NICOLAI SINAI

THE QUR'AN

A Historical-Critical Introduction

THE NEW EDINBURGH ISLAMIC SURVEYS SERIES EDITOR: CAROLE HILLENBRAND

The Qur'an

A historical-critical introduction

The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys
Series Editor: Carole Hillenbrand

Contemporary Issues in Islam Asma Asfaruddin
Astronomy and Astrology in the Islamic World Stephen P. Blake
The New Islamic Dynasties Clifford Edmund Bosworth
Media Arabic Julia Ashtiany Bray
An Introduction to the Hadith John Burton
A History of Islamic Law Noel Coulson
Medieval Islamic Political Thought Patricia Crone
A Short History of the Ismailis Farhad Daftary
Islam: An Historical Introduction (2nd Edition) Gerhard Endress
A History of Christian–Muslim Relations Hugh Goddard
Shi'ism (2nd Edition) Heinz Halm
Islamic Science and Engineering Donald Hill
Muslim Spain Reconsidered Richard Hitchcock
Islamic Law: From Historical Foundations to Contemporary Practice Mawil Izzi Dien
Sufism: The Formative Period Ahmet T. Karamustafa
A History of Islam in Indonesia Carool Kersten
Islamic Aesthetics Oliver Leaman
Persian Historiography Julie Scott Meisami
The Muslims of Medieval Italy Alex Metcalfe
The Archaeology of the Islamic World Marcus Milwright
Twelver Shiism Andrew Newman
Muslims in Western Europe (4th Edition) Jørgen S. Nielsen and Jonas Otterbeck
Medieval Islamic Medicine Peter E. Pormann and Emilie Savage-Smith
Islamic Names Annemarie Schimmel
The Genesis of Literature in Islam Gregor Schoeler
The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction Nicolai Sinai
Modern Arabic Literature Paul Starkey
Islamic Medicine Manfred Ullman
A History of Islamic Spain W. Montgomery Watt and Pierre Cachia
Introduction to the Qur'an W. Montgomery Watt
Islamic Creeds W. Montgomery Watt
Islamic Philosophy and Theology W. Montgomery Watt
Islamic Political Thought W. Montgomery Watt
The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe W. Montgomery Watt

www.edinburghuniversitypress.com/series/isur

The Qur'an

A historical-critical introduction

Nicolai Sinai

EDINBURGH
University Press

Edinburgh University Press is one of the leading university presses in the UK. We publish academic books and journals in our selected subject areas across the humanities and social sciences, combining cutting-edge scholarship with high editorial and production values to produce academic works of lasting importance. For more information visit our website: edinburghuniversitypress.com

Edinburgh University Press Ltd
The Tun – Holyrood Road
12 (2f) Jackson's Entry
Edinburgh EH8 8PJ

Typeset in 11/13pt Baskerville MT Pro by
Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Stockport, Cheshire
and printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 0 7486 9576 8 (hardback)
ISBN 978 0 7486 9577 5 (paperback)
ISBN 978 0 7486 9578 2 (webready PDF)
ISBN 978 0 7486 9579 9 (epub)

Contents

Expanded table of contents

Figures

Shepherd's pleasures, shepherd's delights.

Introduction

For most Muslims past and present, the Qur'an constitutes the literal transcript of God's revelatory address to Muhammad, his contemporaries, and humanity at large. It would of course be dangerously fallacious to suggest that an adequate understanding of Islam, in all its historical, regional, and confessional variety and complexity, could be derived exclusively, or even primarily, from the Qur'an. Nevertheless, it is 'the event of the Qur'an'[1] that inaugurated the new religion of Islam; and until today the Qur'an has remained Islam's ultimate scriptural point of reference.

Commensurate with the Qur'an's importance as one of the major religious scriptures in world history are the interpretive challenges presented by it and the frequently technical nature of the scholarship devoted to it. The aim of the present book is to induct readers into the current state of the historical-critical study of the Qur'an, understood as the discipline tasked with elucidating the Qur'an's content and literary organisation and with reconstructing how the texts compiled in the Qur'an are likely to have been understood by their original addressees.[2] Thus framed, the historical-critical study of the Qur'an is distinct from the study of later Islamic exegesis (*tafsīr*) or of the Qur'an's role in Islamic ritual, art, and literature. The fact that this book does not address these latter topics should not be taken to mean that I consider them less important, only that I would insist on a principled distinction between interpreting a literary document within its historical context of origin on the one hand and examining its subsequent reception history on the other. The present work is exclusively concerned with the former. The readership I envisage are advanced undergraduate and graduate students of Arabic and Islamic studies as well as students and colleagues from neighbouring fields, such as Biblical studies, Patristics, or Rabbinics. I also aspire to having something useful to say to Muslim readers wanting to gain an understanding of how their scripture is being studied by contemporary Western scholars, many of whom are of course agnostic about whether the Qur'an does or does not constitute divine revelation. Since the book is partly based on original research, I hope that other specialists in Qur'anic studies will also take an interest.

For at least four decades, the study of the Qur'an has been characterised by a far-reaching lack of consensus on basic historiographical questions, such as where and when the Qur'anic corpus originated. Like virtually all other scholars

active in the field, I hold views on these issues that are not unanimously shared. I hope that my relatively detailed engagement with conflicting perspectives and arguments will convey some sense of what others have written, and ultimately empower the reader to navigate the field by herself, and, if need be, to gainsay me. My main aim is less to convey factual certainties than to initiate the reader into the multifaceted methodological toolkit that ought to be applied to the Qur'an no less than to other scriptures. Qur'anic scholarship is still beset by an unfortunate bifurcation between literary approaches and the intertextual analysis of specific Qur'anic passages in the light of earlier Christian and Jewish literature. This involves obvious dangers: a literary perspective unmoored from considerations of historical context can quickly become subjective, while an intertextual approach that ignores the Qur'an's literary features can easily degenerate into atomistic source-hunting. Both viewpoints should therefore be seen as complementary rather than as mutually exclusive. Equally indispensable are an appropriate awareness of the internal heterogeneity of the Qur'anic corpus and some rudimentary reliance on quantitative methods. The present book is thus committed to presenting the historical-critical study of the Qur'an as a genuinely multi-pronged and multi-dimensional endeavour, rather than as the exercise in narrow reductionism that some may intuitively associate with the label 'historical-critical'.

What is the 'historical-critical' method?

At this point, the reader may legitimately demand to know what, exactly, I understand by approaching the Qur'an from a historical-critical perspective, and why this may at all be a worthwhile endeavour.[3] I shall take the two components of the hyphenated adjective 'historical-critical' in reverse order.

To interpret a literary document *critically* means to suspend inherited presuppositions about its origin, transmission, and meaning, and to assess their adequacy in the light of a close reading of that text itself as well as other relevant sources. A pertinent example would be the demand voiced by Thomas Hobbes (d. 1679) that discussion of the question by whom the different books of the Bible were originally composed must be guided exclusively by the 'light … which is held out unto us from the books themselves', given that extra-Biblical writings are uninformative about the matter; according to Hobbes, an impartial assessment of the literary evidence refutes the traditional assumption that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch.[4] While critical interpretation in this basic sense is perfectly compatible with believing that the text in question constitutes revelation, it may nonetheless engender considerable doubts about the particular ways in which that text has traditionally been understood. Benedict Spinoza (d. 1677), one of the ancestors of modern Biblical scholarship, goes yet further. In his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* he criticises earlier interpreters of the Bible for

having proceeded on the basis of the postulate that scripture is 'everywhere true and divine'. This assumption, Spinoza insists, is to be rigorously bracketed.[5] This is not to say that scripture should conversely be assumed to be false and mortal, but it does open up the very real possibility that an interpreter may find scripture to contain statements that are, by his own standards, false, inconsistent, or trivial. Hence, a fully critical approach to the Bible, or to the Qur'an for that matter, is equivalent to the demand, frequently reiterated by Biblical scholars from the eighteenth century onwards, that the Bible is to be interpreted in the same manner as any other text.[6]

Moving on to the second constituent of the adjective 'historical-critical', we may say that to read a text *historically* is to require the meanings ascribed to it to have been humanly 'thinkable' or 'sayable' within the text's original historical environment, as far as the latter can be retrospectively reconstructed. At least for the mainstream of historical-critical scholarship, the notion of possibility underlying the words 'thinkable' and 'sayable' is informed by the principle of historical analogy – the assumption that past periods of history were constrained by the same natural laws as the present age, that the moral and intellectual abilities of human agents in the past were not radically different from ours, and that the behaviour of past agents, like that of contemporary ones, is at least partly explicable by recourse to certain social and economic factors.[7] Assuming the validity of the principle of historical analogy has significant consequences. For instance, it will become hermeneutically inadmissible to credit scripture with a genuine foretelling of future events or with radically anachronistic ideas (say, with anticipating modern scientific theories). The notion of miraculous and public divine interventions will likewise fall by the wayside. All these presuppositions can of course be examined and questioned on various epistemological and theological grounds, but they arguably form core elements of the rule book of contemporary historical scholarship. The present volume, whose concerns are not epistemological or theological, therefore takes them for granted.

The foregoing entails that historical-critical interpretation departs in major respects from traditional Biblical or Qur'anic exegesis: it delays any assessment of scripture's truth and relevance until after the act of interpretation has been carried out, and it sidesteps appeals to genuine foresight and miracles.[8] Why should one bother to engage in this rather specific and perhaps somewhat pedestrian interpretive endeavour? A first response would be to affirm the conviction that making historical sense of the world's major religious documents, such as the Bible or the Qur'an, is intrinsically valuable. This answer, of course, may fail to satisfy a believing Jew, Christian, or Muslim. After all, the results of a historical-critical approach to the Bible or the Qur'an could well turn out to stand in tension to her existing religious commitments. What, then, may be said specifically to a religious believer in support of a historical-critical approach to the Bible or the Qur'an? I would venture the following two considerations.

First, Spinoza justifies his demand for a new Biblical hermeneutics by observing that traditional exegetes, who operate on the basis of the a priori assumption that scripture is 'true and divine', frequently succumb to the temptation of merely wringing their own 'figments and opinions' from the text.[9] Spinoza here expresses the insight that by far the most convenient, and therefore continuously enticing, way of making sure that scripture's meaning is true, consistent, and relevant is to simply project on to it, more or less skilfully, what one happens to believe anyway. By contrast, historical criticism's deliberate suspension of judgement regarding scripture's truth, coherence, and contemporary significance effectively safeguards the text's semantic autonomy, its ability to tell its readers something that may radically differ from anything they expected to hear: historical criticism undercuts the instrumentalisation of scripture as a mere repository of proof texts in support of preset convictions and views – and thereby also undercuts the potentially disastrous use of such proof texts as ammunition in religious and political conflicts. Arguably, this is a feature of historical criticism that may be appreciated not only by secular agnostics but also by believing Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Historical criticism, then, is a radical way – quite a risky one, to be sure – of truly letting oneself be addressed by scripture instead of making scripture conform to one's existing convictions and values.

Second, while some results of historical-critical scholarship may indeed prove to be religiously destabilising (depending, obviously, on the particular set of religious beliefs at stake), this is by no means the case for all, or perhaps even most, of them. As this book hopes to show in some detail, the philologically rigorous analysis of the Qur'anic text that is demanded by a historical-critical methodology discloses intriguing literary features and can help discern how the Qur'an harnesses existing narratives and traditions to its own peculiar messages. Precisely because such findings are arrived at in a manner that does not presume a prior acceptance of the Bible or the Qur'an as 'true and divine', believing and practising Jews, Christians, and Muslims may find – and, indeed, have found – it stimulating and enriching to view their canonical writings from a historical-critical perspective.

For the sake of clarity, the preceding paragraphs have highlighted the difference in assumptions and method that separates the historical-critical approach from pre-modern Jewish, Christian, and Islamic scriptural exegesis. This opposition must not be overstressed. While my approach to the Qur'an diverges in important respects from Islamic *tafsīr*, historical-critical students of the Qur'an do well to acknowledge their debt to the philological labour of numerous Muslim exegetes and textual critics. Even more profoundly, the type of Qur'anic scholarship exemplified by the present book shares with traditional Islamic exegesis a fundamental commitment to close and patient reading and an abiding fascination with the text of the Qur'an. The book thus inscribes itself, with an acute

sense of modesty, in more than a millennium of Qur'anic interpretation defined by the work of such luminaries as al-Ṭabarī, al-Zamakhsharī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and al-Biqāᶜī.

Plan of the book and some notes on style

The plan of the book is, it is hoped, straightforward. Part One, 'Background', introduces some basic characteristics of the Qur'anic corpus, assesses its probable date of codification, and offers a sketch of the historical habitat from which it is likely to have emerged. Part Two, 'Method', presents the chief dimensions of a historical-critical analysis of the Qur'an and in so doing lays out what I have referred to as the Qur'anic scholar's interpretive toolkit. This encompasses an appreciation of the compositional structure of Qur'anic surahs, the ability to recognise later additions and expansions in them, and due attention to the novel functions and inflections that often characterise the Qur'anic adaptation of existing narratives and concepts. Part Two also addresses the crucial question of whether we can make defensible judgements about the temporal, or diachronic, sequence in which Qur'anic surahs or passages were first proclaimed. Based on the historical and methodological groundwork laid in the first two parts, Part Three, 'A diachronic survey of the Qur'anic proclamations', then studies the main themes and literary features of the Qur'anic proclamations, treated in their putative diachronic order. Given that the discussion of Qur'anic militancy presented in Chapter 8 treads on politically charged ground, it may not be amiss to remind the reader that my aim throughout is a purely historical one. I do not wish to be recruited as an ally either by Jihadists or Islamophobes, and I do not believe that the scriptural data I discuss is incapable of being suitably navigated by contemporary Muslim theologians.

The present volume was originally conceived as an English translation of a concise German introduction to the Qur'an written for a general readership.[10] Even before setting to work on the English version, however, I decided in favour of thoroughly rewriting the original and expanding it into a more comprehensive and ambitious textbook. Nonetheless, certain sections in the present monograph still show some overlap with passages from my German book. Other sections overlap with, and sporadically reproduce passages from, articles and book chapters that I have written over the last few years, some of which were produced with the express purpose of unburdening the present work from overly technical disquisitions. In such cases, I note the publication in question but dispense with awkward self-quotations. My justification for occasionally having covered the same territory twice, once in a specialised publication and then again in the present book, is that the latter will, it is hoped, convey an idea of how these more narrowly focused studies cohere and how they relate to work that other scholars have done. At regular intervals, claims made in the

course of my argument seemed to call for a more advanced defence or qualification than I found appropriate to include in the main text. Such comments I have relegated to the notes, some of which can consequently be comparatively extensive. They can readily be skipped by most readers but may be useful to some colleagues.

References to the Qur'an (abbreviated as 'Q') give the number of the respective surah and verse, or verses. Non-neighbouring verses of the same surah are separated by a dot; thus, 'Q 74: 31.56' refers to surah 74, verses 31 and 56, and 'Q 89: 15–16.23–24.27–30' means surah 89, verses 15–16, 23–24, and 27–30. Like other contemporary scholars, I cite what is commonly referred to as the ʿUthmānic text of the Qur'an, in the reading of Ḥafṣ ʿan ʿĀṣim and according to the orthography and verse division of the 1924 Cairo edition. This is the version of the Qur'anic text that has achieved virtually exclusive dominance in modern printings. My renderings of Qur'anic passages tend to be based on the translation by Alan Jones, although I have felt free to modify it, sometimes by drawing on the translations by Richard Bell and M. A. S. Abdel Haleem. In citing Qur'anic passages, I adopt Jones's helpful convention of distinguishing singular and plural uses of the second person, which are morphologically distinct in Arabic, by superscript letters ('you^{s}', 'you^{p}'). Quotations from the Bible generally follow the New King James Version, sometimes with modifications. For ascertaining inner-Qur'anic parallels to a given verse I have relied on the print concordances by Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī and Rudi Paret, on http://corpus.quran.com, and on Hans Zirker's searchable transliteration of the Qur'anic text into Latin letters (available at http://duepublico.uni-duisburg-essen.de/servlets/DocumentServlet?id=10802). My notes do not adequately convey how fundamental these four resources have been to the research that has gone into the present book.

All references employ short titles, with full details given in the bibliography. The expanded second edition of Theodor Nöldeke's *History of the Qur'ān*, now available in an English translation, is quoted according to the pagination of the three-volume German original published 1909–38 (*Geschichte des Qorāns*), which is indicated in the margins of the English version. My transliterations of Arabic words and passage use *j* (rather than *ǧ*) for the letter *jīm*, *sh* (rather than *š*) for *shīn*, and so forth. When cited in isolation, individual Arabic words and even genitive constructs are mostly transliterated without full inflectional endings. I do not represent assimilation of the definite article (thus, *al-nās*, as written, rather than *an-nās*, as pronounced). In transcribing entire phrases rather than isolated words I omit *hamzat al-waṣl* and do not take into account the contextual shortening of vowels, which embroils me in slight inconsistency (thus, I transcribe *fī l-arḍ*, as opposed to *fī 'l-arḍ* or *fī al-arḍ*, as written, or *fi l-arḍ*, as pronounced). The pausal form of the regular feminine singular ending is rendered as *-ah*. Transliterations of Qur'anic passages normally reproduce the

vocalisation of current printed editions of the Ḥafṣ ʿan ʿĀṣim text, with the exception that all verse-final words have been changed to their corresponding pausal form, as is generally required by the conventions of Qur'anic rhyme.[11] For words and names that have entered into general English usage, I adopt a simplified anglicising spelling (for example, 'Muhammad', 'the Qur'an', 'Mecca', and 'the hijrah').

Acknowledgements

In the long term, this introduction would not have been written had I not as a student at the Free University of Berlin encountered Angelika Neuwirth's notoriously infectious and inspirational enthusiasm for the literary and intertextual complexity of the Qur'an. More immediately, this book is inspired by the first six years that I spent teaching Islamic Studies at the University of Oxford's Oriental Institute and at Pembroke College. Foremost among the many colleagues from whom I have been fortunate to learn here is Christopher Melchert, whose meticulous scholarship, aversion to verbal smokescreens, and exacting sense of argument were a constant challenge and inspiration. Devin Stewart generously agreed to go through a draft of the book and contributed numerous corrections and suggestions. Another mistake was pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, while Jan Joosten and Catherine Pennacchio obliged me by speedily answering last-minute queries. I furthermore owe an immense debt of gratitude to Marianna Klar, who was a constant interlocutor, critic, and companion during the gestation of this work, and who scrupulously corrected much of its final draft. Lastly, completion of the book and of the research underpinning it would not have been possible without a research leave funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (grant reference AH/M011305/1), without my colleagues' willingness to accommodate my temporary absence from teaching and administrative duties, without the moral and financial support of my parents Barbara and Michael, and without the forbearance of Jakob, Helena, and Susanne.

Notes

1. Thus the title of Cragg, *Event*.
2. The formulation is indebted to the Egyptian scholar Amīn al-Khūlī; see Jansen, *Interpretation*, pp. 66–7.
3. The following section abbreviates some of the ideas developed in Sinai, 'Spinoza and Beyond'; id., 'Historical-Critical Readings'; id., 'Gottes Wort'.
4. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 252.
5. Spinoza, *Opera*, vol. 3, p. 9.
6. See, e.g., Reventlow, 'English Deism', pp. 860–1; Kümmel, *New Testament*, pp. 50, 58, 61, and 87; Stroumsa, *New Science*, pp. 49–61.

7. See Hayes, 'Historical Criticism', p. 998.
8. For an exemplary illustration, see Sinai, 'Gottes Wort', pp. 154–7.
9. Spinoza, *Opera*, vol. 3, p. 97.
10. Sinai, *Der Koran*.
11. See in more detail Chapter 1.

PART ONE

Background

CHAPTER 1

Some basic features of the Qur'an

Introducing the Qur'anic corpus

Before delving into a study of the Qur'an's historical context or its content, we do well to acquaint ourselves with the basic structural and literary features of the Qur'anic corpus as transmitted to us. Many of these features will be treated from a more analytical perspective in subsequent chapters; the focus of the present one, by contrast, is squarely on providing an accessible descriptive survey.[1]

The Qur'an (from Arabic *qurʾān*, 'reading' or 'recitation') is a relatively compact scripture: with *c.* 77,400 Arabic words, its length equals approximately 56 per cent of the Greek New Testament (138,020 words in total).[2] It is composed in a language close to the idiom of early Arabic poetry, although both the lexicon and certain grammatical peculiarities of Qur'anic Arabic are distinct from poetic Arabic.[3] Most importantly, the standard way of reciting the Qur'an displays the desinential (word-final) inflection of nouns and verbs (*iʿrāb*) that is a defining feature of classical Arabic. The hypothesis that the Qur'an was originally recited in uninflected Arabic, put forward in 1906 by Karl Vollers, has not so far prevailed.[4]

The first thing that Western readers are apt to notice about the Qur'an is that it displays neither a linear narrative organisation of the sort familiar from the book of Genesis or the New Testament gospels, nor a topical arrangement like that of the Mishnah. This makes it difficult to give a concise account of the Qur'an's structure and content. Its basic format is perhaps best characterised as consisting of revelatory addresses treating a wide spectrum of topics (eschatology; the ministry of divine messengers prior to Muhammad, such as Abraham, Moses, and Jesus; God's creation and maintenance of the natural order; and moral and quasi-legal norms of behaviour) and interweaving a multitude of discursive registers (narrative, hymnic speech, exhortation and admonition, polemics, and casuistic prescription). In its standard recension, the Qur'anic corpus is divided into 114 textual units, designated as 'surahs'.[5] For various reasons, it would be inadequate to gloss these as 'chapters'. We cannot, for example, assume that the surahs were originally meant to function as component parts of an overarching literary whole. Furthermore, the thematic cohesion and original unity at least of the longer surahs is far from immediately obvious. Thus, surah 2 opens with a paraenetic section revolving around the contrast between

Believers and Unbelievers (v. 1–29), tells the story of the creation and fall of Adam (vv. 30–39), launches into a lengthy indictment of the Israelites and Jews (vv. 40–123), and then recalls Abraham and his founding of a sanctuary (vv. 124–141) towards which the Qur'anic community is subsequently instructed to pray (vv. 142–152).The rest of the surah features an extensive corpus of legislation (vv. 153–283) that is concluded by a brief epilogue (vv. 284–286). Whether a text of this kind constitutes more than a haphazard sequence of unrelated blocks of material is a question that will be discussed in Chapter 4.

In addition to the polythematic structure of many Qur'anic surahs, one and the same topic is often treated in more than one surah. For instance, God's commission of Moses and the latter's confrontation with Pharaoh are retold in at least six different Qur'anic passages,[6] and similar observations hold for other narratives, such as the stories of Noah and the Flood, of Abraham's dispute with his unbelieving father, and of the creation and fall of Adam.[7] Such parallel narratives can exhibit conspicuous phraseological overlap; to give an example, almost all Qur'anic retellings of the creation of Adam begin with the formulaic introduction 'And when We /when your[s] Lord said to the angels'.[8] On the other hand, when examined with sufficient attention, many of these parallel narratives turn out to have subtly different emphases and can even be viewed as complementing or clarifying one another in various ways.[9]

The Qur'an's dramatis personae

One core feature that unites most of the material compiled in the Qur'anic corpus is the fact that it is punctuated by a divine voice employing the first-person singular or plural. An example is provided by the opening verses of the second surah (Q 2: 2–3), which run as follows:

> [2] This is the Scripture
> in which there is no doubt,
> a guidance for the God-fearing,
>
> [3] who believe in the Hidden
> and perform prayer
> and spend from that which We have provided for them.

Despite the prominence of this divine voice throughout the Qur'an, there are entire surahs that lack any explicit occurrence of the divine first person (Q 1, 62, 79, 82, 85, 91, 93, 98–107, and 109–114), even though a divine speaker may still be taken to be implied by direct addresses of the Qur'anic Messenger (e.g., Q 62: 11).[10] There is also a substantial number of instances of the first person that clearly represent a human rather than a divine speaker. It is true that in the majority of such cases, human first-person statements are preceded by the imperative 'Say (*qul*): …' and are thus embedded within a divine utterance (for

example, Q 3: 15.20.31). Yet this is by no means always the case (see Q 11: 2–4, 51: 50–51).[11] A further complication arises from the fact that throughout the entire corpus first- and third-person references to God can alternate at a high frequency, sometimes even within one and the same sentence (italics added):

> O you who believe,
> eat of the good things that *We* have provided for you,
> and be grateful to *God*, if you worship *Him*. (Q 2: 172)

> And when Moses came to *Our* appointed time
> and *his Lord* spoke to him, he said: … (Q 7: 143)

Similarly abrupt shifts of grammatical person, called 'enallage', also occur in the Hebrew Bible,[12] and the phenomenon is not unknown in early Arabic poetry.[13] Given how widespread the phenomenon is in the Qur'an, it is unlikely that it could be explained, or at least exhaustively explained, as resulting from a splicing together of originally independent passages, as has been proposed.[14] At least to a significant extent, then, Qur'anic enallage would appear to constitute a deliberate rhetorical device, whatever its precise meaning and function.[15]

Despite the foregoing qualifications, the sheer quantity of occurrences of the divine first person in the Qur'anic corpus means that the Qur'an styles itself fairly pervasively as divine speech.[16] This divine voice has its natural counterpart in second-person addresses. They occur not only in the plural (for example, Q 37: 4: 'Your^{p} God is one'), but also in the singular, as in Q 20: 2–3:

> [2] We have not sent down the recitation upon you^{s} for you to be wretched,
> [3] but as a reminder to those who are afraid [of God].

On occasion, this Qur'anic 'you^{s}' – or, in a more dated register, 'thou' – may be understood generically, as in the Biblical commandment 'Thou shalt not kill'.[17] Yet in the majority of cases, it unmistakably refers to a specific individual who is cast as the recipient of divine revelations and charged with conveying them to a wider audience (for example, Q 17: 106, 20: 2–3, and 76: 23), who is defended and comforted in the face of resistance and polemical aspersions (Q 50: 29–49, 68: 2–6, 68: 44–52, and 76: 23–26), who can even be rebuked (Q 80: 1–10), and whose domestic circumstances and conflicts are sometimes commented on (Q 33: 28–34.37.53–55, and 66: 1–5).[18] This individual must be identical with the 'messenger' (*rasūl*) of God whom the Qur'an's audience is repeatedly commanded to obey (for example, Q 3: 32.132 and 4: 13.59.69). The Qur'anic Messenger is also given other titles, for instance, that of a 'warner' (*nadhīr*, *mundhir*; for example, Q 32: 3, 35: 24, and 79: 45), a 'bearer of eschatological tidings' (*bashīr* or *mubashshir,* for example, Q 11: 2 and 17: 105), and a 'prophet' (*nabiyy*; for example, throughout Q 33). Four verses call the Messenger 'Muhammad' (Q 3: 144, 33: 40, 47: 2, and 48: 29). Like God, the Messenger can be referred to in the third person, especially when the

divine speaker turns directly to his audience, as in Q 81: 22: 'Your[p] companion is not possessed.'

Unravelling the dramatis personae of a particular Qur'anic passage is not always straightforward. Nonetheless, the work's basic discursive constellation is relatively evident. It is best conceptualised as a triangle whose vertices are constituted by God, the Messenger, and the latter's audience, which includes supporters as well as various groups of opponents.[19] As we have already seen, the divine voice alternately addresses the Messenger (in which case the Qur'anic audience may be referred to in the third person) and the Messenger's hearers (in which case the Messenger may be referred to in the third person). In many cases, however, the Messenger and the audience are not only spoken to or spoken about, but themselves figure as speakers. As pointed out above, utterances by the Messenger are normally reconciled with the Qur'an's divine voice by means of the framing command 'Say (*qul*): …', while statements ascribed to the Qur'anic audience are preceded by formulae of citation such as 'They say: …'.[20] These techniques of transitioning from divine to human speech permit the Qur'an to stage polemical exchanges between the Messenger and his hearers, often interrupted by direct interventions of the divine voice (for example, Q 37: 11–18 or Q 6: 4–73). While such polemical sequences are not unreasonably seen as having some grounding in real debates, it would of course be naive to treat them simply as unfiltered transcripts.

Self-referentiality, metatextuality, and formulaic density

After having reviewed the basic constellation of speakers and addressees that can be discerned in the Qur'an, it is useful to turn to three general characteristics of Qur'anic discourse. The first of these has been labelled the Qur'an's 'self-referentiality' – meaning that a substantial number of Qur'anic passages are keenly concerned to define their own provenance, nature, function, and proper manner of reception.[21] For example, the Qur'anic proclamations describe themselves as a divine 'reminder' (*tadhkirah*) to man (for example, Q 74: 54–55 and 80: 11–16) and a 'sending down (*tanzīl*) from the Lord of all beings' (Q 26: 192 and 69: 43), thus making explicit what is persistently implied by their extensive deployment of the divine voice. They furthermore claim to derive from an archetypical celestial 'scripture' (*kitāb*) or 'tablet' (*lawḥ*) (Q 56: 77–80, 80: 11–16, and 85: 21–22) and even to constitute a scripture in their own right (for example, Q 2: 2–3, quoted above); they comment on the manner in which they have allegedly been transmitted to the Qur'anic Messenger (for example, Q 26: 192–195); and they defend themselves against the charge of constituting mere poetry or oracles (see Q 36: 69–70 and 69: 38–51). One very well-known verse even appears to impart rudimentary guidance on how the Qur'anic corpus is, or rather is not, to be interpreted, acknowledging that it contains ambiguous passages but warning

the addressees against seeking the latter's interpretation (Q 3: 7).[22] Many of these statements occur in the context of polemical exchanges and appear to respond to doubts and objections emanating from the Qur'an's audience, which has led one scholar to speak of the Qur'an's 'embattled self-reflexivity'.[23]

It is tempting to connect the Qur'an's recurrent concern with defining its own status, function, and transcendent origin to its stereotypical insistence on being eminently 'clear' (*mubīn;* for example, Q 5: 15 and 12: 1). The same preoccupation with clarity may be detected in another overarching trait of the Islamic scripture: its high incidence of parenthetical statements that appear to float atop a passage's primary expositional layer (although they may be syntactically linked to it) and provide clarificatory or exhortatory comments addressed to the Qur'anic audience. Such parenthetical or metatextual segments, also termed 'clausulae',[24] often serve to close out a Qur'anic verse or verse section, although verse-internal clausulae also occur. An example is provided by Q 10: 73–75, which straddles the border between two adjoining narrative pericopes (italics added):

> [73] They [Noah's people] dismissed him as a liar,
> upon which We rescued him and those who were with him in the ship
> and made them successors,
> and We drowned those who dismissed Our signs as a lie.
> *– So behold the end of those who were warned! –*
>
> [74] Then after him We sent messengers to their people,
> and they came to them with clear proofs.
> But they would not believe
> what they had previously dismissed as a lie.
> *– Thus do We set a seal on the hearts of the transgressors! –*
>
> [75] Then after them We sent Moses and Aaron …

Unlike the remainder of this excerpt, the final segments of vv. 73 and 74 (italicised) are not part of the passage's basic narrative but form paraenetic interjections. They serve to draw the addressees' attention to the universal patterns of divine-human interaction that are exemplified by the events retold: those who give no heed to God's warnings come to ruin; God hardens the hearts of those who reject His 'clear proofs'.

Such parenthetical asides are extremely frequent throughout many Qur'anic surahs. They specify attitudes that the Qur'an's addressees are or are not expected to adopt (for example, Q 16: 52: 'Do you[p] fear something other than God?'; Q 36: 68: 'Do they not understand?'), spell out the moral standing of persons appearing in the text's primary thread (Q 38: 30, referring to Solomon: 'How excellent a servant! He was ready to do penance'), or qualify the message that is being conveyed in terms of its truth value or its communicative purpose (Q 10: 4: 'The promise of God is true'; Q 15: 77: 'In this is a sign

for the Believers'). Particularly frequent are predications of divine attributes (Q 2: 20: 'God has power over everything'; Q 3: 11: 'God is severe in punishment'). As a result of such parenthetical interjections, Qur'anic discourse often unfolds on two parallel tiers: an expositional level consisting, for instance, in the telling of a narrative, the articulation of certain commands and prohibitions, or a polemical exchange, and a metatextual level that endows core aspects of the Qur'anic world view with a drone-like resonance and thereby serves to minimise moral and theological ambiguity. This continuous broadcasting of valuations is one of the features that most noticeably sets Qur'anic narrative apart from the narrative sections of the Hebrew Bible. However, the phenomenon of Qur'anic metatextuality is not therefore without historical precedent, since the verse homilies on Biblical narratives that were authored by late antique Syriac Christians can contain similar moralising and exhortatory asides.[25]

A third general feature of the Qur'an that is fittingly highlighted at this juncture is its strongly formulaic nature.[26] The theological predications just mentioned provide some of the best examples of this phenomenon. Thus, the clausula 'God has power over everything' (*inna llāha ᶜalā kulli shayᵓin qadīr*) occurs no less than eight times across the entire Qur'an, and there are a further four occurrences of the structurally analogous phrase 'God is knowledgeable of everything' (*inna llāha bi-kulli shayᵓin ᶜalīm*). As a computer-based study by Andrew Bannister has shown, if one defines a formula as a sequence of three 'bases' (= words stripped of any desinential vowels, suffixed pronouns, and proclitic particles including the definite article) that recurs five times or more in the Qur'an, then the entire text will turn out to have a formulaic density of 21.86 per cent. That is to say, almost 22 per cent of the Qur'an's words belong to three-word phrases that are repeated with identical inflection five times or more within the corpus.[27] If one were to require merely a recurrence of the same word or even root, the text's formulaic density would be still higher.[28] Unsurprisingly, the fact that the Qur'an contains a very significant number of identical or near-identical phrases and even verses was already noted by medieval Muslim scholars, who speak of verses that are 'similar to one another'.[29] The terminology is rooted in the Qur'an's description of itself as a scripture that is 'self-similar in its oft-repeated parts' (*kitāban muthashābihan mathāniya*; Q 39: 23). Although the phrase is not easy to unpack, it may indeed signify a self-referential acknowledgement of the Qur'an's highly formulaic character.[30]

Verses and rhyme

Classical Arabic poetry, the emergence of which can safely be assumed to predate the Qur'an, is distinguished by a quantitative metre (that is, recurrent patterns of long and short syllables) and by rhyme. The Qur'an generally lacks quantitative metre; instead, at least some of the shorter surahs admit of being

analysed as exhibiting an accent- or stress-based metre that is characteristic of the literary genre of *saj*ᶜ, a rhymed and rhythmic type of prose associated with pre-Islamic soothsayers (*kuhhān*).[31] Rhyme, however, or rather a periodically recurrent word-final assonance, is a feature of the Qur'an throughout, and it naturally partitions the surahs into a total of approximately 6,200 verses (*āyāt*).[32] As a result, the Qur'an's subdivision into verses forms an integral component of its literary structure rather than an external grid imposed for convenience of reference, as is the case for the New Testament and the prose books of the Hebrew Bible.[33] This is so despite intermittent uncertainty as to where one Qur'anic verse ends and where the next one begins. As a result of such ambiguity, Islamic sources record seven different (albeit frequently overlapping) systems of subdividing the received text into verses. These systems are named after major urban centres of the early Islamic period, such as Kufa, Basra, Damascus, Mecca, and Medina.[34] Today, the Kufan division, which counts 6,236 verses, has established itself as the default approach.

The importance of rhyme to the Qur'an's literary fabric is most revealingly indicated by the fact that Qur'anic verse endings have frequent recourse to what may be described as poetic licence in the interest of maintaining rhyme. As Friedrun Müller and, more recently, Devin Stewart have shown, the text often substitutes an expected word X* that would have disrupted the respective passage's rhyme by a variant form X that fits the rhyme but is morphologically unusual or has a slightly different meaning than required by the context. Claims to have detected a case of poetic licence are especially persuasive if the Qur'anic corpus contains at least one thematically or phraseologically parallel verse that employs X* rather than X at a position in the verse that is not affected by rhyme.[35] For example, at the end of Q 95: 2 the text refers to Mount Sinai by the etymologically puzzling *ṭūr sīnīn*, rather than as *ṭūr saynāʾ*, which is the form of the name that occurs verse-internally in Q 23: 20. At Q 95: 2, the occurrence of *ṭūr sīnīn*, rather than *ṭūr saynāʾ*, obviously serves to generate a rhyme with the surrounding verses, ending with the words *al-zaytūn* (v. 1), *al-amīn* (v. 3), *taqwīm* (v. 4), *sāfilīn* (v. 5), and so on.[36]

Many cases of verse-final poetic licence exhibit a technique that Devin Stewart has termed 'cognate substitution', whereby an expected expression is replaced by a word derived from the same consonantal root but conforming to a different morphological pattern. Thus, Q 105: 2 – 'Did He [namely, God] not cause their plot to go astray?' – employs the word *taḍlīl* ('leading astray') in the sense of the cognate expression *ḍalāl* ('going astray').[37] In other cases, Qur'anic verse endings secure the requisite rhyme by means of an unusual word order or by replacing a verb in the perfect tense by one in the imperfect.[38] All these examples underscore that rhyme is a fundamental literary feature of the Qur'anic corpus and therefore ought to be accorded corresponding significance. As a corollary of this insight, verse borders marked off by rhyme should

generally be assumed to form more important structural caesurae than any thematic or structural breaks that may be discerned within verses.[39]

Qur'anic rhyme normally presupposes that the final short vowels of verbs and nouns, including the indeterminate nominal endings *-un* and *-in*, are dropped at the end of a verse, while final *-an* is lengthened to *-ā*. Most Qur'anic rhyme words are thus to be read in their pausal form, although there are occasional exceptions.[40] This feature, technically referred to as *taskīn*, distinguishes the Qur'an from classical Arabic poetry and, like the lack of quantitative metre, unites it to *saj*ᶜ prose.[41] In other respects, too, the principles governing Qur'anic rhyme are distinct from the rules followed in classical Arabic poetry, a fact that is reflected by the different Arabic terms for Qur'anic rhyme (*fāṣilah*) and for poetic rhyme (*qāfiyah*). First, whereas Arabic poetry normally adheres to the same rhyme throughout a given poem, many Qur'anic surahs feature changes in rhyme, which is likewise a trait of *saj*ᶜ prose.[42] Secondly, the Qur'an goes further than Arabic poetry in permitting different vowels and consonants to be substituted for one another without breaking the rhyme. Like poetry, the short vowels *a*, *i*, and *u* as well as the long vowels *ī* and *ū* are freely interchanged, but unlike poetry, Qur'anic verse endings can also alternate the long vowels *ī*/*ū* with *ā*, or can even switch back and forth between different consonants, especially phonetically similar ones like *l*, *m*, *n*, and *r*.

By way of an example, let us consider verses 2–11 of surah 3, a passage for which the Damascene rather than the Kufan verse divisions seem superior.[43] Below is an overview of the verse-final syllables yielded by the Damascene partitioning of the text. All of these verse-final syllables carry an accentual stress by virtue of being what is called 'overlong' (i.e., consisting of a long vowel in between two consonants). Note that the superscript numbers retain the Kufan verse counting to permit comparison with current printings.

[2] *-yūm*
[4] *-qān*
-qām
[5] *-māʾ*
[6] *-kīm*
[7] *-bāb*
[8] *-wāb*
[9] *-ᶜād*
[10] *-nār*
[11] *-qāb*

We encounter two kinds of rhyme shifts here. On the one hand, the passage alternates between verses that have the long vowel *ā* in the final syllable and those that have *ī*/*ū*, while on the other hand it alternates between different final consonants (mostly *m*, *n*, and *b*, but occasionally switching to the glottal stop

ʾ as well as to *d* and *r*). To introduce convenient abbreviations, the passage is dominated by the rhyme scheme C (designating a discretionary consonant) + *ā* + *m/n/b*, with the occasional variants C + *ī/ū* + *m* and C + *ā* + ʾ*/d/r*. It does not seem likely that the sporadic occurrence of such variants is to be construed as a proper *change* in rhyme, since the shifts in questions are confined to one or two verses, after which the text reverts to the pattern C + *ā* + *m/n/b*. Nor do vv. 9–10, for instance, form a thematically or structurally self-contained textual unit. Consequently, the opening passage of surah 3 is best seen as exhibiting only a generic verse-final assonance, consisting in a discretionary consonant followed by any one of the three long vowels, followed by another discretionary consonant (C + *ī/ū/ā* + C), with a certain predominance of the vowel *ā* and the phonetically similar final consonants *b, d, m*, and *n*.

Other surahs, however, conform to more narrowly defined rhyme patterns and employ changes between these patterns as evident structural markers. A case in point is surah 101. Here, there are unmistakable and compositionally meaningful rhyme changes between vv. 3 and 4 and then again between vv. 5 and 6, as a result of which vv. 4 and 5 are clearly set off from the preceding and from the following. In order to convey the phonetic quality of the text, the following translation includes a transliteration of the original Arabic, with rhyme changes indicated by horizontal lines. Note that here, too, I depart from the prevailing Kufan verse division in counting vv. 6–7 and 8–9 as one verse each, in line with the Basran and Damascene counting systems.[44]

[1] The striking!	[1] *al-qāriᶜah*
[2] What is the striking?	[2] *mā l-qāriᶜah*
[3] What will teach you[s] what the striking is?	[3] *wa-mā adrāka mā l-qāriᶜah*
[4] On the day on which humans will be like scattered moths	[4] *yawma yakūnu n-nāsu ka-l-farāshi l-mabthūth*
[5] and the mountains will be like carded wool,	[5] *wa-takūnu l-jibālu ka-l-ᶜihni l-manfūsh*
[6.7] the one whose balances will be heavy will live contently,	[6.7] *fa-ammā man thaqulat mawāzīnuhu fa-huwa fī ᶜīshatin rāḍiyah*
[8.9] and the one whose balances will be light – his mother will be the pit.	[8.9] *wa-ammā man khaffat mawāzīnuhu fa-ummuhū hāwiyah*
[10] What will teach you[s] what she is?	[10] *wa-mā adrāka mā hiyah*
[11] A blazing fire!	[11] *nārun ḥāmiyah*

Since vv. 1–3 end with the same word, they all rhyme in *-āriᶜah*. After v. 3, we confront an obvious change in rhyme, neatly coinciding with the transition from rhetorical question to response. Like the opening of surah 3, vv. 4 and 5 of surah 101 – ending in *-abthūth* and *-anfūsh* – do not yield an exact rhyme according to the conventions of Arabic poetry, even though they display morphological correspondence, insofar as the final word of each verse is an adjective conforming

to the same pattern of consonants and vowels.[45] Once again, we find that the rules underlying Qur'anic rhyme appear to permit the substitution of different consonants within the same rhyme section. It deserves to be noted, however, that unlike the opening verses of surah 3, vv. 4 and 5 of surah 101 limit themselves to interchanging consonants that share a similar manner of articulation: both *th* and *sh* are fricatives. After v. 5, the surah shifts back to the rhyme pattern *ā* + C + *iyah*. This is maintained throughout the remainder of the text. A final observation to be made is that surah 101 affords two further illustrations of the phenomenon of cognate substitution: *ʿīshatin rāḍiyah* at the end of v. 7, literally 'an approving life', must be understood in the sense of *ʿīshatin marḍiyyah*, 'an approved life', while *hāwiyah* at the end of v. 9 would appear to do duty for one of the more common Arabic words *huwwah* or *mahwā*, meaning 'pit' or 'abyss'.[46]

Regardless of which system of verse divisions one adopts, two general observations about verse length in the Qur'an remain valid. First, the length of individual verses from different surahs can show extreme variation. As illustrated by Figure 1, surah 2, when transliterated into Latin letters, contains many verses whose length exceeds 100 characters, and four verses in excess of 400 characters (vv. 102, 187, 196, 233, and 282).[47] The last one of these totals 843 Latin letters, making it longer than a large number of individual surahs (namely, each of surahs 81, 82, 84–88, and 90–114). By contrast, the forty-two verses of surah 80 only count from fifteen to forty-one transcription letters each (see Figure 2). The second noticeable feature, also illustrated by Figures 1 and 2, is that verse length within a given surah tends to be much more consistent than between different surahs, although a few remarkable outliers do occur. A possible explanation for these extreme divergences in verse length – namely, that they reflect a process of gradual stylistic evolution – will be considered in Chapter 5.

Verses and stichs

The very considerable divergences in length that can exist between Qur'anic verses are not a purely quantitative phenomenon but rather manifest differences in the complexity of their internal literary structure. This can be illustrated by comparing two brief verse groups, Q 99: 1–4 and Q 2: 1–5. Let us begin with the former:

[1] When the earth undergoes its shaking
[2] and the earth brings forth its burdens
[3] and man says, 'What is happening to it?',
[4] on that day it will tell its news.

In the Arabic original, vv. 1, 2, and 4 consist only of a single clause. V. 3 encompasses the statement 'and man says' (*wa-qāla l-insānu*) and the question 'What is happening to it?' (*mā lahā*), yet due to their brevity these two clauses will naturally

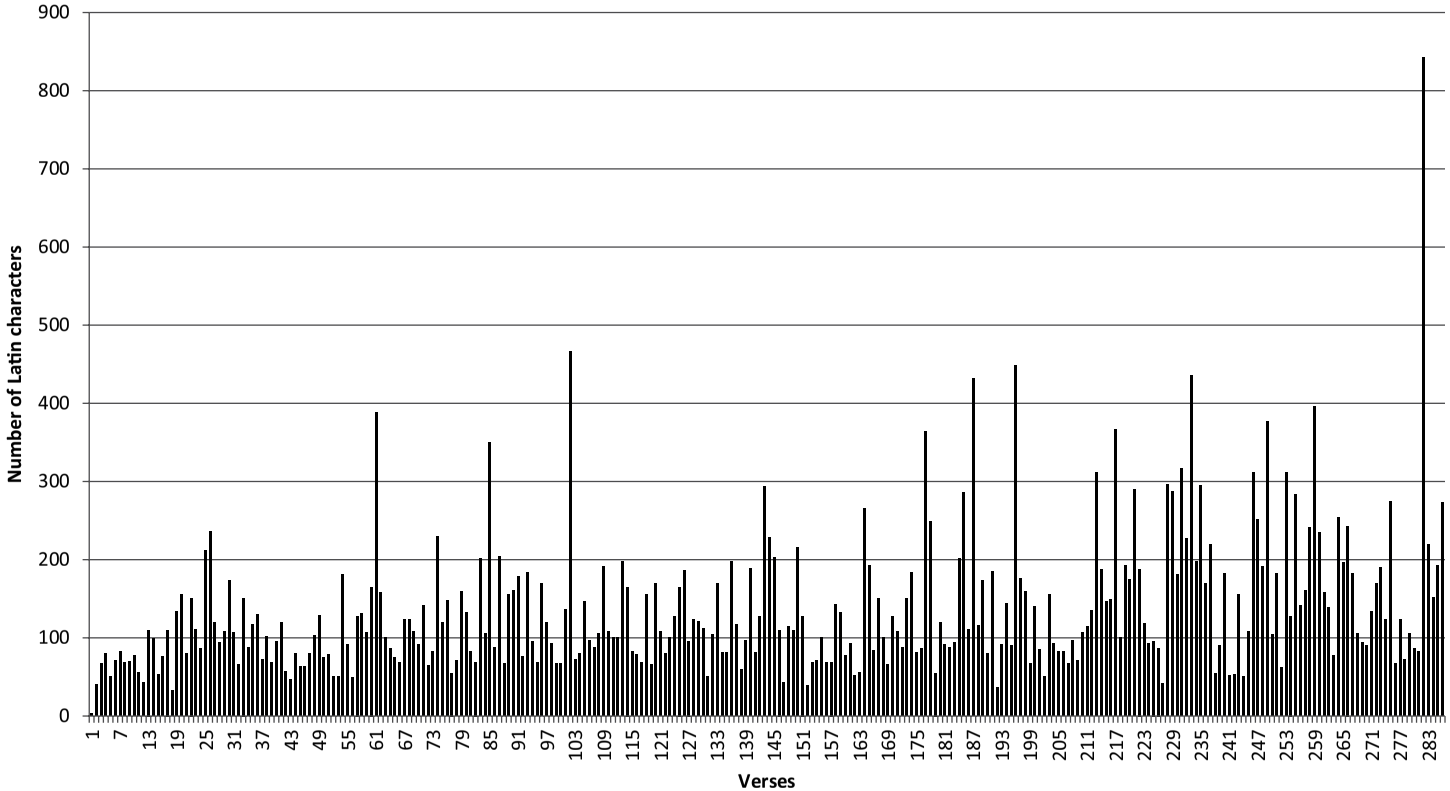

Figure 1 Verse length in surah 2 (in transliteration)

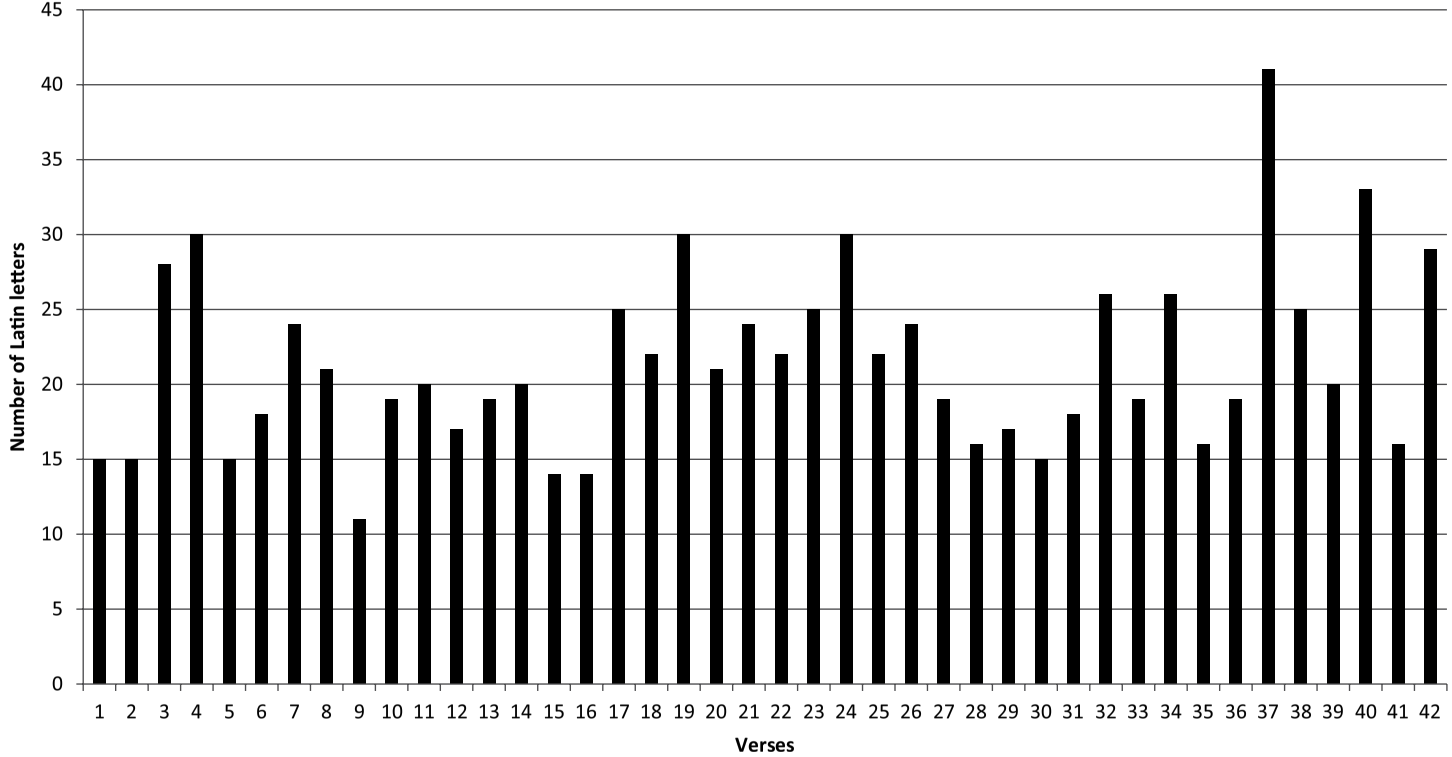

Figure 2 Verse length in surah 80 (in transliteration)

merge together into a single unit of delivery. Thus, each verse constitutes what one may call a single recitation phrase.[48] This is most transparently conveyed by placing line breaks between verses.

In Q 2: 1–5, by contrast, each verse except for the opening letter sequence occupying v. 1 comprises two or three clauses or clause-like phrases. Thus, verses here naturally divide up into two or three units of delivery that are best allocated separate lines, even though the rhyme (marked by a slash below) only recurs at the end of every verse:

[1] Alif, Lām, Mīm /

[2a] This is the Scripture
[2b] in which there is no doubt,
[2c] a guidance for the God-fearing, /

[3a] who believe in the Hidden
[3b] and perform prayer
[3c] and spend from that which We have provided for them, /

[4a] and who believe in what was sent down to you[s]
[4b] and what was sent down before you
[4c] and are certain of the world to come. /

[5a] Those are guided by their Lord
[5b] and those are the ones who prosper. /

The fact that long Qur'anic verses tend to fall into such recitation phrases was noted already by the theologian Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013), who described them by the Arabic term *kalimah*.[49] Western scholars have termed the units in question 'cola' (singular 'colon') or 'members'.[50] I shall here use the term 'stich' instead: being derived from the Greek *stichos*, 'line', it expresses the expectation that the textual units in question will be sufficient to fill a line. Linguistically, the most straightforward examples of a Qur'anic stich would be a main clause, such as 'those are guided by their Lord' (Q 2: 5a), or one of various types of subordinate clauses. However, in many cases a word group not amounting to a complete clause may also carry enough weight to merit being deemed a self-standing stich, while in other cases very short clauses may not be considered to form an independent stich. Introducing the concept of a stich will enable us to describe Qur'anic verses not only in terms of their number of transcription letters, but also in terms of the number of component units that they contain. Thus, Q 99: 1–4 can be characterised as a sequence of four monostichs, whereas Q 2: 1–5 is composed of a monostich and four polystichs, more particularly, three tristichs and a final distichs.

Efforts have been made to draw up a catalogue of linguistically precise criteria for subdividing longer Qur'anic verses into recitation phrases or

stichs, and discussing these criteria would require a fair amount of Arabic grammatical terminology.[51] Yet despite such attempts, the Qur'an contains many cases where the decision for or against imposing a line break will, ultimately, be based on literary intuitions that are marked by an inherent degree of subjectivity. For instance, certain two-word clauses may be felt to deserve being counted as independent stichs in one case and not in another. Thus, it would not be obviously wrong to combine 2: 3a and 2: 3b ('and perform prayer', *wa-yuqīmūna l-ṣalāta*) into one stich. This would turn v. 3 from a tristich into a distich.[52]

Despite such residual uncertainties, a stichometric presentation of longer Qur'anic verses will decisively facilitate an adequate processing of their internal disposition. For instance, consider again Q 2: 3–4, which I have proposed to analyse as tristichs. Both of them are relative clauses introduced by the pronoun 'who' (*alladhīna*). V. 3 then has a sequence of three third-person plural verbs ('they believe', 'they perform', and 'they spend') that naturally creates a tripartite climactic structure. The resulting sense of climax is reinforced by the fact that 2: 3c inverts the normal word order of Arabic verbal clauses by delaying the verb 'they spend' (*yunfiqūn*) until the end of the verse. It is true that this inversion also ensures maintenance of the passage's rhyme in *ī/ū* + *m/n*, yet its literary side effect of inducing a sense of chiastic closure is nonetheless undeniable. V. 4 has a slightly different syntactic configuration, but shows the same inverted syntax at the end of the verse, thus inviting an equivalent tripartite construal. A stichometrically structured translation aiming to capture all these aspects of literary crafting might run as follows (first and last verb of each verse italicised):

[3a] who *believe* in the Hidden
[3b] and perform prayer
[3c] and of that which We have provided for them *do spend*, /

[4a] and who *believe* in what was sent down to you[s]
[4b] and what was sent down before you
[4c] and in the world to come *place their trust.* /

Qur'anic verses can contain many more than two or three stichs. An example is provided by Q 5: 1–2:

[1a] O you who believe,
[1b] fulfil the obligations.

[1c] Permitted to you[p] is the beast of the herds,
[1d] except what is recited to you,
[1e] as long as you do not deem permissible hunting prey
[1f] while you are in the pilgrim state.

[1g] God adjudicates as He wills. /

[2a] O you who believe,
[2b] do not profane [literally, 'deem permissible'] God's rites
[2c] nor the sacred month nor the offerings nor the garlands
[2d] nor those repairing to the Inviolable House,
[2e] seeking bounty and approval from their Lord.

[2f] When you leave the pilgrim state, you may hunt.
[2g] And let not hatred for a people
[2h] due to their barring you from the Inviolable Place of Prostration
[2i] incite you to commit a transgression.

[2j] Help one another to righteousness and fear of God;
[2k] but do not help one another to sin and transgression.

[2l] And fear God;
[2m] God is severe in punishment. /

As illustrated by the variable line spacing above, some of the stichs making up these two verses are more closely related than others. It is convenient to reserve the word 'segment' as a technical term for a group of closely linked stichs.[53] For instance, the stichs constituting 5: 1 cluster together to form three distinct segments: a vocative followed by a general injunction to keep the Qur'anic community's obligations to God (1a–b), a pronouncement on the impermissibility of hunting during the pilgrimage (1c–f), and a metatextual 'wrap-up' statement (1g).[54] Here, too, there is some room for subjective decisions: for instance, one could opt for a further subdivision of the second segments into two distichs, juxtaposing a general permission (1c, 1d) with a pilgrimage-specific prohibition (1e, 1f).[55] These two distichs would obviously be more closely related to each other than, say, 1c–d are connected to 1a–b, entailing a need for an additional degree of line spacing. Verse 2 is even more complex than v. 1, and I have subdivided it into five segments (2a–e, 2f, 2g–i, 2j–k, and 2l–m), the last of which is again a metatextual wrap-up.

As highlighted above, given the fact that Qur'anic discourse comes in the form of verses that are clearly partitioned by rhyme, we may take it for granted that verse borders will always constitute more significant breaks than those obtaining between the stichs and segments inside a verse. This is so even in cases where a clause runs across verse borders. An example is provided by Q 74: 40–41: 'In gardens they [the inhabitants of paradise] shall ask one another / about the evildoers (*fī jannātin yatasāʾalūn / ʿani l-mujrimīn*).' Taking into account the rhyme-induced caesura in the middle of this couplet, it would be a mistake to assimilate it to a single stich.[56]

The arrangement of the Qur'anic corpus

While the composition and literary peculiarities of individual surahs and groups of surahs will be extensively discussed in subsequent chapters, the order in

which the canonical recension of the Qur'an arranges the surahs is best examined here. The corpus is opened by a brief prayer formulated in the first-person plural, called 'the Opening' (*al-Fātiḥah*), and closes with a monotheistic creed (Q 112) and two brief invocations in the first-person singular (Q 113 and 114, jointly labelled 'the Protective Incantations', *al-Muʿawwidhatān*). Like the opening surah, Q 112–114 are evidently intended as prayers to be uttered by humans rather than as divine addresses, although the introductory imperative 'Say: …' (*qul*) serves to transpose them into the divine register that generally dominates the Qur'anic corpus, a feature that we do not see replicated in Q 1. It bears noting that according to Islamic sources the *Fātiḥah* as well as Q 113 and 114 were absent from the recension of the Qur'an that was allegedly compiled by the Prophet's companion Ibn Masʿūd.[57] This could indicate that some early Muslims did not consider these prayers to constitute divine revelations, thus raising the possibility that even in the standard recension of the Qur'an they could originally have functioned as framing texts rather than as part of the body of revelation proper.

Following Q 1, the order of the surahs appears to be partly determined by decreasing length, a principle that perhaps underlies the arrangement of the Pauline epistles in the New Testament as well.[58] If, as I shall go on to argue in Chapter 5, the longest surahs belong to a relatively late stage of the Qur'an, ordering the surahs by decreasing length may have recommended itself as a way of ensuring that chronologically earlier surahs were placed after, and were thus interpretively governed by, texts that reflected the theological state of development of the late Qur'an.[59] However, as illustrated by Figures 3 and 4,[60] the principle of decreasing length has by no means been applied consistently. Why?

Some degree of divergence from the decreasing-length principle may have arisen simply because the redactors, or redactor, of the Qur'an had to rely on their visual judgement rather than on precise computations of length, which would have entailed a certain margin of error.[61] Nevertheless, it seems fairly obvious that the standard recension of the Qur'an deliberately modifies the decreasing-length principle in the light of subsidiary considerations. Already Hans Bauer, writing in 1921, linked some of the deviations from the decreasing-length principle to the fact that many Qur'anic surahs open with strings of enigmatic letters (indicated by the data labels in Figures 3 and 4) and observed that the standard recension of the Qur'an betrays a reluctance to separate surahs introduced by the same letters.[62] Thus, for example, surahs beginning with the sequences *ʾ-l-r*/*ʾ-l-m-r*, *ṭ-s*/*ṭ-s-m*, and *ḥ-m* are placed in cohesive blocks. The marked surge between surahs 32 and 33 illustrates the extent to which this disrupts the principle of decreasing length.[63] Following Bauer, we may conjecture that the surah groups in question had already coalesced as partial collections of Qur'anic material before they were slotted into the corpus as a whole. A similar reluctance to separate surahs that were viewed as linked may have been responsible for the striking

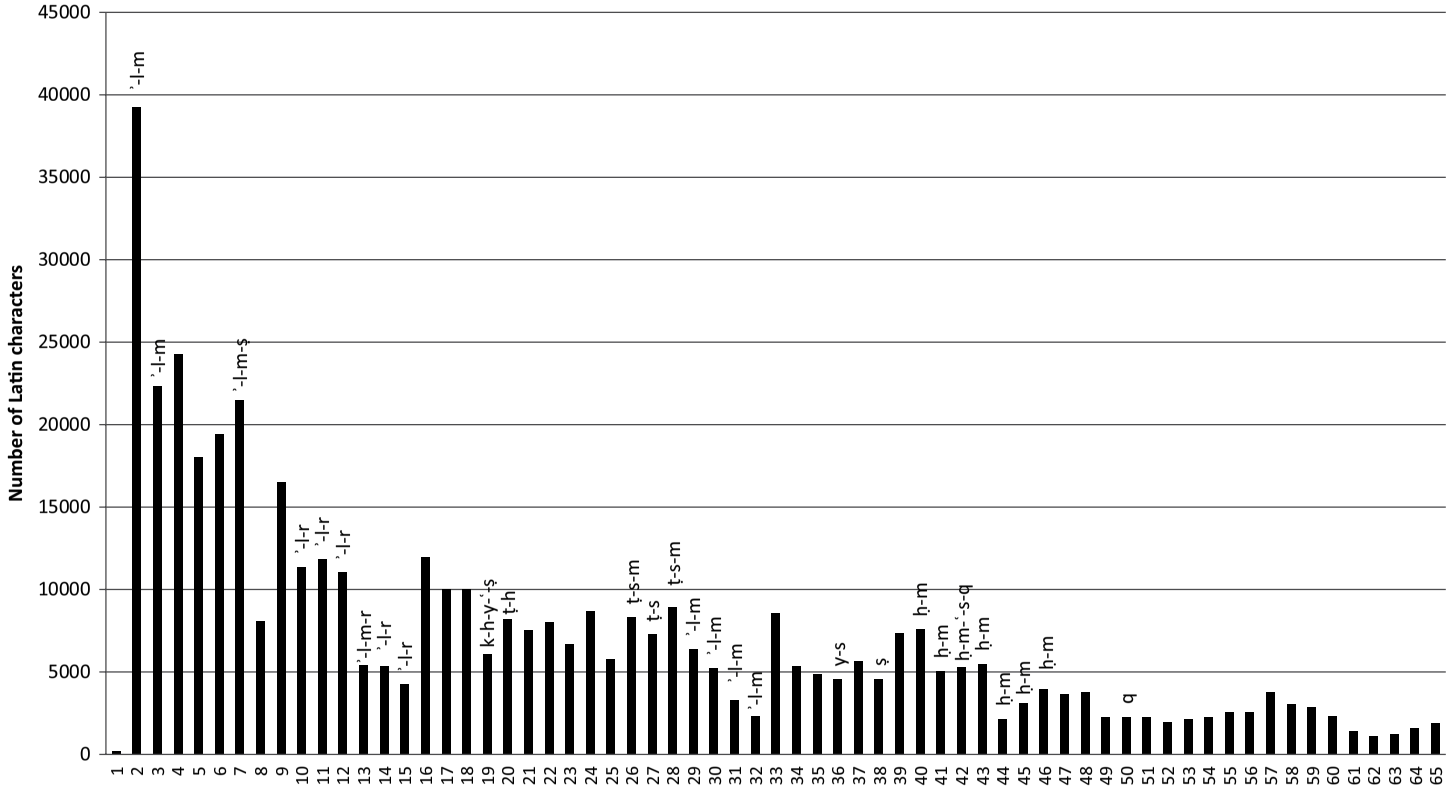

Figure 3 Total length of surahs 1 to 65 (in transliteration)

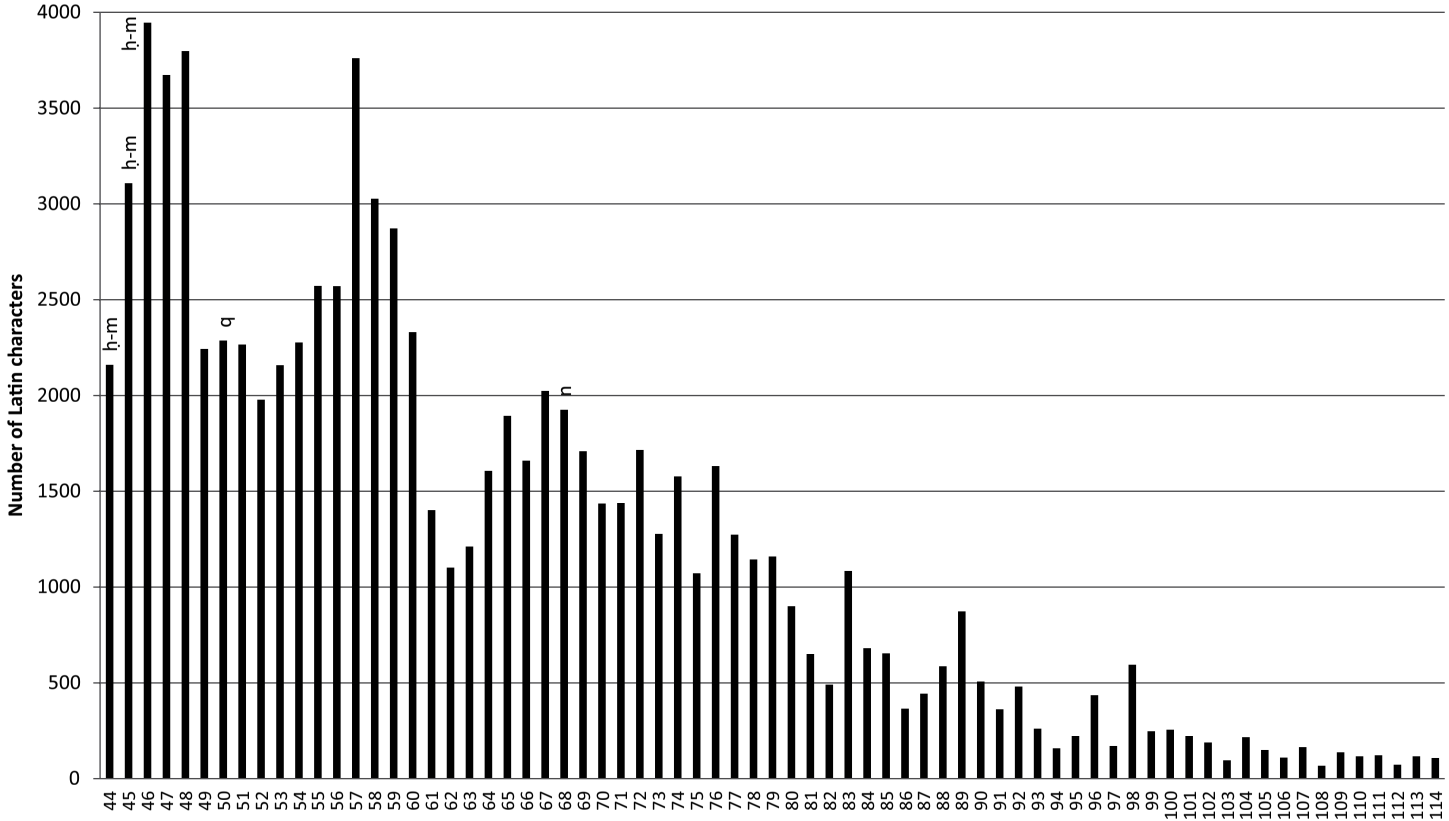

Figure 4 Total length of surahs 44 to 114 (in transliteration)

placement of surah 8 before the much longer surah 9. Some early Muslims are said to have considered these two surahs to form one text, which is supposedly the reason why surah 9 omits the introductory formula 'In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate' (known as the Basmalah), found at the beginning of every other surah.[64] Interestingly, the two alternative recensions of the Qur'anic text that are attributed to Muhammad's companions Ibn Masʿūd and Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, which are now lost but whose surah order is described in later Islamic sources, are reported to have followed the decreasing-length principle much more consistently. Ibn Masʿūd even seems to have separated surahs 8 and 9, relegating the former to a much later position in the corpus.[65]

It is possible to identify a number of further considerations in the light of which the canonical recension appears to have modified the decreasing-length principle. Both pre-modern Muslim exegetes and, more recently, Neal Robinson have observed that the end of one surah can sometimes be viewed as lexically dovetailing with the beginning of the following one. For example, both the last verse of surah 5 (v. 120) and the opening verse of surah 6 refer to God's sovereignty over, or creation of, 'the heavens and the earth', and similar references to God's power over 'the heavens and the earth' connect the end of surah 24 (v. 64) and the beginning of surah 25 (v. 2).[66] Significantly, scholars have detected comparable instances of thematic and terminological concatenation in the Biblical book of Psalms.[67] As with the principle of decreasing length, the compiler or compilers of the Qur'anic corpus thus appear to have relied on techniques of redactional organisation that are also attested elsewhere.

As a matter of fact, further links between adjacent surahs can be discerned. Following the Indo-Pakistani exegete Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī (d. 1997), we may note that the standard recension of the Qur'an occasionally pairs up surahs that exhibit noticeable literary similarities (for example, Q 73 and 74; Q 81 and 82; Q 91 and 92; Q 93 and 94; and Q 105 and 106).[68] Such clustering is not limited to pairs: already Bauer proposed that the proximity of Q 61, 62, and 64 may be due to their partly identical opening verses.[69] A certain measure of general thematic clustering may also have played a role and would help make sense of the current order of surahs 5, 6, and 7, which increase, rather than decrease, in length. Drawing again on the work of Iṣlāḥī, we can observe that dominant themes in surahs 2 to 5 are polemics against the 'People of the Scripture' (*ahl al-kitāb*, namely, Jews and Christians) and legal commandments, whereas surahs 6 to 9 are primarily directed against those accused of 'associating' or 'partnering' (*ashraka*) other beings with God – traditionally identified as the pagan majority of the Meccan tribe of Quraysh – and contain much less or no legally relevant material.[70] One can therefore distinguish an *ahl al-kitāb* block consisting of surahs 2 to 5 and a Quraysh block stretching from surah 6 to surah 9. Hence, surah 5 may have been placed after surah 4 – rather than after surahs 7 and 6 – because it was considered to share the general thematic focus of surahs 2 to 4, and surah 6 may

have been positioned before rather than after surah 7 because it was perceived as the most suitable opening to the Quraysh block. As a result of this arrangement, surah 5 with its triumphant statement 'Today I have perfected your[p] religion for you and have approved Islam as a religion for you' (v. 3) now concludes a suite of long surahs dominated by polemical engagements with the Scripturalists and by a substantial amount of law. Once again, it is noteworthy that the recensions of Ubayy and Ibn Masᶜūd follow a more consistently quantitative approach and consign Q 5 to a later position (Ubayy: Q 6, 7, 5; Ibn Masᶜūd: Q 7, 6, 5).

Despite the foregoing remarks, it would be difficult to argue that the canonical surah order is determined by some unifying theological vision. Rather, content-based considerations of similarity, overlap, or complementarity seem to have played an auxiliary role, supplementing and modifying a basically quantitative approach, perhaps with the aim of creating a more meaningful sequence of texts. This does not need to have entailed editorial intervention in the wording of the surahs themselves. At least the surah-opening strings of isolated letters must have been given to the compilers of the corpus rather than having been inserted by them; for if we were to assume the Qur'an's final redactors to have been responsible for adding the letter sequences, the violations of the decreasing-length principle that result from surahs beginning with the same letters being placed side by side would become quite inexplicable. This suggests that other terminological and thematic commonalities that can be detected between neighbouring surahs may also antedate the stage when the canonical surah order was drawn up, rather than having been worked into the corpus only at the final stage of redaction.

Textual variance

Like other ancient writings, the Qur'an is not a completely uniform text. What is perhaps more unusual is that such textual variance is not just a feature of the Qur'an's manuscript transmission, but was enthusiastically embraced by medieval Muslim scholars, who devoted much effort to cataloguing variant readings (singular *qirāʾah*) of the Qur'anic text. The final section of this chapter will attempt to convey some sense of the nature and extent of these transmitted variants. This requires the examination of a certain amount of material in Arabic; some readers may therefore want to skip the following pages, with the option of returning to them at a later point.

We need to begin by briefly reviewing some basic features of the Arabic script, whose emergence took place in the centuries preceding the rise of Islam. The most famous pre-Islamic inscription in a language close to Classical Arabic, the epitaph of Imruʾ al-Qays at al-Namārah (located some 120 kilometres south-east of Damascus) dating from 328 CE, is still written in the script of Nabataean Aramaic.[71] Other inscriptions demonstrate that by the sixth century the Nabataean alphabet had evolved into a recognisable version of the Arabic

one, a development that began as early as the third century CE.[72] Because of the presence of homographs and the merging of previously distinct letters, the basic form of the Arabic script is characterised by considerable ambiguity, representing the twenty-eight consonants of the Arabic language by a significantly lower number of graphemes. Certain letters must therefore stand for different consonants. A remedy, possibly adapted from Syriac, consisted in disambiguating equivocal graphemes by placing diacritical (that is, 'distinguishing') dots above or below them, a practice that is selectively attested already in papyri and inscriptions from the first Islamic century. The subsequent development of vowel signs then permitted a fully determinate transcription of Arabic.[73]

It is worthwhile illustrating these general remarks by a simple example, the Arabic word *kitābun* ('a scripture', in the indefinite nominative), which current printed editions of the Qur'an spell approximately as follows:

كِتَٰبٌ

This sequence of letters has three distinct dimensions. There is, first, the word's basic consonantel skeleton (*rasm*):

كتب

This undotted and unvocalised sequence of three graphemes, read from right to left, leaves a large interpretive margin. For example, the word's middle grapheme, a single tooth, can represent any of the consonants *b, t, th, n*, and *y*, while the leftmost grapheme ب can stand for word-final *b*, *t*, or *th*. The *rasm* كتب could thus equally be read as *kitābun* ('a scripture'), *kuntu* ('I was'), *kānat* ('she was'), or *kabbaba* ('he rolled together'), to give but a few possibilities. It is only by adding diacritical dots to this consonantel skeleton that we arrive at an unequivocal representation of the consonantal sequence *k-t-b*:

كتب

Depending on which vowels are inserted into this string of consonants, this dotted *rasm* could still represent a number of words other than *kitābun*, such as *kataba* ('he wrote'), *kutiba* ('it has been written'), or *kātib* (the active participle 'writing' or 'writer'). Furthermore, since geminated (that is, doubled) consonants are not written twice, the above form could be read both as *kataba* ('he wrote') or as *kattaba* ('he caused someone to write' or, perhaps, 'he wrote' with a special connotation of intensity). All these residual ambiguities are removed by adding the remaining dashes and curls that grace the full spelling of the word, thus giving us an unequivocal representation of the word *kitābun*.

For any written Arabic text, we may thus distinguish between its basic consonantal skeleton, or its *rasm*, and the different ways in which this *rasm* can be dotted and vocalised. In the case of the Qur'an, these two layers of the script correspond to different degrees of textual invariance. The received *rasm* of the

Qur'anic text is generally believed to have been promulgated by the third caliph ᶜUthmān (r. 644–56 CE), a view whose historical plausibility will be examined in the next chapter. This ᶜUthmānic *rasm* is, by and large, considered to be invariant, although there are minor exceptions to this.[74] However, as the discussion above of the word *kitāb* illustrates, even a perfectly invariant *rasm* would by no means be equivalent to an invariant text. As a matter of fact, classical Muslim scholars recognised at least seven equally authoritative 'readings' (*qirāʾāt*) of the standard *rasm*, which are traced back to eponymous Qur'an reciters who died in the eighth or ninth century CE. These seven readings were influentially codified in Ibn Mujāhid's (d. 936) *Book of the Seven Readings* (*Kitāb al-sabᶜah fī l-qirāʾāt*), even though other compilations of variant readings were authored before.[75] Subsequent scholars recognised three further readings as canonical. Similar to the different systems of verse division discussed above, these readings of the entire Qur'an frequently overlap in their rendering of a particular passage.[76] Today, the version of the Qur'anic text that is printed and recited most frequently is the reading ascribed to ᶜĀṣim ibn Abī l-Najūd (d. 745) in the version transmitted by Ḥafṣ ibn Sulaymān (d. 796), although from the perspective of pre-modern Islamic scholarship this is, strictly speaking, only one among several equally valid versions.[77]

Many of the variant readings that Islamic sources transmit for a given verse of the received *rasm* are exclusively phonetic and do not affect meaning.[78] This includes, for example, variants exhibiting the phenomenon of *imālah*, that is, of 'tilting' the pronunciation of *ā* towards *ī*, producing an intermediate sound that may be transcribed as *ē*. Thus, some of the eponymous Qur'anic readers are reported to have pronounced the word *al-tawrāta* ('the Torah' in the accusative) at Q 3: 3 as *al-tawrēta*, or *al-nār* ('the Fire', scil. of hell) at Q 3: 10 as *al-nēr*. Likewise of a phonetic nature are variants contracting two identical consonants by omitting an intervening vowel (so that, for example, *yaᶜlamu mā*, 'he knows what …' at Q 2: 77 or 3: 29 becomes *yaᶜlammā*), a phenomenon known as 'major assimilation' (*al-idghām al-kabīr*).[79] Reading variants like these are recorded because of

Reader	Provenance
Nāfiᶜ (d. 785–6)	Medina
Ibn Kāthir (d. 737–8)	Mecca
Abū ᶜAmr (d. 770–1?)	Basra
Ibn ᶜĀmir (d. 736)	Damascus
ᶜĀṣim (d. 744–5?)	Kufa
Ḥamza (d. 772–3?)	Kufa
al-Kisāʾī (d. 804–5?)	Kufa

Figure 5 The seven canonical readers of the Qur'an

Muslim scholars' concern with the minute regulation of correctly articulating the Qur'anic text.[80] They document idiosyncrasies of pronunciation and do not amount to textual variants in the conventional sense.

Semantic differences, rather than just certain aspects of pronunciation, are at stake where two variants provide alternative ways of dotting the Qur'anic *rasm* and filling in vowels, glottal stops, and geminations. To review a few attested readings that are pertinent here, in Q 3: 3 one and the same consonantal skeleton may either be stating that God 'has sent down upon you[s] the Scripture' (*nazzala ʿalayka l-kitāba*) or that 'the Scripture has descended upon you[s]' (*nazala ʿalayka l-kitābu*). Similarly, the threat that the Qur'an's opponents will be punished 'because they used to lie' (*bi-mā kānū yakdhibūn*) at Q 2: 10 was alternatively read as threatening them with punishment 'because they used to dismiss as a lie' (*bi-mā kānū yukadhdhibūn*) – the implicit object here being, presumably, Muhammad's proclamations. In some cases, a different choice of diacritics and vowels transforms the sense of a verse in a fairly major manner. Consider Q 2: 106, in which the divine speaker avers that 'whatever verses We annul or cause to be forgotten (*nunsihā*), We bring better or the like' – thus reassuring recipients that even if God has revoked a Qur'anic passage or consigned it to oblivion, this has not compromised the integrity of His revelation. Here, a large number of readers are credited with the reading *nansaʾhā* ('We defer') instead of *nunsihā*, which yields the meaning 'whatever verses We annul *or defer*' and does not entail the potentially unsettling prospect that God may have caused existing revelations to vanish without a trace. The stray variant *tansahā* ('you forget'), on the other hand, goes so far as to imply that the Prophet may fail to remember some of the divine communications conveyed to him.[81]

While the Islamic tradition generally stipulates that only readings based on the ʿUthmānic *rasm* are authoritative, medieval Arabic sources are nevertheless interested in variants that depart from the standard *rasm* and therefore fall into the category of 'irregular readings' (*qirāʾāt shādhdhah*).[82] A case in point would be Q 1: 6, where Muhammad's companion Ibn Masʿūd, already encountered in the preceding section, allegedly read 'Direct us (*arshidnā*) on the straight path' instead of the canonical 'Guide us (*ihdinā*) on the straight path'. Muslim scholars often treat variants of this kind as effectively tantamount to explanatory glosses, and some of them do indeed have a patently interpretive purport. For instance, whereas the received *rasm* stipulates that male and female thieves are to have 'their hands' (*aydiyahumā*) cut off (Q 5: 38), leaving open whether the left hand or the right hand is meant, a reading attributed to Ibn Masʿūd demands that one cut off 'their right hands' (*aymānahumā*). Rather than just substituting one expression for another, variants contravening the standard *rasm* may also include additional words or phrases. At Q 33: 6, the received *rasm* reads, 'The Prophet is closer to the Believers than they are themselves, and his wives are their mothers', while Muhammad's companions Ibn Masʿūd and Ubayy ibn Kaʿb

are credited with a more expansive version that makes explicit the implication that Muhammad occupies a patriarchal position vis-à-vis the Islamic community (italics added): 'The Prophet is closer to the Believers than they are themselves; *he is their father*, and his wives are their mothers.'[83] Similarly, the request for a fast of 'three days' in expiation of broken vows at Q 5: 89 was reportedly read by Ubayy as stipulating a fast of 'three *consecutive* days', thus insisting that the fast must be undertaken without interruption.[84]

When two or more variant readings are transmitted for a given passage (whether based on the standard *rasm* or not), the question arises as to whether any of these variants has a greater claim than others to represent the original wording of the text. In the case of Q 5: 38, for instance, Ibn Masʿūd's version is obviously less equivocal than the standard reading and may consequently be suspected of being a later attempt at clarification. The traditional principle that the more difficult – in this case, the more ambiguous – variant is better (*lectio difficilior potior*) has some intuitive plausibility here. Yet for many Qur'anic reading variants, perhaps even for most, it is very difficult to make compelling text-critical judgements of this kind. The Qur'an is characterised by an irreducible degree of multiformity that modern scholars, like their medieval Islamic precursors, are arguably well advised to accept as a given. In other words, it appears highly doubtful whether the enterprise of reconstructing a uniform Qur'anic *Urtext* is feasible.[85]

Notes

1. Some sections of this chapter are more detailed variants of passages in Sinai, 'The Qurʾān'.
2. The figure for the New Testament is taken from http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/NT-Statistics-Greek.htm (accessed 5 August 2013). For different counts of the number of words making up the Qur'an, see Hamdan, 'Second *Maṣāḥif* Project', pp. 812–3. Of course, notions of which linguistic elements count as independent words differ between Arabic and Ancient Greek.
3. Luxenberg, *Syro-Aramaic Reading*, maintains that the original language of the Qur'an was a mixture of Arabic and Aramaic. Scholars have generally found his reasoning wanting; see Saleh, 'Etymological Fallacy', Wild, 'Lost in Philology?', and Sinai, '"Weihnachten"', as well as the very measured evaluation in Stewart, 'Notes on Medieval and Modern Emendations'. On the relationship between the language of the Qur'an and that of early Arabic poetry, see Jones, 'The Oral and the Written', p. 58, and Bauer, 'Relevance', pp. 705 and 713–15.
4. See Vollers, *Volkssprache*, and the objections raised in Versteegh, *Arabic Language*, pp. 40–1, and Holes, *Modern Arabic*, pp. 16–17. Building on Vollers, Owens, *Linguistic History*, pp. 119–36, argues that during the early Islamic period inflected and uninflected ways of reciting the Qur'an coexisted, but does not commit himself to Voller's assertion that a caseless reading of the Qur'an is historically primary. Jones, 'The Oral and the Written', pp. 59–60, contends that the Qur'an's 'full *iʿrāb*' is secondary, but primarily has in mind the desinential endings at the end of Qur'anic verses. As pointed out to me by a colleague who wishes to remain unnamed, a verse that could be seen as raising doubts about desinential

endings within verses is Q 104: 2, which runs *waylun li-kulli humazatin lumazah* if read with full verse-internal *iʿrāb*. Arguably, the inherent rhythm of the phrase only comes through if at least the penultimate word *humazah* is read without case ending.

5. On the etymology of the term *sūrah* – used in the Qur'an to refer to a unit of revelation (e.g., at Q 24: 1 or 47: 20) – see Jeffery, *Vocabulary*, pp. 180–2, leaning towards a derivation from Syriac *surṭā*, 'writing'.
6. See the overview in Neuwirth, *Scripture*, pp. 282–3.
7. For Noah, see, e.g., Q 54: 9–17; for Abraham, see, e.g., Q 19: 41–50; for Adam, see, e.g., Q 7: 10–25. Parallel versions of these narratives are most conveniently located by means of Paret, *Kommentar und Konkordanz*, which for any given Qur'anic verse or verse section references other verses that are topically or phraseologically similar.
8. E.g., Q 15: 28, 20: 116, and 38: 71. For a full conspectus, see Bannister, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, p. 13 (Table 1.4), and the tables in Sinai, 'Two Types'.
9. See Chapter 6, section 'Qur'anic intratextuality', as well as Sinai, *Fortschreibung*, pp. 59–160, and Sinai, 'Two Types'. The phenomenon of Qur'anic self-interpretation was already noted by medieval Muslim scholars; see Abdel Haleem, *Understanding*, pp. 160–1, and Reda, *al-Baqara Crescendo*, pp. 50–2.
10. See Pohlmann, *Die Entstehung*, p. 63. See also Q 81 and 84, whose only use of the first person comes in 81: 15 and 84: 16: 'I swear by', which could well be taken to imply a human speaker. Q 113 and 114 employ the first-person singular, but are obviously intended to function as human prayers.
11. Note especially that the human first person (singular) in Q 51: 50 is immediately preceded, in v. 49, by a divine first person (plural).
12. See, for instance, Amos 9: 8 ('Behold, the eyes of *the Lord God* are upon the sinful kingdom, and *I* will destroy it from the face of the earth; except that *I* will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, declares *the Lord*') and Song of Songs 1: 2 ('Let *him* kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For *your* love is better than wine').
13. E.g., Abdel Haleem, 'Grammatical Shift', p. 412 (quoting Imruʾ al-Qays).
14. See Zirker, *Koran*, pp. 75–9 (the example of Q 2: 172 is taken from ibid., p. 76). For an attempt to account for some of these shifts in redactional terms, see Pohlmann, *Die Entstehung*, pp. 59–79.
15. For a rhetorical analysis of grammatical shifts in the Qur'an (called *iltifāt* by Muslim scholars), see Abdel Haleem, 'Grammatical Shift', and Robinson, *Discovering*, pp. 245–55.
16. An overview of instances of divine first-person speech is given in Pohlmann, *Die Entstehung*, pp. 62–3.
17. Rippin, 'Muḥammad'.
18. On the problem of distinguishing between generic and individual uses of the second-person singular, see also Welch, 'Muhammad's Understanding', p. 17.
19. Marshall, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers*, p. 165, similarly describes the Meccan surahs as presenting a 'triangular drama', but identifies the vertices of this triangle differently – namely, as consisting in 'firstly God, secondly the messenger and his followers, and thirdly the unbelievers'.
20. As already pointed out, not all first-person statements by the Messenger are preceded by *qul*. See, e.g., Q 11: 2–4.
21. Wild, 'Why Self-Referentiality?'; Sinai, 'Qurʾānic Self-Referentiality'; Boisliveau, *Le Coran par lui-même*.
22. This verse is discussed in Chapter 2, section 'Post-Muhammadan additions to the Qur'an?'
23. Wild, 'Why Self-Referentiality?', p. 3.
24. Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 157–70.

25. Brock, 'Two Syriac Verse Homilies', pp. 81–2. Qur'anic metatextuality is absent from the discussion of homiletic features of the Qur'an in Reynolds, *The Qurʾān and its Biblical Subtext*, pp. 232–45. An in-depth comparative study of the phenomenon would be highly desirable.
26. See Dundes, *Fables of the Ancients?*, pp. 23–54; Bannister, *Oral-Formulaic Study*.
27. Bannister, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, pp. 146–7.
28. For thirty examples of 'formulaic systems' in the Qur'an, see Bannister, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, pp. 220–36.
29. Witztum, 'Variant Traditions', p. 8, referencing inter alia al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, pp. 1865–72 (*nawʿ* 63).
30. My translation of the phrase is inspired by A. J. Arberry's rendering 'consimilar in its oft-repeated' (Arberry, *Koran Interpreted*). For an alternative understanding, see Sinai, 'Qurʾānic Self-Referentiality', pp. 130–1. I owe the interpretation presented in the main text to a paper delivered by Giuliano Lancioni at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the International Qur'anic Studies Association at San Diego.
31. Stewart, '*Sajʿ* in the Qurʾān'. The rhythmic parallelism of adjacent *sajʿ* verses, termed *iʿtidāl* by medieval Arabic rhetoricians, results from the fact that they display the same number of accentual stresses, even though their total number of syllables may be different; see Stewart, 'Divine Epithets', pp. 22–30. While *sajʿ* verses do not exhibit quantitative metre throughout, their final words often match in morphological pattern, resulting in the same succession of long and short syllables. On this phenomenon, called *muwāzanah* in the Arabic rhetorical tradition, see Stewart, 'Divine Epithets', pp. 30–58, arguing that it is also found in the Qur'an. Thus, even though Qur'anic verses do not generally adhere to a quantitative metre, their endings frequently exhibit matching patterns of long and short syllables.
32. *Āyah* (probably to be derived from Aramaic *ātā*; Jeffery, *Vocabulary*, pp. 72–3) literally means 'sign' and is used by the Qur'an both to refer to manifestations of God's power in nature and, in a secondary sense, to a 'textual segment of the Revelation' (Ambros, *Dictionary*, p. 32; cf. Q 2: 106 and Q 10: 1). Note that a poetic verse, characterised both by rhyme and quantitative metre, is designated by a different word, *bayt*.
33. Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 3 and 117–8. For a detailed treatment of Qur'anic rhyme, see ibid., pp. 65–115.
34. Counting differences for each surah are conveniently tabulated in Spitaler, *Verszählung*.
35. Stewart, 'Ibn al-Ṣāʾigh al-Ḥanafī's *Iḥkām*', demonstrates that the phenomenon was already noted and extensively catalogued by some medieval Muslim scholars, even though it could be seen as having doctrinally problematic implications. Arabic sources describe the modifications in question as due to 'consideration for the verse ending' (*riʿāyat al-fāṣilah*, *murāʿāt al-fāṣilah*); see ibid., pp. 14–15.
36. Müller, *Reimprosa*, p. 137; Paret, *Kommentar und Konkordanz*, on Q 95: 20; Stewart, 'Ibn al-Ṣāʾigh al-Ḥanafī's *Iḥkām*', pp. 39 and 41; Stewart, 'Names of Hell', p. 201.
37. Müller, *Reimprosa*, pp. 46–50; Stewart, 'Names of Hell', pp. 215–16. On cognate substitution in general, see Stewart, 'Ibn al-Ṣāʾigh al-Ḥanafī's *Iḥkām*', pp. 20–9.
38. For two compelling examples where rhyme has affected word order, see Stewart, 'Ibn al-Ṣāʾigh al-Ḥanafī's *Iḥkām*', p. 3, arguing that *iyyāka naʿbudu wa-iyyāka nastaʿīn* at Q 1: 5 simply stands for *naʿbuduka wa-nastaʿīnuka* ('We worship You and we seek Your help'), and that *wa-lam yakun lahu kufuwan aḥad* at Q 112: 4 stands for *wa-lam yakun aḥad kufuwan lahu* ('No one is equal to Him'). See also ibid., pp. 17–18, 33, and 41–2. For the use of the imperfect *taqtulūn* instead of the perfect *qataltum* (Q 2: 81), see ibid., pp. 7, 39, and 46.
39. This fundamental principle is repeatedly, and in my view indefensibly, violated in Cuypers, *Composition*. See in more detail Sinai, 'Going Round in Circles'.

40. For a more detailed explanation of pausal forms in Arabic, see Fischer, *Grammar*, pp. 32–4. One example where pausal pronunciation would undermine the rhyme is provided by Q 84: 14: given that vv. 11–13 and 15 end in *-ūrā*/*-īrā*, the last word of v. 14 (written *yaḥūra* in the Cairo edition) must clearly be pronounced *yaḥūrā* rather than *yaḥūr*. I owe the example to Devin Stewart. For similar cases, see Stewart, 'Ibn al-Ṣāʾigh al-Ḥanafī's *Iḥkām*', pp. 5, 34 (no. IX), and pp. 40–1.
41. See Stewart, '*Sajᶜ* in the Qurʾān', pp. 109–10. If Qur'anic rhyme were reliant on desinential endings, the question of whether the Qur'anic text was originally recited in inflected or uninflected Arabic would admit a much more conclusive answer; see Jones, 'The Oral and the Written', pp. 59–60.
42. Stewart, '*Sajᶜ* in the Qurʾān', pp. 120–1.
43. See Spitaler, *Verszählung*, p. 34. The Kufan system is the only one that posits a verse break after the surah's opening letter sequence. For vv. 2–4, the Kufan and Damascene systems compare as follows (superscript K = Kufan verse break, superscript D = Damascene verse break; words preceding a break according to either system are transcribed pausally): *allāhu lā ilāha illā huwa l-ḥayyu l-qayyūm* K D *nazzala ᶜalayka l-kitāba bi-l-ḥaqqi muṣaddiqan li-mā bayna yadayhi wa-anzala l-tawrāta wa-l-inǰīl* K *min qablu hudan li-l-nāsi wa-anzala l-furqān* D *inna lladhīna kafarū bi-āyāti llāhi lahum ᶜadhābun shadīdun wa-llāhu ᶜazīzun dhū ntiqām* K D. The Kufan verse divider after *inǰīl* seems inferior in view of the fact that it produces a case of enjambement, a phenomenon that is relatively rare in Qur'anic verses of a comparable length: '[3] … and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel (*al-inǰīl*) [4] before, as a guidance for the people, and He sent down the decisive guidance (*al-furqān*) …'. It is true that the Damascene system yields a very long verse from *nazzala* to *furqān* (118 transcription letters, rather than eighty-one, as per the Kufan system). However, other verses in Q 3 are even longer (e.g., each one of vv. 13–15). For an unusual string of three consecutive cases of enjambement that could be adduced to justify the Kufan partitioning of Q 3: 2–4, see Q 30: 2–5 (Spitaler, *Verszählung*, p. 51). Three further cases of Qur'anic enjambement are Q 2: 219–220, 70: 1–2, and 74: 40–41.
44. Spitaler, *Verszählung*, p. 72. See also Neuwirth, *Studien*, p. 35.
45. When occurring in *sajᶜ* this phenomenon is termed *muwāzanah* or *izdiwāǰ*. See Stewart, '*Sajᶜ* in the Qurʾān', p. 130.
46. Stewart, 'Ibn al-Ṣāʾigh al-Ḥanafī's *Iḥkām*', p. 23; Stewart, 'Pit'. Neither *huwwah* nor *mahwā* are attested in the Qur'an; it is *in extra-Qur'anic Arabic* that they are more common than the enigmatic term *hāwiyah*. Stewart's argument seems nonetheless persuasive.
47. I rely on Hans Zirker's transliteration of the Qur'an (according to the Kufan system of verse division and the reading of Ḥafṣ ᶜan ᶜĀṣim), available at http://duepublico.uni-duisburg-essen.de/servlets/DocumentServlet?id=10802 (accessed 8 August 2013). Some corrections have been made to this transliteration after August 2013, although I would not expect these to have any major effect on my results. Zirker's transliteration adheres to the conventions of the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft by using characters such as *ǧ* and *d̲*, and it also transcribes word-initial glottal stops. I have transformed all verse endings into pausal form (by omitting brief vowels and *-un*/*-in*, changing the accusative ending *-an* to *-ā*, and omitting gemination), and then counted all transcription letters excluding hyphens and space characters.
48. Since Q 99: 1–4 is an obvious example of Qur'anic *sajᶜ*, each of its verses also qualifies as a *sajᶜah*, or *sajᶜ* phrase (Stewart, '*Sajᶜ* in the Qurʾān', pp. 117–8).
49. See Stewart, 'Divine Epithets', p. 32, with further references.
50. The subdivision of verses into 'cola' is treated in Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 117–74, and Edzard, 'Perspektiven'. On the term 'member', see Cuypers, *Composition*, pp. 26–9. Note

that Cuypers will sometimes combine two short Qur'anic verses to form a single member, whereas Neuwirth and Edzard will always consider a verse, no matter how short, to amount to at least one colon. See Sinai, 'Going Round in Circles'.

51. Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 121–2, and Edzard, 'Perspektiven', pp. 358–64 (both highlighting that a residual amount of subjectivity is inevitable); less principled is the approach followed in Cuypers, *Composition*, pp. 26–9.
52. Neuwirth, *Studien*, p. 121, requires a main clause making up a colon to contain more than two words, which would militate against counting Q 2: 2a or 2: 3b as independent cola. Edzard, by contrast, will frequently posit cola containing only two words.
53. This use of the term 'segment' is inspired by Cuypers, *Composition*, pp. 29–36, although I thereby pry the word loose from the complex theoretical structure in which Cuypers embeds it following Roland Meynet. Most notably, my definition of the term entails that it always refers to a unit below the verse level, whereas Cuypers also uses it to refer to groups of verses.
54. I borrow the term 'wrap-up' from Zahniser, 'Major Transitions', pp. 32–4.
55. See the analysis of the verse in Cuypers, *Banquet*, p. 67 (which I find far more persuasive than the alternative analysis on p. 68).
56. Pace Cuypers, *Composition*, p. 28, who considers the two verses to make up a single 'member'. For an opposing view, see Edzard, 'Perspektiven', pp. 361–2, citing Q 44: 43–44 as an example.
57. Jeffery, *Materials*, pp. 21–3; Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 2, pp. 39–42. Another non-canonical recension of the Qur'an, that ascribed to Ubayy ibn Ka°b, reportedly contained two brief additional prayer surahs whose text can be found in Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 2, pp. 33–8. Like Q 1, they are formulated in the first-person plural and lack an introductory *qul*.
58. Robinson, *Discovering*, pp. 258–60.
59. I owe this conjecture to Rüdiger Braun.
60. For details of how the values underlying these two graphs were computed, see n. 47 above.
61. Thus Bauer, 'Anordnung', p. 313.
62. Bauer, 'Anordnung'. On the question of what these letters mean or represent, see Stewart, 'Mysterious Letters'.
63. See the more detailed treatment in Robinson, *Discovering*, pp. 260–3.
64. Bauer, 'Anordnung', p. 320; Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 2, pp. 80–1.
65. Bauer, 'Anordnung', pp. 320–7. But see Robinson, *Discovering*, pp. 265–6, pointing out that our evidence for the surah order of alternative recensions only goes back to Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*, compiled in the late tenth century CE.
66. Robinson, *Discovering*, pp. 266–9.
67. See Zenger, 'Psalter'. On the possibility that the Hebrew Bible's placement of the book of Obadiah after Amos could be motivated by thematic considerations, see Collins, *Introduction*, p. 374.
68. Iṣlāḥī generalises such observations by claiming that virtually all Qur'anic surahs form pairs (Mir, *Coherence*, pp. 75–84). To my mind, this is a schematic exaggeration.
69. Bauer, 'Anordnung', p. 329, n. 12.
70. Mir, *Coherence*, pp. 85–7. Similar observations are made by the Egyptian commentator Maḥmūd Shaltūt (d. 1963), as presented in Zebiri, *Maḥmūd Shaltūt*, pp. 155–6. See also Frolov, 'Problem', especially pp. 201–2, and Farrin, *Structure and Qur'anic Interpretation*, pp. 48–9. Note that I do not endorse Iṣlāḥī's more general claim that the entire Qur'an divides into nine such surah blocks.
71. Versteegh, *Arabic Language*, pp. 31–2; Fiema et al., '*Provincia Arabia*', pp. 405–9 (by Michael Macdonald).
72. Nehmé, 'Glimpse'; Fiema et al., '*Provincia Arabia*', pp. 417–21 (by Laïla Nehmé).

73. On the emergence and early development of the Arabic script, see, for instance, Gruendler, 'Arabic Script'; Versteegh, *Arabic Language*, pp. 33–5 and 55–7; Hoyland, 'Epigraphy'; Fiema et al., '*Provincia Arabia*', pp. 395–417 (by Michael Macdonald); Kaplony, 'Dots'.
74. On divergences between the various copies of the Qur'anic *rasm* that ʿUthmān is said to have dispatched to the regional capitals of the early Islamic empire, see Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, pp. 39–49. See also Dutton, 'Orality', p. 10, who points out that some of the differences between Ibn Mujāhid's seven readings involve minor disagreements in the *rasm*.
75. Leemhuis, 'Readings'; Melchert, 'Ibn Mujāhid'; Shah, 'Early Arabic Grammarians'; Gilliot, 'Creation of a Fixed Text'; Stewart, 'Consensus', pp. 156–7 and 167–9.
76. Melchert, 'Relation'.
77. Death dates of Qur'anic readers (also in Figure 5) are based on Melchert, 'Ibn Mujāhid'.
78. For a more detailed survey of the types of variants reported by Islamic sources, with copious examples, see Dutton, 'Orality', pp. 8–12. For a convenient listing of reading variants for a particular verse, one may consult ʿUmar and Makram, *Muʿjam*, with references to the primary sources (against which the *Muʿjam* ought to be checked). An even larger collection of reading variants is al-Khaṭīb, *Muʿjam*.
79. See Nasser, *Transmission*, p. 121; Owens, *Linguistic History*, pp. 119–36.
80. For a summary introduction to the general principles governing the recitation of the Qur'an, see Nelson, *Art*, pp. 14–31.
81. On Q 2: 106, see Goldziher, *Richtungen*, p. 24, and ʿUmar and Makram, *Muʿjam*.
82. Even readings conforming to the ʿUthmānic *rasm* can be classed as *shādhdh*, namely, when the soundness of their transmission is in doubt or when they are linguistically problematic (Nasser, *Transmission*, pp. 118–19).
83. On the substitution of synonyms, as in Q 5: 38, and on interpretive additions, see Goldziher, *Richtungen*, pp. 8–18.
84. This last example is taken from Dutton, 'Orality', p. 13.
85. Dutton, 'Orality', especially pp. 34–5.

CHAPTER 2

Muhammad and the Qur'an

The standard account of the Qur'an's emergence

After having acquired a basic grasp of the Qur'an's structure and content, we will now enter more controversial territory and attempt to embed the Qur'an in a historical context. According to the Islamic tradition, of course, the Qur'anic corpus faithfully documents the divine revelations that were proclaimed by the Prophet Muhammad in the early seventh century CE in the West Arabian towns of Mecca and Medina. I shall end up endorsing core aspects of this scenario, namely, the historical existence of Muhammad, a default dating of most of the Qur'an to his lifetime and, in the following chapter, a placement of the Qur'an's genesis in the Hijaz region of Western Arabia. My objective in nonetheless discussing these matters in some detail is to acquaint the reader with the main arguments and pieces of evidence that are relevant to a scholarly assessment of the entire issue. I shall begin with a plausible retelling of the traditional story, and then address the main doubts that may reasonably be raised against it.[1]

Muhammad's hometown of Mecca, located some sixty-seven kilometres inland from the Red Sea and about halfway down the Western coast of the Arabian Peninsula, was situated close to the site of a major Arabian pilgrimage ritual, the *ḥajj*, and also housed an intramural sanctuary, the Kaʿbah. The city was controlled by the tribe of Quraysh, who were engaged in long-distance trade, exporting pastoralist products – such as leather goods, woollens, and clarified butter – to southern Syria and Yemen, and carrying back cloth, clothing, arms, and agriculturalist foodstuffs that were then distributed within the Arabian Peninsula.[2] After Muhammad began proclaiming the Qur'an in about 610 CE, the explicit monotheism of his preaching increasingly set him and his followers in opposition to the polytheism that formed the foundation of Mecca's religious status as a pagan shrine city. In 622 CE, Muhammad and his supporters therefore found it necessary to relocate to the oasis settlement of Yathrib, situated some 320 kilometres to the north – the famous 'emigration', or *hijrah*, that marks the starting point of the Islamic calendar.

At Yathrib, better known as Medina (*al-madīnah*, 'the city'), a covenant was concluded that united 'the Believers and Submitters (*al-muslimūn*) of Quraysh and Yathrib' into a new community (*ummah*) of internally autonomous tribal units who recognised Muhammad as the 'Messenger of God'.[3] The document,

generally known as the 'Constitution of Medina', shows that this *ummah* included, or was at least affiliated with, a number of Jewish tribes, whose different religious identity is explicitly recognised: 'the Jews have their religion (*dīn*) and the Submitters have their religion.' Crimes and disputes were to be 'brought before God and Muhammad'. Relatively soon after the hijrah, the supra-tribal *ummah* thus constituted embarked upon a military confrontation with the Meccans, involving several skirmishes and battles as well as a full-blown siege of Medina, known as the Battle of the Trench, in 627 CE. In 630 CE, the Meccans finally surrendered to Muhammad. During these years of armed conflict with the Meccans, the three main Jewish tribes of Medina were either expelled or massacred. At the time of his death in 632 CE, Muhammad left behind an incipient Islamic polity centred in Medina that had already become a dominant regional power in the Arabian Peninsula. The Prophet's successors, the caliphs (from *khalīfah*, 'successor' or 'deputy'), swiftly advanced into Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia; already the second caliph, ʿUmar (r. 634–44), won major victories against the Byzantine and Sasanian empires at the battles of Yarmūk and Qādisiyyah, both fought in 636 CE.

As regards the Qur'anic text, it is reported that its received *rasm* goes back to the rule of the first caliph Abū Bakr (r. 632–4), during which Muhammad's former scribe Zayd ibn Thābit was ordered to record all extant Qur'anic material that could be tracked down. The measure was taken, on the advice of the future second caliph ʿUmar, in order to ensure a continued preservation of scripture after a number of Qur'anic reciters had been killed in battle. About fifteen years later, during a military campaign that is probably to be dated to 650–1, a Muslim commander observed alarming divergences in reciting the Qur'an between military contingents from different regions. In the interest of unity, the third caliph ʿUthmān (r. 644–56) therefore retrieved Zayd's recension of Muhammad's scriptural legacy, which had come to be in the possession of ʿUmar's daughter Ḥafṣah. He then had a committee including Zayd make copies of what would henceforth be known as the ʿUthmānic *rasm*, and ordered these copies to be dispatched to the various regions of the Islamic empire. Divergent versions of the Qur'anic text were to be burnt.[4]

How do we know all of the above? For a comprehensive narrative of Muhammad's life and career, including specific dates and a substantial number of names, we are dependent on Islamic literary sources that postdate the events they narrate by at least a century. The best-known of these biographical works is ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Hishām's (d. 833–4) *Life of Muhammad, the Messenger of God* (*Sīrat Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*), which reworks and abridges Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq's (d. 767–8) earlier *Book of [the Prophet's] Military Expeditions* (*Kitāb al-maghāzī*). Similar material is also preserved elsewhere, for example, in the *Book of Military Expeditions* contained in ʿAbd al-Razzāq ibn Hammām al-Ṣanʿānī's (d. 827) collection of traditions from the Prophet and other early authorities or

in Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's (d. 923) monumental *History of the Messengers and Kings*. These and other authors claim to be citing earlier sources and are wont to preface reports about events in the life of Muhammad by a list of the successive transmitters through whom they believed the information in question to have reached them. Similarly, the foregoing digest of how the Qur'anic corpus was compiled and committed to writing is based on two widespread reports that are found, for instance, in Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī's (d. 870) collection of the extra-scriptural sayings and actions of Muhammad and are traced back to Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 742) and beyond him to earlier transmitters.[5]

Despite this persistent claim to preserve an earlier oral tradition reaching back to the first generation of Muslims, the historicity of such narratives can obviously not be taken for granted, even if, as the best recent scholarship maintains, reports about crucial episodes from Muhammad's career were in circulation by the second half of the seventh century.[6] This applies, for instance, to a well-known narrative describing Muhammad's prophetic initiation by the archangel Gabriel atop a mountain in the vicinity of Mecca, in the course of which the opening verses of surah 96 (vv. 1–5) were supposedly revealed.[7] Although the story is certainly much older than the literary works that preserve it and appears to have been transmitted orally within a few decades of Muhammad's traditional date of death, this in no way guarantees that it contains a factual core, even after having been divested of its supernatural and miraculous aspects. It is entirely conceivable, and perhaps even likely, that the story originates in a narrative framing of the opening verses of surah 96 in the light of various Biblical topoi, inspired both by apologetic concerns as well as by ordinary curiosity about the beginning of Muhammad's mission. In support of this view, the following observations may be adduced: the command by which Gabriel famously addresses Muhammad – 'Recite (*iqraʾ*)!' – employs the first word of Q 96 and may thus simply be derived from the text of scripture; Muhammad's reluctance to do Gabriel's bidding conforms to Biblical call accounts (Exodus 3: 11, Jeremiah 1: 6); the localisation of the event in a cave, according to one version of the story, is reminiscent of an event in the life of Elijah (1 Kings 19: 9–18); and the sequence of Gabriel's command 'Recite!' followed by Muhammad's question 'What shall I recite?' (*mā aqraʾu*), as retold in a second recension of the event, conspicuously echoes Isaiah 40: 6.[8] The narrative's conclusion has Waraqah ibn Nawfal, a Christian said to have been familiar with the Biblical scriptures, confirm that Muhammad is indeed a true prophet. This obviously serves an apologetic purpose: a Christian comes to recognise Muhammad as a prophetic successor to Moses.

Observations like the preceding ones are bound to raise the question of whether scholars are entitled to consider the traditional Islamic narrative of origins a more reliable historical account than, say, the Biblical stories of the patriarchs or of the Exodus. Take, for example, the fact that the Islamic

tradition has the revelation of the Qur'an commence in a pagan desert sanctuary far outside the Fertile Crescent. Rather than simply preserving a historical fact, may this choice of locale not be seen to make the point that Islam, despite its obvious continuity with many aspects of Judaism and Christianity, is based on an independent revelation miraculously irrupting into virgin territory?[9] And may the subsequent change of scene to Medina, where Muhammad was supposedly confronted with the implacable opposition of the town's Jewish residents, not primarily serve the function of exemplifying Islam's supersession of Judaism and Christianity? Can we even take for granted the historical existence of Muhammad, seeing that it is only from 685–6 CE onwards that he appears on Islamic coinage?[10]

Muhammad in the light of non-Islamic sources

One way of cross-checking the historical reliability of the Islamic tradition, pioneered by Patrica Crone and Michael Cook in their joint essay *Hagarism* (1977), is to examine what seventh- and eighth-century non-Islamic sources have to say about the history and character of early Islam.[11] Probably the earliest pertinent reference occurs in the Greek *Doctrina Iacobi*, a Christian anti-Jewish text allegedly written in 634 CE. It mentions the appearance of 'a prophet coming with the Saracens' who is said to be announcing the advent of the Messiah and claiming to be in possession of the keys of paradise.[12] An Armenian history composed in the 660s, conventionally referred to as the *History of Pseudo-Sebeos*, portrays Muhammad as calling the Arabs to take possession of Palestine, understood to be their rightful inheritance as descendants of Abraham. According to *Pseudo-Sebeos*, the Arabs' new awareness of their Abrahamic descent was ultimately triggered by the recent influx of Jewish refugees from Edessa.[13] That Muhammad promised his followers possession of Palestine, 'a fine land flowing with milk and honey', is also reported by a later Syriac source that probably preserves parts of the lost eighth-century chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa. Similar to the *Doctrina Iacobi*, this text has Muhammad himself lead raids into Palestine.[14] Intriguingly, other Syriac and Latin texts dating from the seventh and eighth centuries, and even an early Arabic letter ascribed to the caliph ʿUmar II (r. 717–20), can also be read as sharing the assumption that Palestine was conquered already during Muhammad's lifetime rather than only after his death, as Islamic historians maintain.[15]

If one were to accept the non-Islamic material just surveyed as largely accurate and reliable, one may well entertain, as Crone and Cook did, the hypothesis that Islam originally emerged as a messianic movement focused on the conquest of Palestine.[16] But of course, it is entirely possible that contemporary outside observers of early Islam, just like later Muslim authors, imposed their own agenda or conceptual framework on the events they undertook to recount or that

they may simply have suffered from insufficient information and faulty guesswork.[17] For instance, given the intimate link that exists for Jews and Christians between the Last Judgement and the appearance of the messiah or the Second Coming of Christ, it is perhaps not surprising that early Islam – a movement that seems to have been marked by the imminent expectation of a universal Day of Judgement[18] – was understood by Christians and Jews to await the arrival of a messianic figure as well. And reports to the effect that Muhammad promised his followers possession of the Holy Land – a claim not obviously borne out by the canonical recension of the Qur'an – could have arisen from the early Muslims' recognition of Jerusalem's sacred status and from the inference that in conquering the Holy Land they must have been following an objective inculcated in them by Muhammad himself.[19]

Be that as it may, what matters in the present context is above all that non-Islamic sources explicitly confirm the existence of an Arab prophet by the name of Muhammad. Apart from the *Doctrina Iacobi*'s mention of an anonymous Saracen prophet, a Syriac text probably composed in about 640 CE reports on a battle between the Romans and the 'Arabs (*ṭayyāyē*) of Muhammad' that is dated, with impressive precision, to Friday, 4 February 634 CE.[20] Thus, Muhammad is attested by name already within a decade of his traditional date of death. A Syriac chronicle from the 660s, the *Chronicle of Khuzistan*, also refers to Muhammad as the 'leader' of the Ishmaelite conquerors of the 'land of the Persians'.[21] Similarly, the *History of Pseudo-Sebeos* directly traces the Arab conquests to the preaching of a merchant named Muhammad. To be sure, it is likely that such references to Muhammad in non-Islamic sources are ultimately reliant on statements made by the Muslims themselves.[22] Nevertheless, the fact remains that the Arab conquerors must have been considering themselves to be followers of Muhammad already in about 640 CE.

The preceding references make it rather improbable that the late attestation of Muhammad on coins indicates that the figure of the Islamic Prophet is only a late seventh-century fiction. Rather, just as the new Arab-Islamic ruling elite initially retained the existing administrative structures of the regions they had conquered, so they may at first have seen no reason to break with established Byzantine and Sasanian coin designs, despite the fact that the latter involved religious symbols (the Christian cross or the Zoroastrian fire altar) and expressions of political allegiance (in the form of portraits of Roman and Sasanian rulers) that the Islamic conquerors may not themselves have endorsed. Only after a process of experimentation that lasted for several decades did the new Islamic polity discover coinage as a medium for its own religious and political self-representation and work out a distinctively Islamic coin design.[23] Furthermore, even if a modification of existing coinage practices had been seen as desirable, it may simply not have been immediately feasible to impose this on an indigenous majority population of non-Muslims. Tellingly, a Maronite

chronicler writing in Syriac reports that the subjects of the first Umayyad caliph Muᶜāwiyah (d. 680) rejected coins that did not have the customary symbol of the cross on them.[24]

Non-Islamic sources not only substantiate the historical existence of Muhammad, but also confirm or at least complement what Islamic historians tell us about two major episodes of pre-Islamic South Arabian history and, in part, about the main stages of the Arab conquests.[25] In contrast, however, the Islamic dates for three crucial events of seventh-century Middle Eastern history conflict with what can be gleaned from non-Islamic sources, and quite possibly it is the former that fail to preserve the actual course of happenings here.[26] In view of this mixed balance, it would be unwise to issue the Islamic historiographical tradition a blank cheque of confidence when it cannot be checked against other sources; a wholesale reliance on what the Islamic tradition tells us about Muhammad's activity in Mecca and Medina – a topic on which Christian writers offer at most a few tantalising glimpses – is clearly not justified.

An especially intriguing divergence between the Islamic and the non-Islamic sources consists in the fact, already touched on above, that a relatively wide and heterogeneous selection of non-Islamic texts can be understood to assume that the Arab invaders were led into Palestine by Muhammad himself, which conflicts with the Islamic dating of Muhammad's death to 632 and the beginning of the conquests to 634. At present, Crone and Cook's hypothesis, recently restated by Stephen Shoemaker, that the Islamic tradition moved Muhammad's death from after 634 to 632 can hardly be ruled out.[27] Alternatively, it may be that significant Arab raiding into Palestine commenced much earlier than 634, the official Islamic starting date for the conquests, and that already Muhammad succeeded in establishing some control over such raiding activity prior to his death in 632.[28] In other words, the Islamic sources could be giving us, for whatever reason, too late a date for the beginnings of the Arab expansion northwards rather than too early a date for the death of Muhammad. Such a scenario would tally well with the history of Theophilus of Edessa (probably composed in Syriac during the second half of the eighth century and partly preserved in later Greek, Syriac, and Christian Arabic works), which reports that Muhammad dispatched wide-ranging military expeditions northwards while himself remaining based at Yathrib.[29]

Dating the closure of the Qur'anic corpus

Even if Christian sources from the seventh century corroborate that Muhammad was a historical person and that the Arab conquerors of the Middle East understood themselves to be his followers from very early on, this does not yet suffice to establish that the material compiled in the Qur'anic corpus reflects the

preaching of the historical Muhammad. To consider a potential parallel from the field of Biblical studies, many scholars would now view the final shape of the prophetic books of Jeremiah and Isaiah as the product of a multigenerational process of growth and accretion, with at most a basic kernel of material going back to the eponymous prophet himself. Should we envisage a similar scenario for the Islamic scripture? Unfortunately, seventh-century non-Islamic sources are uninformative in this regard: they offer at most a general summary of Muhammad's teachings and do not discuss details of the Qur'an's content and provenance. Against this background, some scholars have developed the hypothesis that the Qur'anic corpus may only have been codified during, or may at least have been open to substantial revision until, the second half of the seventh century.[30] The reign of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (r. 685–705) has suggested itself as a particularly fitting context for the final redaction of the Qur'an.[31]

However, the various kinds of literary and documentary evidence that have been adduced in support of this latter hypothesis are all open to alternative, and much more traditional, construals.[32] In addition, it appears increasingly certain that at least a large part of the Qur'an was extant by the middle of the seventh century, since several sheets from early Qur'anic manuscripts have now been subjected to radiocarbon dating. Thus, the testing of a folio belonging to a very substantial Qur'anic palimpsest discovered in the Grand Mosque of Ṣanʿāʾ has produced a likelihood of more than 95 per cent that the parchment is older than 660 CE.[33] Other tests have yielded a 95 per cent probability of the parchment of early manuscripts having been manufactured at some time between 649 and 675 CE (for a manuscript of seventy-seven leaves now kept at the Tübingen University Library), 606 and 652 CE (for a manuscript parts of which are now at the Berlin State Library), and 568 and 645 CE (for a fragment kept at Birmingham).[34] Although the radiocarbon dating of Qur'anic manuscripts has produced occasional anomalies,[35] the increasing number of such tests would appear to confirm that a very considerable portion of the Qur'anic text was around, albeit not without variants,[36] by the 650s.

Additional arguments for an early date of the Qur'anic corpus can also be marshalled. For instance, there is impressive pan-Islamic unanimity on the link between the Qur'an's standard *rasm* and the caliph ʿUthmān.[37] The supposition that such a consensus could have formed only in the late seventh or early eighth century, when the Islamic community had already spread across a vast region from Spain to Central Asia and had begun to experience deep sectarian divides, is questionable. Moreover, Islamic sources present ʿUthmān's promulgation of a standardised *rasm* as deeply controversial and report that he was accused of having 'burnt God's Scripture'. Such controversy over ʿUthmān's measures would seem to presuppose that the measures themselves did indeed take place.[38] If we were faced with a legend, we would expect to encounter

at least a vestige of someone having denied that a ʿUthmānic standardisation of the Qur'an happened at all, rather than merely the denial that it was legitimate.

Further considerations also militate against the possibility that the Qur'anic text could have remained fluid until the end of the seventh century. The corpus as we have it does not unequivocally comment on or presuppose some of the major developments that defined Islamic history from 630 to 700, in particular the epoch-making Arab conquest of the Fertile Crescent and the bitter civil wars that soon erupted within the ranks of the conquerors.[39] Furthermore, while the Qur'an frequently enjoins its addressees to obey God's Messenger (for example, Q 3: 32.132, 4: 13.59.69, and 5: 92) and to refer disputes to him (for example, Q 4: 59–60.65 and 24: 48.51), it says nothing whatsoever about whether such obedience would remain mandatory after the Messenger's death and, if so, how it could possibly be implemented. If the Qur'anic corpus had continued to be modified and added to for decades after Muhammad's death, one would have assumed this question to be posed and to have received at least a rudimentary answer. It is also noteworthy that the Qur'an displays a number of features that indicate fairly rapid textual stabilisation. For example, various 'rough edges' of the Qur'an – such as the occasional departure from classical Arabic norms of case agreement or the fact that the wording of Q 3: 96, generally believed to refer to Mecca, uses the expression *bakkah* rather than *makkah* – were not smoothed out, as would have been liable to happen had the Qur'anic text remained a work in progress during a protracted period.[40]

There are good grounds for accepting, then, that ʿUthmān made some attempt at imposing an authoritative version of the Islamic scripture and that the ʿUthmānic *rasm* of the Qur'an does go back at least to the middle rather than the end of the seventh century. Even so, ʿUthmān's measures do not seem to have been immediately successful: it must have taken the ʿUthmānic text at least a few decades to establish itself as the sole authoritative version of scripture, given that the alternative recension of the Qur'an ascribed to Ibn Masʿūd was still used in Kufa at the end of the seventh century, when ʿAbd al-Malik's governor al-Ḥajjāj made attempts to suppress it.[41]

The Qur'an on Muhammad and his historical context

As pointed out above, the Islamic tradition generally considers the standard *rasm* of the Qur'an to have been compiled within a few years of Muhammad's death and to amount to an accurate record of the latter's proclamations.[42] This is a much bolder claim than the foregoing conclusion that the Qur'an's canonical *rasm* was extant by the middle of the seventh century. How confidently can we take the additional step back to Muhammad? May at least parts of the

Qur'anic corpus not rather stem from the decades from *c.* 630 to 650, when Muhammad was already dead and the Arab conquest of the Fertile Crescent was well under way?

Given the Qur'an's lack of explicit references to events and personalities falling into the early post-prophetic decades, any attempt at assigning particular sections of the Qur'an to this period will inevitably remain circumstantial. An interesting example for the sort of argument that seems feasible given the peculiarities of the Qur'an has been put forward by Stephen Shoemaker. He observes that the Qur'anic retelling of the Nativity of Jesus in Q 19: 16–33 draws upon a combination of narrative traditions that was linked to a Christian pilgrimage sanctuary located between Jerusalem and Jericho, the church of the 'Kathisma', or seat, of the 'God-Bearer' Mary. The early Muslim conquerors seem to have attached sufficient significance to this church in order to eventually turn it into a mosque and to use it as an architectural blueprint for the Dome of the Rock.[43] Historical probability thus suggests that surah 19's account of the Nativity stands in some relationship to the Palestinian Kathisma sanctuary. The most straightforward model for how this could be the case, given the demonstrable importance of the Kathisma church to the Arab conquerors, would be to assume that the passage in question, or perhaps the entire surah to which it belongs, originated in post-conquest Palestine. Yet a less direct link remains possible: nothing precludes that traditions associated with the Kathisma sanctuary could have radiated further afield already prior to the Arab conquest of Palestine and that they could have penetrated the Qur'anic milieu (wherever we choose to locate the latter) via several stages of oral dissemination.[44]

Whether or not scholars will succeed in demonstrating that specific Qur'anic passages must be placed in an early post-conquest setting, the possibility that this may turn out to hold for a major portion of the text seems remote. The alternative versions of the Islamic scripture that medieval Islamic sources attribute to Ibn Masʿūd and Ubayy ibn Kaʿb reportedly displayed a different surah order, as does the lower writing of the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest; yet we hear almost nothing to the effect that the recensions of Ibn Masʿūd and Ubayy either lacked verses that are present in the standard *rasm*, contained additional verses, or arranged a given surah's verses in a different order.[45] Neither does the edited portion of the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest offer evidence for additional or missing verses or for a divergent verse order within surahs. This suggests that the individual surahs' verse sequence crystallised very early, and that attempts to compile a complete corpus of all Qur'anic revelations worked on the basis of existing surahs, rather than by linking up unconnected verses or verse sections.[46] The simplest explanation for this would appear to be the assumption that the surahs took shape during the life of Muhammad.

This default supposition is also supported by a closer look at certain peculiarities of the Qur'anic corpus as a whole. As noted in the previous chapter, it

contains frequent second-person addresses to an individual messenger. There would appear to be no reason to doubt that this messenger figure is reflective of the Quranic proclamations' original context of promulgation; that such second-person addresses may be nothing more than a literary fiction by means of which post-prophetic Muslims retrospectively aimed to fit Muhammad with a pseudepigraphic body of revelatory proclamations remains little more than an abstract possibility. For if this were the case, our hypothetical post-prophetic authors would arguably have been prone to make a much more insistent attempt at clarifying the identity of the Qur'anic Messenger, the environment within which he operated, and the circumstantial context of specific revelations. For instance, we might have expected the Qur'an to make use of superscripts tying specific scriptural passages to certain events in Muhammad's life, a technique also familiar from Biblical literature,[47] or to have attracted at least a certain amount of biographical narrative as found in the New Testament gospels or in the Biblical books of Isaiah and Jeremiah.[48]

The situational context from which the Qur'anic proclamations emerged can be further illuminated by a careful examination of the Qur'an itself.[49] This is so despite the fact that the text does not provide a systematic narrative of Muhammad's life, lacks dates, names almost no contemporaries of Muhammad, and contains only a single reference to world-historical events of the seventh century (Q 30: 2–6).[50] Nonetheless, a significant number of Qur'anic passages presuppose a fairly concrete tale of two cities. One of these consists in a sanctuary that goes by different designations: 'the Inviolable Place of Prostration' (*al-masjid al-ḥarām*; for example, Q 2: 144.149.150, 8: 34, and 48: 27), 'the Inviolable House' (*al-bayt al-ḥarām*; Q 5: 2.97), 'the Ancient House' (*al-bayt al-ʿatīq*; Q 22: 29.33), 'the House frequented [by pilgrims]' (Q 52:4: *al-bayt al-maʿmūr*, perhaps also to be translated as 'the House solicitously attended to'), or simply 'the House' (for example, Q 2: 125). This sanctuary, which the Qur'an associates already with Abraham (Q 2: 124–129, 3: 96–97, 14: 35–37, and 22: 26–29), is a pilgrimage destination (Q 2: 158, 2: 196–200, 3: 96–97, 5: 2, 5: 94–97, and 22: 30–37). It is identified with the Kaʿbah (Q 5: 97) and linked with a place called ʿArafāt (Q 2: 198). Elsewhere it is connected with 'the valley of Makkah' (Q 48: 24–25) and located *bi-bakkah*, 'at/in Bakkah' (Q 3: 96–97).[51] Surah 106 enjoins a collective designated as the Quraysh 'to worship the Lord of this House'. The rites performed at the sanctuary involve prayer (Q 8: 35, 14: 37, and 22: 26), circumambulation (Q 2: 158 and 22: 26.29), and animal sacrifice (Q 2: 196, 5: 2, and 22: 32–33.36–37).

The second place dominating the Qur'anic constellation is called *al-madīnah*, 'the city' (Q 9: 101.120, 33: 60, and 63: 8). The name 'Yathrib', used in Q 33: 13, appears to refer to the same settlement. It is in *al-madīnah*/Yathrib that the Qur'anic Messenger and his adherents, 'the Believers' (*al-muʾminūn, alladhīna āmanū*), reside after having been 'expelled' from their previous abode

(Q 2: 191, 3: 195, 9: 13, 22: 39–40, and 60: 1.8–9). This expulsion is said to have been due to the Believers' faith in God (Q 22: 40 and 60: 1). Q 8: 30–34 provides a brief outline of the situation that obtained prior to this expulsion: the Messenger once resided 'among' (*fī*, Q 8: 33) the Unbelievers (*alladhīna kafarū*), reciting God's 'signs' to them (Q 8: 31). They, however, dismissed his preaching as 'tales of the ancients' (Q 8: 31) while 'plotting' to 'kill' or 'expel' him (Q 8: 30). The pre-expulsion constellation that is intimated here provides a plausible background to the numerous Qur'anic passages that are concerned to convince a sceptical and unbelieving audience that there are no deities other than the one God, who is going to resurrect and judge all humans at the end of the world.

After the Believers' expulsion, the Unbelievers are portrayed as preventing them from accessing the sanctuary (Q 5: 2, 8: 34–35, 22: 25, and 48: 25). This appears to have triggered a military confrontation, since numerous passages refer to battles with the Unbelievers, sometimes in connection with specific place names like Badr or Ḥunayn, and summon the Believers to 'fight in the path of God'.[52] Q 2: 191 specifically calls the Qur'anic community to expel their opponents 'from where they expelled you', and then clarifies under what circumstances it would be permissible to do battle at the Inviolable Place of Prostration. This entails that the place from which the Believers had been previously expelled is in fact identical with the sanctuary.

The outcome of these military conflicts seems to have been the Believers' victory over the Unbelievers. According to Q 48: 27, God has fulfilled the Messenger's 'vision' that the Qur'anic addressees would 'safely enter the Inviolable Place of Prostration, shaving your heads and cutting short [your hair? your beard?]' – a practice that was part of the pilgrimage rites performed at the sanctuary (see Q 2: 196). The pilgrimage instructions given in Q 2: 158.196–203, 5: 1–2, and 22: 27–37 also indicate that the Qur'anic community now had at least an imminent prospect of gaining access to the sanctuary. Q 5: 2 still assumes that the Unbelievers will be present during the pilgrimage, but Q 9: 17–22 and 9: 28 reflect a complete takeover of the sanctuary, now declared off limits to those who partner other beings with God (*al-mushrikūn*).

There can be no doubt that the basic framework emerging from the Qur'an's miscellaneous contextual allusions is fully consistent with the skeletal structure of the traditional Islamic narrative of origins. This does not, of course, suffice to make the traditional narrative true, given that the latter is far more determinate and specific than what we can learn from the Qur'an alone. For instance, while Q 33: 9–27 refer to an unsuccessful siege of *al-madīnah* by an enemy alliance, it is only later sources that identify this siege with the Battle of the Trench, reportedly fought in 627.[53] Nor can we even be sure, on a Qur'anic basis alone, of the geographical location of the sanctuary and of *al-madīnah*, an issue to which we shall return in the following chapter. We certainly need to keep in mind the

possibility raised by Henri Lammens that extra-Qur'anic information purporting to illuminate the Qur'an's highly opaque allusions to contemporary events might simply have arisen from a narrative framing and embellishment of the scriptural passages in question, rather than from independently preserved historical information.[54]

Nonetheless, the Qur'an unmistakably presupposes a contextual setting that amounts to a stripped-down version of the standard Islamic portrayal of Muhammad's career: an early stage set at a pilgrimage sanctuary and in a milieu where doubts about the reality of the Last Judgement and about the unity and omnipotence of God were prevalent, followed by an expulsion from this sanctuary and a second stage of preaching at another settlement, which coincided with a military conflict between the Qur'anic community and the inhabitants of the sanctuary. Once again, it seems unlikely that the Qur'an's plentiful contextual references could merely be a fallout of calculated literary staging by authors who were posthumous to Muhammad: it is precisely because these references are so allusive and reliant on prior acquaintance with the events that are talked about that the scriptural passages in question are best placed in the midst of these events, wherever they unfolded, rather than as a later attempt at reimagining them from a historical distance. For in the latter case, we would have expected the Qur'anic texts to make at least some effort to provide a structured narrative of Muhammad's career.

Our best estimate therefore remains that the bulk of the Qur'an came into existence prior to the Arab conquests and in parallel to the preaching as well as military and political leadership of a historical figure called Muhammad. The fact that early non-Islamic sources depict the latter as an Arab prophet whose followers irrupt into Roman territory from the outside inspires some confidence that the traditional placement of Muhammad in the Arabian Peninsula, more specifically in the remote Hijaz region, merits credence. Still, as the following chapter will show, the issue of where the emergence of the Qur'an is to be situated in space, as opposed to time, does deserve a fuller discussion.

Before moving on to address this latter issue, a caveat is in order. The terms in which the Qur'an's date of closure has so far been discussed may rightly be criticised as dubiously limited: the choice appears to have been between either assigning entire sections, or even whole surahs, to a post-prophetic context or adopting a default dating of the whole Qur'an to the life of Muhammad. Such a clear-cut contrast admittedly fails to take into account the possibility that existing surahs may well have undergone a limited degree of expansion, reshaping, and updating in the first decade or so after Muhammad's death, before extant manuscripts provide us with comparatively firm evidentiary ground. Whether or not there are reasons for assuming that a given surah underwent such early post-prophetic alteration or expansion will have to be determined by a close analysis of the Qur'anic texts themselves. While the issue awaits further study,

it may nonetheless be useful to conclude the present chapter by considering two passages that have been, or may be, suspected of postdating Muhammad.

Post-Muhammadan additions to the Qur'an?

One candidate for a post-prophetic addition to the Qur'an is Q 3: 144, which was already highlighted as a possible later insertion by nineteenth-century scholars.[55] The verse runs as follows:

> Muhammad is only a messenger
> before whom [other] messengers have gone.
> If he dies or is killed,
> will you[p] turn on your heels?
> Those who turn on their heels will not harm God in any way,
> and God will recompense those who are grateful.

It is not prima facie fanciful to read this verse as a comment designed to summon the Believers to steadfastness in the face of Muhammad's death. However, Muhammad's mortality also features elsewhere in the Qur'an: Q 10: 46, 13: 40, 40: 77, and 43: 41–42 state that it is solely up to God whether Muhammad will live to witness God's punishment of the Unbelievers or whether he will die beforehand (cf. also Q 23: 93–95). Such assertions, in turn, are credibly understood as responding to sceptical questions posed by the Qur'anic audience about when the divine judgement announced by Muhammad's proclamations would come to pass (see, inter alia, Q 7: 187, 10: 48, 51: 12, 75: 6, and 79: 42). Thus, Q 3: 144 is linked to a network of additional Qur'anic passages that envisage Muhammad's future death. It appears too sweeping a solution simply to postulate that all of these verses must be post-prophetic, especially without having shown that they can be extricated from their present context without leaving behind literary gaps.[56] Furthermore, there is hardly anything historically improbable about the fact that the Qur'anic proclamations should make passing references to Muhammad's future demise already during his lifetime.

A much stronger argument for a post-prophetic insertion can be put forward regarding Q 3: 7. The verse famously posits that the scripture (*kitāb*) sent down upon the Qur'anic Messenger contains verses that are 'firm' or 'clear' (*āyāt muḥkamāt*) and others that are *mutashābih* – literally 'resembling one another', but here obviously used to mean 'ambiguous'. The verse then condemns those who 'pursue what is ambiguous' in scripture, 'seeking temptation and seeking its interpretation'.[57] This admission that certain parts of the Qur'anic corpus are inherently ambiguous and that their interpretation is bound to remain inaccessible stands in stark contrast to an impressive roster of other verses: the Qur'an's frequent insistence on its own intrinsic clarity,[58] the assurance in Q 75: 16–19 that God

Himself will see to the clarification of existing Qur'anic revelations (presumably in subsequent ones),[59] and a statement implying that all of the Qur'an, not just certain parts of it, have been 'made firm' (Q 11: 1).[60] As opposed to these passages, Q 3: 7 confines the property of clarity or 'firmness' to a textual core designated as 'the mother of the Scripture' (*umm al-kitāb*).

A compelling way of making sense of the above observations would be to take Q 3: 7 to presuppose an experience that early Islamic sources describe as the 'cutting off of revelation' (*inqiṭāᶜ al-waḥy*): the fact that after Muhammad's death the proto-Islamic community found itself in a situation in which the channel of revelatory access to divine revelations afforded by Muhammad had come to be irrevocably closed.[61] Thus, Q 3: 7 can be read as addressing a community in possession of a scriptural corpus that, because of the death of Muhammad, was not felt to admit significant revision and growth anymore, yet nonetheless appeared to be characterised by considerable ambiguity. Against this hypothetical background, Q 3: 7 would provide rudimentary guidance on how to deal with the Qur'an's seemingly inescapable ambiguity – namely, by discouraging its addressees from pressing scriptural passages that seem enigmatic and obscure and by urging them to concentrate on scripture's readily intelligible core instead.

Q 3: 7 stands apart from the rest of the Qur'an not only on account of its substantially different take on clarity, but also on terminological grounds. While key diction of Q 3: 7 recurs elsewhere in the Islamic scripture, these parallels display noticeable semantic discrepancies. The term *mutashābih*, for instance, is also employed at Q 2: 25, 6: 99.141, and 39: 23, but there it is amenable to being understood in its literal sense of 'self-similar' or 'mutually similar', whereas the context of Q 3: 7 clearly suggests the meaning 'ambiguous'.[62] The verb *aḥkama*, of which *muḥkam* is the passive participle, also occurs in other Qur'anic verses but is never paired with the word *mutashābih*, as in Q 3: 7.[63] The term 'the mother of the Scripture' (*umm al-kitāb*) is found at Q 13: 39 and 43: 4, but in these verses it designates an *archetype* of the Qur'anic revelations that is located 'with' God, whereas at Q 3: 7 the phrase is used to refer to an unambiguous *core*, either of the Qur'anic revelations or of their celestial archetype.

A final consideration is that the entire sequence Q 3: 7–9 can easily be lifted from its literary context: v. 10 would link up with v. 6 without an obvious gap. This is consistent with the suspicion that verses 7–9 were only embedded in the surah in a late editorial step. In this regard, it may also be observed that both v. 3 and v. 7 begin by asserting that God has 'sent down (*nazzala/anzala*) the Scripture'. Similar affirmations recur in the opening verses of many other surahs,[64] meaning that v. 3 deploys a standard introductory topos. The recurrence of this topos in v. 7 could be explained as a deliberate resumption of the beginning of v. 3, here employed as a point of departure for working into the original text a later assertion about the inescapable ambiguity adhering to certain parts of scripture. It is pertinent that similar cases of editorial

resumption – although often of the *ending* rather than the *beginning* of an earlier portion of text – can be detected in the Hebrew Bible.[65]

It is distinctly possible, therefore, that Q 3: 7–9 form a secondary interpolation into the surah. This would certainly provide a convincing explanation for the fact that verse 7 imposes perceptible semantic shifts on some of its key terms. Of course, even if verses 7–9 are a later addition, this does not require them to postdate Muhammad. Yet while many similar additions can be perfectly well accommodated within Muhammad's lifetime, the perspective of Q 3: 7 is quite distinctive: insofar as the verse would appear to bespeak a vision of the Qur'anic revelations as a closed corpus, the case for a post-prophetic date is not negligible. Even so, the addition, if it is one, must have been made very early, perhaps within a few years of Muhammad's death, since Q 3: 7 is already contained in an early manuscript that has been carbon dated to the first half of the seventh century.[66]

Notes

1. For a detailed distillation of what Islamic sources have to say about the life and career of Muhammad, it is still helpful to refer to Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, and id., *Muhammad at Medina*, despite the fact that Watt's approach to the sources is in many respects insufficiently critical.
2. See the summary account of how the Islamic sources present the nature and extent of Meccan trade in Crone, *Meccan Trade*, pp. 149–54; for an attempt to understand how Meccan trade with Syria could have been viable, see Crone, 'Quraysh and the Roman Army'. As Crone, *Meccan Trade*, demonstrates, the long-standing notion that the Quraysh traded in spices and aromatics is an 'Orientalist myth' (thus Crone, 'Quraysh and the Roman Army', p. 64) not supported by the Islamic sources.
3. This covenant is edited, translated, and studied in Lecker, *Constitution*. One recension of the Arabic text, accompanied by an English translation, is found on pp. 32–9. For a concise presentation of the document and the considerations that support its authenticity, see Munt, *Holy City*, pp. 54–6.
4. A detailed analysis can be found in Motzki, 'Collection'. On the date of the campaign in question, see Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 2, p. 49.
5. Al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmiᶜ*, vol. 3, pp. 337–8, nos 4986–7 (66: 3).
6. E.g., Schoeler, *Biography of Muḥammad*; Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*; Görke et al., 'First Century Sources'; Motzki, 'Collection'.
7. Wüstenfeld (ed.), *Leben Muhammed's*, vol. 1, pp. 151–4. For a detailed discussion, see Schoeler, *Biography of Muḥammad*, pp. 38–79.
8. On the link with Isaiah 40: 6, see Görke et al., 'First Century Sources', pp. 31–2.
9. The suspicion that the entire history of formative Islam, as retold in Islamic sources, must be understood as 'salvation history' – i.e., as a narrative concerned to articulate a theological message rather than to preserve accurate information about the past – was most insistently put forward in the 1970s by John Wansbrough; see Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, and id., *Sectarian Milieu*. An introductory exposition of Wansbrough's ideas can be found in Berg, 'Implications', and Rippin, 'Methodologies'. It should be noted that similar, although less far-reaching, doubts have been expressed long before Wansbrough. Already in 1890,

Ignaz Goldziher maintained that the numerous extra-Qur'anic accounts detailing specific utterances and actions by Muhammad were not to be treated as so many faithful glimpses of what Muhammad had really said and done, but rather as the expression of later religious and political tendencies (Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, vol. 2); and in 1910, Henri Lammens claimed that most traditions about the life of Muhammad had their origin in the narrative embellishment and elaboration of passages from the Qur'an rather than in authentic historical recollection (Lammens, 'The Koran and Tradition').

10. For the earliest coins mentioning Muhammad, see Heidemann, 'Representation', pp. 167–8. For an attempt to argue, based on Muhammad's absence from early coinage, that the Islamic Prophet is a legendary construct, see Popp, 'Die frühe Islamgeschichte'.
11. Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*. For a comprehensive survey of the full range of non-Islamic sources on early Islam and the seventh century in general, see Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*; for an in-depth analysis of those among them that yield specific historical information, see Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*.
12. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 55–61; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 155–7.
13. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 124–32; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 70–102.
14. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 129–30; Shoemaker, *Death*, pp. 47–52.
15. Shoemaker, *Death*, pp. 18–72.
16. This view has recently been resurrected in Shoemaker, *Death*, who interbreeds it with Fred Donner's claim that early Islam was an ecumenical movement of monotheistic 'Believers' in which Jews and Christians participated on a par with non-Jewish and non-Christian Arabs (see Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*). See also Bori, '"All We Know"'.
17. See Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 523–44.
18. The idea that early Islam was suffused with apocalyptic expectations was first argued in Casanova, *Mohammed*, and is redeveloped in Shoemaker, *Death*, pp. 118–96. Qur'anic eschatology will be discussed in Chapter 7 below.
19. Regarding the allegation, in the *History of Pseudo-Sebeos*, that Muhammad's unification of the Arabs was inspired by Jewish refugees, this could plausibly be viewed as a Christian attempt 'to provide an explanation for the otherwise inexplicable' – namely, for the remarkable successes of the Arabic conquerors – by scapegoating the Jews (Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, p. 98). The claim that the emergence of Islam was somehow due to Jewish influence could also have derived credibility from the fact that some Jews appear to have supported the Arab invaders, whom they may quite understandably have preferred to their previous Christian overlords (Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 527–31). For an alternative to my own view that the Qur'an does not attribute to the Believers any claim to the Promised Land, understood as referring to Palestine, see Bori, '"All We Know"', pp. 322–7.
20. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 118–20; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 63–6.
21. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 182–9; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 128–35.
22. Cf. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 593–4.
23. For the different stages of the process, see Heidemann, 'Representation'; on the relationship between the character of the early Islamic polity and the media of self-representation employed by it, see Johns, 'Archaeology', p. 418.
24. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 135–8 (who points out that the reliability of the notice has been questioned).
25. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 396–8 (on Yūsuf Dhū Nuwās's attack on Najrān in 523 and the Persian takeover of Yemen *c.* 571) and pp. 370–9 (on the first stage of the conquests); see also pp. 12–13.
26. See Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 379–87. The events in question are the conquest of Jerusalem (which may have taken place significantly earlier than the 638 CE date claimed

by Islamic historians), the assassination of Muhammad's son-in-law ʿAlī (which the Islamic tradition places in 661, while the Maronite Chronicle suggests 658), and the death of the latter's son Ḥusayn at Karbalāʾ (which Theophilus of Edessa places in the context of the first *fitnah*, i.e., in or before 661 rather than in 680).

27. Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, p. 24; Shoemaker, *Death*. Assuming that such a re-dating did indeed take place, what caused it? Shoemaker entertains the idea that the reason may have been Biblical typology: 'by locating Muhammad's death in 632, both before the invasion of Palestine and outside of the Holy Land, Muhammad, like Moses, leads the children of Abraham to reclaim the land of their inheritance, but does not himself enter it nor have a hand in its conquest'. I would disagree with Shoemaker's feeling that such a typological explanation by itself would be clearly insufficient to account for a putative re-dating of Muhammad's death.
28. In his review of Shoemaker, *Death*, Hoyland points out that Arab raids into Palestine and Sinai appear to have become 'endemic' already in the 610s.
29. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 403–4; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 208–9.
30. In the 1970s, John Wansbrough suggested a yet later dating, conjecturing that the Qur'an was a product of Abbasid (i.e., late eighth-century and early ninth-century) Mesopotamia. This hypothesis, thought-provoking though it was when originally voiced, can now be safely ruled out; see, inter alia, Donner, *Narratives*, pp. 35–63, and Crone, 'Two Legal Problems', pp. 16–18.
31. See, for example, Robinson, *ʿAbd al-Malik*, pp. 100–4; de Prémare, *Fondations*, pp. 278–323; Shoemaker, *Death*, pp. 136–58.
32. Sinai, 'Consonantal Skeleton', pp. 273–92.
33. Sadeghi and Bergmann, 'Codex'. Forty folios of this manuscript's lower writing, encompassing a considerable portion of Qur'anic text, have been edited in Sadeghi and Goudarzi, 'Ṣanʿāʾ 1'. The edited material includes passages from, or the full text of, each of the following surahs: 2, 5, 11, 8, 9, 19, 22, 12, 18, 16, 33, 39, 40, 20, 21, 24, 34, 13, 28, 37, 15, 25, 30, 35, 63, 62, 89, and 90 (listed according to the order of Sadeghi and Goudarzi's edition).
34. Marx and Jocham, 'Datierungen'. Scans of some of the manuscripts in question are available at http://corpuscoranicum.de/handschriften/uebersicht, http://idb.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/diglit/MaVI165, and http://vmr.bham.ac.uk/Collections/Mingana/Islamic_Arabic_1572a/table/. For a slightly more detailed survey of the issue, see Sinai, 'The Qurʾān'. For another Qur'anic manuscript fragment that has been carbon dated to 610–720 CE, with a probability of more than 90 per cent, see Dutton, 'Umayyad Fragment', pp. 63–4.
35. Déroche, *Qur'ans of the Umayyads*, pp. 12–13; Robin, 'L'Arabie', p. 65. The most striking anomaly is the dating of folio 13 of the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest, with a probability of 95 per cent, to 388–535 CE by a French laboratory in Lyon, and to 430–610 by the Christian Albrecht University of Kiel in Germany. Two further laboratories (Oxford and Zurich) have produced much later date ranges for this folio, though, which are consistent with the results that Sadeghi and Bergmann obtained for a different leaf of the same manuscript (Sadeghi and Bergmann, 'Codex'). As pointed out to me by Sadeghi, the Lyon and Kiel tests may have been compromised by sample contamination or faulty chemical pretreatment. One should also bear in mind that radioactive decay is a random process, which renders the results of radiocarbon dating inherently probabilistic. This means that one would expect the true age of a certain – but very limited – number of samples to lie outside the 95 per cent range. The way forward is obviously to conduct a much greater number of tests than has hitherto been possible.
36. The *rasm* attested by the lower writing of the Ṣanʿāʾ palimpsest recognisably contains a version of the Qur'an as we know it yet exhibits frequent divergences such as differences in

the grammatical person of verbs and suffixes, the omission, addition, and transposition of individual words and brief phrases, and a different sequence of surahs. An annotated list of variants is found in Sadeghi and Bergmann, 'Codex', pp. 417–33.

37. Donner, *Narratives*, pp. 26–8, and Sadeghi and Bergmann, 'Codex', pp. 364–6.
38. Schoeler, 'Codification', pp. 787–8.
39. This argument is ultimately based on a remark in Donner, *Narratives*, p. 49.
40. Sinai, 'Consonantal Skeleton', pp. 517–20. On Qur'anic verses with anomalous cases, see Burton, 'Linguistic Errors'. The phrase 'rough edges' is taken from Cook, *Koran*, pp. 134–5. For a possible explanation of the wording *bi-bakkah*, see below, n. 51.
41. Sinai, 'Consonantal Skeleton', pp. 278–85 (with pertinent references).
42. On occasion, some scriptural material is reported to have been lost; see Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 1, pp. 255–6.
43. Shoemaker, 'Christmas'.
44. The evidence presented by Shoemaker would permit such a hypothetical process of oral dissemination to have commenced as early as the second half of the sixth century.
45. Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 2, pp. 44–6, briefly discusses additional verses that were allegedly contained only in some non-standard recensions of the Qur'an.
46. See Sadeghi and Goudarzi, 'Ṣanʿāʾ 1', pp. 22–3.
47. See Isaiah 1: 1, Jeremiah 1: 1–3, and the beginnings of various Psalms, such as 3 or 34, which associate the following text with situations in the life of David.
48. See in more detail Sinai, 'Consonantal Skeleton', pp. 517–19 (inspired by Madigan, 'Reflections', pp. 353–4).
49. The rest of this section overlaps with parts of Sinai, 'The Unknown Known', and is ultimately inspired by Robinson, *Discovering*, pp. 30–2.
50. In its most likely vocalisation, Q 30: 2–6 would appear to comment on the Byzantine-Sasanian wars of the early seventh century; the passage predicts that the Byzantines, despite having been vanquished, will emerge victorious 'in a number of years'. Should we consider this passage (which is studied in Tesei, '"The Romans Will Win!"') to be informed by hindsight of the Byzantine victory of 627–8 CE and therefore to postdate the latter? The inference is hardly conclusive, however: conceivably, Q 30: 2ff. reflects only Byzantine wartime propaganda of the sort that would have been disseminated already during the years prior to 627 (even if the extra-Qur'anic literature in which such propaganda is documented for us may have reached its final shape only after the end of the conflict). See also Chapter 7, n. 44.
51. The occurrence of the form *bakkah* instead of *makkah* is linguistically explicable as resulting from assimilation of the initial consonant of *makkah* to the preceding preposition *bi-*.
52. For reminiscences of battlefield situations, see Q 3: 13.121–128.152–155.166–168, 8: 7–19.42–44, 9: 25–27, 33: 9–27, 48: 20–26. That the opponents were the Unbelievers is made clear, for instance, in Q 8: 15 and 9: 26. Injunctions to militancy (a topic to be discussed in Chapter 8) are found, for example, in Q 2: 190–193.216, Q 3: 139–151.157–158.169–171, and much of surah 9.
53. See Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, pp. 35–9, for a distillation of extra-Qur'anic traditions.
54. Lammens, 'The Koran and Tradition'.
55. See, e.g., Hirschfeld, *New Researches*, pp. 138–9, and, more recently, Shoemaker, *Death*, pp. 178–88.
56. In addition to Q 3: 144, Gustav Weil also considered Q 21: 34–35 (which includes the question, 'If you[s] are to die, are they to live forever?') to be post-prophetic (Hirschfeld, *New Researches*, p. 138). This suggests a general policy of deeming all verses explicitly addressing the eventual death of Muhammad to be post-prophetic. Whether such a principle is able to withstand case-by-case scrutiny remains to be explored.

57. Interpretation of the verse is complicated by the fact that a crucial part of it can be segmented in two different ways: (i) 'Only God knows its [= the ambiguous verses'] interpretation. And those who are well-grounded in knowledge say, "We believe in it. All is from our Lord"'; (ii) 'Only God knows its interpretation, and those who are well-grounded in knowledge. They say, "We believe in it. All is from our Lord."' I remain convinced that (i) is the more probable construal; see Sinai, 'Qurʾānic Self-Referentiality', pp. 128–9. On the meaning of *taʾwīl*, see Ambros, *Dictionary*, p. 31.
58. As noted in Neuwirth, 'House of Abraham', p. 515, 'the concession of a hermeneutic ambiguity in scripture comes as a surprise considering numerous previous Qurʾanic self-declarations as emanating from a particularly clear (*mubīn*) text' (Neuwirth cites Q 12: 1, 26: 2, and 43: 2 as examples).
59. The passage runs as follows:

> [16] Do[s] not move your tongue about it to hasten it.
> [17] Upon Us is its putting together and its recitation.
> [18] When We recite it, follow[s] its recitation.
> [19] Upon Us is its explanation (*bayān*).

60. Cf. also Q 22: 52 and 47: 20.
61. Cf. Graham, *Divine Word*, pp. 9–10.
62. The same applies to Q 2: 70.118 and arguably even to Q 13: 16, which have *tashābaha/-t*, 'to resemble one another'.
63. See Q 11: 1, 22: 52, 47: 20.
64. Introductory invocations of God's 'sending down' (*tanzīl*) of 'the Scripture' are found in Q 32: 2, 39: 1, 40: 2, 41: 2–3, 44: 2–3, 45: 2, 46: 2. Further surah openings contain *either* a reference to God's 'sending down' *or* make reference to 'the Scripture'.
65. See the comments in Pohlmann, *Die Entstehung*, pp. 46 and 80–1, on the technique of resumptive repetition ('Wiederaufnahme'), first highlighted in Kuhl, '"Wiederaufnahme"'.
66. See http://www.corpuscoranicum.de/handschriften/index/sure/3/vers/7?handschrift=73 (accessed 16 December 2015), Ms. Qāf 47 (on which see Marx and Jocham, 'Datierungen', especially p. 37). The parchment of the manuscript has been dated, with a probability of 95.4 per cent, to 606–52 CE.

CHAPTER 3

The Qur'anic milieu

Whence the Qur'an?

As explained in the previous chapter, the Islamic tradition places the first half of Muhammad's prophetic career in Mecca. This is an extremely remote locale that does not seem to have been situated on any major trade route.[1] Furthermore, non-Islamic sources up until at least the late seventh century fail to mention Mecca by name.[2] A Syriac text completed no later than the 660s, the *Khuzistan Chronicle*, links the Arabs to a desert sanctuary that it calls 'the dome of Abraham', but provides no place name or any further geographical details.[3] How confidently can we accept this Hijazi placement of Muhammad and the Qur'an? Apart from the general suspicion that it may well serve a salvation-historical function, as noted in the previous chapter, there are additional reasons to be doubtful. For instance, Patricia Crone has argued that the Qur'an's manifold agricultural references do not fit the ecology of Mecca.[4] One may pertinently retort that the Qur'anic accounts of the natural world bear a deep Psalmic imprint, which would make it simplistic to construe them as faithfully mirroring the Qur'an's immediate environment.[5] Nonetheless, it does not seem satisfactory to maintain that the Qur'an's numerous and sometimes highly specific invocations of natural phenomena are exclusively due to an uptake of literary topoi and lack any link to its proximate habitat. Consider Q 6: 136–139, which criticise Muhammad's opponents for certain rituals involving their harvest and livestock. This can hardly be understood in any other way than as implying that these opponents were themselves agriculturalists. Given the barren conditions around Mecca, this gives pause.[6] Another passage that jars with a Hijazi locale is Q 37: 137–138. It follows a concise retelling of God's annihilation of the people of Lot and addresses the hearers by saying that 'you^{p} pass close to them in the morning / and at night'.[7] Taken at face value, this implies that the Qur'anic hearers must reside close to the remains of Sodom and Gomorrah, traditionally taken to have been located somewhere in the vicinity of the Dead Sea.

The conventional placement of the genesis of the Qur'an in today's Mecca and Medina is thus by no means beyond reasonable doubt. Can one at least settle on the less specific claim that the Qur'an must hail from somewhere within the Arabian Peninsula? To infer this from the mere fact that the Qur'an is composed in Arabic, rather than in any of the standard literary idioms of

the late antique Fertile Crescent, would be callow. For it seems to have been at the periphery of the Roman Empire, rather than deep inside the Arabian Peninsula, that Arabic developed into a written language – more specifically, in the formerly Nabataean domain that was annexed by Rome in 106 CE. It is in this region that we find Old Arabic inscriptions in the Nabataean script (including the famous epitaph of al-Namārah) and at least two sixth-century inscriptions that are not only in Old Arabic but also employ what became the standard Arabic script; a third such inscription is located even further north, at Zabad in northern Syria.[8] It was therefore at the imperial fringe that speakers of Arabic started viewing their language as sufficiently important to their cultural identity in order to carve it in stone.[9] One may well conjecture that it was in the same region that core beliefs and narratives of the Biblical tradition began to be expressed in Arabic, ultimately yielding the Qur'an.

Situating the genesis of the Islamic scripture at the immediate periphery of the Roman Empire, rather than deep inside the Arabian Peninsula, would indubitably have some explanatory benefits: it would make Q 37: 137–138, quoted above, at least somewhat more intelligible, and it would accommodate Stephen Shoemaker's observation, briefly discussed in the previous chapter, that the Qur'anic account of the Nativity in Q 19: 16–33 bears a close link to Palestinian local tradition.[10] Perhaps most importantly, placing the genesis of the Qur'an further north than traditionally assumed may be felt to accord much better with its pervasive acquaintance with Christian and Jewish traditions, an issue that will be addressed in more detail below.

Yet in the end, the prospects for identifying a compelling alternative to the traditional Hijazi locale and for explaining why and how the Qur'an's true birthplace could have been so completely obliterated from Islamic historical memory are unpromising, to say the least.[11] It is also important to note that, notwithstanding the foregoing uncertainties pertaining to Mecca, the traditional connection of Muhammad and the Qur'an with the oasis of Yathrib/Medina is more difficult to impugn. For one, Yathrib, which is explicitly mentioned in Q 33: 13, is far better attested in literary and epigraphic sources from the pre-Islamic period than Mecca: for example, the South Arabian king Abraha claims to have subjugated it in an inscription produced sometime after 552 CE.[12] As we saw in the preceding chapter, the impression to be gleaned from the Qur'an is that Yathrib is the same place as *al-madīnah*, an identification that is substantiated by the mid-seventh-century Syriac *Khuzistan Chronicle*.[13] Moreover, scholars generally deem the treaty uniting 'the Believers and Submitters of Quraysh and Yathrib' into a new transtribal community to be authentic.[14] And the fact that the Islamic tradition depicts Yathrib as home to several Jewish tribes means that references to Biblical and in particular to Rabbinic traditions are easily accommodated at least for those parts of the Qur'an that one chooses to assign to Muhammad's Medinan period. This is so

despite the fact that there is virtually no epigraphic record of a Jewish presence in the Hijaz.[15]

Other considerations also favour situating the Qur'an's origin further south than within or just beyond Byzantine provincial territory. For instance, two Qur'anic passages mention the names of what appear to be supernatural beings venerated by parts of the Qur'an's audience (Q 53: 19–22 and 71: 23).[16] The worship of at least some of these deities is confirmed by inscriptions ranging across north Arabia, Syria, and Mesopotamia, although interpretation of the epigraphic evidence is not always straightforward.[17] The one of these deities that has been studied most extensively is the goddess al-Lāt. It is pertinent here that the epigraphic and literary record for her begins to go quiet already in the fourth century CE.[18] Thus, by the time of the Qur'an's appearance, the veneration of al-Lāt and other pagan Arabian gods, if it persisted at all, must have become restricted to relatively isolated regions of the Near East, of which the Arabian Peninsula was certainly one.[19] A similar train of thought applies to the prominent role that animal sacrifice manifestly played at the Qur'anic sanctuary (Q 2: 196, 5: 2, 5: 95, 22: 32–33, 22: 36–37, 48: 25, and 108: 2).[20] Within the Roman Empire, sacrificial slaughter, prominently associated with pre-Christian paganism, had been officially prohibited since the late fourth century and would have been in mortal decline by the early seventh century.[21] The survival of a major pilgrimage sanctuary involving animal sacrifice seems much more plausible in a region that was far removed from Roman control than in the empire's provincial margins, where Christianity had long taken roots.[22]

What about the fact, highlighted above, that the sixth-century epigraphic record for Old Arabic is limited to the borderlands of the Roman Empire? Irrespective of where Arabic became a written language, it also functioned as the idiom of an orally transmitted body of poetry celebrating the heroic virtues of tribal warriors, a literature that originated and circulated deep inside the Arabian Peninsula.[23] While the thematic and stylistic character of this poetry is starkly different from the Qur'an, the latter does occasionally employ poetic phraseology and motifs.[24] Furthermore, many surahs possess literary affinities with the oracular utterances that later Islamic sources attribute to pagan Arabian soothsayers, insofar as they are composed in rhymed prose (*sajʿ*) and are introduced by oaths.[25] Finally, we will see later in this chapter that Muhammad's unbelieving opponents seem to have described certain deities as 'daughters' of Allāh, a notion whose closest parallels occur in South Arabian inscriptions. All in all, there are important respects in which the Qur'anic corpus tallies well with a peninsular cultural milieu, thus supporting the traditional localisation of the Qur'an's origin in the Hijaz. The Qur'an, it appears, really did emerge from a society at the distant margins of the late antique Near East, just as the Biblical prophets emerged from a society at the margins of the ancient Near East.[26]

The Qur'anic milieu and the late antique world

At this point we need to confront what is prima facie the main difficulty for placing the Qur'an's genesis in the southern half of the Hijaz, a difficulty to which I have already briefly alluded. It consists in the fact that the Qur'anic proclamations unquestionably addressed an audience that was intimately familiar with narratives and concepts related to the Biblical tradition. To provide but one example, Q 85: 17–18 justifies God's omnipotence by posing the question,

> [17] Have you[s] heard the story of the hosts,
> [18] of Pharaoh and Thamūd?

At least by the dating criteria that will be developed in Chapter 5, this passage may well be the earliest Qur'anic reference to Pharaoh. It obviously assumes that its addressees have substantial prior knowledge of Pharaoh (and also of course of Thamūd). Another similarly concise reference to Pharaoh and Thamūd occurs in Q 89: 9–10, and even the earliest proper retelling of the story of Moses and Pharaoh in Q 79: 15–26 confines itself to a general outline that would still appear to rely on extensive background knowledge. Such an allusive invocation of Biblical figures and narratives characterises the Qur'an throughout: familiarity with a broad body of Biblical and Biblically inspired lore is simply taken for granted.[27]

That the Qur'an's addressees were conversant with a wide array of Judaeo-Christian traditions also arises from the fact that the Qur'an itself repeatedly cites Muhammad's opponents as dismissing his preaching as mere 'fables of the ancients' – in other words, as regurgitating thoroughly familiar content (for example, Q 6: 25, 8: 31, 68: 15, and 83: 13). Putting a positive spin on the same phenomenon, the Qur'an describes itself as a 'confirmation' of previous revelations (for example, Q 2: 97 and 35: 31), particularly of the Torah (*al-tawrāh*) and the Gospel (*al-injīl*) (Q 3: 3–4). Furthermore, the Qur'anic corpus shows traces of profound linguistic contact with the Fertile Crescent. This is especially true of its religious terminology: words such as *ṣalāh*, 'prayer', *sabbaḥa*, 'to praise', *āmana*, 'to believe', *aslama*, 'to submit' (namely, oneself to God), *āyah*, 'sign, miracle', *sulṭān*, 'authority', or *zakkā*, 'to purify' are etymologically derived from, or at least bear a strong semantic relationship to, Aramaic, various dialects of which were employed by late antique Jews and Christians across the Fertile Crescent.[28] These linguistic relationships are complemented by impressive and far-reaching parallels that link the Qur'an to Christian literature in Syriac, the most important dialect of Aramaic in the late antique Near East, as well as to Rabbinic texts.[29] Hence, it seems inevitable to conclude that Jewish and Christian traditions, although possibly transmitted orally and in Arabic, had an important presence in the Qur'anic proclamations' cultural habitat.[30]

All of the preceding observations have an obvious bearing on the issue of the Qur'an's geographical origin. For if we follow the general drift of the Islamic

tradition in viewing pre-Islamic Arabia as dominated by indigenous forms of paganism and largely untouched by Biblical religions, as a cultural space dominated by barbarian 'ignorance' (*al-jāhiliyyah*),[31] then the observations above are bound to call into question the standard assumption that the Qur'an originated in the Arabian Peninsula. The traditional supposition that part of the population of Medina was Jewish does not suffice to obviate the problem, since it is the entire Qur'an, not just those parts of it that are normally dated after the hijrah, that appears to be well acquainted with Biblical traditions.

Instead of solving the problem by relocating the Qur'anic milieu away from the Hijaz, however, it appears on the whole more promising to modify the portrayal of pre-Islamic Arabia that we inherit from the Islamic tradition. Rather than assuming that the pre-Islamic Hijaz was culturally 'empty'[32] and rife with primitive forms of idolatry, there are good grounds for considering the region to have been exposed to profound religious influences from the outside. Scholars increasingly accept that in the centuries prior to the rise of Islam, at least parts of Arabia had become integrated into the wider late antique world.[33] This process would have been facilitated by political developments: especially in the sixth century CE, powerful Arab tribal leaders came to serve as clients of the Roman, or Byzantine, Empire and the rivalling Sasanian Empire in Mesopotamia and Iran. The best-known of these client dynasties were the Jafnids, based in what is now Western Syria and Jordan and affiliated with the Romans, and the Naṣrid rulers of al-Ḥīra on the Euphrates, who were allied with the Sasanians.[34] Frequently, the political integration of such tribal leaders into the Roman world went hand in hand with a spread of Christianity. Thus, the Jafnids cultivated close bonds with the miaphysite branch of Christianity, which had considerable popular appeal in the regions under their control.[35] (Miaphysite Christians profess a complete fusion and unity of Jesus's divine and human natures, in opposition to the creed adopted by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE.) As regards the Naṣrids, even though the dynasty itself remained pagan until the baptism of its last ruler, their capital al-Ḥīra was inhabited by a large Arab Christian population, called the 'Servants' (*ʿibād*).[36]

During the same period, the south of the Arabian Peninsula, too, witnessed a progressive entanglement with the wider late antique world, which similarly coincided with the arrival of Biblically based forms of religion.[37] In about 380 CE, the ruling elites of the South Arabian kingdom of Ḥimyar abandoned the realm's traditional polytheism. Rather than becoming Christian, however, as a Byzantine embassy sent by the emperor Constantius (r. 337–61 CE) had reportedly invited them to, they embraced a Jewish-inspired form of monotheism. This is likely to have been an intentional counterpoint to the adoption of Christianity, and thereby also of a pro-Roman alignment, by the kingdom of Axum on the opposite side of the Red Sea, in parts of modern-day Ethiopia and Eritrea.[38] In the early sixth century, Axum established itself as overlord of Ḥimyar, yet

in 522 CE the Ḥimyarite king Yūsuf As'ar Yath'ar rose up in rebellion against Axum and instigated an anti-Christian pogrom: the oasis of Najrān, the second most important centre of Arab Christianity besides al-Ḥīra, was besieged, and a large number of its inhabitants were massacred. The event triggered a retaliatory invasion by the Axumite king. In its wake, the Ḥimyarite realm came to be ruled by the Christian king Abraha and thus entered the Roman sphere of influence. The situation changed yet again at about 575 CE, when South Arabia was conquered by the Sasanians.

The available sources being what they are, it remains inevitably speculative to assess the impact of these developments on the middle regions of the Arabian Peninsula, especially on the Hijaz. The Jafnids and the Naṣrids certainly appear to have maintained political and cultural ties deeper into the peninsula. For instance, while the ultimate origins of the Arabic poetic tradition must be located among bedouin tribespeople, a fair number of its practitioners were linked to or patronised by the Jafnid and Naṣrid courts.[39] It seems safe to assume that there would also have been significant cultural transfer in the opposite direction, whereby the Christian and Jewish traditions that were increasingly implanting themselves in the northern and southern margins of the Arabian Peninsula radiated further inwards.

An obvious manner by which such seepage would have taken place is by means of missionary activity. Christian evangelism among pagan Arab tribes is amply attested for Syria, Palestine, the Sinai, and Mesopotomia,[40] and it may very well have extended further into peninsular Arabia. Both al-Ḥīra and Najrān would have been suitable bases for such missionary efforts in the Arabian interior.[41] Captivatingly, a ninth-century Islamic source mentions a Christian cemetery in Mecca, a piece of information that appears credible given that it defies the pronounced tendency of later Arabic sources to depict pre-Islamic Mecca as a stronghold of primitive idolatry.[42] Further vestiges in the Islamic sources also entitle us to posit at least a limited and diluted Christian presence in the Hijaz,[43] thus opening up one potential channel by means of which the Qur'an's audience could have been exposed to narratives and ideas derived from or retrospectively linked to the Bible. Since the religious language of Arab Christians, whether inside or outside the Arabian Peninsula, would very likely have been saturated with Syriac loanwords and calques, such a scenario also yields a reasonable explanation for the profound Aramaic imprint on the religious language of the Qur'an.[44]

Despite all of these considerations, however, one should probably not overestimate the presence of mainstream Christianity in the Arabian interior.[45] Najrān and al-Ḥīra are well attested as episcopal seats, yet Christian sources do not name any bishops from inside the peninsula or from the Hijaz in particular, as one would have expected had substantial and organised communities belonging to one of the main forms of late antique Christianity existed there.[46] Of course, it is

possible that peninsular Arabia harboured non-standard strands of Christianity. In particular, some scholars have conjectured that the Qur'anic milieu was dominated by Jewish Christianity, which combines a belief in the preeminent role of Jesus with continued observance of the Mosaic law.[47] Unfortunately, the case for a Jewish-Christian background to the Qur'an hinges exclusively on the interpretation of certain Qur'anic passages that often permit other construals as well, making it difficult to clinch the argument.[48]

In any case, despite Arabia's increasing political and cultural integration into the late antique world, the majority of the peninsula's inhabitants would still have been nominally pagan (that is, not Jewish or Christian) in the early 600s.[49] This is actually an explanatory merit of the traditional placement of the Qur'an's genesis, for as was pointed out above, the text presupposes deities and sacrificial rites that would be surprising in a predominantly Christian setting. Yet we also saw that the Qur'an's audience must have been aware of a wide range of Biblical and parabiblical traditions. In attempting to reconcile these two givens, it may be a mistake to imagine the Qur'anic milieu as one in which two clearly demarcated groups – native pagans, on the one hand, and Jews and Christians, on the other – confronted each other in tidy separation. Instead, Arabian pagans may have fused Biblical and Christian traditions with more ancient indigenous forms of belief and worship. The possibility of such syncretism entails that in the Qur'an's milieu of origin, Jewish and Christian traditions and ideas may not have been the exclusive preserve of self-confessing Jews and Christians but could have reverberated in wider pagan circles. Before we can examine this hypothesis of pagan-Biblical syncretism in detail, though, we first need to develop at least an approximate idea of native Arabian religion.

The quest for Arabian paganism

At this juncture we must once more turn to the vexing problem of historical access. Our knowledge of pre-Islamic Arabian paganism, like our knowledge of the life of Muhammad, is largely mediated by literature that postdates the Qur'an by at least a century. The best-known source on pre-Islamic Arabian religion is a work called the *Book of Idols* (*Kitāb al-aṣnām*), which purports to describe the deities that were venerated by pagan Arabs and the cults and sanctuaries devoted to them. Many of the reports contained in the work are traced back to the early scholar Hishām al-Kalbī (or ibn al-Kalbī, d. 821–2 CE or slightly earlier), although the present form of the text would appear to have been compiled, and supplemented by additional material, at a later time.[50] Although it is tempting to treat the resulting work as a repository of reliable facts, the *Book of Idols* is in fact recognisably shaped by later Islamic concerns and furthermore draws on established motifs of Jewish and Christian anti-pagan polemics.[51] Even the most basic information about where and by whom a certain deity

was allegedly venerated has been found to display considerable '[p]roliferation, lack of consistency and variant detail'.[52]

Our knowledge about pre-Qur'anic Arabian paganism is consequently bound to remain blurred: it is entirely possible that the *Book of Idols* and similar material preserve some authentic data, but there is little prospect of reliably separating out the genuine facts from secondary accretions, legends, and polemical stereotypes. The best we may be able to do is to sketch a general picture of religious life in pre-Islamic Arabia as portrayed by post-Qur'anic sources and then to confront this sketch with the Qur'anic evidence, with a view to determining whether the former seems credible in the light of the latter or instead requires modification.

Based on material of the kind compiled in the *Book of Idols*, pre-Islamic Arabian religion may be summarily portrayed as follows.[53] Although many peninsular tribes led a nomadic life, religious rituals took place at stationary sanctuaries. Religious worship was focused on stones and rocks representing miscellaneous deities. They were hewn images or served as altars on which the blood of sacrificial animals was daubed. Sacred trees are also mentioned. The actual cult site was surrounded by a *temenos* or hallowed precinct (*ḥimā*, *ḥaram*) that was often distinguished by salient natural features, for instance, a spring or a copse. A *temenos* was barred from profane usage, such as hunting or the cutting down of trees. Visitors to a sanctuary would slaughter sacrificial animals, offer up votive gifts, or release camels into the *temenos*. Frequently, sacrifices and gifts were made in return for oracles, which were issued by casting divining arrows. At certain places, more complex pilgrimage rituals evolved. The best-known example is the *ḥajj* in the vicinity of Mecca, an annual procession held in the open countryside that involved three different sites (ʿArafāt, Muzdalifah, and Minā) and culminated in a concluding sacrifice. The Meccan Kaʿbah, too, was the destination of an annual pilgrimage festival centred on the sanctuary's ritual circumambulation.

To what extent is the preceding sketch borne out by the Qur'an? To begin with, the Qur'an devotes ample attention to a group of opponents who are at least reasonable candidates for being identified as pagans, insofar as they are not explicitly designated as 'Israelites', 'Jews', or 'Nazoraeans'. Most frequently, they are labelled as 'Unbelievers' or 'Associators', the latter term deriving from the accusation of illicitly 'associating' other beings with God by worshipping them.[54] Apart from being charged with the worship of false deities, the Associators are also depicted as disbelieving the Qur'an's announcement of an eschatological judgement and as doubting the prophetic credentials of Muhammad.[55] Taking our cue from pioneering work done by Gerald Hawting and Patricia Crone, the question that imposes itself is therefore to what extent the religion of the Qur'anic Associators can be equated with the kind of paganism described in texts like the *Book of Idols*.[56]

That the Associators were engaged in a crude kind of stone worship is difficult to corroborate: as has been pointed out, Qur'anic references to a literal

veneration of idols (*aṣnām, awthān*) occur almost exclusively in narratives about past messengers, the only explicit mention of idols contemporary with the Qur'anic proclamations being the warning to 'avoid the filth of idols (*awthān*)' at Q 22: 30.[57] Nonetheless, the spectrum of religious rituals that is presupposed by the Qur'an fits the cultic practices appearing in post-Qur'anic portrayals of Arabian paganism relatively well. Foremost among these rituals is animal sacrifice, which, as noted above, must have been a pre-eminent mode of worship at the Qur'anic sanctuary. The Qur'an itself condemns 'sacrifical stones' (*anṣāb*) and meat slaughtered on them (Q 5: 3 and 5: 90). This does not, however, imply a repudiation of all sacrificial worship: sacrifice in the name of God is explicitly enjoined (for example, Q 22: 36–37).[58] That the Qur'an's only quarrel is with sacrifices offered up to false deities is also reflected in its ban of 'that on which any other than God has been invoked' (Q 2: 173, 5: 3, 6: 145, and 16: 115). Arguably, Q 22: 30's warning against 'the filth of idols', too, is best understood as prohibiting illicit sacrifice.[59] The Qur'an also reflects other aspects of pre-Islamic Arabian ritual life as portrayed in later Islamic sources. For instance, 6: 136–139 and, less transparently, Q 5: 103 depict Muhammad's opponents as consecrating animals and farm produce.[60] Divining arrows (*azlām*) are denounced in Q 5: 3 and 5: 90. Finally, Q 22: 26.29 authorise the ritual circumambulation of God's 'House', and Q 2: 158 approves the circumambulation of al-Ṣafā and Marwah, customarily assumed to be two heights close to the Kaʿbah.

Apart from the fact that the Qur'an fails to attest a literal veneration of stone images, these glimpses of ritual life in the Qur'anic milieu do not yield a major contradiction with later Islamic accounts of pre-Islamic paganism.[61] More unexpected are the theological views ascribed to the Qur'anic Associators. For starters, they patently accept the idea of a creator god called Allāh, 'God' or, literally, 'the deity'. According to Q 29: 61,

> If you[s] ask them,
> 'Who created the heavens and the earth
> and subjected the sun and the moon?',
> they say, 'God (*allāh*)'.
> So how can they be so deceived?

Other verses reiterate the same contention (Q 31: 25, 39: 38, and 43: 9) or assume that Muhammad's opponents were prepared to concede that Allāh is the owner of the heavens and earth (Q 23: 84–89) and that He makes the rain fall (Q 29: 63).[62] One is furthermore tempted to conclude that the Associators considered Allāh to be the patron and 'lord' of the Qur'anic sanctuary (Q 27: 91, 28: 57, 29: 67, and 106: 3), whereas later Islamic reports often emphasise the Kaʿbah's link to the idol Hubal.[63] The Associators even appear to have engaged in some amount of worship directed at Allāh (Q 6: 136.138), to have appealed to Him in situations of distress (Q 6: 63–64, 10: 22–23, and 29: 65),[64] and to have

sworn by Him (Q 6: 109 and 35: 42).[65] In sum, the Associators undoubtedly recognised the same supreme creator god as Muhammad did.[66] Incidentally, many of the foregoing aspects of Allāh's role are also reflected in pre-Islamic poetry, where Allāh is generally much more prominent than the deities treated in the *Book of Idols*.[67]

The identity of the beings whom the Qur'anic pagans 'associated' with God remains elusive, the only passages that name names being Q 53: 19–20 and 71: 23, mentioned above. However, such anonymity is entirely in keeping with the Qur'an's marked tendency to prefer general terms over proper names, of which the Islamic scripture contains conspicuously few.[68] In any case, there is relatively ample evidence that the beings worshipped by the Qur'anic pagans had the status of 'deities' (*ālihah*) (for example, Q 25: 42 and 36: 74).[69] In this sense, it is accurate to describe the Qur'anic Associators as polytheists.

At the same time, Allāh's ultimate preeminence over other deities does not seem to have been in doubt. One way in which the Associators appear to have articulated such a distinction in rank is by utilising human genealogical language: a fair number of passages chide Muhammad's opponents for ascribing 'offspring' or, more specifically, daughters to God (Q 16: 57, 21: 26, 37: 149–153, 43: 16–18, and 53: 21).[70] Perhaps for polemical reasons, the Qur'an takes talk of God's daughters very literally and ridicules it accordingly; but it is conceivable that the concept's original purport was not to signal a real genealogical link but merely to refer to inferior divine beings of a female nature, similar to the Hebrew Bible's description of the angelic members of God's heavenly court as 'sons of God' (Job 1: 6 and 2: 1).[71] Significantly, the concept of God's daughters is also attested in the Qur'an's wider Arabian context: epigraphic evidence from South Arabia and also from Palmyra testifies to the veneration of a class of female deities of inferior rank called the 'daughters of Īl', who may have played the role of intermediaries between humans and higher-ranking gods.[72]

The Qur'anic Associators seem to have described these subordinate deities not only as daughters of God but also as angels. According to Q 43: 19, Muhammad's opponents 'turn the angels, who are servants of the Merciful, into females', and similar accusations recur elsewhere (Q 17: 40, 37: 150, and 53: 27).[73] It is true that the verses in question could be taken to insist that the beings whom the Associators erroneously understand to be daughters of God are really angels, which would leave it open whether the concept of angels formed part of the Associators' own religious vocabulary.[74] Yet all things considered, one does gather the impression that Muhammad's pagan opponents themselves employed the concept of angels, and that they interchangeably spoke of gods, offspring or daughters of God, and angels.[75]

Be that as it may, the Associators evidently operated with a graded understanding of the divine. The main function fulfilled by the deities associated with

Allāh was to act as intermediaries: 'We only worship them so that they might bring us near to God', the Associators are quoted as saying (Q 39: 3). Frequently, this intermediary role between humans and God is framed in terms of the notion of intercession (*shafāᶜah*): 'They worship besides God what can neither hurt them nor benefit them and say, "These are our intercessors with God."' (Q 10: 18)[76] Remarkably, in deploying the notion of intercession the Qur'anic Associators are making use of a notion that is prominent in Christian discourse: to intercede with God on behalf of ordinary believers is the main function of Christian saints and holy men. The Associators thus appear to have been comfortable borrowing at least some of the conceptual language of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. As a matter of fact, the Associators are nowhere depicted as questioning the Qur'anic equation of Allāh with the Biblical God and may consequently have accepted it.[77] As Patricia Crone has highlighted, certain Qur'anic verses even seem to presuppose that the Associators acknowledged the existence of divinely sent 'messengers' (*rusul*) and of a scripture associated with Moses (see Q 6: 91 and 6: 124).[78] Such observations lend further credence to the supposition that it was the Associators themselves who, in Biblically inspired fashion, cast their intermediary deities as angels.

Pagan-Biblical syncretism

Against the backdrop of the preceding section, there would appear to be two general ways of construing the Qur'anic Associators. The first is to view them as Jewish or Christian saint or angel worshippers whom the Qur'anic proclamations assimilate to polytheists for polemical effect.[79] The other possibility would be to understand the Associators as pagans who had grafted on to their religious heritage assorted Judaeo-Christian elements, such as the figure of a creator God ranking far above all other beings, the notion of intercession, and the concept of angels. On balance, the nature of the rituals attributed to Muhammad's opponents and the Qur'an's occasional references to Arabian deities point to the second alternative.[80] Thus, the Associators are plausibly taken to venerate pagan deities who had come to be subordinated to a supreme creator god Allāh and been recast as intercessory angels. This demotion of originally higher-ranking deities – such as al-Lāt, al-ᶜUzzah, and Manāt – as well as Allāh's equation with the Biblical god may well have occurred under the impact of Jewish and Christian penetration into the Qur'anic milieu. One can even imagine a political context for such developments, for the subordination especially of the three goddesses al-Lāt, al-ᶜUzzah, and Manāt to Allāh, the 'lord' of the Meccan sanctuary (Q 106: 3), would very effectively have supported the Kaᶜbah's cultic prominence. Hypothetical though it may be, such a scenario accords well with Islamic reports that the Quraysh were keen to cultivate the religious prestige of their shrine. For instance, they are said to have removed from a sacred hill in

the vicinity of Mecca a conspicuous stone thought to have descended from the sky and to have included it in the wall of the Kaʿbah, obviously with a view to maximising the latter's religious potency.[81]

It stands to reason, then, that the Qur'anic Associators worshipped ancient Arabian deities yet felt free to reinterpret and supplement their ancestral rites by concepts and ideas adopted from the Jewish and Christian traditions that were increasingly seeping into the Arabian interior. The Associators may even have appropriated elements of Christian ritual practice: according to later Islamic sources, when Mecca surrendered to Muhammad the Kaʿbah was adorned with icon-like images, namely, 'a picture of Abraham as an old man and performing divination by the shaking of arrows, and a picture of Jesus son of Mary and his mother, and a picture of angels'.[82] Especially intriguing here is the link suggested between Abraham and the pagan practice of belomancy, or divination by means of arrows (cf. Q 5: 3.90), which attests to a seamless fusion of pagan and Biblical elements.

How seriously should we take the claim that already prior to the Qur'an some connection existed between the Meccan sanctuary and Abraham? It is true that Islamic sources are doctrinally committed to understanding the Kaʿbah sanctuary to have been founded by Abraham, as maintained in Q 2: 124–129. On the other hand, pre-Islamic Christian texts do confirm that the figure of Abraham exerted a particular attraction on pagan Arabs. Already by the first century CE, the Arabs had come to be integrated into Biblical genealogy by being identified as descendants of Abraham's son Ishmael.[83] At some point, this outsider's genealogical construct appears to have been taken over by at least some Arabs themselves: according to the *Ecclesiastical History* of Sozomen of Gaza, completed before 450, some Arabs (whom he calls 'Saracens') had 'come in contact with the Jews, gathered from them the facts of their true origin [namely, their descent from Abraham], returned to their kinsmen, and inclined to the Hebrew customs and laws'.[84] Theodoret of Cyrus, likewise writing in the fifth century, similarly holds that some of the 'barbarians' of Sinai 'proudly derive their descent from their ancestor Ishmael'.[85] Notwithstanding the geographical distance separating Gaza and the Sinai from the Hijaz, the evidence of Sozomen and Theodoret makes it conceivable that the Associators believed that the early history of the Meccan sanctuary was bound up with the figure of Abraham, a motif subsequently espoused and developed by the Qur'an (Q 2: 124–129, 11: 73, 14: 35–41, and 22: 26–29).[86]

Comparative evidence endows the preceding attempt at profiling the Qur'anic Associators with additional plausibility, for the absorption of Judaeo-Christian notions and practices by indigenous pagan traditions was a widespread phenomenon in the late antique Near East.[87] Peter Brown has memorably characterised late antique pagans as 'impenitent *bricoleurs*' and '[h]ackers of the supernatural' who 'were quite prepared to "cannibalise" Christian belief and practice, in order

to find spare parts with which to enrich their own religious systems'.[88] Brown's description is entirely applicable to the Qur'anic Associators as well, given the syncretistic blending of pagan and Christian rites and ideas they seem to have espoused. Use of the term 'syncretism', of course, must not be understood to imply a confused concoction of incompatible ideas or an absence of intellectual agency.[89] It is only from the polemical perspective of outsiders that a syncretistic system of beliefs and practices presents itself as a discordant patchwork of disjointed elements. As a matter of fact, the report about Muhammad's entering the Kaʿbah after the conquest of Mecca that was cited above perfectly illustrates such an outsider's perspective: when laying eyes on the picture of Abraham performing belomancy, he is said to have exclaimed in horror: 'May God destroy them! They made him cast the divining arrows. What does Abraham have to do with divining arrows?'[90] A similarly external viewpoint animates the Qur'an's polemical attacks on the beliefs of the Associators: to recognise an omnipotent creator while continuing to have recourse to subordinate deities is condemned as preposterously inconsistent.[91] Of course, such accusations of incoherence will seem far from cogent to those actually inhabiting a syncretistic system of beliefs and practices.

It is probably no coincidence that the Associators' apparent fusion of pagan and Judaeo-Christian components crystallised at what must have been a sanctuary of at least regional importance, where ideas and practices would have circulated, mutated, and fused at a quicker rate than at other places. As Bertram Schmitz has pointed out, a suggestive precedent for imagining the nature of the sanctuary occupied by the Associators is afforded by Sozomen's description of the pilgrimage festival of Mamre near Hebron. Mamre was the site of an ancient oak by which Abraham, according to Genesis 18, received the annunciation of the birth of his son Isaac. Sozomen reports that during the reign of the emperor Constantine (r. 306–37) the annual festival held there attracted a wide and heterogeneous range of visitors from the surrounding regions. These were not confined to Jews and Christians but also comprised pagans, resulting in a colourful collage of religious rites:

> Here some prayed to the God of all; some called upon the angels, poured out wine, burnt incense, or offered an ox, or he-goat, a sheep, or a cock … And either from honour to the place, or from fear of divine wrath, they all abstained from coming near their wives … The place is open country, and arable, and without houses, with the exception of the buildings around Abraham's old oak and the well he prepared. No one during the time of the feast drew water from that well; for according to pagan usage, some placed burning lamps near it; some poured out wine, or cast in cakes; and others coins, myrrh, or incense. Hence, as I suppose, the water was rendered useless by commixture with the things cast into it.

When the emperor Constantine was apprised of these goings-on, he saw to it that the festival was purged of any pagan rites and enjoined 'that no libations or

sacrifices should be offered on the spot but that it should be exclusively devoted to the worship of God according to the law of the church'.[92]

Mamre was not the only site dedicated to a Biblical or Christian figure that was frequented by pagan tribespeople: the sanctuaries of St Sergius at Rusafa or of Symeon the Stylite in Syria exerted a similar attraction.[93] Such late antique shrines constitute our best points of departure for understanding seventh-century Mecca, despite the fact that the latter's religious status was not predicated on its link with a Christian saint. Nonetheless, we saw above that the Meccan sanctuary, like Mamre, was perhaps already in pre-Qur'anic times considered to be related to Abraham, a figure whose appeal demonstrably resonated well beyond Jewish and Christian circles. Like other late antique sanctuaries, Mecca may have attracted pilgrims holding very different beliefs, on a sliding scale from unmitigated polytheism to something approaching monotheism.[94] The spectrum of rituals carried out at the Meccan sanctuary may have been equally wide, ranging from sacrificial slaughter to mere prayer.[95] Intriguingly, there is isolated post-Qur'anic evidence for Christian involvement in the *ḥajj*, anticipating the ritual's monotheistic recasting in Islam, although the rationale that potential Christian participants would have ascribed to the *ḥajj* remains obscure.[96] Unlike Mamre, Mecca was not subject to any external authority interested in, and capable of, enforcing 'the worship of God according to the law of the church', allowing for an entirely uncontrolled fusion of pagan and Judaeo-Christian components. Most likely, it is such a milieu that yielded the religion of the Qur'anic Associators, polemics against which take up so much of the Islamic scripture.

Notes

1. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, pp. 4–7. Bukharin, 'Mecca', pp. 121–2, insists that the caravan route must have at least gone through al-Ṭā'if.
2. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, pp. 134–7; Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, p. 22, p. 171 (n. 8), and pp. 175–6 (n. 48). As pointed out in the former work, it is doubtful that an enigmatic reference to a place called Macoraba by the second-century geographer Ptolemy may without further ado be identified with Mecca (but see Robinson, *Discovering*, p. 32, and Bukharin, 'Mecca', p. 122).
3. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, p. 187.
4. Crone, 'How Did the Quranic Pagans Make a Living?'
5. Neuwirth, 'Qur'anic Readings of the Psalms', p. 737; Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, pp. 82–3.
6. Crone, 'How Did the Quranic Pagans Make a Living?', pp. 388–9. Crone furthermore draws attention to Q 16: 5–15. This passage not only contains a long catalogue of divine blessings (involving livestock, pack animals, a diverse range of vegetation and crops, and fresh fish) but also repeatedly and explicitly ties these blessings to the addressees.
7. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, p. 163; Cook, *Koran*, pp. 140–1.
8. Fiema et al., '*Provincia Arabia*', especially pp. 399–417; Millar, *Religion*, p. 153. It has been pointed out that the development of the Nabataean script into the Arabic one presupposes a much more extensive practice of writing Arabic than is documented by extant

inscriptions, probably on perishable materials (Hoyland, 'Epigraphy', pp. 57–8, 63; Macdonald, 'Ancient Arabia', pp. 20–1).

9. Hoyland, 'Arab Kings', p. 375; Fiema et al., 'Provincia Arabia', p. 410.
10. It would also be at least as compatible as the Hijazi hypothesis with the prominence that certain Qur'anic narratives accord to the people of Thamūd, a tribal group from north-west Arabia who is attested in inscriptions and literary sources from the early first millennium BC onwards. See Macdonald et al., 'Arabs and Empires', pp. 45–7. The north-west Arabian placement of Thamūd is highlighted in Millar, *Religion*, p. 159. For two exemplary Qur'anic accounts of God's annihilation of Thamūd, see Q 7: 73–79 and 91: 11–15.
11. Gibson, *Qurʾānic Geography*, locates the Qur'an's emergence in Petra.
12. Robin, 'Ḥimyar', pp. 151–2 and 169–70. For a recent survey of ancient sources mentioning Yathrib, see Munt, *Holy City*, pp. 42–4.
13. Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, p. 174, n. 39; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 187–8.
14. See once again Munt, *Holy City*, pp. 54–6.
15. Hoyland, 'Jews of the Hijaz'.
16. As pointed out in Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry*, pp. 136–7, Q 53: 19–22 does not explicitly say that the Qur'an's opponents considered al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzah, and Manāt to be goddesses, although it may be inferred that they were viewed as female offspring of Allāh and, presumably, deemed to merit worship. Q 71: 23, on the other hand, does explicitly speak of 'deities' (*ālihah*), yet these are presented as having been venerated by the people of Noah. However, in view of the fact that Qur'anic messenger narratives frequently present their protagonists and their addressees in a way that mirrors Muhammad and his own audience, Q 71: 23 is defensibly considered to shed light on the religious context of the Qur'an itself.
17. On the deities mentioned in Q 53: 19–20, see Krone, *Altarabische Gottheit*, and, more sceptically, Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry*, pp. 130–49. On those mentioned in Q 71: 23, see Fahd, *Panthéon*, pp. 132–4, 154–6, and 182–97 (primarily based on the later Islamic tradition but also invoking some epigraphic evidence). For a note of caution against an overly confident identification of frequently ambiguous inscriptional expressions or references in non-Arabic texts with the pagan deities mentioned in post-Qur'anic Islamic sources, see Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry*, pp. 112–19.
18. Krone, *Altarabische Gottheit*, p. 163.
19. Krone, *Altarabische Gottheit*, pp. 166–75.
20. Conceivably, such terminology as *hady* ('sacrificial offerings'), *maḥill* ('place of sacrifice'), and *shaʿāʾir allāh* ('divine rites') could be reinterpreted in a non-sacrificial manner, but at least Q 5: 3, 22: 36–37, and 108: 2 contain unequivocal reference to the slaughtering of animals.
21. My point here is inspired by a conversation with Andrew Marsham. On the 'end of sacrifice' as a defining trait of late antique religious history, see Stroumsa, *The End of Sacrifice*, pp. 56–83. Islamic sacrificial practices were deemed noteworthy already by seventh-century Christian observers; see Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, p. 149.
22. Even Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, p. 13, note that Islamic sacrificial rites likely perpetuate pagan Arabian practices. See also Al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam*, pp. 1, 40, 263, and elsewhere, who describes the early seventh-century Hijaz as a 'pagan reservation'.
23. The best textbooks for beginning the study of early Arabic poetry remain Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, vols 1 and 2. Although many allegedly pre-Islamic lines of poetry may be spurious, the suspicion that the entire corpus is a later fabrication may be safely dismissed; see Wagner, *Grundzüge*, vol. 1, pp. 15–29, and Bauer, 'Relevance', pp. 701–2.
24. Horovitz, 'Das koranische Paradies'; Neuwirth, *Frühmekkanische Suren*, pp. 91–2, 148–9, 230–1 and elsewhere; Bauer, 'Relevance'; Sinai, '*Sūrat al-Najm*', p. 14 and p. 25, n. 48; Sinai, 'Religious Poetry'.

25. For oath introductions, see Q 37, 51, 52, 75, 77, 79, 85, 86, 89–93, 95, 100, and 103; on the employment of oaths in pre-Islamic oracles, see Hoyland, *Arabia*, pp. 220–2, and Neuwirth, 'Der historische Muhammad'. A comprehensive study of Qur'anic oath introductions is undertaken in Neuwirth, *Scripture*, pp. 102–37.
26. Stroumsa, 'Jewish Christianity', p. 79, building on Max Weber.
27. Thus, Griffith (*The Bible in Arabic*, p. 57) speaks of 'the Islamic scripture's unspoken and pervasive confidence that its audience is thoroughly familiar with the stories of the biblical patriarchs and prophets, so familiar in fact that there is no need for even the most rudimentary form of introduction'.
28. On the terms listed in the main text, see the relevant entries in Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, and Pennacchio, *Emprunts* (cf. Pennacchio's register on pp. 175–6).
29. Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*; Griffith, 'Christian Lore'; van Bladel, 'Alexander Legend'; Reynolds, *The Qur'ān and its Biblical Subtext*; Witztum, 'Joseph'; Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma'; Zellentin, *The Qur'ān's Legal Culture*. On the Qur'an's familiarity with Christian and also Jewish traditions, see in more detail Chapter 6 below; on Qur'anic eschatology, see Chapter 7.
30. One could object that it is only in fairly late surahs – namely, those that may be dated to the Medinan stage of Muhammad's career – that one finds explicit references to Christians, whom the Qur'an calls *al-naṣārā*, 'the Nazoraeans'. Yet given the linguistic and intertextual observations just enumerated, such a far-reaching (although not total) lack of explicit engagement with Christianity cannot be deemed to indicate a general absence of Christians from the early Qur'anic milieu. Rather, it appears that the early Qur'an is, for whatever reason, simply not interested in polemically confronting Christians and their signature beliefs, such as the divinity of Jesus. For further remarks on this topic, see Chapter 7.
31. For a sample, see Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry*, pp. 99–100.
32. See Montgomery, 'The Empty Ḥijāz'.
33. Hoyland, 'Early Islam', pp. 1071–2.
34. For a recent study, see Fisher, *Between Empires*.
35. On Jafnid involvement with Christianity, see Fisher, Wood, et al., 'Arabs and Christianity', pp. 313–50.
36. Fisher, Wood, et al., 'Arabs and Christianity', pp. 357–63; Toral-Niehoff, 'The ʿIbād'; Toral-Niehoff, *Al-Ḥīra*, pp. 88–105 and 151–211.
37. On the following, see Bowersock, *Throne of Adulis*, and Robin, 'Ḥimyar' (with an analysis of sample inscriptions).
38. See, e.g., Fisher, Wood, et al., 'Arabs and Christianity', pp. 276–7.
39. A miscellany of relevant source material is presented, albeit occasionally treated in a somewhat speculative manner, in Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 220–305; see also Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, pp. 432–43. On the Ḥīran poet ʿAdī ibn Zayd, who was a Christian, see Dmitriev, 'An Early Christian Arabic Account', with further references. See also Montgomery, *Vagaries*, pp. 258–9; Hoyland, 'Arab Kings', p. 395.
40. Fisher, Wood, et al., 'Arabs and Christianity', pp. 287–311 and 350–7.
41. On al-Ḥīra, see Fisher, Wood, et al., 'Arabs and Christianity', p. 357, and Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, p. 366. That Najrān played a similar role is suggested by the fact that various post-Qur'anic anecdotes, legendary though they may be, portray Muhammad as engaged in interaction with Christians from there; see Lammens, *L'Arabie occidentale*, pp. 16–18. That late sixth-century South Arabia served as a basis for vigorous missionary activity inside the Arabian Peninsula is maintained as inherently probable in Andrae, *Ursprung*, pp. 201–3.

42. Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, p. 387, and El-Badawi, *The Qur'ān and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions*, p. 58 (both citing al-Azraqī's *Akhbār Makkah*).
43. Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, pp. 359 and 390–2.
44. On the use of Syriac as a liturgical and scriptural language, possibly complemented by impromptu translations into Arabic, see Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, pp. 42–3.
45. See Lammens, *L'Arabie occidentale*, pp. 1–49. After a detailed review of the post-Qur'anic references to Christians in Mecca, Lammens concludes that the sources examined by him do not imply more than a marginal presence of Christianity there.
46. A list of Ḥīran bishops is provided in Toral-Niehoff, *Al-Ḥīra*, p. 224. On references to Christian bishops from the eastern coast of Arabia, see Andrae, *Ursprung*, p. 17.
47. See now Crone, 'Jewish Christianity'.
48. For instance, Crone ('Jewish Christianity', pp. 228–9) considers a Jewish Christian background to the Qur'an to be indicated by the fact that 'the Qurʾānic Jesus is a prophet sent to the Israelites, not to the gentiles' and that he claims to confirm the Torah (e.g., in Q 61: 6). Yet both facets of the Qur'anic Jesus are easily explicable in terms of the Qur'an's overarching prophetological assumptions: Qur'anic messengers and prophets are generally sent to their own people (although Moses is of course charged with preaching to Pharaoh as well), and all prophets recognised by the Qur'an are said to 'believe' in predecessors whose teaching 'confirms' their own message (Q 3: 81). The first objection is noted, although not in my view convincingly invalidated, by Crone herself ('Jewish Christianity', pp. 230–1).
49. On the problems inherent in the term 'paganism', see Frede and Athanassiadi (eds), *Pagan Monotheism*, pp. 4–5, and Maxwell, 'Paganism', pp. 852–3.
50. Al-Kalbī, *Kītāb al-Aṣnām*; see Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry*, pp. 88–95.
51. Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry*, pp. 92–110.
52. Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry*, pp. 111–29 (quoting p. 122).
53. The following sketch is derived from Wellhausen, *Reste*, and Ammann, *Geburt*.
54. The Arabic terms are *al-kāfirūn*, *al-kuffār, alladhīna kafarū* and *al-mushrikūn*, *alladhīna ashrakū*. On the semantics of both terms, see Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry*, pp. 48–50. As duly emphasised there, it would be misleading to translate *al-mushrikūn* as 'the polytheists' or 'the idolaters'. Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, p. 61, persuasively links the Qur'anic use of *ashraka* to Hebrew *šittēp*, which Rabbinic sources employ to denote the 'association' of another being with God (cf. Jastrow, *Dictionary*, p. 1639), with Arabic *sharīk* corresponding to Hebrew *šúttāp* (cf. Jastrow, *Dictionary*, p. 1544).
55. Crone, 'The Quranic *Mushrikūn*'. – Two caveats are in order here: (i) The categories of unbelief and associationism can sometimes overlap with references to Jews and Christians. For instance, Q 2: 105 and 98: 6 condemn 'the Unbelievers from among the People of the Scripture [= Jews and Christians]' (cf. also Q 5: 78), although at least the former two verses would appear to maintain a distinction between unbelieving Scripturalists and the Associators. Conversely, Q 9: 31 finds the Christians guilty of associationism. However, it remains true to say that Jews, 'Nazoraeans', and Unbelievers/Associators are generally treated as different groups. (ii) Not all passages criticising members of Muhammad's audience for failing to believe in the Last Judgement explicitly designate these opponents as 'Unbelievers' or 'Associators'. For instance, Q 68: 8, 69: 49, 73: 11 and other verses speak of 'the Deniers' (*al-mukadhdhibūn*), while explicit references to the Associators seem to occur predominantly in later surahs. Nonetheless, there is no reason to doubt the standard assumption that it is by and large one and the same group of opponents whom the Qur'an accuses of worshipping false deities and rejecting the Last Judgement. It is therefore convenient to refer to them by using the Qur'anic term 'the Associators', even if the relevant scriptural passages also employ other designations.

56. Although the following is substantially inspired by and based on Hawting and Crone, as referenced in the notes, my reading of the Qur'anic material ultimately disagrees in important respects with their conclusions. The relevant studies by Crone are conveniently gathered in Crone, *The Qurʾānic Pagans*.
57. Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry*, pp. 55–9; Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', pp. 169–72.
58. Furthermore, Q 108: 2 exhorts the Qur'anic Messenger to 'pray to your^{s} Lord and sacrifice': there is no sense that sacrifice might be an entirely inappropriate mode of venerating God (although Q 22: 36–37 is careful to develop a theologically sophisticated account of sacrificial worship that does not suggest God might have any need of sacrifices).
59. Thus also Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', p. 169. Q 22: 30 follows a passage according to which the pilgrimage rites performed at the Qur'anic sanctuary were established already by Abraham (Q 22: 26ff.) and is followed by a comment on the performance of sacrifice (Q 22: 32–33). Although the Qur'an unequivocally approves the pilgrimage as such, it seems that in undertaking it Muhammad's followers were deemed to be in danger of becoming polluted by illicit sacrifices. This fits in with the fact that Q 5: 2 presupposes that during the pilgrimage Muhammad's followers would mingle with the Associators. Note that Q 22: 30 does not only warn against the 'filth of idols' but also against 'the speaking of falsehood'. This, too, admits of being linked to the pilgrimage and may refer to certain cultic utterances and prayers that the Qur'an judges to be idolatrous.
60. Q 5: 103 is admittedly opaque but the aspect of religious consecration is quite unequivocal in Q 6: 136 (*wa-jaᶜalū li-llāhi* …, 'they assign to God'; see also 6: 138–139).
61. A minor surprise is perhaps constituted by the fact that according to Q 8: 35 the pagans also performed some kind of prayer ritual at the sanctuary.
62. Brockelmann, 'Allah und die Götzen', pp. 105 and 107; Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', p. 154.
63. On Hubal, see Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry*, pp. 112–13, with further references; Pavlovitch, '*Qad kunna* [sic] *lā naᶜbudu*', pp. 66–71. Pavlovitch doubts that Allāh was considered to be the lord of the Kaᶜbah already in pre-Islamic times, although the claim is arguably vitiated by his decision to privilege post-Qur'anic evidence – the reliability of which is appropriately critiqued by Hawting – over Q 27: 91 and 106: 3.
64. Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', p. 162; Ammann, *Geburt*, pp. 26–7 and 30.
65. Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', p. 165.
66. Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', p. 153.
67. See the material surveyed in Brockelmann, 'Allah und die Götzen'. I take it that at least a sizeable amount of the verses in question are not obviously suspect of constituting Islamic interpolations. As Devin Stewart reminds me, the relative unimportance of deities other than Allāh in the poetic corpus may to some degree be the result of censorship.
68. For a narrative illustration of this tendency, see Sinai, 'Religious Poetry', p. 412.
69. Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry*, p. 50 (where the reference to Q 25: 43 is to be emended to 25: 42); Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', pp. 154–6.
70. Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', pp. 156–7.
71. This is inspired by the paraphrase proposed in Wellhausen, *Reste*, p. 24: 'divine beings of a female nature'.
72. Robin, 'Les "filles de Dieu"'; Robin, 'À propos des "filles de Dieu"'; see also Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', pp. 183–5.
73. Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', pp. 156–7.
74. Thus, for instance, Brockelmann, 'Allah und die Götzen', p. 102, following Macdonald; for further references, see Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', p. 157, n. 10.

75. Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', p. 156; Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry*, pp. 52–3. That the concept of angels formed part of the Associators' own religious vocabulary is supported by some of the Qur'anic material discussed in Crone, 'Angels versus Humans', such as Q 11: 12 and 15: 7.
76. Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', pp. 158–9, quoting a batch of further verses.
77. Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', pp. 151–2.
78. Crone, 'Angels versus Humans'.
79. This hypothesis seems to underlie, however tentatively, Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', pp. 192–200.
80. Cf. Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', pp. 188–9.
81. Rubin, 'The Kaʿba', pp. 118–23.
82. Al-Azraqī, *Kitāb akhbār Makkah*, pp. 110–1 (translation quoted from Peters, *Muhammad*, p. 141). See also, with further references, Rubin, 'Ḥanīfiyya and Kaʿba', p. 102.
83. The notion is found already in the Jewish-Roman historian Flavius Josephus (d. c. 100 CE); see Millar, 'Hagar'.
84. Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 6: 38 (cited in Fisher, Wood, et al., 'Arabs and Christianity', pp. 370–1); see also Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, pp. 167–80. Shahîd interprets the passage to mean a full conversion to Judaism but despite Sozomen's claim that the Saracens in question 'regulate their lives according to the Jewish precepts' this seems far from certain. Sozomen singles out the practice of circumcision and abstention from pork as having been motivated by the Arabs' consciousness of being descended from Abraham, but this could be a construct (Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry*, pp. 38–9). Based on the pre-Islamic onomasticon, as transmitted in later Islamic works, Dagorn, *La geste*, attempts to refute the claim that already pre-Islamic Arabs derived their descent from Abraham. For a critical response, see Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, pp. 382–3.
85. Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, pp. 154–6.
86. See below, Chapter 5, n. 51, and Chapter 8, section 'Jerusalemising Mecca'.
87. For some examples, see Fisher, *Between Empires*, pp. 38–9; Fiema et al., '*Provincia Arabia*', p. 389; Frankfurter, 'Syncretism', p. 345; Herrero de Jáuregui, *Orphism*, p. 124.
88. Brown, *Authority*, pp. 67–8.
89. See Frankfurter, 'Syncretism', pp. 340–8. Healey, *Religion of the Nabataeans*, pp. 14–16, prefers to speak of 'assimilation' or 'acculturation'.
90. Al-Azraqī, *Kitāb akhbār Makkah*, pp. 111 (translation quoted from Peters, *Muhammad*, p. 141).
91. Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', pp. 153–4.
92. Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 2: 4 (quoted with slight orthographic changes to Hartranft's translation). See Schmitz, *Sure 2*, pp. 201–5. As pertinently highlighted ibid., p. 203, the festival of Mamre is even more similar to the *ḥajj*, which was also held in the unsettled countryside, than to the intramural rites performed at the Kaʿbah.
93. Sizgorich, *Violence*, pp. 150–1. For a comprehensive study of the cult of St Sergius at Rusafa, see Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*.
94. Islamic sources on pre-Islamic Mecca make reference to a number of confessionally uncommitted monotheists who professed to be followers of Abraham and also attached special significance to the Meccan sanctuary. For an argument in favour of the basic historical accuracy of such reports, see Rubin, 'Ḥanīfiyya and Kaʿba'. Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry*, p. 37, is unconvinced.
95. That the Qur'anic pagans would pray at the sanctuary is clearly confirmed by Q 8: 35, even though the peculiar nature of their prayer is harshly criticised. A combination of prayer and sacrificial worship is also implied by Q 108: 2, an early verse.
96. Rubin, 'Great Pilgrimage', p. 244.

PART TWO

Method

CHAPTER 4

Literary coherence and secondary revision

As was intimated in Chapter 1, it is no easy task to peruse the Qur'an from cover to cover. The difficulty results mainly from the fact that especially the compositional unity of the long surahs located at the beginning of the corpus is anything but obvious: at least at first sight, they can appear to flit back and forth between different topics in a largely haphazard manner. This impression is not limited to Western readers: even pre-modern Muslim scholars have often approached their scripture as a quarry of unconnected verses and groups of verses that bear little intrinsic relation to what precedes and follows.[1] In fact, my own treatment of Qur'anic material in previous chapters has applied a similar method of textual hunting and gathering: in profiling the historical constellation presupposed by the Qur'an or the religion of Muhammad's pagan opponents, I have drawn on a wide range of Qur'anic data scattered across the entire corpus, without paying much attention to the relevant verses' literary context.

If the Qur'an really were a largely amorphous mass of material, such an approach would be without alternative. This chapter will focus on the question of whether such a diagnosis is in fact sound. We shall begin from the ground up, by exploring literary units immediately above the verse level, namely, paragraph-like groups of verses.

Paragraphing the Qur'an: an exemplary dissection of Q 19

When reading through a Qur'anic passage or surah, it is fairly evident that its constituent verses frequently connect with one another to form longer verse groups. In fact, the segmentary quality of Qur'anic discourse is sufficiently pronounced in order for two popular translations – Rudi Paret's German one and Muhammad Abdel Haleem's English rendering – to organise the text accordingly.[2] It was pointed out in Chapter 1 that the demarcation of individual verses, albeit occasionally controversial, can rely on a relatively easily ascertainable literary feature, namely, rhyme. To what extent can the division of a surah into verse groups lay claim to a similarly objective status?

The segmentary character of Qur'anic discourse was first highlighted in 1896 by David Heinrich Müller.[3] Unfortunately, Müller spoke of the Qur'an's 'strophic composition', and his theory was then lambasted on the grounds that Qur'anic paragraphs almost never maintain a fixed number of constituent

verses for a significant stretch of text.[4] Nonetheless, Müller's basic insight that Qur'anic surahs naturally divide into smaller verse groups is sound. These sections emerge from readily discernible shifts in topic, speaker, and addressee, as well as various formal markers, which frequently coincide with the former. For instance, in surahs with short verses changes in rhyme tend to concur with plausible section breaks, or at least to precede or follow them by one or two verses.[5] Other sectioning devices include formulaic introductory or concluding phrases, vocatives ('O Prophet', 'O you who believe', and so forth), and metatextual 'wrap-up' statements.[6]

Since the ability to map out the structure of a surah is an indispensable skill for anyone trying to work out what the Qur'an is saying, the exercise deserves to be demonstrated in some detail. By way of a concrete example, let us dissect surah 19, totalling ninety-eight verses. It opens with a chain of narratives, including the birth of John the Baptist to his father Zachariah and the birth of Jesus to Mary; later sections of the surah have a pronounced polemical quality. A convenient point of departure is afforded by Paret's and Abdel Haleem's paragraphing of the text, presented side by side in Figure 6. The table furthermore shows the section breaks identified by Neuwirth.[7] To facilitate orientation, the table's rightmost column summarises the verses following each of the suggested paragraph breaks, up until the verse listed in the next row. Caesurae that are posited by at least two of the three scholars are shaded.

As indicated by Figure 6, a considerable number of paragraph breaks are agreed upon by two or three scholars. Many of these caesurae can be easily rationalised. Especially clear are the breaks engendered by the introductory formula that forms the first half of vv. 16, 41, 51, 54, and 56: 'Remember, [as contained] in the Scripture, Mary/Abraham/Moses …'[8] These opening injunctions recall v. 2, which introduces the Zachariah pericope: 'A remembrance (*dhikr*) of the grace of your[s] Lord towards His servant Zachariah'. The internal structure of the Zachariah pericope itself is signalled by two vocatives: 'O Zachariah' (v. 7), introducing God's response to the latter's prayer for a son, and 'O John' (v. 12), which transitions to a summary of the divine graces bestowed on Zachariah's son. The caesura at v. 58, after the surah's sequence of prophetic reminiscences, is equally clear, given that the verse begins by reminding the addressees of all the prophetic figures previously treated: 'These are the prophets blessed by God, from the descendants of Adam …'

Other thematic transitions are accentuated by rhyme changes (vv. 34, 41, and 75). The break between v. 33 and v. 34 is further reinforced insofar as the statement of the infant Jesus in v. 33 – 'Peace upon me the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I am raised alive!' – is identical with the last verse of the John passage (v. 15): 'Peace upon him the day he was born, the day he dies, and the day he is raised alive!' Both blessings have an evident closing function. Section breaks can also be induced by conspicuous changes in speaker and

Paret	Abdel Haleem	Neuwirth	Brief characterisation
v. 1	v. 1	v. 1	superscript (letter sequence)
	v. 2	v. 2	formulaic introduction of Zachariah pericope
		v. 3	Zachariah's prayer for a son
		v. 7	God's response to Zachariah
	v. 10		Zachariah asks God for a sign
v. 12	v. 12	v. 12	God's grace upon Zachariah's son John
v. 16	v. 16	v. 16	formulaic introduction of Mary pericope, annunciation of Jesus
		v. 22	birth of Jesus
	v. 27	v. 27	Mary's return to her people
		v. 30	speech of the infant Jesus
v. 34	v. 34b[a]	v. 34	general comments on Jesus: rejection of his divine sonship
		v. 37	division of people into factions, eschatological threats
v. 41	v. 41	v. 41	formulaic introduction of Abraham pericope, Abraham's quarrel with his father
		v. 47	Abraham renounces his people, God grants Abraham prophetic descendants
v. 51	v. 51	v. 51	formulaic introduction of Moses pericope, Moses' prophetic call
v. 54		v. 54	formulaic introduction of Ishmael pericope, brief statement
v. 56		v. 56	formulaic introduction of Idrīs pericope, brief statement
v. 58	v. 58	v. 58	general comments on preceding prophets
		v. 60	promise of salvation to those who believe
v. 64	v. 64	v. 64	speech by the angels
v. 66	v. 66	v. 66	polemic against doubts concerning the Resurrection, eschatological threats
		v. 72	antithetical contrast of the saved and the damned
v. 73	v. 73	v. 73	polemic against those who reject God's signs
v. 75		v. 75	address of the Messenger (*qul* command)
v. 77			further polemic against those who reject God's signs
v. 81	v. 81		polemic against false deities
		v. 83	eschatological threats (addressed to the Messenger)
v. 88	v. 88	v. 88	polemic against the claim that God has offspring
v. 96	v. 96	v. 96	eschatological promise
v. 97 (– v. 98)		v. 97 (– v. 98)	concluding address of the Messenger

Figure 6 Paragraph breaks in surah 19 according to Paret, Abdel Haleem, and Neuwirth

[a]Abdel Haleem here posits a paragraph break in the middle of the verse, which must surely be rejected.

addressee. Thus, v. 64 shifts from the divine first person (v. 63) to what must be construed as angelic speech, and a similar shift occurs at v. 81: whereas the preceding verses polemicise against 'the one who disbelieves in our signs' (v. 77) in the third-person singular, v. 81 employs the third-person plural: 'They have taken gods beside God …'

Even if a paragraph break is not signalled by prominent formal cues such as a rhyme change, an introductory formula, a vocative, or a change in speaker or addressee, the existence of a caesura may still be obvious. This is the case, for instance, when the verses following an assumed section break are connected by close lexical and syntactic links that mark them off from their wider environment. Thus, vv. 88ff. form a distinct verse group devoted to the accusation that the Unbelievers believe in divine 'offspring' (*walad*), a term that recurs in vv. 88, 91, and 92.[9] Apart from its thematic and terminological unity, this paragraph is also tied together by syntactic features: v. 90 contains a pronoun referring back to v. 89, and v. 91 complements the preceding verse with a subordinate clause beginning with the word 'that' (*an*).

Many section breaks in surah 19 are thus defensible in terms of reasonably objective philological observations. This is not to deny that there remains some room for more subjective decisions. For instance, v. 96 may be deemed either to close the polemical section starting with v. 88 or to belong together with the surah's final verses 97–98. Given that v. 97 opens with the conjunction *fa-*, which implies an inherent link to the preceding statement, Abdel Haleem's decision to group v. 96 together with vv. 97–98 seems marginally preferable, but the matter hardly admits of an absolutely compelling resolution.[10] There can also be uncertainty as to whether a given stretch of text between two section breaks ought to be subdivided yet further. For instance, consider vv. 75–81. Should we follow Paret in positing an additional intervening break inside this unit, at v. 77? Different readers of the text may well have different intuitions here. Yet despite such residual indeterminacy, the basic observation that the surah is composed of paragraph-like verse blocks does not seem doubtful.

This is not all, though. Virtually all Qur'anic surahs above a certain length exhibit further structural features: just as individual verses cohere together to form paragraph-like verse groups, so the latter often cohere together to form overarching surah parts. Surah 19 again provides a good illustration. Figure 6 shows that more than half of the text is occupied by a sequence of narratives and brief reminiscences about previous prophets that comes to an end with the summary statement starting at v. 58. The remainder of the text, by contrast, is dominated by polemics. Thus, whereas vv. 2 up to at least 57 are closely interconnected by virtue of their interest in figures from Biblical history, vv. 66–95 are linked by virtue of attacking various manifestations of unbelief: doubts about the Resurrection (vv. 66–72), rejection of God's 'signs' (*āyāt*) (vv. 73–80), the veneration of false deities (vv. 81–87), and the belief that God has

'offspring' (vv. 88–95). All four verse groups are concluded by threatening announcements related to the 'Day of Resurrection' (v. 95, ending in the same rhyme word as v. 80). The entire polemical suite is closed out by vv. 97–98, which contain a brief self-referential statement and a final reference to God's annihilation (verb: *ahlaka*) of previous generations, recalling a very similar interjection in v. 74.

The surah thus falls into two parts, one narrative and one polemical. The former presents a series of positive role models that contrast with the types of unbelief attacked in the polemical part. To be sure, identifying the precise border between the narrative and the polemical portions is not entirely straightforward. Assuming that the initial letter sequence functions as a sort of superscript for the entire composition, the narrative part obviously commences at v. 2. But where does it end? That vv. 58–63 still belong to Part One seems clear, but should we assume Part Two to begin with v. 64 or with v. 66? As shown above, both verses constitute at least minor caesurae; the question is which one of them amounts not merely to a paragraph break but to a major transition between the surah's two main parts.[11] It is important to emphasise that there is no reason why this question should necessarily have only a single answer: it is perfectly conceivable that a verse group occurring between two major surah parts may function as a transitional 'hinge' with close links to the preceding as well as to the following.[12] Such a hinge could well be what we are confronted with in the present case, too. On the one hand, the angels' hymnic praise of God as quoted in vv. 64–65 provides a fitting conclusion to the preceding cycle of narratives. On the other hand, the angels' insistence on God's omnipotence and their injunction to steadfast veneration of God organically segues into the following polemic, which attacks various ways in which humans fail to live up to the angels' demand.

Having clarified the nature of the transition between both parts of the surah, we are now in a position to give a complete account of the text's literary structure, which is provided by Figure 7 below. It can hardly be stressed enough that a proper interpretation of any Qur'anic surah, or even of an extended portion of text within a surah, should always involve a structural analysis of this kind. One reason for this is that the content and structure of a surah as a whole may have important implications for the interpretation of particular passages within it. This can be seen by briefly considering the portion of surah 19 that deals with Mary and Jesus (vv. 16–40). This passage shows manifold correspondences in diction to the Zachariah pericope; the virtual identity of vv. 15 and 33, underscored above, forms only the tip of the iceberg.[13] By virtue of such links, the surah portrays Jesus and John as being very much on a par. Unlike the Christian Jesus, the Jesus of surah 19 does not play a unique soteriological role but is demoted to one in a series of God-given prophetic descendants or relatives who, apart from Zachariah's son John, also include Isaac and Jacob

[1] Superscript (letter sequence)

I Prophetic narratives

[2–6] Zachariah (1): Zachariah's prayer for a son
[7–11] Zachariah (2): God's response to Zachariah
[12–15] Zachariah (3): God's grace upon Zachariah's son John
[16–21] Mary (1): annunciation of Jesus
[22–26] Mary (2): Jesus's birth
[27–33] Mary (3): Mary's confrontation with her people, God's grace upon Jesus
[34–40] Paraenetic interlude: rejection of Jesus's divine sonship, eschatological threats
[41–50] Abraham
[51–53] Moses
[54–55] Ishmael
[56–57] Idrīs
[58–63] General comments on preceding prophets, promise of salvation to those who believe

Hinge

[64–65] Speech by the angels: hymn on God's omnipotence, injunction to worship only God

II Polemic

[66–72] Polemic against doubts concerning the Resurrection
[73–80] Polemic against those who reject God's signs
[81–87] Polemic against false deities
[88–95] Polemic against the claim that God has offspring
[96–98] Concluding address of the Messenger

Figure 7 The structure of surah 19

(v. 49) and Moses' brother Aaron (v. 53). Whereas standard Christian typology has a miscellany of earlier Biblical figures and events prefigure and climactically lead up to the birth and life of Christ, the narrative cycle in Q 19 conspicuously lacks such a sense of climax, despite the surah's substantial reliance on Christian narrative lore.[14] As a result, even if the explicit rejection of Jesus's divine sonship in vv. 34ff. is likely to be a secondary addition to the text,[15] it would be a mistake to describe the remainder of the surah's narrative part 'as almost Christian, or even as Christian'.[16] Placing the surah's sections on Jesus and Mary in their wider literary context is therefore apt to yield significant interpretive insights.

The literary coherence of Qur'anic surahs

But could the literary context of the Mary and Jesus pericope not be secondary to that pericope itself? Perhaps vv. 16–40 or vv. 16–33 originally formed an independent piece of text that was only afterwards combined with other passages to form an extended narrative cycle. If so, then whatever implications arise from other parts of the surah for the interpretation of the Mary pericope may

have no bearing on the latter's original meaning. The question thus arises as to whether or not we are entitled to approach Qur'anic surahs as integral wholes, as compositions that are genetically of a piece.

In 1970, William Montgomery Watt could still assert that the Qur'an seldom shows 'evidence of sustained unified composition at any great length'.[17] Watt thereby reiterated the position of his teacher Richard Bell (d. 1952) that most surahs were made up of short passages that had originally been promulgated separately. Only subsequently did Muhammad revise and combine them to form entire surahs.[18] For Bell and Watt, then, the basic literary units of the Qur'an are short verse groups, even though they concede that some longer passages and in certain cases even entire surahs do form integral wholes.[19]

Against Bell's default assumption that surahs are normally secondary collocations of originally independent verse groups, a growing tendency in Western scholarship since the 1980s has insisted that many Qur'anic texts are in fact much tighter literary unities. This trend was pioneered by Angelika Neuwirth's work on the short and medium-length surahs that are traditionally assigned to Muhammad's Meccan period.[20] Neuwirth demonstrated that many of these texts display a tripartite structure and are often constructed around a narrative middle part. This compositional proclivity to position narratives at the centre of surahs is reminiscent of the position of scriptural readings in Jewish and Christian services.[21] The narrative middle parts of Qur'anic surahs can either be devoted to one extended account, such as the story of Moses in Q 20: 9–99, or they can consist of a series of different pericopes that may display conspicuous formal parallels, such as identical introductions or a refrain.[22] The fact that such a tripartite structure recurs across a large corpus of texts indicates that the surahs in question were patterned on a generic structural template and crafted as unified compositions. Furthermore, different sections of a surah can often be seen to be thematically complementary or to display recurrent diction. Against Bell and Watt, the basic literary unit of at least the short and medium-size surahs is therefore not the short verse group but the surah itself.

Reading Qur'anic surahs holistically: Q 37 as an example

The literary cohesiveness of many Qur'anic surahs is best illustrated by means of an exemplary study of one of the medium-length texts examined by Neuwirth. Although surah 19 would lend itself well to such an undertaking, it seems preferable to choose a surah that is representative of the tripartite macrostructure just described. Surah 37 fits the bill. Figure 8 provides a structural analysis of the text, performed on the basis of observations similar to those discussed in the preceding section.[23] What follows is a cursory commentary on the most salient respects in which surah 37 forms a cohesive literary whole.[24]

I Introductory oaths and polemic

1–5 Oath series: the angels at the Last Judgement, oath statement: God's unity and omnipotence
6–10 God's creation of the heavens and the stars; the heavenly assembly's inaccessibility to demons
11–18 Polemic against doubts about the Resurrection
19–26 The doubters confronted with the Judgement (–)
27–32 Conversation among the damned in hell (–)
33–39 Threat, flashback: the doubters mock the Messenger (–)
40–49 Hospitality in paradise: God's chosen servants (+)
50–61 Conversation among the blessed in paradise (+)
62–68 Hospitality in hell: the Zaqqūm tree (–)
69–70 The doubters accused of following their erring ancestors

Hinge

71–74 Previous warners, those who rejected them, and God's chosen servants

II Narrative cycle

75–82 Noah, refrain
83–98 Abraham and the idols
99–111 Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son, refrain
112–113 Addendum on Abraham and Isaac
114–122 Moses and Aaron, refrain
123–132 Elijah, refrain
133–138 Lot
139–148 Jonah

III Concluding polemic and address of the Messenger

149–160 Critique of pagan beliefs: daughters of God, female angels, deification of the *jinn*
161–166 Speech of the angels: threat against those worshipping false deities, self-identification
167–173 The doubters' attempts at self-justification, response
174–180 Consolation of the Messenger
181–182 Concluding blessing

Figure 8 The structure of surah 37

Like other surahs, the text opens with a series of enigmatic oaths:

1 By those standing in rows,
2 who emit a loud shout,
3 who recite invocations![25]

The scene that is concisely sketched here is eschatological: reference is probably to the angelic hosts who will be present at the Resurrection and the Last Judgement. This is supported not only by Qur'anic parallels that explicitly mention the angels standing in ranks on the Day of Judgement (Q 78: 38 and 89: 22), but also by a passage occurring later on in surah 37 itself, vv. 165–166. Coming at the end of what would appear to be a speech by the angels, this couplet unequivocally clarifies the identity of 'those standing in rows':

165 It is we who stand in rows,
166 and it is we who glorify.

Intriguingly, the angels' involvement in the proceedings of the Last Judgement is described in very similar terms in a pre-Qur'anic Syriac homily, which speaks of the 'rows of the fiery ones', meaning the angels, who will 'incessantly offer up praise' when the divine judge enters the scene.[26] This also throws light on v. 3, which corresponds directly to the angels' praise of God as reported in the Syriac text.[27] As regards the nature of the shouting alluded to in v. 2, this likewise becomes clear further into the surah, in v. 19: it is the sound that awakens the dead from their graves (cf. also Q 79: 13–14).

The surah's introductory series of oaths culminates in an emphatic affirmation of the unity and omnipotence of God (vv. 4–5):

> [4] Your[p] God is one,
> [5] the Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them,
> the Lord of the rising places![28]

As we shall see, this confession of monotheism plays a programmatic role throughout the entire text. God's power over the heavens in particular then provides the focus of the following verse group, vv. 6–10. These verses underscore the beauty and functionality of God's arrangement of the celestial realm. Not only do the stars serve as an adornment of the heavens but they also function as a demon-proof course, barring 'rebellious satans' (v. 7) from eavesdropping on God's 'supreme council' (v. 8). Should one of these demonic beings manage to overcome the barrier, he will be pelted with a shooting star.[29] The heavenly domain is protected by impenetrable security arrangements.

God's handiwork thus displays superlative power and wisdom. How, then, could the creator fail to be capable of recreating man at the end of the world? The inference, a sort of cosmological argument for the Resurrection, is made explicit at the beginning of the following verse group, in v. 11: 'So ask[s] them [namely, those who are in doubt about the Resurrection]: are they more difficult to create or those [other beings] whom We have created?' The Messenger's opponents, however, continue to raise doubts:

> [16] When we are dead and have become dust and bones,
> are we really to be resurrected,
> [17] along with our forefathers?

The objection is countered not with further argument but by a curt confirmation:

> [18] Say: 'Yes, and you will be abjectly humiliated!'

What this means is then fleshed out by means of additional glimpses of the Last Judgement (vv. 19–26) that complement the brief eschatological sketch intimated in the surah's opening verses. The 'wrongdoers' and 'that which they used to worship' are led away to hell (vv. 22–23), unable to aid one another (vv. 24–25) and in complete submission (v. 26). The reference to the veneration of

beings 'beside God' (vv. 22–23) here emphasises that the primary offence of the damned consists in their disregard for the unity of God, which was so emphatically affirmed in vv. 4–5. It would appear that the false deities venerated by the damned are considered to be sufficiently real in order to incur eschatological punishment themselves. They are probably envisaged as demons,[30] which would tie in with vv. 6–10.

After having been led away to hell, the damned enter into mutual recriminations (vv. 27ff.). This conversation among the damned has its climax in their recognition that God's punishment has now come to pass (v. 31) and in an explicit confession of their guilt (v. 32). A portentous threat against the sinners in the divine voice (vv. 33–34) is justified by a flashback to their previous misdeeds, which again focuses on the doubters' rejection of the reminder that 'there is no god but God' (v. 35).

After the doom and gloom of the first thirty-nine verses, the text takes a positive turn: v. 40 introduces the positive counterpart of the doubters and wrongdoers, designated as 'God's chosen servants'. This expression and variants thereof recur many times throughout the remainder of the surah, thus endowing it with palpable terminological cohesion (vv. 74, 81, 111, 122, 128, 132, 160, 169, and 171). In opposition to the damned, who experience abject humiliation (vv. 18 and 26), God's servants will be 'honoured' (v. 42) and lavishly entertained in paradise (vv. 40–49). The contrast between the damned and the blessed is further heightened by the fact that the latter, too, will 'turn to one another with questions', as v. 50 asserts, thus replicating v. 27. Further resonances of earlier sections of the surah can be discerned: the conversation that takes place among the saved incorporates a variant on the sceptical question cited in v. 16 (v. 53: 'When we are dead and have become dust and bones, are we really to be judged?'), and vv. 55, 64, and 68 all employ the same term for the fire of hell as v. 23, *al-jaḥīm*, 'the Blaze', a term that all four verses place in rhyme position. The first part of the surah draws to its close with another depiction of hell, which inverts the hospitality offered to the inhabitants of paradise: whereas the latter were said to be offered fruit (v. 42) and cups of paradisiacal water (vv. 45–47), the damned are fed the fruit of the nightmarish Zaqqūm tree (vv. 64–66) and given scalding water to drink (v. 67).

The transition to the second part of the surah is effected by means of a short notice spelling out the plot scheme underlying most of the narratives in the surah's middle part (vv. 71–74):

> 71 Before them, most of the ancient ones went astray,
> 72 even though We sent warners among them.
> 73 So behold the end of those who were warned,
> 74 except for God's chosen servants.

It is noteworthy that this prefatory summary of the middle part ends with a reference to God's chosen servants, thus inducing a bracket that links back to v.

40. The fundamental moral of the stories making up the surah's middle part is thus that God punishes unbelief and disobedience yet does not fail to deliver and assist His 'chosen servants'.

The text then presents a series of narratives about various Biblical figures, similar to the first part of surah 19. Four of the six episodes are closed out by a refrain. Its first occurrence comes at vv. 78–81, after a brief reminiscence of how Noah and his family were rescued from the Deluge:

[78] We left for him among later generations [the blessing]:
[79] Peace be upon Noah among the inhabitants of the world!
[80] Thus do We recompense those who do good.
[81] He was one of Our believing servants.[31]

The refrain, which recurs at vv. 108–111, 119–122, and 129–132, not only integrates a reference to God's 'believing' or 'chosen' servants, but also echoes v. 34, where the divine speaker had asserted, 'Thus do We recompense the sinners.'

Although a comprehensive commentary on the individual narratives is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is worth pointing out that the Abraham episode again features the term *al-jaḥīm* that was encountered several times in the first part: v. 97 uses it to designate the pyre on which the idolaters attempt to cast Abraham. This could serve to make the point that Abraham's unbelieving opponents arrogate a divine role to themselves. The last episode, the story of Jonah, is the only one whose protagonist scores a major missionary success (vv. 147–148), providing the entire cycle with a climactic happy ending:

[147] We sent him to a hundred thousand or more,
[148] and they believed; so We accorded them more time.

Jonah's success in converting his audience, however, stands in stark contrast to the unbelief of the Messenger's hearers, to which the surah's final part reverts. It commences with an attack on aspects of the doubters' own belief system, namely, the veneration of what appear to be female deities described as God's 'daughters' and the deification of the *jinn* (vv. 149–160). The surah's introductory affirmation of monotheism again affords an implicit doctrinal benchmark here. There are also various phraseological links that serve to tie the surah's conclusion to earlier verses. Most striking is perhaps the back-reference to the opening verse in v. 165 that was already noted above. In addition, the final part of the composition continues to make reference to God's 'servants': the section critiquing various pagan beliefs ends by conspicuously excepting 'God's chosen servants' (v. 160) from the threat of being summoned to judgement (v. 158); in attempting to justify their stance, the doubters are depicted as maintaining that they, too, would have been among 'God's chosen servants' if only they had inherited a revelatory 'reminder' (vv. 168–169); and the divine speaker's riposte

to this self-defence invokes a promise to 'Our servants, the messengers' that they will be victorious (vv. 171–173). There is also a final recurrence of the term *al-jaḥīm*, 'the blaze of hell' (v. 163). Finally, the two-verse blessing that concludes the surah pronounces 'peace upon the messengers' (v. 181), thus recalling the refrain of the middle part.

A close reading therefore reveals that surah 37 possesses a considerable degree of coherence: it is replete with internal echoes and cross-references, it displays a transparent macrostructure, and its concatenation of ideas is generally organic and logical. In this sense, the surah must certainly count as a unified composition, despite the fact that it draws upon a host of different literary forms and exhibits numerous topic shifts.

Tracing processes of literary growth and editorial revision

But could not even a unitary composition like surah 37 have been built up from formerly separate pieces, just as a building may be put together from pre-existing components? Such a process of editorial conjoining is very much how Bell understands most surahs to have reached their final shape. Nonetheless, it would be fallacious to insist that complexity necessarily entails genetic compositeness. The burden of proof must therefore fall on the one who, faced with a composition like surah 37, would hold it to have been assembled from formerly independent passages. On what grounds could this be shown?

Bell tends to limit himself to invoking the topic shifts and formal caesurae that are displayed by all but the shortest surahs: his default attitude towards such breaks is to construe them as redactional seams resulting from the splicing together of previously independent textual units.[32] This is plainly insufficient. If one were to apply the same reasoning to early Arabic poetry, it would follow that the distinct and self-contained sections making up a polythematic *qaṣīdah* poem must also at some point have existed as independent pieces. Yet this view has never been seriously argued.[33] At least when confronted with a surah that is as cohesive as Q 37, any interpreter attempting to discern pre-existing literary blocks and reconstructing the surah's redactional pre-history will therefore need to advance more substantial observations than the Qur'anic text's general tendency to fall into paragraph-like verse blocks. For instance, one may argue that a given surah contains irreconcilable tensions and discrepancies that are only explicable as having arisen from the secondary conjoining of originally autonomous texts. In such a vein, the following chapter will maintain that surah 22 combines stylistic and thematic traits that do not tend to co-occur elsewhere in the Qur'an, and that about two-thirds of the text should therefore be regarded as having emerged considerably earlier than its final version. However, such a thesis must always be carefully argued rather than being regarded as a default case.

There can be no doubt that for a unified composition lacking major tensions and inconsistencies such as surah 37, editorial conjoining of the kind envisaged by Bell is very difficult to establish. It is, however, reasonable to insist that the required burden of proof should be lowered somewhat for very long and complex texts like surah 2. The potentially highly intricate redactional history of this latter text will be addressed at the end of the chapter. For now, let us turn to a second type of editorial revision that is much easier to pinpoint, namely, the expansion of an existing composition by means of short additions, a process that may be described as editorial *embedding* rather than *conjoining*. The phenomenon is particularly visible in some of the short surahs that are customarily dated to the early stage of Muhammad's prophetic career.[34] In the present context I shall concentrate on two examples drawn from surah 37, v. 102 and vv. 112–113.[35] They occur at the beginning of and immediately after the only Qur'anic account of Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son in Q 37: 99–111, which is ultimately rooted in Genesis 22. We may observe that unlike the Biblical version, the Qur'anic one does not explicitly spell out the identity of the victim of the intended sacrifice, and Muslim exegetes were in disagreement as to whether the son in question was Isaac or Ishmael.[36]

V. 102 follows Abraham's prayer for a righteous son (vv. 99–100) and its fulfilment: 'So We gave him the good news of a prudent son' (v. 101). V. 102 then depicts a dialogue between Abraham and this God-given son in which the latter agrees to be sacrificed in obedience to a divine command, thus clarifying that credit is due as much to Abraham's son as to Abraham himself. Prior to the exchange between father and son, it is highlighted that Abraham's son was 'old enough to strive [or run] with' his father, which indicates that he had reached a certain stage of maturity.[37] The upshot of this piece of information in particular is to exonerate Abraham from the charge of having lured an unsuspecting and oblivious child into a deadly trap, which is what the Biblical account (Genesis 22) could be taken to imply. Pertinently, an explicit insistence on the assent and participation of Abraham's son is already found in pre-Qur'anic Rabbinic and also Christian texts.[38] The Qur'anic account then continues with a brief description of the sacrificial scene itself:

> [103] And [remember] when they both submitted [to God's will] (*fa-lamma aslamā*)
> and he [Abraham] flung him [his son] on the forehead
> [104] and We called out: 'O Abraham,
> [105] you have fulfilled the vision!' –
> This is how We recompense those who do good.

Our hypothetical insertion, v. 102, protrudes from its literary environment above all by virtue of its extreme size: the verse is by far the longest one of the entire surah and runs to more than four times the surah's mean verse length.[39] V. 102 may also be removed from its position without leaving behind

a jarring gap in the narrative.[40] Moreover, we can readily hypothesise why v. 102 would have been added to the text – one motive being that it safeguards Abraham's moral integrity by highlighting that his son had been duly consulted and fully endorsed his father's decision. The hypothesis that the original version of the surah did not envisage Abraham's son as an equal participant in the action receives additional confirmation from the fact that in vv. 104–105 God addresses and praises only Abraham, rather than Abraham and his son, for having 'fulfilled' the 'vision' in which the command to carry out the sacrifice had been given.

But does not at least v. 103 clearly imply that it was Abraham *and his son* who 'submitted' (*aslamā*, in the dual) to God? An obvious way of resolving the tension with vv. 104–105, which confine themselves to affirming the merit of Abraham alone, is to assume that the insertion of v. 102 was accompanied by a minor adjustment of v. 103 as well.[41] It is noteworthy that, apart from v. 103, verses connecting Abraham to derivatives of the verb *aslama*, 'to submit', only occur in surahs that are normally assigned to a much later period than surah 37.[42] Hence, v. 103's assertion that both Abraham and his son 'submitted' may very well also be secondary, such that the original wording of v. 103 would only have run, 'And when he flung him on the forehead'.[43]

It seems probable, then, that the stretch of text now making up vv. 101ff. would at some point have consisted only of the following:

[101] So We gave him the good news of a prudent son.
[*103] And [remember] when he flung him on the forehead
[104] and We called out: 'O Abraham,
[105] you have fulfilled the vision!' –
This is how We recompense those who do good.[44]

This original version of the passage was subsequently expanded through the insertion of v. 102 and a minor revision of v. 103, resulting in a marked recalibration of the narrative, insofar as Abraham's son was now accorded a much more crucial role in the events. The addition furthermore served to dispel potential doubts about the moral standing of Abraham's action.

The second passage that would appear to have been secondarily added to surah 37 consists of vv. 112–113:

[112] And We gave him the good news of Isaac as a righteous prophet,
[113] And We blessed him and Isaac.
And among their offspring are those who do good and those who manifestly commit wrong against themselves.

This couplet follows the refrain of the Abraham pericope and thus occupies an appendix-like position. Even though the patterning of the refrains in the surrounding narratives is not entirely uniform, the presence of an extended

block of text following the refrain at v. 111 seems anomalous.[45] This impression of structural anomaly is heightened by the fact that v. 112 shows noticeable overlap with vv. 100–101, which also speak about the annunciation of a 'righteous' son. This raises the question of whether v. 112 and vv. 100–101 are meant to describe the same act of annunciation or two different ones, a problem to which we shall return shortly. In any case, vv. 112–113, on account of their appendix-like position, can easily be removed from the text without generating any gap. Moreover, vv. 112–113, like v. 102, stand out from the surah's mostly short verses, insofar as at least v. 113 is unusually long.[46] Finally, v. 113's insistence that Abraham's descendants include wrongdoers has its only close parallels in two verses that are generally dated much later than surah 37, namely, Q 2: 124 and also 57: 26.[47] One way of accounting for such overlap would be to assume that vv. 112–113 are roughly contemporaneous with Q 2: 124, which would make it virtually certain that they are considerably later than the remainder of surah 37.

The suspicion that vv. 112–113 were only secondarily incorporated into the surah thus imposes itself. What could have been the rationale for adding the two verses? Most likely, they are meant to situate the annunciation and birth of Isaac at a time subsequent to the near-sacrifice of the 'prudent son', which rules out that the 'prudent son' could have been Isaac. The intended implication would then be that the near-victim was Abraham's other son, Ishmael, who acquires particular prominence in a crucial passage in the later surah 2.[48] Second, Q 37: 112–113, like Q 2: 124 and Q 57: 26, express the Qur'an's disagreement with an important Rabbinic doctrine: the notion that the merit that Abraham acquired by virtue of his willingness to obey God's command to kill his son is inherited by the people of Israel.[49] In opposition to this view, which may well have circulated among the Jews whom the Qur'anic Believers appear to have encountered at Medina, v. 113 insists that even descendants of Abraham will be judged solely by their individual moral merit.[50]

Against the background of this fairly detailed discussion of two additions to surah 37, let us attempt a general overview of observations that may support a claim to have detected a case of secondary embedding in a Qur'anic surah.[51] To begin with, any textual segment that is conjectured to constitute a later insertion must be removable from its current position in the text without leaving behind an unbridgeable gap. We have seen that this condition is met by Q 37: 102 and 37: 112–113. It is also satisfied by Q 3: 7–9, discussed as a potential post-prophetic addition at the end of Chapter 2. By way of a further requirement, it ought to be possible to identify the motive on account of which a supposed addition was made. For instance, the verse or verses in question may serve to interpret or modify a statement made elsewhere in the original text, or they may serve to supplement the latter by incorporating some later doctrine or practice. Thus, Q 37: 102 exonerates Abraham as well as

ascribing a more central narrative role to his son, while 37: 112–113 clarify the identity of the son in question and reject an interpretation of the episode that would have undermined the Qur'an's consistent emphasis on individual moral responsibility.

Even when a given verse or verse group satisfies the two minimum requirements just presented, it is preferable for hypothetical reconstructions of secondary interpolations to be based on at least some additional considerations. These may consist in stylistic and lexical peculiarities that set a putative insertion off from its literary environment and can be linked with a later period of the Qur'an's genesis. We have seen that both Q 37: 102 and, to a somewhat lesser extent, 37: 112–113 display a conspicuous surge in verse length. If we make the assumption, justified below in Chapter 5, that Qur'anic verses tended to become longer over time, marked differences in verse length indicate different periods of composition. The phenomenon is illustrated by Q 73: 20 and 74: 31, arguably the two most obvious cases of later interpolation in the entire Qur'an.[52]

Apart from exhibiting a noticeably higher verse length, a passage flagged up as a potential insertion may also display diction or doctrinal content that indicates a later date of origin than its literary environment. Here, too, Q 37: 112–113 provide an illustration: as we have seen, the only two parallels that similarly contradict the Rabbinic teaching of Abraham's hereditary merit, using some of the same key terms, are Q 2: 124 and 57: 26, which are likely to be much later than the body of surah 37 – at least if one accepts the standards for a relative dating of Qur'anic material that are developed in the next chapter. One of the considerations adduced in connection with Q 3: 7–9 in Chapter 2 also fits under this bracket: as argued there, v. 7 envisages that the Qur'anic revelations form a closed textual corpus that is marked by irreducible ambiguity, a view that may reflect the perspective of the early Islamic community soon after Muhammad's death.

The case for an insertion can also be made in terms of the immanent incongruity – whether in content, style, or literary form – between a given verse or verse group and the literary environment in which it is located. For instance, the content of a passage suspected of being a later insertion may stand in tension with statements made in the remainder of the surah, or a presumed addition may appear to be structurally out of place or intrusive. An observation of the latter kind was presented in connection with Q 37: 112–113: the couplet occurs after the refrain of the Abraham episode and thus disrupts the dominant structure of an otherwise mostly symmetrical narrative cycle. It is important to recognise that both types of considerations should at most play a supplementary role. For instance, it is hardly safe to make the general assumption that any text that displays minor structural irregularities may be routinely emended to a more regular version. Similarly, when a presumed insertion appears to stand in tension with other verses in the same surah, the perceived incompatibility will

often admit of being eliminated by a harmonising construal of the passages in question, thus undermining the argument from contradictory content.

Ultimately, any claim to the effect that a certain verse or group of verses forms a later addition to a surah ought to be based on a cumulative case invoking as many of the above considerations as possible. Even though the outcome will be inevitably probabilistic, the hypothesis of secondary interpolation nonetheless constitutes an important part of a Qur'anic scholar's explanatory toolkit. As we have seen, even a cohesive text like surah 37 may very well be found to contain minor interpolations that were motivated by the need to clarify and reinterpret certain portions of text or to interweave them with later doctrines and ideas. In studying a Qur'anic surah, one must not only be sensitive to indications of unitary composition but equally be prepared to discover in its literary brickwork traces of later maintenance and expansion. Whether such additions were made during the lifetime of Muhammad or possibly after his death will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis, although many of the secondary insertions that scholars have so far identified can very well be imagined to have occurred during Muhammad's prophetic ministry.

The long surahs: Q 2 as an example

While most short and medium-sized surahs of the Qur'an can fairly easily be read as unitary compositions, matters are far more complicated with regard to the long surahs found at the beginning of the Qur'anic corpus, especially surahs 2–5. Against the initial impression that these texts are little more than 'collecting baskets for isolated groups of verses',[53] scholars like Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, Neal Robinson, and Mathias Zahniser have insisted that they, too, possess an intelligible macrostructure and a significant degree of thematic and literary coherence.[54] The literary understanding of these compositions is still developing, but it seems appropriate to conclude the present chapter with a preliminary exploration of the topic.

As with surahs 19 and 37 above, a holistic approach to the long surahs must commence by assessing whether their constituent paragraphs lend themselves to being arranged into a smaller number of overarching sections, based on shifts in topic, speaker, and addressee, as well as formal markers, including, for instance, vocatives ('O you who believe', 'O Prophet').[55] Figure 9 puts forward a structural analysis of surah 2 that draws eclectically on the work of Robinson, Zahniser, and Nevin Reda.[56] As prior studies have shown, the surah's constituent parts are bound together not only by content but also by lexical features. For example, Part I is dotted with repeated occurrences of the words 'guidance' and 'to guide' (vv. 2, 5, 16, 26, and 38), while each one of the following two parts is framed by an *inclusio*. Thus, at the beginning and end of Part II, the Israelites are exhorted to 'remember the blessings' that God has bestowed upon them (vv. 40,

I General prologue (vv. 1–39)

I.1 The Believers, the Unbelievers, and those who pretend to be Believers (vv. 1–20)
I.2 Admonishment to believe in God (vv. 21–29)
I.3 The creation of Adam and his temptation by the devil (vv. 30–39)

II Polemic against the Israelites and the People of the Scripture (vv. 40–123)

II. 1 Indictment of the Israelites' past acts of disobedience against God (vv. 40–74)
II.2 Further polemic against the Israelites and their present-day descendants, the 'People of the Scripture' (vv. 75–123)

III The Abrahamic sanctuary (vv. 124–152)

III.1 Abraham and the founding of the sanctuary; the religion of Abraham (vv. 124–141)
III.2 Establishment of a distinctively Qur'anic direction of prayer (*qiblah*) towards the sanctuary (vv. 142–152)

IV Legal corpus (vv. 153–283)

IV.1 Introductory exhortation to patience and militancy; miscellaneous pronouncements pertaining, among other things, to dietary matters, manslaughter, bequests, fasting, the pilgrimage, marriage, and divorce (vv. 153–242)
IV.2 Militancy; additional pronouncements to do with charity and money lending (vv. 243–283)

V Epilogue (vv. 284–286)

Figure 9 The thematic macrostructure of surah 2

47, and 122) and to 'fear a day when no soul will give satisfaction on behalf of another' (vv. 48 and 123). As regards Part III, Abraham and Ishmael's prayer in v. 129 ('Our Lord, raise up among them a messenger from among themselves, who recites Your signs to them and teaches them the Scripture and wise adjudication and purifies them')[57] corresponds to the divine voice's declaration in v. 151 that 'We have sent among you[p] a messenger from among yourselves, who recites Our signs to you and purifies you and teaches you the Scripture and wise adjudication'.[58] Moreover, noteworthy phraseological links can be detected not only within each of the surah's main parts but also between them. For example, the Epilogue contains resonances of numerous preceding verses from Parts I, II, and IV, and there are also manifold lexical correspondences between Parts I, II, III, and IV.[59] Hence, surah 2 does indeed display philologically tangible signs of a unitary composition rather than being merely a random aggregation of disparate verse groups.

It would be rash, however, to infer from such indications of compositional coherence that the text must therefore have been composed or proclaimed as a unit. Rather, given its size and complexity it seems conceivable, even probable, that the final version of the text is the outcome of several phases of literary growth. To be sure, it is often difficult to isolate later additions to any of the long

surahs with the same degree of quasi-surgical precision that is feasible in cases like Q 37: 102, 37: 112–113, 73: 20, or 74: 31. Yet a close analysis of the opening sections of two other long surahs, Q 5 and Q 9, reveals that the respective passages underwent several stages of secondary expansion,[60] which suggests that similar findings may hold for surah 2. As a matter of fact, a number of verses or verse groups throughout the surah are best understood as later additions. For example, Q 2: 26–27 could be viewed as a later comment explaining the rationale behind God's recourse to similes of the sort put forward a few verses earlier, in vv. 17–20.[61] Another case in point is v. 158, which maintains that al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah, traditionally held to be sites in the vicinity of the Kaʿbah, are part of the sanctuary's sacred precinct. As scholars have noted, the verse stands in thematic isolation from its immediate literary environment.[62] One may attempt to rationalise its placement as both harking back to the surah's third part with its focus on the Abrahamic sanctuary and foreshadowing various references to the sanctuary and the pilgrimage later on in Part IV (vv. 191, 196–203, and 217). Nonetheless, the verse remains undeniably intrusive, disrupting the inherent connection between a verse group promising God's blessing of the steadfast (vv. 155–157) and a subsequent threat that God will curse those who hide His proofs and guidance (v. 159). The hypothesis that v. 158 is a late addition to the entire passage is therefore highly credible.[63]

Nor are these the only places in the surah where some amount of secondary expansion appears to have occurred. V. 114 occupies an isolated position that is similar to that of v. 158, and serves to inscribe an allusive reference to the pagan occupants of the sanctuary ('those who prevent God's name from being invoked at His places of prostration') into an extended stretch of text that is otherwise focused on critiquing the Jews and Christians.[64] Vv. 183–187, a sequence of verses devoted to the topic of fasting, are best analysed as encompassing two or three temporally consecutive pronouncements.[65] Vv. 190–195 and vv. 196–203 are similarly unlikely to date from the same time: the former verse group assumes that the 'Inviolable Place of Prostration' is still in the hands of the Unbelievers, whereas the pilgrimage instructions given in vv. 196ff. presuppose that the sanctuary is readily accessible to the Qur'anic community.[66] Furthermore, one may well question whether the imposition of a prayer direction (*qiblah*) towards the 'Inviolable Place of Prostration' in vv. 142–150 is easily reconcilable with v. 177, which emphatically discounts the religious significance of 'turning your[p] faces to the west or to the east'. Here, too, the easiest solution is to date one of the two passages to a later time than the other.

A potential reason why a pronouncement like that about al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah, found at v. 158, was incorporated into the surah is that it responded to an audience query: if, as v. 196 commands, Muhammad's followers are to perform the pilgrimage to the sanctuary, the question may well have arisen whether neighbouring sites of minor cultic significance should also be accorded

a sacred status. As a matter of fact, a relatively large number of verses from Part IV of the surah overtly invoke precisely such audience queries: vv. 189, 215, 217, 219, 220, and 222 all begin with the statement 'they ask you' (*yasʾalūnaka*), and then proceed to offer guidance regarding issues such as the permissibility of combat during sacred months, the consumption of wine, the treatment to be accorded to orphans, or the question of whether menstruation entails temporary impurity. Such instructions would often appear to have been promulgated in response to specific inquiries and circumstances, upon which they were filed at appropriate locations in the text. This points to a gradual growth of what ultimately became Part IV of the surah. It may have begun life either as an independent repository of behavioural instructions that later coalesced with the first half of the text, or as a legal appendix that incrementally expanded to its present size.

It is noteworthy in this context that verses from surah 2's second half tend to be longer than those from the first half. To some extent, the discrepancy is perhaps due to the legal subject matter of much of Part IV, which may be viewed as requiring longer verses than the polemical and narrative material that dominates Parts I, II, and III.[67] However, it could also be the case that the difference is reflective of the literary development by which the surah reached its final shape. As Chapter 5 will argue, the mean verse length of Qur'anic surahs appears to have progressively increased over the course of the Qur'an's emergence, making it a useful criterion for discerning the relative chronology of Qur'anic surahs and passages. In light of this, one may well surmise that material from the second half of surah 2 is more likely to be younger than material from the first half. This would appear to be the general approach to surah 2 adopted by the Iranian scholar Mehdi Bazargan (d. 1995), whose analysis of the text has recently been examined by Marianna Klar.[68]

According to Bazargan, Part I.1 (vv. 1–20) contains some of the oldest material in surah 2.[69] An important indication for this consists, again, in this section's mean verse length, which is far lower than that of the surah as a whole, and indeed lower than even that of the immediately ensuing sections I.2 and I.3.[70] Assuming once more that mean verse length is not only a function of literary genre but a chronological marker, we may speculate that vv. 1–20, or at least a substantial part of them, could predate much, if not all, of the surah's remaining sections.[71] True, the introductory verse groups of other long surahs, too, have verses that are shorter than the respective surah average.[72] Nonetheless, Bazargan's diachronic hypothesis receives additional corroboration from the fact that surah 2's opening – consisting in a sequence of isolated letters (v. 1) followed by the statement, 'This is the Scripture' (v. 2) – is distinctly reminiscent of the beginning of many surahs that are usually dated prior to the Qur'anic community's hijrah from Mecca to Medina, whereas Q 2 as a whole is ordinarily considered to be Medinan.[73] Indeed, two of these Meccan surah introductions

in particular, Q 27: 1–5 and 31: 1–7, exhibit extremely far-reaching lexical and structural similarities to Q 2: 1–7.[74] These parallels raise the possibility that the beginning of surah 2 recycles older Meccan material that was subsequently adapted to serve as the prelude to a Medinan surah. That some reworking of this conjectured core of earlier material must have taken place is evinced by the phrase 'in their hearts is sickness' in v. 10, whose parallels are all Medinan. Alternatively, it is also conceivable that the opening section's affinity with Meccan surahs is simply due to the fact that it was retrospectively patterned on the opening passages of Q 27 and 31.[75]

In any case, even if the opening sections of surah 2 really do utilise older Meccan verses, this does not necessarily mean that the text's literary growth proceeded straightforwardly from front to back. Possibly, the introductory Part I, despite potentially including some of the surah's earliest material, was incorporated into the composition only after other parts of it had already taken shape. Such a scenario is tentatively proposed by Klar, who persuasively surmises that v. 40 could originally have formed the opening address of an orally delivered sermon.[76] As a matter of fact, Part II (vv. 40–123) would make for an entirely credible surah just by itself, seeing that its length is comparable to that of Q 17 and that its commencement with a vocative is similar to a considerable number of other Medinan proclamations (Q 4, 5, 22, 33, 49, 60, 65, and 66).[77] Indeed, the admonishment following the opening address of the Israelites – insisting that the Israelites will remain in breach of their covenant with God as long as they fail to recognise the Qur'anic revelations – would form a highly compelling surah opening:

> [40] O Israelites, remember My grace which I have bestowed upon you,
> and fulfil your covenant with Me, upon which I shall fulfil My covenant with you;
> and be afraid of Me.
>
> [41] And believe in what I have sent down confirming what is with you,
> and do not be the first to disbelieve in it,
> and do not sell My signs for a paltry price;
> and fear Me.

The programmatic, preamble-like status of these two verses is clearly attested by the recurrence of allusions to a revelation 'confirming what is with them' (*muṣaddiq li-mā maᶜahum*) in vv. 89, 91, and 101 – reference being, of course, to the Qur'anic revelations.[78] Moreover, v. 40's emphasis on God's covenant (*ᶜahd*) anticipates frequent uses of the two Qur'anic words for 'covenant', *ᶜahd* and *mīthāq*, as well as the cognate verb 'to conclude a covenant' (*ᶜāhada*) throughout Part II (vv. 63, 80, 83, 84, 93, and 100). In other words, Q 2: 40–41 function much in the same way as Q 37: 4–5, insofar as they concisely foreshadow central concerns of the text that follows. This is apt to reinforce our sense that the beginning of surah 2's second part may very well once have served as the

opening section of a self-standing composition. Finally, we have already noted that vv. 122–123 are virtually identical with two verses occurring shortly after the beginning of Part II, vv. 47–48, and that v. 122 also shows literal overlap with the very first verse of Part II, v. 40. Vv. 122–123 thus induce a pronounced sense of closure that would have been highly appropriate for a surah ending. It is pertinent here that, as Klar observes, a similar phenomenon of ring-compositional closure is exhibited by the much shorter surah 60, whose first and last verses (vv. 1 and 13) open with partly identical addresses of the Believers.[79] It may be, then, that the original nucleus of surah 2 consisted in a precursor version of what are now vv. 40–123, to which vv. 1–39 were subsequently prefixed by way of a prelude.

Whether Part III accreted to this nuclear version of surah 2 at the same time as Part I or later is difficult to determine. Yet it is certainly conceivable that Part III, centred on the story of Abraham and Ishmael's foundation of the sanctuary and the latter's institution as the Qur'anic community's new direction of prayer, postdates vv. 40–123. References to the sanctuary are virtually absent from Part II as well as from Part I, the only exception being v. 114, which sits in isolation from its immediate context and may, as already noted above, form a secondary insertion.[80] In addition, the idea that the Qur'anic community preserves 'the creed of Abraham' (*millat ibrāhīm*) and can therefore lay claim to greater antiquity than Judaism and Christianity,[81] an idea that is central to Part III (vv. 130 and 135), is noticeably absent from Part II's engagement with Jewish and Christian claims to be in the exclusive possession of religious truth (vv. 111–121).[82] Indeed, Part III provides an arrestingly effective solution to the basic problem around which Part II revolves. From v. 124 onwards, the Qur'anic community emerges as being directly linked to an ancient sanctuary established by Abraham. Together with Ishmael, Abraham is depicted as entreating God to bring forth from their descendants (*dhurriyyah*) 'a community that submits to You' (*ummatan muslimatan laka*) and to equip it with 'a messenger from among themselves' (vv. 128–129). Muhammad and his adherents are therefore presented as the climactic fulfilment of Abraham's religious legacy, thus rebutting any Jewish or Christian pretensions to religious superiority, claims that are elaborately debated in Part II. Quite possibly, this Abrahamic solution took some time to materialise, meaning that Part III, now the Abrahamic centrepiece of the surah, may well be later than Part II.[83] This hypothesis is further corroborated by the fact that the similar Abrahamic centrepiece of surah 22 also seems to have been secondarily interwoven with earlier material.[84] Some notable lexical overlaps between Q 2: 150 and surah 5, which is probably one of the latest Medinan surahs, point in the same direction.[85]

An attentive inspection of surah 2 thus reveals many indications that its ultimate shape is the outcome of a fair amount of secondary interpolation and probably also incremental literary growth. Yet the fact that the surah is likely to

have expanded over time must by no means be taken to imply that it did so haphazardly. Given the numerous signs of literary coherence displayed by its final form, it would appear that later passages were carefully implanted in the text and often composed – or, if drawing on pre-existing material, revised – in such a way as to pick up the diction of chronologically earlier sections. Especially decisions as to *where* secondary material was placed do not seem to have been taken randomly. Thus, Part III, if indeed secondary, must have been deliberately positioned as a climactic conclusion to the preceding polemic against Jews and Christians. Since a number of verses in Part IV (vv. 158, 191, 196, and 217) then make reference to the Abrahamic sanctuary that is the focus of vv. 124–152, Part III ends up functioning as the structural fulcrum of the surah's final version.

A particularly potent illustration of the final text's compositional unity is provided by the opening verse of Part III, which pulls together numerous thematic and lexical strands originating in Parts I and II:

> [124] And [remember] when Abraham was tested by his Lord by means of certain words, and he fullfilled them.
> He [God] said, 'I am establishing you[s] as an exemplar (*imām*) for mankind.'
> He [Abraham] said, 'And my descendants?'
> He [God] said, 'My covenant does not extend to wrong-doers.'

On the one hand, the verse shows significant lexical links to Part II: God's exclusion of 'wrong-doers' from His 'covenant' (*ᶜahd*) resonates with the theme of Israelite covenant-breaking that is prevalent throughout vv. 40–123, after having been foreshadowed already in v. 27, which condemns 'those who break God's covenant (*ᶜahd*) after it has been concluded (*min baᶜdi mīthāqihi*)'.[86] Furthermore, v. 124's allusion to the 'wrong-doers' recalls the references to Israelite wrong-doing found in vv. 51, 54, 57, 59, 92, and 95.[87]

On the other hand, Neal Robinson has highlighted that v. 124 exhibits three major lexical intersections with the story of the creation and fall of Adam that is recounted in Part I (vv. 30–39): God's address to Abraham that 'I am establishing you (*innī jāᶜiluka*) as an exemplar for mankind' echoes God's announcement of the creation of Adam in v. 30, 'I am establishing (*innī jāᶜilun*) a successor on the earth'; v. 124's introductory statement that God tested Abraham 'by means of certain words' (*bi-kalimātin*) – a reference to the demand that Abraham sacrifice his son (Q 37: 99–111) – brings to mind v. 37, according to which Adam, after contravening God's prohibition to eat of the forbidden tree, 'received words (*kalimāt*) from his Lord'; and God's warning to the 'wrong-doers' (*al-ẓālimūn*) at the end of v. 124 recalls God's command that Adam and his spouse are not to 'approach this tree lest you become wrong-doers' (v. 35).[88] V. 124 thus establishes a strong nexus between Abraham's foundation of the Meccan sanctuary and the creation and disobedience of Adam: 'God's dealings with Abraham' are presented as marking 'a new beginning in His relationship with humankind.'[89]

Insofar as Part III then goes on to present Muhammad as fulfilling Abraham's prayer for a future messenger, the surah unfolds a tripartite historical scheme, progressing from Adam to Abraham to Muhammad: man is created and immediately displays a seemingly innate proclivity to disobey God; Abraham subsequently establishes a positive standard of obedience and faith that contrasts with Adam's primordial lapse; and, finally, Muhammad and his adherents translate Abraham's individual righteousness into a new collective identity, thereby giving it a communal embodiment. The Qur'anic community is thus placed against a universal backdrop of sacred history that reaches back to the creation of humankind.

Thus, even if Part III may not be an original component of the surah, it is now intimately intertwined with the remainder of the text. This illustrates that it would be a fallacy to assume a contradiction between, on the one hand, the discovery that the long surahs display many hallmarks of compositional coherence and unity and, on the other, the thesis that they are an outcome of extended and complicated literary growth that is amenable to at least hypothetical reconstruction.[90] A satisfactory interpretation of Qur'anic texts that are as complex as surah 2 therefore requires simultaneous consideration of both synchronic and diachronic dimensions of analysis.[91] With this in mind, the following chapter turns to the foundations on which diachronic distinctions between different Qur'anic passages and surahs may be based. How can we know what is early and what is late in the Qur'an?

Notes

1. It is only Western readers, however, who have complained of the Qur'an's alleged absence of coherence as a literary flaw. See Wild, 'Die schauerliche Öde'.
2. Abdel Haleem (trans.), *The Qur'an*, and Paret (trans.), *Der Koran*.
3. Müller, *Die Propheten*, vol. 1, pp. 20–60. Müller's analysis of Q 56, for example, identifies 'strophes' whose length varies from one to seventeen verses. See also Geyer, 'Strophik'; Naham, 'Drei Suren'.
4. See, e.g., Watt, *Bell's Introduction*, p. 73. Neuwirth accordingly speaks of *Gesätze* (roughly, 'sections') rather than 'strophes'; see Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 175–8.
5. Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 104–5.
6. Zahniser, 'Major Transitions', pp. 32–4; Robinson, *Discovering*, pp. 200–1. For a systematic treatment of structural dividers in Q 18, see Klar, 'Re-examining Textual Boundaries'; for a similar study of Q 2, see Klar, 'Text-Critical Approaches', Part One.
7. Neuwirth, *Studien*, p. 269. Incidentally, these three subdivisions of the text were at least partly arrived at independently: while Neuwirth would have consulted Paret's translation in preparing her own analysis, Abdel Haleem, whose English rendering postdates both Paret's translation and Neuwirth's *Studien*, does not betray any awareness of either.
8. Arabic: *wa-dhkur fī l-kitābi maryama/ibrāhīma/mūsā*.
9. The notion that God has offspring is already criticised in v. 35, with respect to Jesus.
10. Thus, Neuwirth quite reasonably posits paragraph breaks at v. 22 and v. 27 even though both verses begin with *fa-*, as does v. 97.

11. For a valuable treatment of such questions with regard to Q 2, see Zahniser, 'Major Transitions'.
12. Zahniser, 'Major Transitions', pp. 33–8.
13. Cf. vv. 8 and 20, vv. 9 and 21, vv. 12 and 30, vv. 13 and 31, and vv. 14 and 32. Furthermore, note that both John and Jesus are described as a 'boy' (*ghulām*) in vv. 7–8 and 19–20.
14. For an overview of the Christian traditions deployed in the Mary pericope, see Mourad, 'Mary in the Qurʾān'.
15. Thus, e.g., Müller, *Die Propheten*, vol. 1, p. 28; Paret, *Kommentar und Konkordanz*, on Q 19: 34–40. See also Chapter 7, n. 87.
16. Contra Dye, 'Hypertextuality'.
17. Watt, *Bell's Introduction*, pp. 73–5 (quoting p. 73).
18. Watt, 'Dating', pp. 51–3; Watt, *Bell's Introduction*, pp. 86–107.
19. Watt, 'Dating', pp. 47 and 54.
20. Neuwirth, *Studien*.
21. Neuwirth, *Text der Spätantike*, pp. 362–3.
22. See, for example, the narrative cycles in Q 11: 25–99, 21: 48–96, 26: 10–191, 27: 7–58, 37: 75–148, 38: 12–49, and 54: 9–42.
23. My analysis mostly agrees with Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 280–1.
24. For a similar discussion of a much shorter surah, Q 82, see Sinai, 'The Qurʾān'.
25. Similar oath introductions are found at the beginning of Q 51, 77, 79, and 100. See Neuwirth, *Scripture*, pp. 102–37, especially pp. 104–12.
26. Beck (ed.), *Sermones III*, no. 2, lines 285–8 and 317–20.
27. In light of the Syriac parallel, it is distinctly preferable to translate *dhikr* as 'invocation' here, rather than as 'admonishment, reminder'. Cf. also Ambros, *Dictionary*, p. 104.
28. The 'rising places' (*al-mashāriq*) are probably the rising places of the sun, the moon, and the planets; see Stewart, 'Ibn al-Ṣāʾigh al-Ḥanafī's *Iḥkām*', p. 19.
29. On the general topic, see Hawting, 'Eavesdropping'.
30. This is confirmed by v. 158, which accuses the opponents of asserting God's kinship with the *jinn*, even though 'the *jinn* know that they will be summoned'. See also Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', pp. 175–7.
31. The refrain following the Noah pericope is followed by a final verse concluding the narrative itself (v. 82): 'Then We drowned the rest.' Neuwirth, *Studien*, p. 281, maintains that the verse should be moved to a position before the refrain, in order to restore the section's symmetry with other pericopes. See n. 45 below.
32. See, for instance, his analysis of surah 37 in Bell (trans.), *The Qurʾān Translated*, vol. 2, pp. 441–9.
33. On the structure of the *qaṣīdah*, see Jacobi, *Studien*. The position criticised in the main text should be distinguished from the reasonable hypothesis that the literary genres that are concatenated by a polythematic *qaṣīdah* poem had originally emerged separately. A comparison between the literary genre of the Qur'anic surah and that of the *qaṣīdah* is drawn in Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 9–10.
34. See the overview in Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 201–3.
35. That v. 102 is an insertion is conjectured but not further developed in Neuwirth, *Studien*, p. 45, but the verse is treated as original in ibid., p. 281. That vv. 112–113 are secondary is already maintained in Bell, *Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 159, and Bell (trans.), *The Qurʾān Translated*, vol. 2, p. 446; see also Neuwirth, *Studien*, p. 281. My discussion of vv. 112–113 below draws on Sinai, 'Two Types'.
36. Firestone, 'Abraham's Son'.

37. Ancient interpreters of the Biblical account disagreed about the age of Isaac at the time of the near-sacrifice; see Kugel, *Traditions*, p. 320. This background supports construing the enigmatic phrase *fa-lammā balagha maᶜahu l-saᶜya* as meaning 'when he [namely, the son] was old enough to strive = do work with him [namely, with Abraham]', reference possibly being to Abraham and his son's joint erection of the sacrificial altar (cf. Witztum, 'Foundations of the House'). An alternative understanding of the phrase would be 'when he was old enough to perform the rite of *al-saᶜy* with him', the latter being one of the rituals performed at the Kaᶜbah. If the latter interpretation is not merely the retrojection of a post-Qur'anic rite, the verse would not only emphasise the son's relative maturity but also explicitly anchor the scene in a Meccan locale. Even though I would incline towards the first alternative, this second understanding is not implausible either: after all, as shown below, the second addition to the Abraham pericope in Q 37, vv. 112–113, parallels a verse from the Abraham passage in Q 2 (namely, v. 124). Since the Abraham narrative in Q 2 does suggest that the near-sacrifice of Abraham's son took place in Mecca (see Chapter 8, section 'Jerusalemising Mecca'), it is conceivable that the same tendency is already at work in the first addition to Q 37, v. 102.
38. Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, pp. 164–6; Kugel, *Traditions*, pp. 303–6; Brock, 'Two Syriac Verse Homilies', p. 69 and pp. 119 and 124 (Memra II, lines 60–70). It deserves to be noted that according to the Biblical version of the event, the sacrifice was interrupted by 'an angel of the Lord', whereas according to Q 37: 104–105 it is God Himself who calls out. This, too, has a parallel in post-Biblical Syriac literature (Brock, 'Two Syriac Verse Homilies', p. 85).
39. Q 37 has a mean verse length of 31.2 transcription letters (see Figure 10), whereas the length of v. 102 amounts to 143 transcription letters.
40. As pointed out to me by Marianna Klar, v. 105's mention of Abraham's fulfilment of a 'vision' may be taken to presuppose v. 102, where Abraham declares to his son, 'I see in my sleep (*innī arā fī l-manāmi*) that I slaughter you'. However, there is no reason to doubt that even without v. 102 the surah's recipients would have accurately understood v. 105 to refer to a dream in which God had ordered Abraham to sacrifice his son. That Abraham's actions were responding to a divine command, as narrated in Genesis 22, can be assumed to have been common knowledge; after all, even v. 102 does not actually spell this out but merely has Abraham say to his son, 'I see in my sleep that I slaughter you'. As a matter of fact, Qur'anic narratives in general, and other narratives in Q 37 specifically, often rely on their audience's prior acquaintance with the story that is being retold. See, for instance, the highly allusive reference to God's deliverance of Abraham from being incinerated by his people at Q 37: 98, the background to which is presented in Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, pp. 142–4.
41. The present form of the verse is certainly not without awkwardness: after the dual verb *aslamā* ('the two of them submitted') one might have expected the subject of the following action – namely, Abraham – to have been picked out by name, rather than encountering two pronominal references in the singular ('*he* flung *him* on the forehead').
42. See primarily Q 2: 130–141, 3: 64–68, and 4: 125.
43. This is so despite the fact that derivatives of the verb *aslama* are already attested in surahs that are normally considered to be early, at Q 51: 36 and 68: 35. The verbal noun *islām* only occurs in verses that are conventionally dated to the late Meccan and Medinan periods (Q 3: 19, 3: 85, 5: 3, 6: 125, 9: 74, 39: 22, 49: 17, 61: 7).
44. It is also possible, although less likely in my view, that v. 103 originally only spoke of Abraham, i.e., had the singular *aslama*, 'he submitted himself', instead of the dual *aslamā*, 'the two of them submitted themselves'.

45. At least the Moses and the Elijah pericopes (vv. 114–122 and vv. 123–132) conclude with the refrain and then immediately continue with the next episode. Matters are less clear-cut regarding the Noah episode, where the refrain is followed by a final verse stating that God drowned those who were not saved together with Noah (v. 82). It has been suggested that v. 82 ought to precede rather than follow the refrain, which would require relocating the verse between v. 77 and v. 78 (Neuwirth, *Studien*, p. 281). However, it is difficult to be confident about this emendation: the reference to 'the others' in v. 82 may just as well latch on to the mention of Noah or God's 'believing servants' in v. 81 as to that of Noah's 'offspring' in v. 77. In any case, even if v. 82 is at its original position, vv. 112–113 seem much more disruptive of the narrative cycle's general pattern.
46. The verse runs to seventy-nine transcription letters, which makes it the surah's second longest verse after v. 102. But note that v. 158 has almost the same length as v. 113 (seventy-eight transcription letters) yet would appear to be original.
47. Using diction that intersects with Q 37: 113, Q 2: 124 also underscores that, despite Abraham's willingness to obey God's command to sacrifice his son, his offspring (*dhurriyyah*) include wrongdoers (*zālimūn*).
48. Q 2: 124–129 casts Ishmael as a co-founder of the Qur'anic sanctuary together with his father Abraham; see Chapter 8, section 'Jerusalemising Mecca'. My reading of Q 37: 112–113 is also endorsed in Bell (trans.), *The Qur'ān Translated*, vol. 2, pp. 441 and 446, and Neuwirth, *Studien*, p. 281.
49. The doctrine is known under the term *zekhut avot*, the 'merit of the fathers'. See, for instance, Phillips, '"They are Loved"'.
50. On the Qur'anic community's relationship to the Jewish tribes of Medina, see Chapter 8.
51. See in more detail Sinai, 'Processes of Literary Growth', and Sinai, 'Two Types'.
52. Both verses are discussed in some detail in Sinai, 'Processes of Literary Growth', and Sinai, 'Two Types'.
53. Neuwirth, *Scripture*, p. 154.
54. Mir, *Coherence*, pp. 37–63; Mir, 'The *Sūra* as a Unity', pp. 215–17; Zahniser, 'Sūra as Guidance'; Zahniser, 'Major Transitions'; Robinson, *Discovering*, pp. 201–23; Robinson, 'Hands Outstretched'; Reda, *al-Baqara Crescendo*. A holistic approach to the long surahs is also espoused in Cuypers, *The Banquet*; Farrin, 'Surat al-Baqara'; id., *Structure and Qur'anic Interpretation*.
55. Michael Cuypers and Raymond Farrin would proceed very differently, but see Sinai, 'Going Round in Circles', for a detailed critique of their methodology.
56. For a comparative discussion of different analyses of Q 2, see Klar, 'Text-Critical Approaches', Part One. The section border between v. 39 and v. 40 commands widespread agreement. I am persuaded by Reda's argument that vv. 122–123 (which are almost identical with vv. 47–48) conclude Part II rather than opening the next part, entailing that the transition to Part III occurs at v. 124 (Reda, *al-Baqara Crescendo*, pp. 74–7). Against Reda (*al-Baqara Crescendo*, pp. 89–91) and agreeing with Robinson (*Discovering*, p. 211), I would locate the next major transition not at v. 152 but rather at v. 153, seeing that it begins with the first in a series of vocatives that are almost all addressed to the Believers (vv. 153, 168, 172, 178, 183, 208, 254, 264, 267, 278, 282). Zahniser regards vv. 153–162 as a transitional hinge between two surah parts (Zahniser, 'Major Transitions', pp. 33–8), yet to my mind this underestimates the significant degree of literary cohesion between vv. 153ff. and the following sections that is induced by these serial vocatives. Iṣlāḥī and Robinson discern another major transition at v. 243, which they consider to open a section dedicated to the 'liberation of the Kaʿbah' (Robinson, *Discovering*, pp. 215–21; Zahniser, 'Major Transitions', pp. 28–9). As subsequently recognised by Robinson himself, this is in fact an inaccurate heading, both

because vv. 243–283 treat a number of topics other than fighting (e.g., charity, usury, and the writing down of debts) and because the section in question makes no explicit reference at all to the Kaʿbah and its liberation; we merely find general injunctions to fight 'in the path of God'. Against the view that v. 243 forms more than a subsidiary transition, I would insist that the pronouncements on charity, usury, and debts in vv. 267–283 are continuous with many of the legal pronouncements prior to v. 243. Conversely, we encounter injunctions to fight even before v. 243, at vv. 190–195 and 216–218. This supports the view that vv. 243ff. are to be counted with the preceding legislative corpus.

57. In support of the decision to translate the second component of the pair *al-kitāb wa-l-ḥikmah* as 'wise adjudication' – i.e., to treat *ḥikmah* as an approximate equivalent of *ḥukm* – see Q 3: 79, 6: 89, and 45: 16, which have *al-kitāb wa-l-ḥukm*.
58. Robinson, *Discovering*, pp. 208 and 210–11; Reda, *al-Baqara Crescendo*, p. 81.
59. Such parallels are catalogued in detail in Robinson, *Discovering*, pp. 203–23; on the Epilogue in particular, see pp. 221–3. See also Klar, 'Through the Lens'.
60. Sinai, 'Processes of Literary Growth'.
61. Note that Q 2: 26 overlaps with Q 74: 31, undoubtedly a later insertion. Thus, both verses depict the Unbelievers as asking, 'What did God intend by using this simile (*mādhā arāda llāhu bi-hādhā mathalan*)?', and both emphasise that divine discourse of this kind simultaneously serves to 'lead astray' and to 'guide'.
62. Robinson, *Discovering*, pp. 211–12; Zahniser, 'Major Transitions', p. 35.
63. See already Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 1, pp. 177–8. Mehdi Bazargan also considers the verse to be later than the immediately preceding and following verses; see Sadeghi, 'Chronology', p. 234, Table 2. Nöldeke's and Bazargan's treatments of different parts of surah 2 are lucidly juxtaposed in Klar, 'Text-Critical Approaches', Part Two, Table 1. Klar also highlights the connection between vv. 155–157 and 159ff.
64. A possible rationale for inserting v. 114 could have been to emphasise that however much the Jews and Christians may be doctrinally astray, their guilt is still inferior to that of the Associators against whom Muhammad's followers were meant to engage in military combat.
65. See, for the time being, Wagtendonk, 'Fasting'. Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 1, pp. 178–80, only extricates v. 187 as secondary.
66. Bazargan likewise posits that vv. 196ff. are chronologically later than vv. 190–195. See Klar, 'Text-Critical Approaches', Part Two, Table 1.
67. The mean verse length of vv. 1–152 is 115.45 transcription letters, whereas that of vv. 153–286 is 161.84 transcription letters. An explanation of how mean verse length is measured in this book is found in Chapter 5.
68. Klar, 'Text-Critical Approaches', Part Two. Credit for drawing the attention of Western scholars to the importance of Bazargan's work on the Qur'an must go to Sadeghi, 'Chronology'.
69. Bazargan allocates vv. 1–20 to a block of material from Q 2 that he takes to precede many of the surah's other portions; see Sadeghi, 'Chronology', pp. 233–4 (block no. 113 in Table 1) and Klar, 'Text-Critical Approaches', Part Two. It must be observed here that Bazargan 'stresses that his proposed chronology should not be taken as rigid because it is statistical in nature and because statistical methods sustain firm conclusions about averages of aggregates rather than individual items' (Sadeghi, 'Chronology', p. 215).
70. The mean verse length of vv. 1–20 is 73.9 transcription letters, as opposed to 119.53 for vv. 21–39 and 137.19 for the entire surah. It may be pointed out that the low mean verse length of vv. 1–20 is largely due to the brevity of vv. 1–7: the mean verse length of vv. 8–20 is 83.38, as opposed to 56.29 for vv. 1–7.

71. Cf. Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 1, pp. 173–4, according to which Q 2: 1–20 are 'rather early' yet later than vv. 21ff., suspected to be Meccan (which is not implausible given the thematic profile especially of vv. 22–23).
72. For instance, the mean verse length of Q 3: 1–9 is 89.56 transcription letters (as opposed to 111.65 for the entire surah), while that of Q 8: 1–6 is 88 transcription letters (as opposed to 107.63 for the entire surah). I owe the general observation that the mean verse length of the introductory sections of Medinan long surahs can be comparatively low to a talk by Marianna Klar, entitled 'Lexical Layers vs Structural Paradigms in the Opening of Sūrat al-Baqarah' and delivered at Pembroke College, Oxford, on 20 March 2017.
73. Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 1, 173. For surahs opening with letter sequences, see Chapter 1, Figures 3 and 4. For verses similar to Q 2: 2, see Q 10: 1, 12: 1, 26: 2, 27: 1, 31: 2, and others ('These are the signs of the clear/decisive Scripture' or similarly). For further discussion of the distinction between Meccan and Medinan surahs, see Chapter 5.
74. These similarities are best tabulated:

(i)	letter sequence	2: 1	27: 1	31: 1
(ii)	superscript including a demonstrative pronoun (*dhālika*, *tilka*) and reference to 'the Scripture' (*al-kitāb*)	2: 2	27: 1	31: 2
(iii)	qualification of the Scripture as 'guidance for' (*hudan li-*) Believers (alternatively identified as 'the God-fearers' or 'those who do good')	2: 2	27: 2	31: 3
(iv)	aretological (= virtue-listing) relative clause involving almsgiving and belief, ending in the phrase 'and they are certain of the world to come' (*wa-bi-l-ākhirati / wa-hum bi-l-ākhirati hum yūqinūn*)	2: 3–4	27: 3	31: 4
(v)	promise of salvation to the Believers: 'those are guided by their Lord and those are the ones who prosper'	2: 5	–	31: 5
(vi)	threat against the Unbelievers	2: 6–7	27: 4–5	31: 6–7

Interestingly, the phrase 'and they are certain of the world to come', occuring as part of element (iv), does not occur in any other Qur'anic verse than the three listed above. It is also noteworthy that the mean verse length of all three passages is very similar (56.29 transcription letters for Q 2: 1–7, 50.6 for Q 27: 1–5, and 55.57 for Q 31: 1–7). Both surah 2 and surah 31 begin with the same letter sequence, *ʾ-l-m*, which the Kufan system of verse division considers to be an independent verse in both cases, whereas surah 27 opens with *ṭ-s*, not separated off as an independent verse. (Other systems of verse division do not impose a verse divider after the letter sequence opening surah 31; Spitaler, *Verszählung*, p. 51.)
75. This latter possibility was suggested by Marianna Klar in a personal correspondence. For parallels to the phrase 'in their hearts is sickness', see Q 5: 52, 8: 49, 9: 125, 22: 53, 24: 50, 33: 12.32.60, 47: 20.29, 74: 31 (Paret, *Kommentar und Konkordanz*, on Q 2: 10).
76. Klar, 'Text-Critical Approaches', Part Two.
77. Surah 17 contains 10,007 transcription letters, while Q 2: 40–123 contain 10,030. The use of vocatives as surah openings is pointed out in Klar, 'Text-Critical Approaches', Part Two.
78. See similarly v. 97.
79. Klar, 'Text-Critical Approaches', Part Two.
80. There are a few references to the sanctuary in Part IV, namely, in vv. 158, 191, 196, and 217, although none of these mentions the sanctuary's Abrahamic origin as depicted in Part III.

81. On the term *millah*, a loanword from Syriac *melltā* (literally, 'word', and also used to translate Greek *logos*), see Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, pp. 268–9.
82. Cf. especially v. 111 and v. 135, both of which quote the Jews and Christians as insisting on the sole validity of their respective religion: 'They say, "Only those who are Jews or Christian shall enter the garden"' (v. 111); 'They say, "Be Jews or Christians and you will be guided"' (v. 135). In the latter case, the Qur'an retorts by appealing to the 'religion of Abraham', whereas in the former case the rejoinder consists merely in accusing the Jews and Christians of being in thrall to wishful thinking.
83. The mean verse length of vv. 124–152 is 130 transcription letters, while that of vv. 40–123 is 119.4. This is not a major discrepancy, but nonetheless noteworthy as a subsidiary piece of information. Despite the difference, Mehdi Bazargan assigns Parts II and III to the same chronological text block (Sadeghi, 'Chronology', pp. 233–4; Klar, 'Text-Critical Approaches', Part Two). It deserves to be pointed out that Bazargan sometimes includes verses into the same chronological block that exhibit an even greater difference in mean verse length, e.g., Q 2: 165–189 (151.84 transcription letters) and 2: 210–242 (180.48 transcription letters).
84. For an attempt at reconstructing the compositional history of Q 22, see Chapter 5, section 'The Meccan-Medinan divide'.
85. Q 2: 150's injunction 'Do not be afraid of them, be afraid of Me' (*fa-lā takhshawhum wa-khshawnī*) recurs at Q 5: 3.6.38.44, and both 2: 150 and 5: 3 subsequently make reference to the 'completion' of God's 'grace' upon the addressees (Q 2: 150: *li-utimma niᶜmatī ᶜalaykum*, Q 5: 3: *atmamtu ᶜalaykum niᶜmatī*). It must be conceded, however, that the latter phrase also appears elsewhere (e.g., Q 12: 6, 16: 81), as do commands to be afraid only of God (e.g., Q 9: 13). On Q 5: 3, which is itself likely to contain a secondary insertion, see Sinai, 'Processes of Literary Growth'. The traditional belief that surah 5 is to be dated towards the end of Muhammad's ministry is borne out by the fact that there are only two Qur'anic surahs (Q 65 and 60) that have a higher mean verse length (see the following chapter).
86. The covenantal resonance of the Abraham pericope is reinforced by the fact that the root *ᶜ-h-d* recurs in v. 125.
87. Note that v. 114, which was flagged up as an insertion above, also makes prominent use of the root *ẓ-l-m*. For further occurrences of the root in Parts III and IV, see (apart from v. 124) vv. 140, 145, 150, 165, 193, 229, 231, 246, 254, 257, 258, 270, 272, 279, and 281. For occurrences of the root in Part I, see vv. 17, 19, and 35. The root is studied in Christiansen, *'My Lord'*.
88. Robinson, *Discovering*, pp. 208–9. The pivotal importance of the Adam narrative for Q 2 as a whole, and its resonance in later parts of the surah, is treated in detail in Klar, 'Through the Lens'.
89. Robinson, *Discovering*, p. 209.
90. This is also pointed out in Farrin, *Structure and Qur'anic Interpretation*, p. xv.
91. This is underlined, after careful study of Q 2 in particular, in Klar, 'Text-Critical Approaches'.

CHAPTER 5

Inner-Qur'anic chronology

At several junctures in the preceding chapter, I have invoked distinctions between earlier and later passages of the Qur'an. For instance, the contention that Q 37: 112–113 constitute a secondary insertion was in part supported by the observation that they parallel a verse from surah 2, a text generally assumed to be later than the body of surah 37. The task of the present chapter is to examine whether such claims pertaining to the internal chronology of the Qur'anic corpus do in fact rest on a sufficiently solid basis. It must be acknowledged that this book has a vital stake in this being the case. The thematic and literary survey of the Qur'anic proclamations undertaken in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 will proceed by grouping the surahs into temporally consecutive sets, and this evidently presupposes that we can at least make some defensible judgements about the relative order in which the surahs were originally composed or proclaimed.

The temporal order of the Qur'anic revelations: Islamic and Western perspectives

The Islamic tradition is unambiguous that the present arrangement of surahs does not correspond to the order in which they were first revealed. From early on, interpreters of the Qur'an have therefore attempted to assign portions of Qur'anic text to particular stages in the life of Muhammad. Thus, pre-modern Islamic literature often cites extra-Qur'anic reports about the 'occasions of revelation' (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) of specific verses or verse groups.[1] Furthermore, Muslim scholars preserve lists enumerating the surahs in their purported order of revelation and subdividing them into Meccan and Medinan ones, the distinguishing consideration being whether a surah was revealed before or after the hijrah.[2] We even encounter an incipient interest in the terminological and thematic profile of the Meccan and Medinan revelations. For example, a tradition traced back to early authorities posits that the vocative 'O you who believe' (*yā-ayyuhā lladhīna āmanū*) is characteristic of Medinan revelations, whereas 'O you people' (*yā-ayyuhā l-nās*) points to a Meccan date. Another report claims that all surahs containing narratives about God's punishment of earlier communities are Meccan, while the surahs containing legal regulations are all Medinan. References to a group reviled as the 'hypocrites'

(*munāfiqūn*) are likewise put forward as a terminological feature of the Medinan surahs.[3]

Western scholars, too, have taken a strong interest in reconstructing the temporal sequence of the Qur'anic proclamations. Arguably the most influential chronological model is the one developed in the 1840s by Gustav Weil (d. 1889) and then further refined by Theodor Nöldeke (d. 1930).[4] Its point of departure is one of the medieval lists cataloguing the Meccan and Medinan surahs in their alleged order of revelation.[5] Weil retained the traditional distinction between Meccan and Medinan surahs and proposed that the former could be further subdivided into three distinct periods, yielding a total of four consecutive groups of texts. He also attempted to check the traditional list against a set of systematic dating criteria. Most importantly, he assumed that surahs in a 'poetic, rhythmic language' are early while surahs exhibiting a 'prosaic form' are later, a postulate that he justified by asserting that Muhammad's later responsibilities as a ruler and lawgiver must have had an adverse effect on his 'inner enthusiasm'.[6] In practice, this premise of ever-decreasing poeticity amounts to the theory that over the course of Muhammad's career the Qur'anic proclamations' verse length showed a steady increase, for it is generally surahs with short verses that Weil and Nöldeke consider to be 'poetic' and 'passionate'.[7] Nöldeke himself explicitly singles out the importance of verse length for his dating scheme.[8]

Unfortunately, more than a century and a half after the Weil-Nöldeke chronology was first put forward, the underlying postulate that Muhammad's proclamations suffered from a continuous decrease in poetic potency must seem highly dubious. Weil appears to have espoused this premise mainly because he saw no reason to doubt the tendency of Muslim scholars to assign those surahs that struck him as 'prosaic' to Muhammad's Medinan period, but it is far from certain that present-day scholars are entitled to follow him in this without further argument. After all, why should one rule out that even at a time when Muhammad was promulgating 'prosaic' texts he may simultaneously have continued to disseminate more 'passionate' and 'poetic' surahs? As regards Nöldeke's attraction to the idea of ever-decreasing poeticity, it seems to have been at least partly due to a romantically tinged understanding of the true prophet as an artist-like enthusiast, a notion for which Nöldeke was indebted to his teacher, the Biblical scholar Heinrich Ewald (d. 1875).[9] Against the background of this commitment, Nöldeke is well served by a chronological model assigning all those surahs that satisfy his expectations of what a genuine prophet's literary output ought to look like to the earliest stage of Muhammad's activity, while all other material is relegated to a later period and can therefore be deemed to manifest an increasing evanescence of Muhammad's initial enthusiasm. Needless to say, these conceptual moorings of Nöldeke's work are highly reflective of his nineteenth-century intellectual context.[10]

Verse length as a chronological marker

It should have become clear that in putting forward their chronological scheme both Weil and Nöldeke rely on a number of premises that can hardly be taken for granted anymore. Nonetheless, as this section will argue, the Archimedean point of their approach remains eminently defensible.[11] This is the parameter of verse length, whose enormous fluctuation across the Qur'anic corpus has already been noted in Chapter 1. Modern technology makes it relatively simple to quantify the phenomenon by performing an electronic count of the number of Latin letters required to transcribe each Qur'anic verse and then computing the mean value for each surah. The extent to which the length of a surah's individual verses diverges from the surah mean can then be measured by calculating a basic statistical value known as the standard deviation, expressed in the same unit as mean verse length (namely, in transcription letters). A low standard deviation indicates that the length of individual verses tends to be close to the surah mean, whereas a high standard deviation indicates pronounced fluctuation. Figure 10 gives both values for each surah, based on an electronically available transliteration of the Qur'an by Hans Zirker.[12]

The table requires three additional comments. First, the data given in Figure 10 is based on the Kufan system of verse divisions, even though the Islamic tradition preserves a certain amount of disagreement about verse borders. Ideally, the values given in Figure 10 would be re-computed based on a critical evaluation of the various alternative verse divisions.[13] Second, Figure 10 lists a certain number of surahs twice. These are short texts containing individual verses or verse groups that are highly likely to be later insertions.[14] Since most of these interpolations tend to exhibit a considerably higher verse length than the rest of the surah, they can have a distorting impact on the surah's overall mean verse length and standard deviation. The rows for surah numbers followed by an asterisk therefore give the mean verse length and standard deviation for what would appear to have been the original version of the text at hand. Thus, '73*' refers to surah 73 without the later insertion v. 20. It should be noted that the Qur'an can be expected to contain many more cases in which existing surahs were subsequently expanded.[15] In addition, notwithstanding my criticism of Bell in the preceding chapter, some surahs probably do incorporate pre-existing textual units whose mean verse length should ideally be calculated separately.[16] Again, it would be desirable to re-compute the values in Figure 10 based on future research.

Third, one would expect surahs with a high mean verse length to display a higher standard deviation than surahs with shorter verses, given that both values are measured in transcription letters. It is therefore useful to find a way of numerically comparing a text's standard deviation to its mean verse length. A convenient way of doing so is to compute a surah's coefficient of variation,

Surah no.	**Number of verses (according to Kufan division)**	**Mean verse length (in transcription letters)**	**Standard deviation (in transcription letters)**	**Coefficient of variation (standard deviation divided by mean verse length)**
full text of the Qur'an	6,236	79.48	60.29	0.76
1	7	27.86	14.58	0.52
2	286	137.19	90.73	0.66
3	200	111.66	58.54	0.52
4	176	137.79	82.66	0.60
5	120	150.06	83.67	0.56
6	165	117.87	55.97	0.47
7	206	104.27	58.93	0.57
8	75	107.63	47.35	0.44
9	129	127.88	49.17	0.38
10	109	104.36	49.13	0.47
11	123	96.18	39.04	0.41
12	111	99.42	47.49	0.48
13	43	126.16	60.95	0.48
14	52	103.29	53.08	0.51
15	99	43.12	16.25	0.38
16	128	93.41	37.73	0.40
17	111	90.15	31.27	0.35
18	110	90.98	49.38	0.54
19	98	62.42	25.99	0.42
20	135	61.04	37.60	0.62
21	112	67.08	23.60	0.35
22	78	102.54	60.84	0.59
23	118	56.86	30.69	0.54
24	64	135.64	95.75	0.71
25	77	75.25	24.81	0.33
26	227	36.71	17.05	0.46
27	93	78.19	33.52	0.43
28	88	101.34	38.38	0.38
29	69	92.36	36.33	0.39
30	60	87.20	40.60	0.47
31	34	97.32	44.69	0.46
32	30	77.33	29.61	0.38

Figure 10 Mean verse length, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation for all surahs of the Qur'an

Surah no.	Number of verses (according to Kufan division)	Mean verse length (in transcription letters)	Standard deviation (in transcription letters)	Coefficient of variation (standard deviation divided by mean verse length)
33	73	117.26	75.22	0.64
34	54	99.31	43	0.43
35	45	108.96	52.22	0.48
36	83	55.01	21.32	0.39
37	182	31.20	13.03	0.42
38	88	51.98	29.32	0.56
39	75	98.40	50.52	0.51
40	85	89.20	43.19	0.48
41	54	93.56	42.03	0.45
42	53	99.57	47.97	0.48
43	89	61.78	25.43	0.41
44	59	36.61	13.54	0.37
45	37	84	31.43	0.37
46	35	112.74	52.64	0.47
47	38	96.66	55.57	0.57
48	29	130.97	77.03	0.59
49	18	124.61	51.87	0.42
50	45	50.82	16.71	0.33
51	60	37.77	13.45	0.36
52	49	40.37	20.61	0.51
52* (excl. v. 21)	48	38.35	15.33	0.40
53	62	34.81	32.72	0.94
53* (excl. vv. 23 and 26–32)	54	24.09	5.74	0.24
54	55	41.40	11.88	0.29
55	78	32.97	12.77	0.39
56	96	26.78	9.77	0.36
57	29	129.69	62.21	0.48
58	22	137.59	66.43	0.48
59	24	119.67	54.38	0.45
60	13	179.31	105.29	0.59
61	14	100.14	52.51	0.52
62	11	100.18	33.13	0.33
63	11	110.18	31.07	0.28

Figure 10 continued

Surah no.	Number of verses (according to Kufan division)	Mean verse length (in transcription letters)	Standard deviation (in transcription letters)	Coefficient of variation (standard deviation divided by mean verse length)
64	18	89.28	31.85	0.36
65	12	157.83	67.61	0.43
66	12	138.33	58.01	0.42
67	30	67.47	18.09	0.27
68	52	37.04	18.20	0.49
69	52	32.87	17.03	0.52
69* (excl. v. 7)	51	31.41	13.64	0.43
70	44	32.64	14.98	0.46
71	28	51.39	26.53	0.52
72	28	61.29	15.11	0.25
73	20	63.90	100.23	1.57
73* (excl. v. 20)	19	41.11	13.48	0.33
74	56	28.18	46.42	1.65
74* (excl. vv. 31 and 56)	54	21.28	7.16	0.34
75	40	26.80	7.84	0.29
76	31	52.65	13.83	0.26
77	50	25.48	7.27	0.29
78	40	28.60	17.83	0.62
78* (excl. vv. 37–40)	36	23.36	6.26	0.27
79	46	25.22	8.98	0.36
80	42	21.43	6	0.28
81	29	22.45	5.42	0.24
81* (excl. v. 29)	28	21.68	3.64	0.17
82	19	25.84	9.61	0.37
83	36	30.11	9.90	0.33
84	25	27.24	10.73	0.39
84* (excl. v. 25)	24	26	9.02	0.35
85	22	29.73	22.68	0.76
85* (excl. vv. 7–11)	17	19	3.66	0.19
86	17	21.53	6.44	0.30
87	19	23.37	5.54	0.24
87* (excl. v. 7)	18	22.17	2.22	0.10
88	26	22.58	5.20	0.23

Figure 10 continued

Surah no.	Number of verses (according to Kufan division)	Mean verse length (in transcription letters)	Standard deviation (in transcription letters)	Coefficient of variation (standard deviation divided by mean verse length)
89	30	29.10	15.95	0.55
89* (excl. vv. 15–16, 23–24, and 27–30)	22	24.36	7.60	0.31
90	20	25.35	10.88	0.43
90* (excl. vv. 17–20)	16	22.19	5.14	0.23
91	15	24.13	12.55	0.52
92	21	22.90	5.23	0.23
93	11	23.73	6.81	0.29
94	8	19.88	1.05	0.05
95	8	27.88	13.82	0.50
95* (excl. v. 6)	7	23.43	7.76	0.33
96	19	22.95	5.92	0.26
97	5	34.20	12.06	0.35
97* (excl. v. 4)	4	28.25	2.17	0.08
98	8	74.38	33.77	0.45
99	8	31	8.53	0.28
100	11	23.27	7.12	0.31
101	11	20.27	7.62	0.38
102	8	23.63	6.71	0.28
103	3	32	26.09	0.82
103* (excl. v. 3)	2	14	7	0.50
104	9	24.11	4.04	0.17
105	5	30	5.25	0.18
106	4	27.50	10.14	0.37
107	7	23.57	4.92	0.21
108	3	22.67	0.94	0.04
109	6	23	2.83	0.12
110	3	39	10.71	0.27
111	5	24.40	2.42	0.10
112	4	18.25	5.02	0.27
113	5	23.40	4.63	0.20
114	6	18	6.30	0.35

Figure 10 continued

defined as a surah's standard deviation divided by its mean verse length. The values taken by this quantity are given in the table's rightmost column. It is worth observing that the coefficient of variation for the entire Qur'an is 0.76. The fact that only five surahs display a coefficient of variation that is higher than this confirms that verse length is noticeably more consistent within individual surahs than across the Qur'an as a whole.

The data from Figure 10 permits us to rearrange the surahs in the order of increasing mean verse length, as represented by Figures 11 and 12 (note that the surahs from Q 70 to Q 76 appear on both graphs).[17] What one is first bound to notice here is the extreme spread of values: the mean verse length of Qur'anic surahs ranges from eighteen transcription letters (or even fourteen for Q 103*) to almost 180. Second, despite the considerable distance between these two extremes, the two are connected by a fairly continuous upward slope. Behnam Sadeghi has rightly underscored that this is by no means trivial.[18] Had we found that the mean verse lengths of surahs fall into discrete bands, the hypothesis that the Qur'anic corpus is divisible into distinct and originally independent surah groups would have imposed itself. By contrast, the non-discrete nature of the data shown by Figures 11 and 12 is entirely consonant with, and perhaps even naturally suggestive of, Weil and Nöldeke's assumption that Qur'anic verse length underwent a gradual development over time, whether that development took place from short verses to long verses or vice versa.

The case in favour of gradual stylistic evolution over time is further strengthened by the observation that surahs displaying a comparable mean verse length also tend to exhibit many further similarities. This is illustrated by Figure 13. It orders the surahs from left to right according to ascending mean verse length and then maps out the presence of certain introductory elements in them: every surah containing one of the introductory components listed along the graph's vertical axis is marked with a dot corresponding to the surah's position on the horizontal axis.[19] The bottom row of dots shows that introductory oaths of the sort found, for instance, at the beginning of surah 37 only occur in the left-hand half of the surah spectrum. Another prominent introductory device whose occurrences are even more densely clustered together on the graph's left-hand side consists in temporal clauses like those opening surah 81:

[1] When (*idhā*) the sun is wrapped up,
[2] when the stars are dimmed,
[3] when the mountains are set in motion …

By contrast, surah-initial letter sequences, discussed briefly in Chapter 1, only begin appearing in the second third of the spectrum. Superscript-like references to 'the Scripture' (*al-kitāb*) and/or to the 'sending down' (expressed by the verbs *nazzala* and *anzala*) of divine revelations are likewise absent from short-verse surahs. Introductory praises of God (technically called doxologies and eulogies)

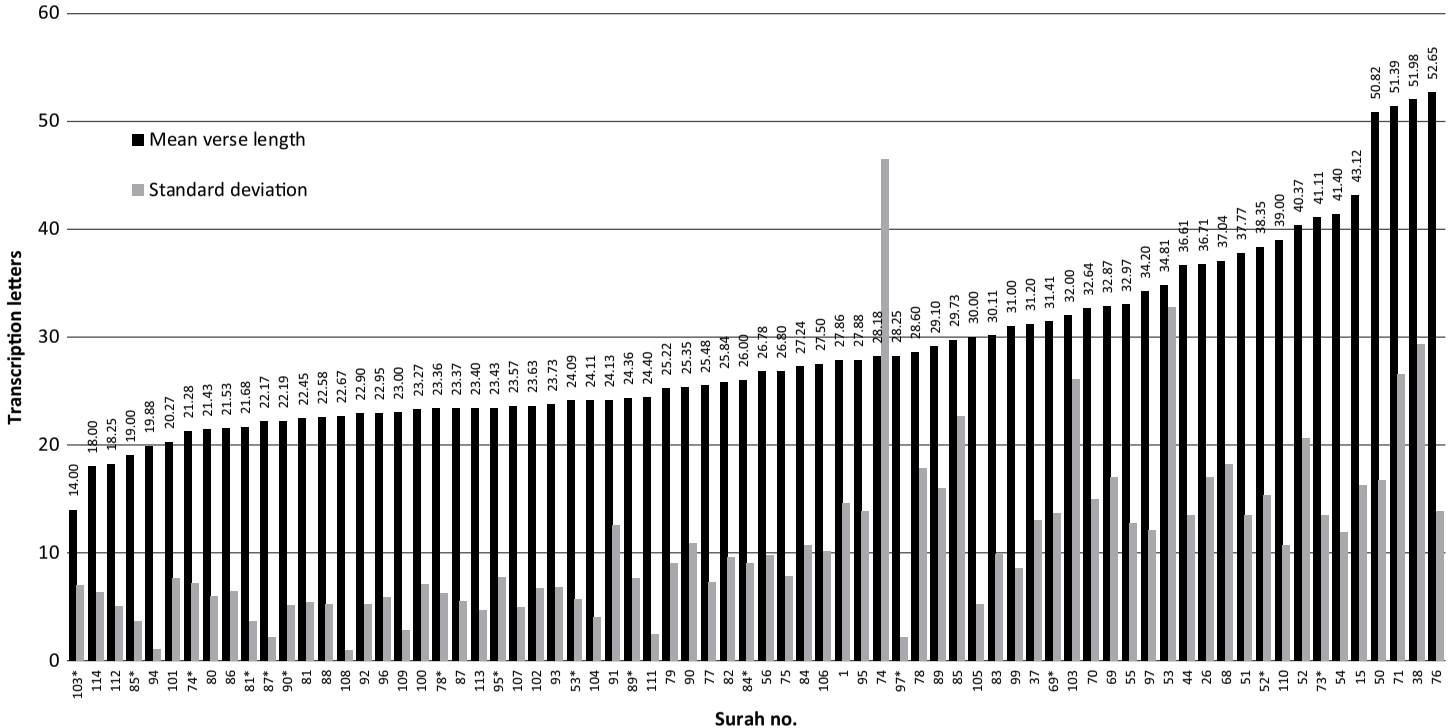

Figure 11 The surahs ordered by increasing mean verse length, part 1

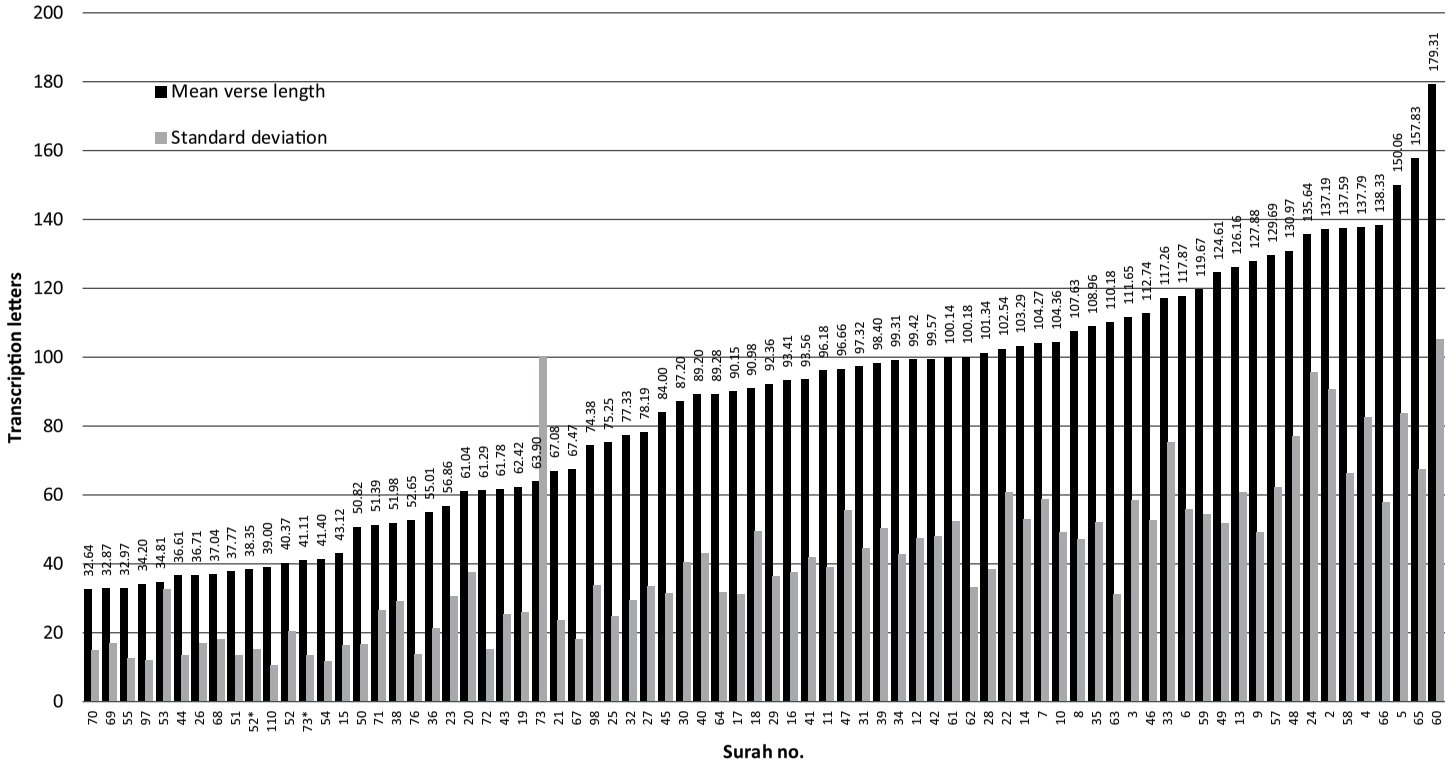

Figure 12 The surahs ordered by increasing mean verse length, part 2

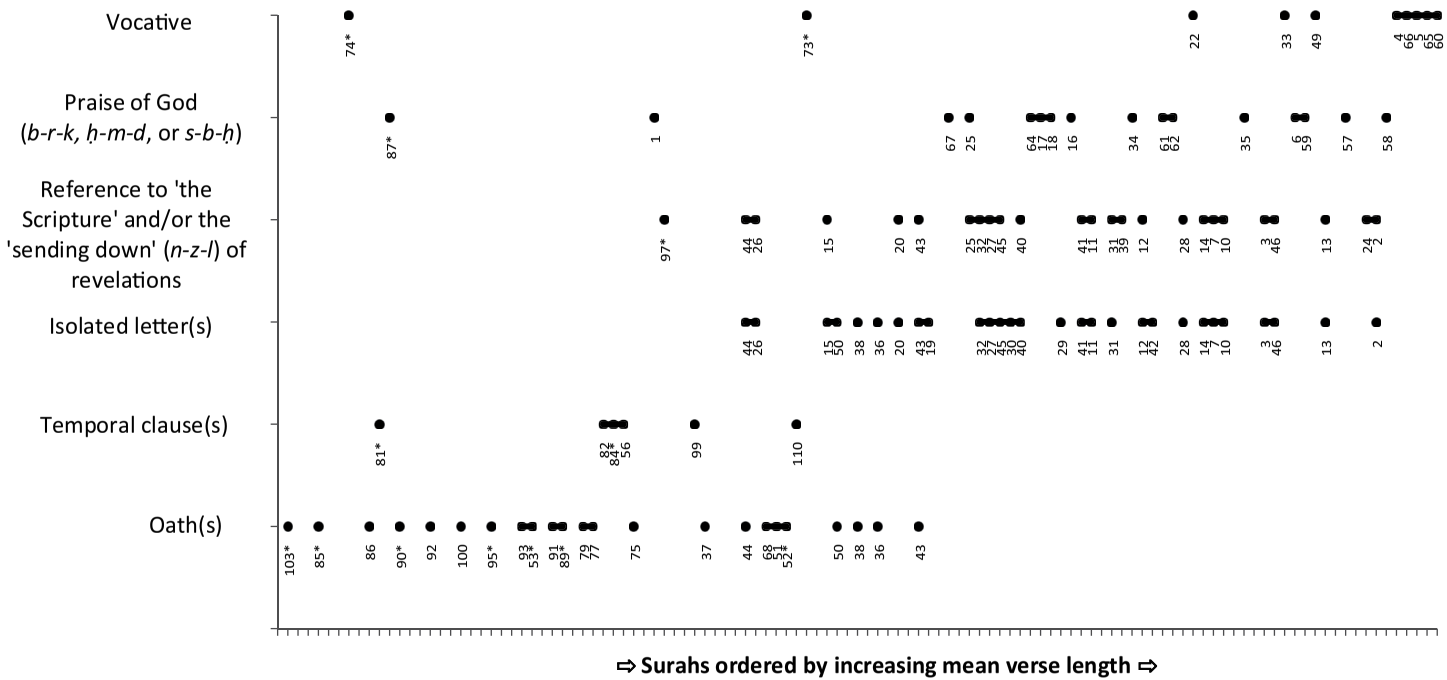

Figure 13 The correlation of mean verse length and characteristics introductory elements (data labels specify surahs)

and opening vocatives exhibit even more noticeable concentration on the right-hand side of the spectrum, although in both latter cases we encounter two outliers to the left.

Similar observations can be made for other terminological and thematic features as well. For example, references to the *munāfiqūn*, or 'hypocrites', only appear in surahs with a mean verse length above ninety-two transcription letters.[20] Similarly, it is only in surahs with relatively long verses that we encounter injunctions to 'fight' (*qātala*) the Unbelievers, explicit calls to obey 'God and His Messenger', and sustained polemics against Jews and Christians.[21] There is also a clear correlation between mean verse length and formulaic density: a high mean verse length normally entails high formulaic density, even though there are some exceptions.[22] Finally, a statistically sophisticated study by Behnam Sadeghi has demonstrated a covariance between the mean verse length of Qur'anic passages and their lexical profile: if one examines the lexical frequencies of three different and very extensive lists of morphemes, verse groups whose mean verse length is similar tend to have a more similar lexical profile than verse groups whose mean verse length is less similar.[23] Sadeghi's study is particularly important because the basic textual units it examines are short passages displaying a relatively homogeneous verse length rather than entire surahs. Thus, unlike my previous observations, Sadeghi's study does not assume that the surahs are mostly unitary wholes. Therefore, even if Bell's far-reaching dissection of almost all surahs into originally independent verse groups were correct, Sadeghi's observation that mean verse length stands in a general correlation with lexical profile would still be likely to hold.

The upshot of all this is that the mean verse length of Qur'anic surahs is smoothly covariant with a host of independent stylistic, terminological, literary, and thematic features.[24] As Behnam Sadeghi has underscored, this correlation is far too pervasive to be coincidental and therefore demands an explanation – and the simplest explanation is arguably to assume that the texts now compiled in the Qur'anic corpus reflect different stages of a process of literary development, a process in the course of which a large number of distinct parameters would have undergone gradual and concurrent change.[25] Crucially, such a hypothesis of serial diachronic spread accords with explicit Qur'anic self-descriptions: Q 25: 32 concedes that Muhammad's proclamations were not promulgated 'as a single whole' (*jumlatan wāḥidatan*) and, according to Q 17: 106, God has deliberately 'divided up' the Qur'anic revelation so that Muhammad might 'recite it to the people in an abiding manner'.[26] Finally, it deserves to be stressed that the general phenomenon of gradual stylistic development is no mere theoretical assumption but is empirically attested. For instance, the works of the seventeenth-century dramatist Pierre Corneille, whose dates of composition are independently accessible to us, have been found to display a progressive rise in the mean number of words per verse.[27]

To be sure, the conclusion that the developmental trajectory thus established led from short verses to long verses rather than vice versa requires a supplementary step. Yet this step is easily justifiable. For instance, we have had occasion to note that a number of short-verse surahs like Q 73 and 74 contain later interpolations that tend to have a markedly higher verse length than their literary environment. Sadeghi correctly points out that this implies that the development was towards, rather than away from, long verses.[28] Furthermore, there are at least some instances in which a passage from a surah with a high mean verse length is reasonably construed as referring back to a passage from a surah with a much lower mean verse length.[29] Finally, assuming an evolution from short to long verses yields a general understanding of Muhammad's career that conforms to the basic scaffolding of the traditional narrative of Islamic origins. As long as there is no compelling further evidence that the Islamic view of the Qur'an's emergence ought to be turned upside down, this strikes me as a merit.[30]

The assumption that over the course of the Qur'an's process of emergence verses tended to get longer is therefore justifiable on the basis of a much more modest and uncontroversial set of premises than those espoused by Weil and Nöldeke. It bears pointing out that the principle of gradually increasing verse length is also upheld by Mehdi Bazargan, who approaches the Qur'an from a very different perspective than Weil and Nöldeke.[31] That verse length tended to increase over time does not, however, mean that a reordering of Qur'anic surahs by ascending mean verse length can simply be equated with a relative chronology. Given that we are faced with a literary development, minor variations in mean verse length cannot necessarily be taken to possess chronological implications. For example, it would clearly be unjustified to infer from the fact that Q 75 has a mean verse length of 26.8 transcription letters and Q 56 one of 26.78 that Q 56 must therefore be dated before Q 75. The fact that even greater discrepancies in mean verse length cannot be automatically translated into a relative dating is illustrated by Q 70: 1ff.:

[1] Someone has asked about a punishment that will befall
[2] the Unbelievers, which none can avert,
[3] [a punishment originating] from God, Lord of the [celestial] stairways.

This reference to a query emanating from the Qur'an's audience shows notable lexical overlap with Q 52: 7–8:

[7] The punishment of your[s] Lord will fall;
[8] there is nothing that can avert it.

Very likely, Q 70: 1–3 refer back to 52: 7–8, which obviously requires that Q 70 be the later of the two surahs.[32] However, its mean verse length (excluding the later insertion Q 70: 4) is some 6.5 transcription letters below that of the original version of Q 52.[33] Had we simply based our dating on the raw numbers, we

would have misconstrued what is probably the real diachronic sequence of the two surahs.

It is reasonable to expect statistical techniques to have something to contribute to determining whether a given discrepancy in mean verse length is sufficiently large in order for us to be safe in ascribing chronological significance to it.[34] Of course, non-quantitative considerations – for instance, the reconstruction of a plausible theological and literary trajectory – will also need to play an important role in working out a detailed relative chronology of the Qur'an. In such an endeavour, the Weil-Nöldeke chronology certainly remains an important point of departure. However, it would be insufficient to rely on their chronological reordering as if it were an established set of facts. Especially when the chronological sequence of two surahs that Weil and Nöldeke allocate to the same textual period has important interpretive implications, it will always be necessary to present evidence supporting one particular ordering rather than another.

The Meccan-Medinan divide

Apart from the assumption that Qur'anic verses tended to become longer over time, a second cornerstone of the Weil-Nöldeke chronology (and also of other chronological schemes) consists in their acceptance of the traditional Islamic postulate that the Qur'anic corpus can be subdivided into two main layers, one Meccan and the other Medinan. This premise requires separate justification. Is it possible to isolate a Medinan stratum of the Qur'an without having to fall back on post-Qur'anic reports and surah lists, whose authenticity and accuracy can easily be called into doubt?

We may begin with the observation that certain portions of the Islamic scripture presuppose a relatively specific historical setting, notwithstanding the fact that we do not encounter many proper names and no dates. Core aspects of it have already been reviewed in Chapter 2: the Qur'anic Messenger and his followers reside at *al-madīnah*, 'the town', after having been expelled from their previous abode, the 'inviolable' sanctuary; and they are locked in violent confrontation with the sanctuary's inhabitants, the 'Unbelievers' or 'Associators', the ultimate outcome of this conflict being the Qur'anic community's takeover of the sanctuary. This entire complex of apparent background circumstances is conveniently labelled 'the Medinan constellation', given that it is centred on the settlement of *al-madīnah*. Now, surahs that evince aspects of the Medinan constellation tend to share a considerable number of further commonalities, and therefore merit being deemed a distinct subcorpus of the Qur'an.[35] Stylistically, the compositions in question are characterised by a high or very high mean verse length and high formulaic density. This is illustrated by the fact that of the fourteen surahs with the highest mean verse length, thirteen are considered to

be Medinan by Weil and Nöldeke, who mostly rely on references to some aspect of the Medinan constellation in dating a Qur'anic surah or passage after the hijrah.[36] Surahs that presuppose the Medinan constellation also display similar literary traits: for instance, they do not conform to the tripartite compositional scheme exhibited by many other texts, such as surah 37; they lack extensive punishment narratives that are so common in other parts of the Qur'an;[37] and they frequently rely on vocatives such as 'O you who believe' and 'O Prophet' as structural markers.

Surahs alluding to aspects of the Medinan constellation furthermore tend to be united by particular doctrinal features that are absent from the remainder of the Qur'anic corpus. For example, they betray an explicit demarcation of the Qur'anic community from Judaism and Christianity and harshly criticise Jewish and Christian beliefs (for example, Q 5: 12–19, 5: 41–86, and 5: 116–118).[38] This forms a contrast to surahs that do not allude to the Medinan constellation. To be sure, non-Medinan texts do occasionally feature critical references to disunity among the post-Mosaic Israelites and to schisms among the followers of Jesus,[39] casually accuse some of them of 'wrongdoing' (Q 29: 46), and insist that Jesus is not God's 'child' but only His 'servant' (Q 19: 34–40 and 43: 57–65).[40] Nonetheless, texts lacking references to the Medinan constellation are generally devoid of explicit, targeted, and sustained anti-Jewish and anti-Christian polemics. Instead, their polemical attention is squarely focused on the pagan Associators, against whom the 'Israelites' or earlier recipients of 'the Scripture' are occasionally invoked as witnesses who would confirm the truth of Muhammad's revelations (for example, Q 6: 20.114, 10: 94, 17: 101, and 26: 197). Indeed, it is only in surahs that form core texts of the Medinan subcorpus (Q 2–5, 9, and 22) that we even come across the Qur'anic expressions for 'Christians' (*al-naṣārā*, 'Nazoraeans') and 'Jews' (*alladhīna hādū*, *al-yahūd*).[41]

Another key doctrinal trait of the Medinan proclamations is their heightened emphasis on the status and far-reaching authority of the Qur'anic Messenger: whereas non-Medinan texts limit themselves to presenting him as a divinely sent 'warner' and 'bringer of good tidings' (for example, Q 17: 105, 25: 56, 51: 50–51, and 79: 45), Medinan surahs additionally cast him as a 'prophet' (*nabiyy*; for example, Q 33: 1.6.13), a title that non-Medinan texts reserve for figures from Biblical history.[42] Moreover, Medinan texts over and over again enjoin their audience to obey 'God and His Messenger' (for example, Q 3: 32, 4: 13, and 5: 92).[43] As illustrated by surahs 2, 4, 5, or 24, a number of surahs containing references to the Medinan constellation also show a profound preoccupation with detailed behavioural prescriptions covering a wide range of spheres, such as marriage and inheritance, ritual matters, and the punishment of various crimes. Finally, as recognised already by medieval scholars, Medinan texts display distinctive phraseological features, such as polemical

references to the 'hypocrites' and to 'those in whose heart is sickness' (*alladhīna fī qulūbihim maraḍun*).

The characteristics just catalogued show a noticeable tendency to occur together. To be sure, not all surahs that display certain characteristics of the Medinan Qur'an exhibit the full panoply of them. Thus, surah 24 has a high mean verse length (135.64 transcription letters), a high formulaic density, makes a cursory reference to those who 'have emigrated in the path of God' (v. 11), includes law-like behavioural prescriptions (vv. 2–9, 22–23, 27–33, 58–61, and 62–63), and emphasises the need to obey the Messenger and his authority to adjudicate between the Believers (vv. 47–56). However, it lacks explicit comments on Jews or Christians.[44] Yet the absence of this latter trait hardly calls into question that surah 24 can safely be assigned to the Medinan Qur'an. The same applies to other texts: almost all surahs that are marked by one of the main Medinan features listed above also reveal one or more of the other traits.[45] Cumulatively, the foregoing features therefore delimit a distinct portion of the Qur'an that is appropriately called 'Medinan'. Moreover, asssuming that the argument put forward above to the effect that verse length is a chronological marker is correct, the consistently high mean verse length of the surahs making up this Medinan subcorpus indicates that they stem from a late period of the Qur'an's process of emergence.

Most of the other surahs are plausibly taken to have been proclaimed before the emigration of the Messenger and his adherents to *al-madīnah*, that is, in a situation of increasingly tense cohabitation between the Qur'anic community and the Associators. Such prior cohabitation is implied not only by reminders of the Messenger's expulsion but also by the statement at Q 8: 33 that the Messenger once dwelt 'among' the Unbelievers. Since, as argued in Chapter 2, it can be inferred that the site of this cohabitation was identical to the sanctuary later conquered by the Believers, the pre-Medinan surahs are justifiably labelled 'Meccan'. It may be added that the general divide between two distinct portions of the Qur'an that has just been outlined would be tenable even if one were to doubt that Qur'anic references to 'the town' (*al-madīnah*) can be equated with present-day Medina and that the Qur'anic sanctuary is identical with present-day Mecca (although somebody beholden to such doubts may of course prefer to call the non-Medinan surahs by a different label than 'Meccan').

The boundary between the Qur'an's two main layers, while clear enough in principle, can sometimes be fuzzy, since one will occasionally encounter both Meccan and Medinan traits in one and the same surah. Consider surahs 6, 7, and 16. On the one hand, they are thematically and structurally close to many Meccan texts; for instance, surah 7 is unmistakably tripartite with a cycle of prophetic narratives in the middle section, and all three texts contain polemics against the Associators of the sort that dominate the Meccan texts (for example, Q 6: 100–117, 16: 51–62, and 16: 70–73).[46] On the other hand, all three surahs

also include material that has a distinctly Medinan flavour: surahs 6 and 16 stipulate dietary prohibitions (6: 119–121, 6: 145, and 16: 114–115); all three texts speak explicitly and polemically of 'those who have adopted Judaism' (*alladhīna hādū*) or at least allude to the expression;[47] and surah 16 even promises God's assistance to those who have undertaken the emigration, or hijrah (16: 41–42, 16: 110).

How are we to explain such instances of Meccan-Medinan hybridity? A clue is offered by surahs 73 and 74. As observed already in Chapter 4, both texts contain obvious later additions that are characterised by typically Medinan diction, positioned either at the very end (Q 73: 20) or in the midst of the surah (Q 74: 31).[48] This suggests that at least some of the Medinan-flavoured verses and verse groups in surahs 6, 7, and 16 could also be secondary insertions. In the case of surah 16, much of the potentially Medinan material is bunched together towards the end of the text, similar to the appendix-like placement of Q 73: 20.[49] By contrast, in Q 6 and 7 a greater number of likely Medinan insertions are embedded deeper inside the surah, somewhat like Q 74: 31.[50]

Nonetheless, a word of caution is in order here. While the general phenomenon of Medinan insertions to Meccan surahs is established by a sufficient amount of credible cases in point, it would be rash to discount the possibility that certain thematic and phraseological features that come to prominence in the Medinan texts may well have an embryonic presence in earlier surahs. For example, the emblematic and foundational status that the figure of Abraham is given in the Medinan Qur'an (Q 2: 124–141, 3: 64–68.95–97, 4: 125, and 22: 26–29.78) is already foreshadowed and prepared by pre-Medinan passages that link Abraham to the Meccan sanctuary (Q 14: 35–41) and urge adherence to his quintessentially monotheistic 'creed' (*millah*) (Q 6: 161 and 16: 120–123). Excising these passages as Medinan insertions merely because of the importance that they attach to Abraham would be question-begging.[51]

Perhaps the most intriguing case of Meccan-Medinan hybridity is presented by surah 22. The composition as it now stands contains evident allusions to the Medinan constellation (vv. 25, 38–41, and 58–60) and also displays other characteristic Medinan traits, such as an explicit endorsement of militancy (vv. 39, 58, and 78) and an interest in relatively precise ritual ordinances, here to do with performance of the pilgrimage (vv. 28–37). The final shape of the surah is therefore best dated to the Medinan period. Yet at the same time, the text also features sections whose thematic and terminological profile is perfectly Meccan, including reminders of how God destroyed various unbelieving peoples in the past (vv. 42–48) and a catalogue of miscellaneous attestations of God's power and grace in the natural world (vv. 61–66). The fact that these parts of the surah largely lack overt Medinan characteristics suggests that they may be earlier Meccan material whose original emergence significantly predates the final version of the text. Thus, whereas in surah 37 we were able to pinpoint later

Medinan interpolations in an earlier Meccan composition, surah 22 invites an attempt to discern earlier Meccan pieces that were subsequently absorbed into a later Medinan composition. In our discussion of surah 2 above, we already encountered a similar scenario for Q 2: 1–20. Surah 22 thus provides an illustration of the sort of editorial conjoining by means of which Richard Bell envisaged most surahs to have attained their final form.

As intimated in Chapter 4, the argument for a redactional analysis of surah 22 very much hinges on the observation that it combines thematic and terminological features that are not normally concomitant in the Qur'an. Can we pick the text apart, then? Nöldeke and Schwally's brief treatment of surah 22 singles out vv. 1–24 (except for v. 17), 42–57, 61–66, and 68–76 as Meccan.[52] This way of splitting the surah up, represented in Figure 14, remains persuasive, as can be shown by quickly scanning it for obvious Medinan characteristics. Most easily detected are the circumstantial references to aspects of the Medinan constellation that have already been pointed out above: the Unbelievers bar access to the sanctuary (v. 25), the Believers have been expelled 'only for saying, "Our Lord is God"' (v. 40), God will reward those who have 'emigrated in the path of God' (v. 58), and there are references to fighting (vv. 39 and 58). Moreover, the passage about Abraham's establishment of the Meccan pilgrimage ritual at Q 22: 26ff. reads like a complement to two other Medinan passages about Abraham and the sanctuary, 2: 124–129 and 3: 96–97,[53] while the pilgrimage instructions in 22: 30–37 fit in with other Medinan passages enjoining performance of the pilgrimage and specifying certain aspects of the applicable ritual.[54] Vv. 25–41 and 58–60 are therefore best viewed as dating from the Medinan period.

The surah's Medinan portion includes a number of further passages. Among them is v. 17, whose enumeration of several religious communities – including the Believers, the Jews, the Christians, and the Associators – is only paralleled by two other Qur'anic verses, both found in Medinan texts (Q 2: 62 and 5: 69). V. 67, on account of its employment of the term 'rite' (*mansak*) recalling v. 34 in the pilgrimage section, likewise ought to be allocated to the surah's Medinan layer. Finally, the surah's concluding verse, v. 78, has a Medinan ring, too. Although the command to 'struggle' (*jāhidū*) must not inevitably be taken to refer to actual fighting, as vv. 39 and 58 do,[55] v. 78 furthermore identifies the Believers' 'religion' (*dīn*) with the 'creed (*millah*) of Abraham' and designates the recipients as 'the Submitters' (*al-muslimūn*). To be sure, the verb *aslama*, 'to submit', is already found in the Meccan corpus, as are references to the 'creed' (*millah*) of Abraham.[56] However, it is doubtful whether any Meccan verse applies the verb *aslama* specifically to Abraham.[57] Instead, the manner in which the final verse of Q 22 connects the words *dīn*, *millah*, and *aslama* as well as the figure of Abraham is closely reminiscent of a number of passages in the long Medinan surahs 2, 3, 4, and 5. These employ the verbal noun *islām*, 'submission', as a

I Eschatological polemic

[1–2] Eschatological warning
[3–4] Threat against those who 'dispute about God without knowledge'
[5–7] Arguments for God's power to resurrect the dead: God's creation of embryos in the womb and His sending down of rain
[8–10] Renewed threat against those who 'dispute about God without knowledge' (cf. v. 3)
[11–13] Reproof of those whose faith is unsteady
[14] Promise of reward for those who believe and do righteous deeds
[15] Reproof of those who would despair of God's assistance 'in this world and the next'
[16] Affirmation of revelation

[17] God's judgement between the Believers and other religious communities

[18–24] God's power over nature, eschatological threats and promises

II Abraham and the pilgrimage sanctuary

[25] Those who bar access to the 'Inviolable Place of Prostration' threatened with divine punishment
[26–29] Abraham commanded to establish the pilgrimage to God's House
[30–37] Pilgrimage instructions
[38–41] Justification of militancy

III Eschatological polemic

[42–48] God's punishment of previous peoples
[49–51] Messenger commissioned to convey eschatological threat and promise
[52–54] Satan's attempt to tamper with prophetic inspiration
[55–57] Polemic against those who are in doubt about the Hour

[58–60] Promise of reward for 'those who have emigrated in the path of God and have then been killed or died'

[61–66] God's power over nature

[67] God's appointment of a 'rite' (*mansak*) for every community (cf. v. 34)

[68–72] Polemic against those who 'dispute' with the Messenger (cf. vv. 3 and 8)
[73–76] The impotence of false gods, hymnic statements about God

IV Conclusion

[77–78] Injunction to worship God and to undertake militant 'striving' (*j-h-d*) on His behalf; the creed (*millah*) of Abraham

Figure 14 Meccan and Medinan passages in surah 22 according to Nöldeke and Schwally (passages likely to be Meccan are highlighted in grey)

proper name for the Qur'anic religion and intimately link it with Abraham.[58] It must be conceded, though, that the surah's penultimate verse, v. 77, which together with v. 78 forms a closing couplet, may nonetheless belong to the text's Meccan layer: its opening – 'O you who believe, bow down and prostrate and worship your Lord' – distinctly recalls a number of Meccan surah endings (Q 96: 19, 53: 62, and 7: 206; see also 77: 48).[59]

That Nöldeke and Schwally's redactional dissection of Q 22 is plausible also follows from the fact that the mean verse length of the putatively Meccan sections by themselves only amounts to 95.07 transcription letters, which is markedly lower than that of the entire surah (102.54) and located in the same range as many other late Meccan surahs such as Q 16, 41, and 11. By contrast, the mean verse length of only those portions of Q 22 that Figure 14 identifies as Medinan is 119.33 transcription letters, roughly equal to that of Q 59.[60] What appears to have taken place, then, is that pre-existing Meccan material was used to pad out a number of programmatic Medinan passages to do with the demarcation of the Qur'anic Believers from Jews and Christians, with Abraham and the Meccan sanctuary, and with the demand for militant action against the Unbelievers occupying the sanctuary. The result is a surah whose conspicuous centrepiece, like that of surah 2, is a section about Abraham. Furthermore, as in surah 2, the interlacing of textual units dating from different periods of the Qur'an's genesis was not undertaken haphazardly, since surah 22's Medinan portions sometimes pick up the diction of earlier Meccan components.[61] Many of the topics broached in the surah's Medinan layer are then climactically recapped in the composition's final verse (v. 78). The outcome is a text that includes a significantly higher amount of Medinan material than the Medinan dabs gracing surahs 6, 7, and 16: if surah 22 is divided up as proposed in Figure 14, the Meccan layer comes to *c.* 5,100 transcription letters and the Medinan one to *c.* 2,800.

Hard cases

The two central arguments of the present chapter – that the Qur'anic texts can be read as a linear sequence of consecutive proclamations, and that the traditional distinction between a Meccan and a Medinan stage of the Qur'anic proclamations is tenable – are anchored in the observation that many surahs show a noticeable convergence of several independent stylistic, thematic, and terminological markers. Although the instances of Meccan-Medinan hybridity that have been examined so far disrupt this pattern, there is good reason to be confident that they are amenable to satisfactory explanation. This final section of the chapter will look at a few surahs that constitute much more serious exceptions to the basic train of thought developed so far.

One case in point is surah 98, which Weil and Nöldeke date to the Medinan period.[62] Their assessment is based on the accusations that vv. 1–6 level against the Scripturalists, which tie in with the prominent place that anti-Jewish and anti-Christian polemics occupy in the Medinan Qur'an. Stylistically, however, the surah does not behave like other Medinan proclamations: although it is one of the most formulaic pieces in the entire Qur'an,[63] its mean verse length (74.38 transcription letters) ranks far below that of many other texts that Weil

and Nöldeke consider to be Meccan, such as Q 13 (126.16 transcription letters). Furthermore, the reference to 'purified sheets' (*ṣuḥuf muṭahharah*) in Q 98: 2 has its only close parallels in surahs that are undeniably Meccan.[64]

Even more anomalous are the two brief surahs 109 and 110. The former is opened by a vocative addressed to the Unbelievers and highlights the irreconcilable difference between their religion and that espoused by the surah's first-person speaker. The latter conjures up the advent of 'God's help and victory', when 'people will enter God's religion in throngs' (Q 110: 1.2). Both surahs have a low mean verse length (23 and 39 transcription letters, respectively), which presents a grave difficulty for Nöldeke's view that Q 110 is Medinan.[65] On the other hand, both texts employ the word *dīn* (Q 109: 6 and 110: 2) in the sense of 'religion' rather than 'judgement', a lexical feature that is otherwise characteristic of surahs with a much higher mean verse length.[66]

Q 98, 109, and 110 thus display a clear rupture between verse length and diction. Yet given their brevity, they do not offer any obvious points of departure for redactional explanations of the sort that I have proffered for Q 6, 7, and 16. A possible solution at least for Q 109 and 110 is foreshadowed by Nöldeke's demarcation of a small group of creedal texts and incantations (Q 1, 109, and 112–114) that he tentatively places at the end of the early Meccan period. He describes them as starkly different from the rest of the Qur'an and doubts whether they can be dated with any real precision.[67] This assessment is well-founded: as indicated especially by their use of the first-person singular (Q 109, 113, and 114) or plural (Q 1), the surahs in question are meant to be uttered by ordinary believers, even though the introductory *qul* ('Say: …') shifts some of them to the standard Qur'anic register of divine address. Surah 110, too, is plausibly included in this set of communal prayers and creeds rather than being allocated to the Medinan surah group. Quite possibly, these prayer surahs should be viewed as standing apart from the evolutionary trajectory that can be discerned in the remainder of the Qur'an. Although they may well have emerged during Muhammad's lifetime or in the immediate wake of his death, their particular function could have insulated them from undergoing the same stylistic development towards ever-increasing verse length that is exhibited by other Qur'anic proclamations. This hypothesis would provide a reasonable explanation for why Q 109 and 110 anomalously combine short verses with diction otherwise associated with long verses. Adopting this solution would, however, entail that at least for this small cluster of prayer texts, mean verse length is not a chronological marker but rather a function of genre.

In any case, surah 98 can hardly be allocated to this prayer cluster, which means that its combination of a relatively moderate mean verse length with Medinan-style criticism of Jews and Christians remains a genuine puzzle. True, the verse break between vv. 2 and 3 could be queried; removing it would bring

the surah's mean verse length up to 85.29 and thereby mitigate the problem.[68] Nonetheless, even this value is still below that of many other surahs that are clearly non-Medinan. Could the surah's hybrid character be reflective of a transitional position between the Meccan and the Medinan period? This view would hold considerably more force if it were possible to pinpoint a similar combination of traits in at least one or two other texts. An alternative solution is suggested by Marianna Klar's observation, already cited above, that the introductory verse groups of some of the Medinan long surahs also have comparatively short verses. Perhaps, then, the peculiar character of Q 98 is to be explained by the fact that it adheres to some of the stylistic conventions characterising the preludes of Medinan long surahs.[69] It remains to be explored whether that implies that the eight verses making up the canonical version of Q 98 could originally have been meant to serve as the beginning of a much more extensive composition that was either never promulgated or has not reached us.

Notes

1. Rippin, 'Function'.
2. Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 1, pp. 59–63. For a detailed treatment of the distinction between Meccan and Medinan revelations in a pre-modern Islamic textbook, see al-Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, pp. 43–113 (*nawᶜ* 1).
3. Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, pp. 106–9 (towards the end of *nawᶜ* 1).
4. Weil, *Historisch-kritische Einleitung*, pp. 54–80; Nöldeke, *Geschichte*, pp. 45–174. See Stefanidis, 'The Qur'an Made Linear'.
5. This list is already cited in Weil, *Mohammed*, pp. 363–71.
6. Weil, *Historisch-kritische Einleitung*, p. 55.
7. See, e.g., Nöldeke, *Geschichte*, p. 60 (cf. Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 1, p. 74).
8. Nöldeke, *Geschichte*, p. 49 (cf. Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 1, p. 63).
9. The 1860 edition of Nöldeke's *Geschichte des Qorâns* is dedicated to Ewald, and the latter's introduction to the Old Testament prophets is cited in Nöldeke, *Geschichte*, p. 2, n. 1. Ewald's influence on Nöldeke is clearly apparent in the general understanding of prophecy developed in Nöldeke, *Geschichte*, pp. 1ff., which should be compared with Ewald, *Propheten*, vol. 1, pp. 2–6.
10. The trajectory of decadence that Nöldeke detects in the Qur'an shows some similarity to Julius Wellhausen's influential account of Israelite religious history, leading from a stage of natural vitality to a stage of legalistic and ritualistic 'denaturation' (Kraus, *Geschichte*, pp. 260–9). Even though Wellhausen's classic work dates only from 1878, it is still noteworthy that he and Nöldeke evidently shared similar intuitions about what constitutes a credible religious-historical narrative.
11. The following summarises the central argument of Sinai, 'Inner-Qur'anic Chronology'.
12. See Chapter 1, n. 47. The data in Figure 10 is also presented and analysed in Sinai, 'Inner-Qur'anic Chronology'. I am grateful to Behnam Sadeghi, Iryna Schlackow, Nora K. Schmid, and Marianna Klar for reading and commenting on this handbook chapter.
13. For a paradigm of what such an evaluation would involve, see Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 11–63.

14. The passages concerned 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. See Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 201–3; Sinai, '*Sūrat al-Najm*', p. 9 (on Q 53: 23.26–32); Sinai, '"Weihnachten"', pp. 23–5 (on Q 97: 4).
15. For instance, Figure 10 does not take into account that Q 70: 4 is also plausibly regarded as a later insertion (Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 1, p. 106). Without v. 4, the surah would have a lower mean verse length, although the difference is less than one transcription letter. Nor do I take account of the fact that, as argued in Chapter 4, the original form of Q 37 very likely did not include vv. 102 and 112–113 (extricating which reduces the surah's mean verse length from 31.2 to 30.26 transcription letters and brings the surah two places forward in an ordering based on increasing mean verse length).
16. A case in point would be Q 22, which is discussed further below.
17. Versions of both graphs were originally compiled for Sinai, 'Inner-Qur'anic Chronology', publication of which has regrettably suffered severe delays.
18. See Sadeghi, 'Chronology', p. 240.
19. Like Figures 11 and 12, this graph was originally compiled for Sinai, 'Inner-Qur'anic Chronology'. Note that for those short-verse surahs that appear twice in Figures 9 and 10–11, only the asterisked (i.e., original) version of the text is taken into account.
20. The surah with the lowest mean verse length in which the term *munāfiq* appears is Q 29 (v. 11), whose mean verse length is 92.36 transcription letters. On the occurrence of the divine name *al-raḥmān* and polemical references to the 'association' (*sh-r-k*) of other deities with God, see Sinai, 'Inner-Qur'anic Chronology', Figure 6.
21. Sinai, 'The Unknown Known'.
22. See Sinai, 'Inner-Qur'anic Chronology', Figure 7, which is also found in Sinai, 'The Unknown Known', p. 93 (Figure 3).
23. Sadeghi, 'Chronology'.
24. There is also a clear correlation between mean verse length and an interest in the detailed regulation of human behaviour: Qur'anic law is almost entirely concentrated in surahs with a high mean verse length. Here, however, it could be objected that we are not in fact faced with a correlation between two properly independent parameters: it would undoubtedly be difficult to articulate precise behavioural rules in verses whose length falls below a certain minimum.
25. See in more detail Sadeghi, 'Chronology', p. 218.
26. The latter verse was pointed out to me by Marianna Klar. On the phrase *ʿalā mukth*, here translated 'in an abiding manner', see Ambros, *Dictionary*, p. 257.
27. Kenny, *Computation*, pp. 74–5.
28. Sadeghi, 'Chronology', p. 283.
29. One example for the latter category is Q 9: 114, which comments on the accounts of Abraham's dispute with his unbelieving father contained in Q 14: 41, 19: 47, and 26: 86. See Sinai, 'Two Types'.
30. See Sinai, 'The Qurʾan as Process', pp. 415–16.
31. Sadeghi, 'Chronology', pp. 228–38.
32. Sinai, *Fortschreibung*, pp. 154–6. I take it that Q 70: 1's reference to an antecedent question renders it more likely that the passage from Q 70 presupposes an audience response to Q 52: 7–8 rather than vice versa. To my earlier treatment I would now add that a crucial point by which Q 70: 1ff. complements Q 52: 7–8 is that God's punishment will only befall the Unbelievers.
33. The mean verse length of Q 70 excluding v. 4 is 31.77 transcription letters, while that of Q 52 excluding the probable insertion v. 21 is 38.35 transcription letters.

34. See Sinai, 'Inner-Qur'anic Chronology', Figures 3 and 4 and the comments thereon. Note that the 95 per cent confidence intervals of Q 70 and Q 52 as depicted in these graphs show enough overlap in order for Q 52's temporal priority not to be statistically improbable.
35. For a detailed presentation of this argument, accompanied by comprehensive references and tables, see Sinai, 'The Unknown Known', on which the following draws.
36. Sinai, 'The Unknown Known', Appendix 2, Figure 2.
37. On this issue in particular, see Marshall, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers*.
38. For a defence of this claim against Fred Donner's intriguing hypothesis that the Qur'anic and early post-prophetic 'Believers' did not view themselves 'as constituting a new or separate religious confession' (Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, p. 69), see Sinai, 'The Unknown Known', Appendix 1.
39. On the theme of 'disunity' and 'doubts' over the Mosaic revelation, see Q 10: 93, 11: 110, 27: 76, 41: 45, 42: 14–15, and 45: 16–17. These passages are perhaps best read as alluding to the split between Judaism and Christianity, both of whom lay claim to the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament. On disunity and schisms among the adherents of Jesus, see Q 19: 37, 21: 93, and 43: 65. More general variants on this theme are found at Q 23: 53 and 10: 19. See also the remarks in Chapter 7, 'Polemics in the later Meccan surahs'.
40. On these two passages, see Chapter 7, n. 87.
41. Three prima facie exceptions are Q 6: 146, 7: 156, and 16: 118, but see below (including notes).
42. Welch, 'Muhammad's Understanding', pp. 43–5; Bobzin, '"Seal"', pp. 567–9 and 571–4.
43. But note that some non-Medinan texts depict important precursors of the Qur'anic Messenger – namely, Noah, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Lot, Shuᶜayb, and Jesus – as commanding their addressees, 'Be fearful of God and obey me!' (Q 26: 108.110.126.131.144.150. 163.179, 43: 63, and 71: 3; see also 20: 90, where Aaron commands the Israelites to obey him, and 43: 54, accusing the people of Pharaoh of having obeyed him rather than Moses). Furthermore, as Andrew O'Connor points out to me, the combination of *allāh* + *al-rasūl/rasūluhū* is already found, together with the verb 'to disobey' (*ᶜaṣā*), at Q 72: 23: 'Who disobeys God and His Messenger shall have the Fire', a threat that recurs in the Medinan verses 4: 14 and 33: 36. See also Q 73: 16. Nonetheless, the full formulaic system constituted by concatenating *aṭāᶜa* ('to obey') + *allāh* + *al-rasūl/rasūluhū* ('the Messenger / His Messenger') would appear to be exclusively Medinan. Furthermore, what non-Medinan surahs mean by obedience to God's messengers seems to be confined to heeding their eschatological preaching (see especially Q 72: 23), whereas the Medinan corpus shows a much more expansive understanding of the duty of obedience to Muhammad.
44. See the relevant entry in Sinai, 'The Unknown Known', Appendix 2, Figure 1.
45. See Sinai, 'The Unknown Known', Appendix 2, Figure 1.
46. Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 292–3.
47. Q 6: 146 and 16: 118 contain the expression *alladhīna hādū*, while 7: 156 has some of the Israelites led by Moses confess their contrition to God with a phrase using the verb *hāda*, very likely a wordplay presupposing and perhaps etymologising the expression *alladhīna hādū* (see Ambros, *Concise Dictionary*, pp. 280–1).
48. Medinan diction in Q 73: 20 includes the phrase 'fighting in the way of God' (*yuqātilūna fī sabīli llāhi*) and the verb *tāba* (here used of God in the sense of 'to relent towards'). The most conspicuously Medinan phrase in Q 74: 31 is the reference to 'those in whose hearts is sickness' (*alladhīna fī qulūbihim maraḍun*).
49. Prima face, this Medinan supplement to Q 16 would appear to include a promise of divine forgiveness and mercy for 'those who have emigrated' (v. 110) and a list of dietary prohibitions followed by a brief comment on Jewish dietary law (vv. 114–118; see Sinai, 'Dietary

Tetralogue'). That the end of Q 16 underwent Medinan expansion is already posited in Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 300–1, who also draws attention to Q 16: 41–42.

50. A Medinan dating of the dietary regulations in Q 6: 145–146 is defended in Sinai, 'Dietary Tetralogue'. On the secondary nature of Q 6: 119–120 and 6: 146–147 (*sic*), see Gräf, *Jagdbeute und Schlachttier*, pp. 33 and 39; on Q 6: 91, see Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung*, p. 113. On the presence of Medinan insertions in Q 7, see Neuwirth, 'Meccan Texts – Medinan Additions?' (arguing that vv. 145–147, 152–153, and 155–157 are later insertions).
51. Q 14: 35–41 portrays Abraham as praying for the prosperity of the future inhabitants of the sanctuary, where Abraham is reported to have 'settled some of my descendants'. Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje's claim that the verse group constitutes a Medinan insertion is open to doubt; see Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung*, pp. 106–12 and also 129–35. Similar objections could be made to attempts to extricate Q 6: 161 and 16: 120–123 as Medinan insertions: although such a hypothesis is by no means inconceivable, it would need to be properly argued. Finally, the address of Abraham and his wife Sarah as 'people of the House' (*ahl al-bayt*) at Q 11: 73 may also betray a link between Abraham and the Meccan sanctuary. Here, too, there is no prima facie reason to deny that the passage in question predates the hijrah.
52. Nöldeke at al., *History*, vol. 1, pp. 213–14. Attention is furthermore drawn to the fact that vv. 5–7 are isolated from their context. The assessment in Schwally's revised edition largely corresponds to Nöldeke's original verdict in Nöldeke, *Geschichte*, pp. 158–9, although there Q 22: 17 is considered to be an addition that is still Meccan, and no reference is made to 22: 5–7. Note that both publications cite the Qur'an according to the verse numbering of the now superseded Flügel edition.
53. But note that a link between Abraham and the Meccan sanctuary is already posited in Q 14: 35–41, probably Meccan (see n. 51 above).
54. See Q 2: 158.196–198, 3: 96–97, 5: 1–2.94–97, and 9: 17–19. Q 48: 27 presupposes that Muhammad and his followers have actually carried out the pilgrimage. This is not to deny that already the Meccan Qur'an contains references to the sanctuary; e.g., Q 14: 37 has Abraham anticipate that his descendants will 'perform prayer' at the 'Inviolable House'.
55. For a non-military employment of the verb *jāhada*, see, e.g., Q 31: 15.
56. The '*millah* of Abraham' is invoked at Q 12: 38 (Joseph confesses his faithfulness 'to the *millah* of my fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob'); see also Q 6: 161 and Q 16: 123, although it remains to be ascertained whether these verses may not be Medinan insertions. See also Q 12: 37, 14: 13, 18: 20, and 38: 7, where the word *millah* is used in the sense of 'religion' or 'creed', although without reference to Abraham, and generally Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, pp. 268–9. Some relevant later Meccan occurrences of *aslama* are Q 10: 72, 15: 2, 27: 42, 39: 54, and 40: 66. Two prima facie Meccan occurrences of the verbal noun *islām* are the references to 'him whose bosom God has widened for submission' at Q 6: 125 and 39: 22.
57. The only counterexample is Q 37: 103, which does speak of Abraham and his son's submission to God; however, as argued in Chapter 4 above, the verse may have undergone secondary expansion together with the insertion of v. 102.
58. The most relevant parallels to Q 22: 78 in this regard stem from surahs 2 and 3: (i) Q 2: 130–141 present Abraham as the ideal 'submitter' and also include references to his *millah* (vv. 130, 135) as well as urging the Believer to self-identify, against the Jews and Christians, as 'submitters' (*muslimūn*). (ii) According to Q 3:19–22, the proper 'religion (*dīn*) with God' is *al-islām*, and Q 3: 64–68 again urges communal self-identification as 'submitters', in the footsteps of Abraham, who 'was not a Jew or Christian but rather was a *ḥanīf* and a

submitter (*muslim*)'. Vv. 80–85 of the same surah feature further occurrences of *muslimūn* and *al-islām* in conjunction with a reference to 'the religion (*dīn*) of God', while v. 95 commands the hearers to 'follow the creed (*millah*) of Abraham'. The latter verse is immediately followed, in vv. 96–97, by a brief statement about the Abrahamic origin of the sanctuary, similar to Q 22: 26–29. See also Q 4: 125 (which again combines reference to the 'creed of Abraham' with employment of the words *dīn* and *aslama*), 5: 3 (where the divine voice states that 'today I have approved submission (*al-islām*) as a religion for you'), and 61: 7 (speaking of people being 'called to submission/*al-islām*').

59. That references to prostration (*s-j-d*) are generally more prominent in the Meccan surahs than in the Medinan ones is observed in Taha, *Second Message*, pp. 125–6.
60. Q 22: 5 constitutes an anomaly in this regard. According to Schwally, vv. 5–7 interrupt their immediate context (Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 1, p. 213). While these verses do not appear to be obviously out of place from a thematic perspective, the extreme length of Q 22: 5 is arresting: with 435 transcription letters, it is the longest verse in the surah, exceeding the length of all the verses identified as Medinan in Figure 14. Yet in terms of its content and diction, the verse resembles many other passages rehearsing natural manifestations of God's power, a staple of Meccan discourse. We are here confronted with one of the relatively few instances in the Qur'an where one can observe a clear disjuncture between diction and content, on the one hand, and verse length, on the other (see the following section for a few other instances). Perhaps the closest parallel to the verse is Q 40: 67, which similarly recounts the different stages of embryonic growth in the womb and likewise runs to a very significant length (200 transcription letters). Q 22: 5 could be read as an attempt to supplement this earlier and already fairly comprehensive verse by additional details only found elsewhere in the Qur'an – for instance, by including a reference to the *muḍghah* as a distinct stage of embryonic growth ('a lump, formed or unformed'), which recalls Q 23: 14. It also merits pointing out that Q 22: 5, unlike 47: 67, includes an introduction that clearly states the aim of the following argument (namely, to respond to those who are 'in doubt about the Resurrection') and appends a second argument based on God's enlivening the earth by sending down rain as found, among others, in 41: 39. In sum, Q 22: 5, together with the following verses 6–7, looks like an attempt to produce a comprehensive digest of Qur'anic natural theology, even if some details of the process of embryonic development as described in Q 23: 14 are nonetheless absent. One may speculate, therefore, that the present version of Q 22: 5–7, like the entire surah, is Medinan yet emerged by way of fleshing out an earlier Meccan precursor version.
61. For instance, the end of v. 25 harks back to the threat that the damned shall 'taste' God's 'punishment' (*ʿadhāb*) at the end of v. 22, and the command to 'struggle on behalf of God as behoves Him' (*wa-jāhidū fī llāhi ḥaqqa jihādihi*) in v. 78 picks up the reproach in v. 74: 'they have not estimated God as behoves Him' (*mā qadarū llāha ḥaqqa qadrihi*).
62. Weil, *Historisch-kritische Einleitung*, p. 70; Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 1, p. 185.
63. See the surah's outlier position in the graph contained in Sinai, 'The Unknown Known', Appendix 2, Figure 3; see also Bannister, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, p. 156.
64. Apart from Q 98: 2, the expression *ṣuḥuf* only appears at Q 20: 133, 53: 36, 74: 52, 80: 13, 81: 10 (referring to a record book used at the Last Judgement), and 87: 18–19. Q 80: 13 is particularly similar, as the verse following it also contains the adjective *muṭahharah*. All of these surahs are considered to be early or middle Meccan by Nöldeke, which is plausible given their relatively low mean verse length.
65. Nöldeke at al., *History*, vol. 1, pp. 219–20.
66. On these two different meanings of the word and their etymological background, see Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, pp. 131–3, and Pennacchio, *Emprunts*, p. 160. A comprehensive

examination of the occurrences of *dīn* would show that the sense 'judgement' is present already in the early Meccan surahs whereas the sense 'religion' only emerges in later Meccan and Medinan surahs that have much longer verses than Q 109 and 110 (for Meccan occurrences see, e.g., Q 12: 40, 29: 65, and 42: 13.21; for Medinan occurrences, see, e.g., Q 2: 132.193.217.256). See also Chapter 7, n. 9.

67. Nöldeke, *Geschichte*, p. 84; Nöldeke at al., *History*, vol. 1, pp. 107–17.
68. Although the main verse division systems recorded by Muslim scholarship are unanimous about the break between v. 2 and v. 3, Gustav Flügel's 1834 edition of the Qur'an combines them into one verse; see Spitaler, *Verszählung*, p. 71, and Flügel (ed.), *Corani Textus Arabicus*, Q 98. In support of Flügel's verse division here, one may point to the fact that the present v. 2 is the only one among the surah's first seven verses whose final word does not contain a geminated *yā'*.
69. Klar has proposed this in a talk entitled 'Lexical Layers vs Structural Paradigms in the Opening of Sūrat al-Baqarah' (Pembroke College, Oxford, 20 March 2017). See also Chapter 4, n. 72.

CHAPTER 6

Intertextuality

As underscored in Chapter 3, the Qur'anic proclamations address an audience that must have been familiar with a considerable amount of Judaeo-Christian lore, including the notion of an eschatological resurrection and judgement. Very briefly, we also considered the extensive Aramaic imprint on the Qur'an's religious lexicon, which indicates substantial cultural contact with late antique Judaism and Christianity, and we saw that the Qur'anic proclamations freely acknowledge their continuity with the Biblical tradition by claiming to be a 'confirmation' of previous revelations, specifically of the Torah and the Gospel (Q 3: 3–4). The most palpable manifestation of such continuity is of course the prominent place that many surahs accord to Biblical figures like Noah, Abraham, Moses, or Jesus.

The consequence of all these observations is that any attempt at delineating the way, or ways, in which the Qur'anic texts would have been understood by their first recipients requires placing them against a cultural backdrop in which Jewish and Christian ideas and stories must have loomed large. The present chapter will introduce and provide examples for such a comparative study of the Qur'an in the light of antecedent traditions. This will involve a close examination of overlaps and differences between the Qur'an and earlier Biblical, extra-Biblical, and post-Biblical writings. As convenient shorthand for this enquiry, I employ the term 'intertextuality', although no attempt will be made to engage with the large body of literary theory that has sprung up around the concept.

The transmission of Biblical knowledge into the Qur'anic milieu

Given the Qur'an's high saturation with Biblical and Biblically based traditions, should we imagine Muhammad and his audience to have had first-hand access to written copies of the Bible and other Jewish and Christian literature? This seems unlikely. True, the Qur'an explicitly refers to the Torah, the Gospel, and the Psalms as distinct literary entities (for example, Q 3: 3–4, 4: 163, and 5: 44.46) as well as mentioning, more enigmatically, 'the ancient scriptures, the scriptures of Abraham and Moses' (Q 87: 18–19; see also 53: 36–37).[1] There are also two Medinan verses that would appear to allude to the original Hebrew wording of Deuteronomy 5: 27, suggesting that at least parts of the

Qur'an's audience at this late stage had some familiarity with the canonical text of the Hebrew Bible.[2] Nonetheless, proper citations of Biblical writings are very rare in the Qur'an.[3] Perhaps the most clear-cut case is Q 21: 105, in which the divine speaker states, 'We have decreed in the Psalms after the reminder that My righteous servants will inherit the land.'[4] The verse both claims to be quoting an earlier text and overlaps very closely with a specific verse from the Psalms, namely, Psalm 37: 29: 'The righteous will inherit the land, and dwell in it forever.'[5] Yet this combination of characteristics – an explicit reference to a specific text accompanied by an accurate quotation – is fairly exceptional. This is illustrated by Figure 15, which gives an overview of some of the clearest cases of quotations and near-quotations from Biblical literature that scholars have identified in the Qur'anic corpus.[6]

Unlike Q 21: 105, most Qur'anic verses included in the table, or others like them, do not explicitly signal that a particular earlier text is being cited. In some cases, the Qur'anic wording only corresponds rather loosely to the respective parallel, as in the Qur'anic restatement of the Biblical law of retaliation (*lex talionis*) at Q 5: 45. Interestingly, the same formula that introduces this latter quotation – the divine affirmation 'We have decreed for' (*katabnā ʿalā*) the Israelites – also occurs at Q 5: 32, where it precedes a statement that does not appear in the Hebrew Bible at all but rather stems from the Mishnah, a later compilation of Rabbinic law. Unlike the Jewish tradition, the Qur'an does not seem to make a principled distinction between these two corpora. Rather, the Qur'anic wording by itself conveys the impression that both the divine decree quoted at Q 5: 32 and that figuring at 5: 45 are equally contained in the Israelite scripture.

Figure 15 also demonstrates that many Qur'anic quotations or near-quotations of Biblical verses are limited to very brief phrases, such as the designation of God as 'the Living, the Enduring' (Q 2: 255, 3: 2, and 20: 11) or 'the First and the Last' (Q 57: 3). Moreover, since some of these brief phrases had come to be reused in the subsequent Jewish or Christian tradition, their uptake in the Qur'an does not necessarily indicate engagement with a specific Biblical passage. This applies, for example, to the divine epithet 'the Living, the Enduring' that originates in Daniel 6: 26/27 but also occurs in later Rabbinic texts.[7] A similar observation emerges from a detailed study of eschatological motifs in the Qur'an: while many of them parallel statements contained in the New Testament gospels or in the book of Revelation, most of these motifs are widely recurrent in later Christian literature, making it again impossible to link the Qur'anic verses in question to particular Biblical passages.[8]

Intertextual links between the Qur'an and earlier writings, then, have a marked tendency to be more in the nature of 'paraphrases, allusions, and echoes' rather than 'quotations in any strict sense of the word'.[9] As a result, the evidence that the Qur'anic proclamations emerged from a direct engagement with specific written texts, whether Biblical, extra-Biblical, or post-Biblical, is

Qur'anic verse	**Closely overlapping Biblical or post-Biblical passage**
Q 1: 6: 'Guide us on the straight path.'	Psalm 27: 11: 'Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me on a straight path, because of my enemies.'
Q 2: 255: 'God – there is no god but Him, the Living (*al-ḥayy*), the Enduring (*al-qayyūm*).	Daniel 6: 26/27: ' … For He is the living and eternally enduring God (*ʾĕlāhā ḥayyāʾ wĕ-qayyām lĕ-ʿālmîn*) …'
Neither slumber (*sinah*) nor sleep (*nawm*) seizes Him.	Psalm 121: 4: 'Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep (*lōʾ yānûm wĕ-lōʾ yîšān*).'
To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is on earth.	1 Chronicles 29: 11: 'Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours …'
… His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He is not weighed down by guarding them. He is the Exalted and Mighty.'	Isaiah 66: 1: 'Thus says the Lord: the heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool …'
Q 5: 32: 'Because of this We have decreed for the Israelites that whoever kills a life (*nafs*), other than in retaliation for another life or for corruption in the land, is as if he had killed all humans; and whoever maintains a soul alive is as if he maintained alive all humans …'	Mishnah Sanhedrin 4: 5: '…Therefore man was created as a single being in the world in order to teach that anyone who causes a single life (*nepeš*) to perish is considered to have caused an entire world to perish; and anyone who preserves a single life is considered to have preserved an entire world …'[a]
Q 5: 45: 'We have decreed for them [= the Israelites] in it [= the Torah]: a life (*nafs*) for a life; an eye for an eye; a nose for a nose; an ear for an ear; a tooth for a tooth; and wounds entail retaliation. If someone forgoes it as an act of almsgiving, it will serve as atonement for him …'	Exodus 21: 23–25: 'But if any harm follows, then you shall give life (Hebrew *nepeš*, Syriac *napšā*) for life / eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, / burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.' See also Leviticus 24: 19–20.
Q 7: 40: 'Those who deem Our signs to be lies and are scornful of them – the gates of heaven will not be opened for them, and they will not enter the garden until the camel passes through the eye of the needle. Thus We recompense the sinners.'	Mark 10: 25: 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' See also Matthew 19: 24 and Luke 18: 25.
Q 21: 105: 'We have decreed in the Psalms after the reminder that My righteous servants will inherit the land.'	Psalm 37: 29: 'The righteous will inherit the land, and dwell in it forever.'
Q 57: 3: 'He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward, and He has knowledge of everything.'	Isaiah 44: 6: 'Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God.' See also Isaiah 48: 12.

Figure 15 Some Biblical and post-Biblical quotations and near-quotations in the Qur'an (corresponding elements are underlined)

[a]I translate the text of MS Kaufmann, fol. 148v.

at best limited.[10] More likely, much of the Biblically based lore reflected in and presupposed by the Islamic scripture reached the Qur'anic milieu in an oral form. It is probable that this orally transmitted body of narratives, concepts, and phrases was at least partly in Arabic. This conjecture is not invalidated by the fact that there does not appear to have been a pre-Qur'anic Arabic translation of the Bible,[11] meaning that even in Arab-speaking communities the scriptural readings that are a standard component of Jewish and Christian services would probably have been conducted in Aramaic. Yet such readings may well have been accompanied by oral translations into Arabic, and Arabic would also have served as a natural vehicle for congregational or missionary preaching.[12] These may have been the contexts in which much of the Qur'an's religious vocabulary was originally coined, even if the earliest literary document in which it surfaces is the Qur'an itself. From such an oral point of departure, Jewish and Christian lore may then have radiated far beyond formally Jewish or Christian congregations into syncretistic pagan circles of the sort that have been tentatively sketched in Chapter 3.

Regrettably, access to the oral discourses informing the Qur'an's cultural habitat is far more meagre and indirect than one would wish. The Islamic tradition claims to preserve an extensive body of narratives about, and utterances by, Muhammad and his companions, yet it is virtually never possible to verify in a conclusive manner which of these traditions really do go back to their alleged sources.[13] And even if we may safely consider a substantial part of the transmitted corpus of pre-Qur'anic Arabic poetry to be authentic, the amount of poetic material exhibiting relevant parallels to the Qur'an is comparatively small.[14] We cannot therefore rely on post-Qur'anic Islamic literature in Arabic to provide us with reliable and sufficiently detailed glimpses of the Qur'an's discursive background.

The consequence of this state of affairs is that in placing the Qur'an against its Judaeo-Christian background we must have recourse to non-Arabic Jewish and Christian writings that are separated from the object of our study by a considerable geographical, historical, and linguistic gap: they were virtually always produced outside the Arabian Peninsula and often antedate the Qur'an by several centuries, and are composed in languages such as Hebrew, Greek, and various kinds of Aramaic that many of the Qur'an's addressees may not have spoken or read to any significant degree. Prospects for uncovering the direct sources of a given Qur'anic narrative are thus slim: just as the Qur'anic designation of God as 'the Living, the Enduring' (Q 2: 255, 3: 2, and 20: 11) does not indicate that Muhammad and his audience had first-hand access to the Biblical book of Daniel, so thematic and phraseological convergences between the Qur'an and any other Biblical or late antique writing, even substantial convergences, do not necessarily point to direct dependence on the particular text in question. It should certainly not be ruled out that in individual cases such

a claim could be successfully argued.[15] In general, however, what we should expect to achieve by identifying parallels between the Qur'an and these earlier works is merely to assemble an approximate and tentative picture of the stories and ideas that may have circulated in the Qur'an's immediate cultural milieu, possibly in a very different form than documented by the sources available to us, and probably in Arabic.

Jewish and Christian traditions in the Qur'an: convergence and divergence

Modern Western Qur'an scholarship was inaugurated by Abraham Geiger's German monograph *What Did Muhammad Borrow from Judaism?*, published in 1833.[16] As the title of Geiger's book suggests, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western scholars were intensely preoccupied with the Qur'an's numerous intersections with Rabbinic and Christian literature – much more so than, say, with the Qur'an's literary dimension or the precise contours of its theology. In view of the Christian or Jewish upbringing of the scholars in question and the fact that many of them were trained in, and active contributors to, Biblical studies this is not surprising. Nonetheless, it endowed the modern Western study of the Qur'an with a very different starting point than that of the Hebrew Bible: a proper sense that the latter, too, was profoundly informed by and engaged with its own cultural context, the ancient Near East, only developed as the literature of ancient Mesopotamia was gradually excavated and deciphered throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century. By this time, historical-critical Biblical scholarship had already consolidated itself as an academic discipline marked by a comparatively wide range of research interests and methods.[17] As a result, the majority of Biblical scholars always deemed the Hebrew Bible to be self-evidently more than a mere reverberation of its wider cultural context.[18]

For the Qur'an, the case was different. Reading it almost instinctively alongside the Bible and Biblically based traditions, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European scholars did not always succeed in resisting the temptation to view the Islamic scripture as a derivative text that was either found to replicate earlier ideas or else dismissed as inadvertently garbling them. Such reductionism can now squarely be regarded as outdated. Just as the writings compiled in the Hebrew Bible harnessed and deployed ideas current in their environment in order to articulate distinctive theological and anthropological messages, so the Qur'an proceeds in relation to earlier Jewish and Christian lore. This does not, however, invalidate the veritable treasure trove of correspondences discovered by Geiger and others. The challenge inherent in the intertextual study of the Qur'an therefore consists in balancing a due appreciation of its continuity with earlier traditions, on the one hand, with a due sensitivity to the potentially novel

inflection and doctrinal purpose that these traditions acquire in their Qur'anic guise, on the other.

An initial example for the Qur'anic dialectic of convergence and divergence is afforded by the Basmalah, the formula 'In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate' (*bi-smi llāhi l-raḥmāni l-raḥīm*).[19] This invocation now precedes every surah but Q 9, although it may have been prefixed to many of them only retrospectively.[20] Given that in Arabic adjectives follow rather than precede the nouns they qualify, the Basmalah falls into three consecutive portions: 'In the name of God, the Merciful one, the Compassionate one'. This tripartite structure is evocative of a very common Christian phrase originating in Jesus's command to his disciples to baptise the nations 'in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost' (Matthew 28: 19).[21] We can safely assume this Christian parallel to have been known in the Qur'anic milieu,[22] meaning that the Qur'an's original addressees would probably have perceived the Basmalah's structural resemblance to its Christian predecessor.[23] Yet whereas the Christian parallel names the three persons of the Trinity (hence its designation as the 'Trinitarian formula'), the Basmalah concatenates the noun 'God' with two words functioning as divine epithets of that same divine person.[24] The Basmalah's very similarity to the Trinitarian formula thus serves to throw into relief the Qur'an's characteristic insistence on the oneness of God.[25]

The Qur'anic accounts of the creation of Adam

The web of intertextual references surrounding some Qur'anic passages can be highly intricate. This is usefully illustrated by a second and more complex example, the Qur'anic accounts of the creation of Adam, on which a number of other scholars have already done important work.[26] As is often the case with Qur'anic narratives, the story is recounted in several closely overlapping versions that are found in different surahs. With one exception, occurring in surah 2, all of the relevant passages are Meccan (Q 7, 15, 17, 18, 20, and 38). Figure 16 provides a synoptic overview of the entire family of texts. It arranges the surahs according to ascending mean verse length from left to right, on the understanding that this will at least approximate their chronological sequence.[27]

The basic story, which individual surahs abbreviate and expand in different ways, can be pieced together as follows. God announces to the angels that He is going to 'create man from clay' and subsequently orders them to prostrate themselves to the first human, Adam. Yet God's command is not universally heeded: Iblīs – who is identified as 'belonging to the *jinn*' in Q 18: 50 – refuses to venerate a creature fashioned from something as lowly as clay. God punishes Iblīs for his defiance by banishing him, but Iblīs successfully petitions God for respite. He then declares his intention to attempt to entice Adam and the latter's

Q 15	Q 38	Q 20	Q 17	Q 18	Q 7	Q 2
(i) God debates His plan to create man with the angels						
[28] God announces to the angels His intention to create man from clay.	[71] God announces to the angels His intention to create man from clay.				[11] Addressees reminded of their creation by God.	[30] God announces to the angels His intention to establish a successor on earth. [30] Protest of the angels, rejoinder by God. [31–33] God teaches Adam 'all the names' and demonstrates the angels' ignorance.
(ii) God orders the angels to prostrate themselves to Adam						
[29] The angels ordered to prostrate themselves before man. [30–31] The angels prostrate themselves, but Iblīs disobeys. [32–33] Exchange between God and Iblīs. [34–35] Iblīs banned. [36–43] Iblīs announces his intention to lead humankind astray; God's servants are exempt.	[72] The angels ordered to prostrate themselves before man. [73–74] The angels prostrate themselves, but Iblīs disobeys. [75–76] Exchange between God and Iblīs. [77–78] Iblīs banned. [79–85] Iblīs announces his intention to lead humankind astray; God's servants are exempt.	[116] The angels ordered to prostrate themselves before Adam. [116] The angels prostrate themselves, but Iblīs disobeys.	[61] The angels ordered to prostrate themselves before Adam. [61] The angels prostrate themselves, but Iblīs disobeys. [61] Statement by Iblīs. [62–65] Iblīs announces his intention to pursue humankind; God's servants are exempt.	[50] The angels ordered to prostrate themselves before Adam. [50] The angels prostrate themselves, but Iblīs disobeys.	[11] The angels ordered to prostrate themselves before Adam. [11] The angels prostrate themselves, but Iblīs disobeys. [12] Exchange between God and Iblīs. [13] Iblīs banned. [14–18] Iblīs announces his intention to lead humankind astray.	[34] The angels ordered to prostrate themselves before Adam. [34] The angels prostrate themselves, but Iblīs disobeys.

Figure 16 A synoptic overview of the Qur'anic accounts of the creation of Adam, arranged by ascending mean verse length (adapted from Sinai, 'Two Types')

descendants to disobey God in their turn. Subsequently, Adam and his wife succumb to temptation by Iblīs and eat of a tree that God had explicitly forbidden to them. This second part of the story consistently refers to Iblīs as 'Satan' (*al-shayṭān*), a detail whose significance will become clear further below.

Q 2: 30–39, the latest text in the series, adds a prequel to this chain of events. God here declares that He is going to 'establish a successor (*khalīfah*) on the earth (*fī l-arḍ*)',[28] whereupon the angels object, 'Will You put in it [the earth] someone who will wreak mischief in it and shed blood, while we glorify You with praise and declare You holy?' God responds by insisting that His knowledge is superior to that of the angels and proceeds to demonstrate the truth of this affirmation: He first teaches Adam the names of all creatures and then puts these latter before the angels, challenging them to name them. The angels confess their ignorance: 'Glory be to You! The only knowledge that we have is what You have taught us, for You are the knowing and wise.' (Q 2: 32) Adam, however, is able to fulfil the task on account of having been appropriately briefed by God beforehand. This is followed by a brief retelling of Iblīs's refusal to prostrate himself to Adam (Q 2: 34) and of the temptation of Adam and his wife (Q 2: 35–39).

An intertextual reading of Adam's veneration by the angels

The Qur'anic narrative summarised above has substantial precursors in earlier writings. The creation of Adam from clay is of course familiar from the Biblical book of Genesis, according to which God fashioned Adam in His 'image and likeness' (Genesis 1: 26–27), blew 'the breath of life' into him (Genesis 2: 7), and allowed him to devise names for all living creatures (Genesis 2: 19–20). Genesis furthermore reports how the serpent seduced Adam and Eve to eat of the 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil', thus causing them to be banned from paradise (Genesis 2: 15 – 3: 24). Of course, the Bible does not preface the creation of Adam with a debate between God and the angels, nor does it describe the latter's veneration by the angels and the fall of Satan. Both episodes can, however, be traced in non-Biblical Christian and Jewish sources prior to the Qur'an. This state of affairs, which applies to other Qur'anic narratives as well, highlights that the intertextual study of the Qur'an must not confine itself to an anachronistic juxtaposition of the Islamic scripture and the Bible. We shall now examine the most relevant pre-Qur'anic parallels in some detail and then highlight salient idiosyncrasies of the Qur'anic accounts.

Let us commence with the prostration of the angels. The episode shows evident overlap with a work describing the fate of Adam and Eve after their expulsion from paradise. Different versions of it are extant in Greek, Latin, Armenian, Georgian, and Slavonic, and the entire literary complex is customarily referred to by the title of the Latin version as *The Life of Adam and Eve*. All of these texts may ultimately derive from a Jewish original, possibly composed in

the first century CE or even earlier.[29] The relevant passage has the devil explain why he harbours such enmity towards Adam:

> When you were fashioned, I was cast out from the presence of God and was sent out from the fellowship of the angels: when God blew into you the breath of life and your countenance and likeness were made in the image of God, [the archangel] Michael brought you and caused you to be worshipped in the sight of God, and the Lord God said, 'Behold, Adam! I have made you in Our image and likeness.' And Michael went out and called all the angels, saying, 'Worship the image of the Lord God, as the Lord God has instructed!' And Michael himself worshipped first, and called me and said, 'Worship the image of God, Yahweh!' And I answered, 'I have no reason to worship Adam.' And when Michael kept compelling me, I said to him, 'Why do you compel me? I will not worship one inferior and subsequent to me. I am prior to him in creation; before he was made, I was already made. He ought to worship me.' … And the Lord God was angry with me and sent me with my angels out from our glory; and because of you, we were expelled into this world from our dwellings and have been cast onto the earth.[30]

A variant of the same narrative is found in the Christian *Cave of Treasures*, a Syriac retelling of sacred history from Creation to the Resurrection that dates from the sixth century CE or earlier. Like the *Life of Adam and Eve*, it emphasises the Biblical statement that God formed Adam 'in His image and likeness' (cf. Genesis 1: 26–27). In some detail, the text describes the complex process by which Adam is formed from various elemental ingredients and the overpowering splendour of his appearance once God has finished His work. After Adam has been granted dominion over all creatures and assigned names to the animals, all living beings prostrate themselves to him. God then declares, 'O Adam, behold I have made you king, and priest, and prophet, and lord, and head, and governor of everything which has been made and created; and they shall be in subjection unto you, and they shall be yours, and I have given unto you power over everything which I have created.' Upon hearing this, even the angels bow to Adam.[31]

Yet the 'leader of the lesser order' of angels becomes jealous of Adam: 'It is appropriate that he should worship me, because I am fire and spirit; and not that I should worship a being of soil that has been fashioned from fine dust.'[32] Interestingly, this statement agrees much more closely with the Qur'an's retelling of the story than the way in which the devil justifies his refusal to worship Adam in the *Life of Adam and Eve*. In the Qur'an, too, the devil underscores that he has been created from a superior element: 'I am better than him: You created me from fire and created him from clay.' (Q 7: 12 and 38: 76)[33] A further connection between the Qur'an and the *Cave of Treasures* consists in the fact that in both texts the disobedient spirit is designated as 'Satan' (Syriac *sāṭānā*, Arabic *al-shayṭān*) only after his expulsion from God's presence.[34] Also of interest is the

fact that the Syriac text and the Qur'an employ the cognate verbs *sged* and *sajada* to refer to the angels' act of venerating Adam. Hence, the Qur'anic passages under consideration are most likely informed by the shape in which the story of Adam's veneration by the angels and the fall of Satan circulated in Syriac Christian circles.[35] This is not to say, however, that the Qur'an must therefore depend directly on the *Cave of Treasures*.

The way in which Adam's veneration by the angels is narrated in the *Life of Adam and Eve* and in the *Cave of Treasures* hinges on the Biblical statement that God created Adam in His image: this is what makes Adam superior to the angels and entitles him to be venerated by them.[36] True, both the *Life of Adam and Eve* and the *Cave of Treasures* make it clear that the devil is guilty of disobeying a divine command; yet the purport of this command is to show due deference to God's 'image and likeness'.[37] Especially in the *Cave of Treasures*, the creation of Adam is presented as a veritable theophany.[38] The entire story as found in pre-Qur'anic sources can thus be viewed as amplifying a particularly fraught Biblical statement.

By contrast, the Qur'an conspicuously omits the Biblical idea that Adam was created in God's image.[39] This is reasonably viewed as a theologically deliberate act of eschewal.[40] After all, the idea that man bears a resemblance to God can appear deeply troubling: it may well be taken to jeopardise the categorical distinction between creator and creature that is a general feature of Qur'anic theology, either by licensing an anthropomorphic understanding of the deity or by amounting to the quasi-deification of Adam and humans in general. In fact, the Qur'an contains an unequivocal denial that *anything* is similar to God: 'nothing is like Him', Q 42: 11 insists.[41] The fact that the Qur'anic retellings of Adam's creation omit the prominent Biblical motif of man's creation in the image of God is therefore well explicable as being motivated by the Qur'an's overarching theological concerns. This obviates the need to posit that the omission occurred already in the oral tradition upstream of the Qur'anic Adam narratives. Since the Qur'anic proclamations, unlike post-Biblical Jewish and Christian writings, are not committed to the Bible's canonical authority, they can afford to be conceptually selective in appropriating the narrative of Adam's creation by leaving out the potentially awkward notion that man was fashioned in God's image.[42] As a result of this Qur'anic omission, God's command to the angels takes on a very different significance: it is no longer the demand to 'worship the image of God',[43] but becomes purely a test of obedience, a test that the haughty Iblīs fails.

A second feature that distinguishes the Qur'anic appropriation of the story of Adam's veneration by the angels from earlier texts is the fact that the Qur'an makes Iblīs's role as a tempter of humankind dependent on prior divine authorisation. For instance, Q 15: 41 has God explicitly approve Iblīs's intention to lead a certain portion of humankind astray: 'This is a straight path for Me', God assents. While similar dialogues between God and the devil figure

in pre-Qur'anic texts, neither the *Life of Adam and Eve* nor the *Cave of Treasures* includes a divine licensing of Satan's subsequent temptation of Adam.[44] This peculiar feature of the Qur'anic presentation of the story also serves a discernible theological function: as Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann points out, the Qur'an seems to be concerned to highlight that Iblīs is only able to carry out his scheming because it does not conflict with the divine will.[45] The point is underscored by Q 38: 82–83, in which Iblīs acknowledges that he, too, is subject to God's power:

> [82] He said, 'By Your might, I shall led them all astray,
> [83] except for those among them who are Your chosen servants.'

Much more unequivocally than the *Life of Adam and Eve* or the *Cave of Treasures*, the Qur'an thus insists on God's omnipotence and demotes the devil from a semi-independent antagonist of God to a clearly subordinate position. Like the eschewal of the notion of Adam's likeness to God, this idiosyncrasy of the Qur'an's presentation, too, ties in with the Islamic scripture's overarching theological vision, according to which God 'has power over everything' (for example, Q 67: 1). Again, it seems preferable to attribute the difference to the Qur'an's distinctive theological agenda rather than to an earlier oral tradition.

An intertextual reading of God's dispute with the angels

Whereas the story of Adam's veneration by the angels seems to have been popular with Christians, matters are different with regard to God's debate with the angels, recounted in Q 2: 30–33. The episode is retold in several Rabbinic works, among them an early compilation of exegetical expositions on the book of Genesis that is known as *Genesis Rabbah* and has been dated to the fifth century CE.[46] God's announcement from Genesis 1: 26, conventionally translated as 'Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness', is here construed as a question addressed to the attendant angels: 'Shall We make man?' The angels respond by enquiring what the nature of this new creature will be, whereupon God announces, 'His wisdom will be greater than yours.' The Rabbinic text then elaborates the brief note in Genesis 2: 19–20, according to which God brought all the creatures before man so that he might give them names. According to *Genesis Rabbah*, God first called upon the angels to name the creatures, yet 'they did not know'. Man, however, fulfilled the task and even devised appropriate appellations for himself, namely, 'Adam' – which is explained as being derived from the Hebrew word for 'earth' (*ʾădāmâ*) – and for God, namely, 'the Lord'.

The Qur'anic version of this story again features distinct emphases. Whereas the Rabbinic narrative celebrates man's inherent and superior wisdom, the Qur'anic account insists that Adam's ability to name the creatures is due to knowledge that God has previously imparted to him: according to Q 2: 31, it

was God who 'taught Adam all the names'. The Qur'anic presentation thus diverges from the Biblical statement that 'whatever Adam called every living creature, that was its name' (Genesis 2: 19). Whereas the Bible and the Rabbinic tradition portray man as creatively inventing names by himself, the Qur'an presents him as being in receipt of pertinent divine instruction. As a matter of fact, every single verse of the passage Q 2: 30–33 highlights God's unrivalled knowledge.[47] In contrast to the Rabbinic version of the story, the Qur'anic account is therefore not interested in foregrounding Adam's innate intelligence but rather the fact that the ultimate fount of all knowledge is God. This further heightens the impression that the subsequent prostration of the angels to Adam, as summarised in Q 2: 34, is primarily an act of submission to God.[48] Here, too, a noticeable difference between the Qur'anic narrative and the closest earlier parallel that is accessible to us would appear to be rooted in the Qur'an's theological commitments.

Another arresting feature of the Adam episode in surah 2 is the wording of God's initial announcement to the angels. Whereas Q 15: 28 and 38: 71 have God declare, 'I am creating man from clay', Q 2: 30 rephrases God's statement as follows: 'I am establishing a successor (*khalīfah*) on the earth.' The rationale underlying the Qur'an's designation of man as a 'successor' must be that he replaces the angels as the highest-ranking creature populating the earth.[49] Q 2: 30 employs the term *khalīfah* at the same point in the narrative at which the Biblical version describes Adam as God's 'image' and 'likeness', namely, in the context of a divine announcement prior to man's creation. This functional equivalence, however, hardly entitles us to take the Qur'anic term *khalīfah* to convey the same meaning as the corresponding Biblical phrase.[50] Rather, Q 2: 30 draws on a notion that recurs more widely in the Qur'anic corpus: the idea that God will annihilate a disobedient people and replace them with another, thereby making these latter the formers' successors.[51] An example is provided by Q 10: 13–14:

> [13] We have destroyed generations before you[p] when they did wrong;
> their messengers came to them with clear proofs,
> but they would not believe.
> Thus do We recompense the people who sin.
>
> [14] Then We established you as successors (*khalāʾif*) on the earth after them
> so that We might see how you act.

God exercises complete discretion with respect to who occupies the earth at any given time: its inhabitants are installed and replaced at will, depending on their religious and moral performance. In view of the phraseological similarity between Q 2: 30 – 'I am establishing a successor (*khalīfah*) on the earth' – and Q 10: 14, the former verse would appear to depict the creation of Adam as exemplifying God's general prerogative of appointing successors on the earth.

Hence, whereas earlier Qur'anic retellings of the creation of man simply omit the Biblical notion of Adam's likeness to God, Q 2: 30 substitutes it by a formulation that links the creation of Adam to a core aspect of the Qur'an's general theology of history. Once more, we find that an earlier narrative has been reworked in a selective and discriminating manner. Incidentally, a similar observation applies to the language in which the angels couch their objection to God's plan to create man: their concern that man might 'wreak mischief' (*afsada*) on the earth utilises diction that is an integral component of many Qur'anic exhortations and reproaches.[52] This contrasts with a Rabbinic parallel from the Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin, 38b), where the angels express their reservation about God's plan by quoting a verse from the Psalms, 'What is man that you spare a thought for him?' (Psalm 8: 4/5).[53] It seems likely that this Rabbinic account sheds light on the background against which the Qur'anic reference to the angel's scepticism must be placed; yet Q 2: 30 robes this pre-existing motif in characteristically Qur'anic phraseology and thereby integrates it with an important aspect of Qur'anic anthropology as it had previously crystallised.

Qur'anic intratextuality

So far, we have primarily conducted a summary comparison between the Qur'anic Adam narratives and various pre-Qur'anic texts. As emphasised earlier, the Qur'anic uptake of Biblical themes and narratives may be largely reliant on a fluid oral tradition rather than on specific texts that are still available to modern scholars. Nonetheless, there can be little doubt that there is one particular body of texts with which the Qur'anic proclamations engage in a very targeted and precise manner. For any given surah, this is the corpus of antecedent Qur'anic pronouncements, that is, of those Qur'anic surahs and passages that had already been proclaimed prior to the text in question, and had come to be recognised as divine revelations by the community emerging around Muhammad.

This claim invites a query. Can we be sure that the Qur'anic proclamations continued to circulate among Muhammad's followers even after their initial delivery, rather than gradually fading from consciousness and only coming to prominence again when the Qur'anic canon was put together after Muhammad's death?[54] Arguably the most compelling evidence to this effect is the presence in at least some surahs of insertions that adapt the original text to later circumstances and doctrines. For instance, consider surah 73. Its final verse, v. 20, stands out by virtue of its disproportionate length and is generally and very sensibly considered to be a Medinan addition to an otherwise Meccan surah.[55] The point of the addition is to alleviate the demand for lengthy nocturnal vigils voiced at the beginning of the text: whereas vv. 2–4 require the Qur'anic Messenger and, presumably, his followers to 'stay up during the night

except for a little, / half of it, or a little less / or a little more, and deliver the recitation distinctly', v. 20 declares that it is sufficient to 'recite of it what is reasonable' – a mitigation that is justified by reference to the presence of sick persons, travellers, and fighters within the ranks of the Qur'anic community. Apart from standing out stylistically and also lexically, v. 20 thus speaks to the socially inclusive religious community of the Medinan period. What is important in the present context is that such an intervention presupposes that the original text continued to be used by the Qur'anic community well after the hijrah, rather than having functioned as a one-off address: had this not been the case there would have been no need to bring the original text in line with the different make-up of the Medinan community.[56]

We are therefore entitled to suppose that many or all of Muhammad's proclamations, once delivered, became part of a communal literary stock, an emerging scriptural canon with which many of Muhammad's hearers would have been intimately familiar. As a result, whenever a Qur'anic proclamation A displays distinct lexical or thematic overlap with some other proclamation B that can be assumed to be temporally prior to A (or with a well-defined cluster of such proclamations), we may suspect attentive recipients to have understood A as deliberately alluding to B. Frequently, such allusions seem to be made in the service of supplementing and re-interpreting existing revelations. The Adam-Iblīs narratives discussed above offer several examples for such intra-Qur'anic back-referencing. For instance, the earliest version of the cluster, in surah 15, overlaps with a couplet from the earlier surah 55 (Figure 17).[57] As observed above, we cannot at all be sure that the Qur'an's first recipients would have identified the divine epithet 'the Living, the Enduring' (Q 2: 255, 3: 2, and 20: 11) as referring back specifically to Daniel 6: 26/27. We can, however, be reasonably sure that Muhammad's followers would have understood Q 15: 26–28 to hark back to Q 55: 14–15. After all, Q 15: 26–27 amount to a modified restatement of two verses from a temporally earlier composition that presumably continued to be regarded as an authoritative divine pronouncement even beyond their initial delivery.

The context in which Q 55: 14–15 occur is a hymnic celebration of God's creative activity, involving His fashioning of humans and the *jinn* from opposing elements. Although the notion that man is created from clay has a Biblical ring, the juxtaposition of man and the *jinn* here draws on native Arabian notions: pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, too, combines these two classes of beings into a merism designating the totality of autonomous agents above the animal level.[58] The renewed uptake of the couplet from surah 55 in surah 15 then deploys the earlier statement as a preface to the story of Adam's creation and veneration by the angels, which is thereby retrospectively inscribed into surah 55's concise allusion to man's creation from mud. Since surah 15 has Iblīs defend his refusal to prostrate himself to Adam on the grounds that the latter was produced from

Q 55: 14–15	Q 15: 26ff.	Q 38: 71ff.
[14] He created man (*al-insān*) from clay (*ṣalṣāl*) like a potter,[a] [15] and He created the *jinn* from a mixture of fire.	[26] We have created man from clay (*ṣalṣāl*), from a moulded mud; [27] We created the *jinn* before from the fire of the scorching wind.	
	[28] And [recall] when yours Lord said to the angels: 'I am creating a human (*basharan*) from clay (*ṣalṣāl*), from a moulded mud.'	[71] And [recall] when your Lords said to the angels: 'I am creating a human (*basharan*) from clay (*ṭīn*).'
	[33] He [Iblīs] said: 'I am not one to prostrate myself to a human whom You have created from clay (*ṣalṣāl*), from a moulded mud.'	[76] He [Iblīs] said: 'I am better than him: You created me from fire and created him from clay (*ṭīn*).'

Figure 17 Q 55: 14–15, Q 15: 26ff., and Q 38: 71ff. compared (lexical overlaps between the latter two passages and Q 55: 14–15 are underlined)

[a] On the phrase *ka-l-fakhkhār*, see Horovitz, 'Jewish Proper Names', pp. 215–16.

mud, the recipients of surah 15, who would have been aware of the related passage in surah 55, would naturally have inferred that Iblīs is meant to represent the second class of beings named in 55: 14–15, namely, the *jinn*. This becomes increasingly explicit in two later versions of the story. For example, Q 38: 76 and 7: 12 have Iblīs add that he was created 'from fire', as are the *jinn* according to Q 55: 15 and 15: 27. As we saw above, Iblīs's justification of his disobedience has a tangible parallel in the *Cave of Treasures*. However, in that text the disobedient spirit is an angel. Not so in the Qur'an: in the light of the earlier statements that God created the *jinn* from fire (Q 55: 15 and 15: 27), Iblīs's self-description as having been fashioned from fire would have implied to attentive recipients that Iblīs was in fact one of the *jinn*. An outright corroboration of this inference is provided by Q 18: 50, which judging by surah 18's mean verse length must be later than at least surah 38:

> And [recall] when We said to the angels:
> 'Prostrate yourselves to Adam',
> and they prostrated themselves, yet not so Iblīs;
> he was one of the *jinn*
> and deviated from the command of his Lord.
> – Will you[p] take him and his offspring as your patrons beside Me,
> when they are an enemy to you?
> What a bad exchange for the wrong-doers!

The antagonism between Adam and Iblīs, a theme that we witnessed already in the *Life of Adam and Eve* and the *Cave of Treasures*, thus comes to amplify the

general contrast between man and the *jinn* that had been previously broached in Q 55: 14–15. The outcome of this intertwining of various thematically and lexically related Qur'anic passages is that the Qur'anic Iblīs, unlike his Judaeo-Christian forebear, is not a fallen angel but belongs to a distinct class of demon-like beings. This coheres well with the fact that the Qur'an does not seem to consider angels, as opposed to humans and the *jinn*, to be capable of disobeying divine commands (Q 16: 49–50 and 66: 6).[59] We have thus located another facet distinguishing the Qur'anic Adam-Iblīs narratives from earlier Judaeo-Christian literature, a facet that is explicable as an outcome of the way in which later Qur'anic proclamations build upon and refer back to earlier ones.

The example just discussed demonstrates that a sensitive intertextual reading of the Qur'an must not ignore the proximate and direct intertextuality obtaining between consecutive Qur'anic proclamations, as opposed to the more distant intertextuality obtaining between the Qur'an and pre-Qur'anic texts like the Bible or the *Cave of Treasures*. In the latter case, the possibility of an intervening oral tradition must always be priced into the analysis. In the former case, however, we may proceed on the default premise that many of the Qur'an's original addressees would have been directly acquainted with thematically and lexically cognate earlier passages and would have recognised allusions to these.

To be sure, not all lexical overlaps between Qur'anic verses should be considered to be targeted back-references. For example, every single Qur'anic retelling of Adam's veneration by the angels commences with the words, 'And [recall] when your[s] Lord / when We said to the angels'. By the time at which the latest text in the series (Q 2: 30ff.) was delivered, this opening had undeniably evolved into a stock phrase that would have been unsuitable to pick out a specific earlier version of the narrative. However, this would not always have been the case, at least if we assume that the Qur'anic proclamations did not inherit this opening formula from a prior oral tradition. Thus, when the opening of the Adam narrative in surah 15 (v. 28) was repeated in surah 38 (v. 71) it did not yet have more than a single antecedent in the gradually expanding corpus of Muhammad's recitations. At the time of surah 38's first delivery, the locution 'And [recall] when your[s] Lord said to the angels' would therefore still have pointed to a specific Qur'anic text.[60] Yet as more and more variants of the Adam narrative came into being, the phrase would have morphed into a formulaic component of the story and thereby come to lose its allusive purport.

Notes

1. The phrase *ṣuḥuf ibrāhīm wa-mūsā* may well mean 'the scriptures [literally, "sheets"] *about* Abraham and Moses' rather than 'the scriptures *authored by* Abraham and Moses'.
2. In Deuteronomy 5: 27, the Israelites promise Moses, who is about to ascend Mount Sinai, that they will 'hear and obey' (Hebrew *šāmaᶜnû wĕ-ᶜāśînû*). In a polemical pun, Q 2: 93

and 4: 46 accuse the Israelites or Jews of having uttered the phonetically almost identical Arabic phrase *samiᶜnā wa-ᶜaṣaynā* ('We hear and disobey'). The passage is discussed in Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, pp. 301–3.

3. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, pp. 55–6.
4. My translation requires two comments. First, although the verb *katabnā* literally means 'we have written', the Qur'anic use of the verb *kataba* includes, or can even be entirely limited to, the connotation of an authoritative divine degree. See in detail Madigan, *The Qur'ân's Self-Image*, pp. 107–24. Second, there are Qur'anic verses in which the word *al-arḍ*, here translated as 'the land', clearly designates the earth, especially when juxtaposed with *al-samāᵓ*, 'heaven', or *al-samāwāt*, 'the heavens', such as Q 2: 22 and 2: 284. In other verses, *arḍ* must just as obviously be translated as 'land', as in the reference to *al-arḍ al-muqaddasah*, 'the Holy Land', at Q 5: 21. With respect to Q 21: 105, this latter alternative seems preferable to me. The problem is largely one of translation into the target language English, not of genuine semantic ambiguity.
5. Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre*, vol. 2, pp. 445–6; Hirschfeld, *Beiträge*, p. 34; Rudolph, *Die Abhängigkeit*, p. 10; Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, p. 449; Sinai, 'Inheriting Egypt', p. 210.
6. The table is based on the much more comprehensive overviews in Rudolph, *Die Abhängigkeit*, pp. 9–17, and Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, pp. 439–61. On the parallel between the phrase *al-ḥayy al-qayyūm* (Q 2: 255, 3: 2, 20: 11) and Daniel 6: 26/27, see Horovitz, 'Jewish Proper Names', p. 219.
7. Hirschfeld, *Beiträge*, p. 38; Horovitz, 'Jewish Proper Names', p. 219.
8. See Chapter 7 and Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma', section entitled 'The Qur'anic vision of the Judgement and the hereafter'.
9. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, p. 56. The same assessment is found already in Rudolph, *Die Abhängigkeit*, pp. 17–21, who also speaks of 'echoes' (*Anklänge*) rather than proper citations. See furthermore Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, p. 439.
10. An opposing view, which presents the Qur'an as manipulating and recasting specific passages of the Syriac version of the New Testament gospels, is presented in El-Badawi, *The Qur'ān and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions*, but see Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma', section entitled 'The Qur'anic vision of the Judgement and the hereafter'.
11. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, pp. 41–53.
12. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, pp. 42–3.
13. On the *sīrah* literature, see Chapter 2 above; comparable difficulties arise regarding the *ḥadīth* corpus.
14. One case in point is the poetry ascribed to Umayyah ibn Abī l-Ṣalt, discussed in Sinai, 'Religious Poetry'.
15. For an attempt to do this with respect to the narratives about Dhū l-Qarnayn ('the Horned One') in surah 18, see van Bladel, 'Alexander Legend'. Whether the links between the Qur'anic narrative and the Syriac text that van Bladel identifies as its source are indeed as close as the latter maintains is queried in Klar, 'Qur'anic Exempla'.
16. Geiger, *Judaism and Islam*.
17. Sinai, 'Historical-Critical Readings', pp. 219–21.
18. There were, of course, exceptions, such as Delitzsch, *Babel and Bible*.
19. The remarks that follow in the main text are partly indebted to a conversation with David Kiltz. – Note that both *raḥmān* and *raḥīm* are derived from the root *r-ḥ-m*, connoting mercy. This etymological link is difficult to render in idiomatic English. The Qur'an also employs the expression *al-raḥmān*, 'the Merciful One', as a self-standing divine name; see, e.g., Q 55: 1ff. and Ambros, *Dictionary*, p. 305. It is likely to be derived from the Rabbinic divine name *ha-raḥămān* (Hebrew) / *raḥmānā* (Aramaic), which also occurs in pre-Qur'anic South

Arabian inscriptions (Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, pp. 140–1; Greenfield, 'From *ʾlh rḥmn* to *al-raḥmān*', who traces the title back to ancient Near Eastern inscriptions; Robin, 'Ḥimyar', pp. 133, 136, 153–4, 159, 163–4, 166, and 169–71). Q 17: 110 indicates that in the Qur'anic milieu the equation of Allāh and *al-raḥmān* was not trivial, raising the possibility that the two expressions could have been perceived to name distinct deities. The Qur'anic identification of the two climaxes in the Basmalah, which may be read as demoting the expression *al-raḥmān* from a proper name to a mere adjective (see Böwering, 'God and His Attributes', p. 318).

20. The argument for this is that – apart from the Basmalah – the divine name *al-raḥmān* does not occur in the earliest layer of the Islamic scripture; see Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 1, pp. 116–17. Nöldeke points to the Basmalah's appearance in Q 27: 30, at the beginning of a letter reportedly sent by Solomon to the queen of Sabaʾ, as being its earliest occurrence.
21. Invocations of the 'name' of God already occur in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. 1 Samuel 17: 45; Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 1, pp. 116–17).
22. For instance, variants of it are employed in sixth-century South Arabian inscriptions (Robin, 'Ḥimyar', pp. 163–4).
23. The Basmalah has also been linked to the Mazdaean phrase *pad nām ī yazdān*, 'in the name of the gods' (Gignoux and Algar, 'Besmellāh'), but the latter evidently lacks a tripartite form.
24. It is grammatically possible to construe the Basmalah as 'In the name of Allāh, the compassionate Raḥmān' (as noted in Böwering, 'God and His Attributes', p. 318), but from a literary perspective it would appear to be preferable to view the proper name *raḥmān* as being reduced to adjectival status here.
25. An explicit rejection of the divinity of Jesus and the doctrine of the Trinity only occurs in the Medinan Qur'an (see especially Q 5: 72–73).
26. See above all Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, pp. 54–61, which forms the foundation of Reynolds, *The Qurʾān and its Biblical Subtext*, pp. 39–54, and of Pohlmann, *Die Entstehung*, pp. 81–146. A forthcoming publication by Holger Zellentin reached me too late to be taken into account.
27. Witztum, 'Variant Traditions', proposes to date the relevant portion of surah 20 later than that of surah 7; see my comments in Sinai, 'Two Types'.
28. On the meaning of *khalīfah*, see Paret, 'Signification coranique'. Both at Q 2: 30 and 38: 26 the word *khalīfah* is often translated as 'vicegerent' or the like. However, Paret persuasively argues that the translation 'successor' is preferable in view of a considerable number of Qur'anic parallels. One category of parallels features the construction *jaʿala* ('to make, to put', with God as subject) + accusative + *khalāʾif/khulafāʾ* (both plural forms of *khalīfah*) + *fī l-arḍ* ('in the land' or 'on the earth'). In these verses, which share with Q 2: 30 and 38: 26 the qualification *fī l-arḍ*, the two plural forms of *khalīfah* clearly mean 'successors' (e.g., Q 6: 165 and 10: 14). Also relevant here are various Qur'anic occurrences of the verb *istakhlafa* + accusative, 'to appoint someone as a successor', which would appear to be largely synonymous with the construction *jaʿala* + accusative + *khalāʾif/khulafāʾ* (Fischer, 'Das geschichtliche Selbstverständnis', especially pp. 148–50). In view of all this, Paret is surely right to insist that a strong case can be made for a unitary translation of *khalīfah* as 'successor'. As Paret points out, the point of calling Adam a 'successor' is presumably that man replaces the angels as the most exalted creature inhabiting the earth (Paret, 'Signification coranique', p. 215). This construal is also borne out by the angels' vigorous protest at Q 2: 30.
29. Johnson, 'Life of Adam and Eve', pp. 251–2; Merk and Meiser, *Das Leben Adams und Evas*, pp. 740–76 (especially pp. 764–9).

30. Meyer (ed.), 'Vita Adae et Evae', pp. 225–6 (§§ 12–16). I cite the translation by M. D. Johnson ('Life of Adam and Eve'), with minor modifications based on consultation of Meyer's Latin text.
31. Ri (ed. and trans.), *Caverne*, ch. 2 (Western recension); Bezold (ed.), *Die Schatzhöhle*, pp. 10–16 (Syriac text). An English translation (from which my quotations are adapted) can be found in Budge (trans.), *Cave of Treasures*, pp. 51–3.
32. Ri (ed. and trans.), *Caverne*, ch. 3, §§ 1–2 (Western recension); Bezold (ed.), *Die Schatzhöhle*, p. 16 (Syriac text); Budge (trans.), *Cave of Treasures*, p. 55.
33. Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, pp. 55–6; Reynolds, *The Qurʾān and its Biblical Subtext*, pp. 50–1; Pohlmann, *Die Entstehung*, p. 117.
34. The *Cave of Treasures* explicitly remarks that 'his name was called *sāṭānā*', explaining the name by an etymology deriving it (incorrectly) from the Syriac verb *ṣṭā*, 'to turn aside'; see Ri (ed. and trans.), *Caverne*, ch. 3, § 6. As regards the Qur'an, it simply replaces the designation *iblīs* by the designation *al-shayṭān* when the story shifts to Adam's temptation in paradise. I owe my awareness of this crucial parallel to Rachel Dryden.
35. The Qur'anic name Iblīs also points to a Christian transmission of the story of Adam's veneration by the angels, since the word is patently derived from Greek *diabolos* (Geiger, *Judaism and Islam*, p. 77–8; Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, p. 87; Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, pp. 55–6).
36. As highlighted in Reynolds, *The Qurʾān and its Biblical Subtext*, pp. 48–9, from a Christian perspective Adam also prefigures Christ, and the angels' veneration of the former prefigures their veneration of the latter as described in Hebrews 1: 6; cf. also Philippians 2: 10. In the *Cave of Treasures*, this link between Adam and Christ can be seen, for instance, in the statement that after Adam's creation he rose up at the centre of the earth, 'on that spot on which the Cross of our Redeemer was set up'; see Ri (ed. and trans.), *Caverne*, ch. 2, § 16 (Western recension); Bezold (ed.), *Die Schatzhöhle*, p. 14 (Syriac text); Budge (trans.), *Cave of Treasures*, p. 53.
37. Pohlmann, *Die Entstehung*, p. 117 denies that the *Cave of Treasures* contains a divine order, but the text does call the devil 'disobedient' (*lā meshtamᶜānā*). See Ri (ed. and trans.), *Caverne*, ch. 3, § 3; Bezold (ed.), *Die Schatzhöhle*, p. 16 (Syriac text); Budge (trans.), *Cave of Treasures*, p. 55.
38. Thus, the angels respond to God's announcement of man's creation, consisting in a citation of Genesis 1: 26, by saying: 'Today, a mighty miracle is made manifest to us: the likeness of God, our maker.' See Ri (ed. and trans.), *Caverne*, ch. 2, § 5 (translating the Eastern recension); Bezold (ed.), *Die Schatzhöhle*, p. 10 (Syriac text); Budge (trans.), *Cave of Treasures*, p. 51.
39. Reynolds (*The Qurʾān and its Biblical Subtext*, p. 51) proposes to understand the description of Adam as a *khalīfah* at Q 2: 30 as in some sense equivalent to the Biblical notion that man was created in the image of God. I have strong reservations about this understanding of the term *khalīfah*, on which see below.
40. Thus also Pohlmann, *Die Entstehung*, p. 121.
41. This statement occurs immediately after a reference to God's role as the 'creator of the heavens and the earth', who has 'made mates for you from among yourselves'. This shared context of creation reinforces the contrastive link between the Qur'anic statement that nothing is like God and the Biblical description of Adam as created in God's image.
42. Another prominent and highly corporeal Biblical motif, that of God's breathing into Adam the breath of life (Genesis 2: 7), is retained at least by some Qur'anic renditions of the story (Q 15: 29, 38: 72; see also 32: 9). Adam's reception of the breath of life figures in close proximity to mention of his divine likeness in Meyer (ed.), 'Vita Adae et Evae', p. 226 (§ 13).

43. Thus Meyer (ed.), 'Vita Adae et Evae', p. 225 (§ 15): *adora imaginem dei.*
44. Pohlmann, *Die Entstehung*, p. 120, pointing both to Job 1–2 and to the *Book of Jubilees.*
45. Pohlmann, *Die Entstehung*, pp. 119–20.
46. Theodor and Albeck (eds), *Bereshit Rabbah*, vol. 1, pp. 155–6 (Parashah 17, on Genesis 2: 19); English translation in Neusner (trans.), *Genesis Rabbah*, vol. 1, pp. 182–3. For introductory comments on the work as a whole and its date, see Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction*, pp. 276–83, and Ben-Eliyahu et al., *Handbook*, pp. 81–3. Pre-Qur'anic parallels to Q 2: 30–33 are treated in Geiger, *Judaism and Islam*, pp. 75–7; Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, pp. 52–4; Reynolds, *The Qurʾān and its Biblical Subtext*, p. 47.
47. Apart from v. 31 ('He taught Adam all the names' – literally, 'caused him to know'), see v. 30 (where God says, 'I know what you do not know'), v. 32 (where the angels say, 'The only knowledge that we have is what You have taught us, for You are the knowing and wise') and v. 33 (where God addresses the angels, 'Did I not tell you that I know what is invisible in the heavens and the earth, and that I know what you reveal and what you conceal?'). However, it may be observed that the theme of knowledge also has a peripheral presence in Q 2: 30–33's Rabbinic antecedents: when God asked the angels for the names of various creatures, they 'did not know' (*lōʾ hāyû yôdᶜîn*); see Theodor and Albeck (eds), *Bereshit Rabbah*, vol. 1, pp. 155–6.
48. See Pohlmann, *Die Entstehung*, p. 129.
49. Paret, 'Signification coranique', p. 215; see also n. 28 above.
50. Pace Reynolds, *The Qurʾān and its Biblical Subtext*, p. 51.
51. Fischer, 'Das geschichtliche Selbstverständnis'; see n. 28 above.
52. See, for instance, Q 7: 56.85.127, 12: 73, or 26: 152.
53. Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, p. 53; Reynolds, *The Qurʾān and its Biblical Subtext*, p. 47 (where the passage is cited).
54. The remainder of this paragraph is based on the more detailed argument in Sinai, 'Two Types'.
55. E.g., Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 1, p. 98. See also Chapter 4, section 'Tracing processes of literary growth and editorial revision', and Chapter 5, section 'The Meccan-Medinan divide'.
56. Q 2: 106 and 16: 101 would appear to imply that in certain cases existing proclamations were simply suppressed or replaced by others. Nonetheless, cases like Q 73: 20 strongly support the view that the texts delivered by Muhammad were not generally amenable to being withdrawn from communal circulation and instead had to be supplemented or re-interpreted.
57. The mean verse length of Q 55 is 32.97 transcription letters while that of Q 15 is 43.12. The following discussion of these two verses draws on Sinai, 'Two Types', and id., *Fortschreibung und Auslegung*, pp. 77–9.
58. For two examples, see Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 92 and 179.
59. I am indebted to an undergraduate essay by Emmeline Skinner Cassidy for bringing the last verse to my attention.
60. For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Sinai, 'Two Types'.

PART THREE

A diachronic survey of the Qur'anic proclamations

CHAPTER 7

The Meccan surahs

This chapter and the following one will attempt to chart the main thematic, doctrinal, and literary features of the Qur'anic proclamations. I proceed chronologically and group the material to be surveyed into three consecutive groups. Such a subdivision is to some extent arbitrary: Weil and Nöldeke arrange the surahs into four periods, and quite possibly one may also devise schemes consisting of five or six groups of surahs. I shall limit myself to positing two diachronic points of transition. One of these, already justified in Chapter 5, is the watershed between the Meccan Qur'an, to be treated in this chapter, and the Medinan Qur'an, which forms the subject of Chapter 8.

At least the Meccan surahs admit of a further internal division. If one orders the surahs by ascending mean verse length, the data presented in Chapter 5 shows a visible leap between surah 15 (43.12 transcription letters) and surah 50 (50.82 transcription letters). We can generally assume that the surahs that come before this leap were chronologically prior to those that come after it.[1] I therefore propose to redefine the label 'early Meccan' as excluding all those compositions whose mean verse length is above that of surah 15. When a surah contains easily discernible additions, its nuclear version should obviously be dated according to the value that its mean verse length takes if the insertions in question are disregarded. Thus, surah 73 will count as early: although in its integral version its mean verse length is 63.9 transcription letters, without the later addition v. 20 its mean verse length drops to 41.11. It is furthermore advisable to exclude from the early Meccan Qur'an surahs 109, 110, 112, and 114, which, as explained in the concluding section of Chapter 5, belong to a separate class of brief communal prayers and creeds, some of which may date to a considerably later period. The resulting class of early Meccan texts is still slightly more expansive than Nöldeke's first Meccan period, insofar as it includes Q 15, 26, 37, 44, and 54, which Nöldeke would assign to the second Meccan period. The present chapter will devote relatively ample attention to the early Meccan surahs thus defined, on the rationale that they form the stem cell out of which later portions of the Qur'an grew. The later Meccan surahs will be dealt with more summarily towards the end of the chapter.

The early Qur'an's eschatological kerygma

The dominant theme of the early Meccan surahs is arguably the announcement of a divine reckoning that will take place at the end of the world: every human who has ever lived will be resurrected from the dead and either be rewarded with eternal bliss in paradise or dispatched to eternal torment in hell.[2] This day of 'resurrection' and 'separation' will be preceded by a catastrophic disintegration of the entire cosmos.[3] The majority of early Qur'anic proclamations contain at least concise references to this sequence of events, and many of them depict aspects of it in harrowing detail.[4] A representative sample is provided by Q 82, here subdivided into paragraph-like verse blocks.[5]

[§1] [1] When the heaven splits asunder,
[2] when the stars are scattered,
[3] when the seas are ripped open,
[4] and when the graves are rummaged,
[5] then a soul will know what it has put forward and what it has kept back.

[§2] [6] O man, what has deceived you[s] concerning your noble Lord,
[7] who created you and formed you and proportioned you,
[8] assembled you in whatever form He wished?

[§3] [9] But no, you[p] dismiss the Judgement as a lie!
[10] Yet over you are set up guardians,
[11] noble ones, record keepers,
[12] who know what you do.

[§4] [13] The virtuous will be in a state of bliss,
[14] and the sinners will be in a fire,
[15] in which they will roast on the Day of Judgement
[16] and which they will not escape.

[§5] [17] What will let you[s] know what the Day of Judgement is?
[18] Again: what will let you[s] know what the Day of Judgement is?
[19] [The Judgement will come to pass] on the day on which no soul will be able to help another.[6]
The matter on that day is up to God.

§1 opens with a series of four parallel temporal clauses introduced by the conjunction 'when' (*idhā*). They dramatically highlight different facets of the world's eschatological collapse, descending from the celestial domain (vv. 1–2) down to the oceans (v. 3) and are capped off by an allusion to the Resurrection (v. 4).[7] This series of eschatological precedents leads up to a main clause asserting an ultimate requital that will be strictly based on everyone's personal merit and culpability (v. 5). §2 can be read both as anticipating an address of the resurrected in the eschatological future or as chastising the Qur'anic audience

in the present. Since §1 did not specify the agent of the world's eschatological devastation, §2 constitutes the first overt mention of the divine judge, here introduced in his role as man's benevolent creator. Yet, as §3 maintains, rather than showing God appropriate gratitude, the audience denies (*kadhdhaba*) 'the Judgement' (*dīn*) (v. 9).[8] This explicit naming of the upcoming reckoning marks another step in the progressive concretisation of the enigmatic threat uttered in v. 5, and indeed all of the surah's following sections are interspersed with references to 'the Judgement' or 'the Day of Judgement' (the latter occurring in vv. 15, 17, and 18).[9] §3 goes on to remind the recipients of the existence of angelic record keepers engaged in transcribing every human's good and bad deeds and thereby ensuring the just assessment of individual merit that was announced in v. 5.[10] §4 briefly contrasts the fate of the saved with that of the damned, and §5 emphasises, once again, the thoroughly individualistic nature of God's verdict: no 'soul' (the expression occurs both in v. 5 and v. 19) will be able to count on the help of any other. The surah ends with an assertion of God's complete control over the future judgement and its outcome.[11]

In more than one respect, surah 82 constitutes a window on to early Qur'anic eschatology. Highly characteristic, for example, is the introductory series of eschatological temporal clauses portraying various antecedents of the Judgement. Such eschatological temporal clauses – introduced either by 'when' or, as in Q 82: 19, by 'on the day on which' (*yawma*) – are a staple of early Qur'anic discourse, whether singly or, as in Q 82, in serial concatenation.[12] They are often conjoined with a main clause containing the qualifier 'on that day' (*yawma'idhin*) and focusing on the ensuing act of judgement itself, man's reaction to it, or the otherworldly recompense that is its outcome.[13]

Another literary characteristic of the early Meccan surahs is illustrated by §4: the contrastive juxtaposition of the saved and the damned, of which both early and later Meccan proclamations contain numerous further instances.[14] Many of the passages in question fall into two sections, one devoted to a description of the delights of paradise, the other devoted to the torments of hell, and they often feature parallelistic phraseology, as in surah 88: 'On that day there will be faces that are humbled, / labouring, toiling …' (vv. 2f.), 'On that day there will be faces that are blissful, / pleased with their striving …' (vv. 8f.). Furthermore, as we saw in Chapter 4 with regard to surah 37, descriptions of the fate of the saved and of the damned often mirror each other in specific details: both the saved and the damned will 'turn to one another with questions' (Q 37: 27.50), and while the former are promised fruit (37: 42) and cups of fresh water (37: 45–47), the damned will be fed the fruit of the Zaqqūm tree (37: 64–66) and given boiling liquid to drink (37: 67). Scholars sometimes refer to such contrastive juxtapositions as 'diptychs'.[15]

Surah 82 is a good representative of early Meccan eschatology not also from a literary perspective but also doctrinally. For example, v. 5 and v. 19 resonate

with passages like Q 99: 7–8 and 101: 6–9, which similarly anticipate an eschatological recompensation purely based on individual merit. The same idea is also affirmed by Q 53: 38, according to which 'no burden-carrying soul shall carry the burden of another',[16] as well as Q 80: 37. Such statements would appear to be directed specifically against the hope that God's eschatological verdict can be swayed by intercession. Q 82: 19 is probably meant to convey the same point. In order to appreciate the extent of this radical eschatological individualism fully, it helps to note the fact that it goes much further than is generally true of late antique Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism, as well as post-Qur'anic Islam.[17]

Particularly resonant is the charge of denying the Judgement that is voiced at the beginning of §3 and recurs in very similar terms in a number of other early Qur'anic proclamations (Q 74: 46, 83: 11, 95: 7, and 107: 1). In view of these passages, collective references to 'the Deniers' (*al-mukadhdhibūn*) (Q 52: 11, 56: 51.92, 68: 8, 69: 49, 77: 15.19.24, and elsewhere) are best taken to mean deniers *of the Judgement*.[18] The sheer number of early Meccan verses attesting this theme entitles us to identify the rebuttal of eschatological agnosticism or denial as the central concern of the early Qur'anic proclamations. This preoccupation appears to have been rooted in the conviction that 'the Judgement' – or, as other verses put it, 'the Hour', or 'the punishment of your[s] Lord' – had now 'drawn nigh' and was about to occur (Q 51: 5–6, 52: 7–8, 53: 57, 54: 1, 70: 6–7, and 77: 7).[19] The profound sense of eschatological urgency that comes through in these latter statements, recently stressed by Stephen Shoemaker,[20] may be the reason why the Qur'an does not always maintain a strict distinction between denying that the the Judgement will occur altogether, on the one hand, and a mere lack of appropriate concern with the Judgement, on the other. For example, Q 70: 6–7 accuse the opponents of regarding the Judgement as something that is 'far away'.[21] From the perspective of imminent eschatological expectation, the two attitudes can easily seem to amount to the same thing, namely, to a 'turning of one's back' to an inevitable and impending reality that ought to form the very lynchpin of everything one does (Q 92: 16 and 96: 13; see also 70: 17, 74: 23, and 75: 32).

It bears reiterating that the Qur'anic 'Deniers' did not disbelieve the announcement of an imminent eschatological judgement for lack of familiarity with the basic idea. This becomes clear from Q 83:

[10] Woe on that day to the Deniers,
[11] who deny the Day of Judgement.
[12] It is only denied by a sinful transgressor.
[13] When our signs are recited to him,
he says, 'Fables of the ancients!'

Together with Q 68: 15, this passage constitutes one of the earliest testimonies to the effect that Muhammad's opponents dismissed the Qur'an's teachings,

and specifically its teachings about the Day of Judgement and the afterlife, as well-known but far-fetched fairy tales. In fact, even though the Qur'an polemically dismisses doubts about the Judgement as a wilful 'turning away', the Deniers' position is presented as being reinforced by argument (Q 37: 16–17 and elsewhere[22]):

> [16] When we are dead and have become dust and bones,
> shall we be raised
> [17] together with our ancient forefathers?

The same objection to the idea of a bodily resurrection, rooted in the perceived difficulty that God would have to reassemble decomposed and scattered bodies, is addressed by late antique Christian authors.[23] One must concur with the diagnosis that the Deniers are 'drawing on a polemical armoury built up by participants in the debate about the resurrection outside the [Arabian] peninsula'.[24]

The passage just quoted from Q 83 deserves attention for another reason, namely, insofar as it openly links eschatological denial and moral transgressions. The same equation is found in Q 107: 1–3, which identifies 'the one who denies the Judgement' with 'him who repulses the orphan / and does not urge the feeding of the poor'. Other early passages also evince a nexus between eschatological denial and sinful behaviour.[25] This nexus is anchored in a highly pessimistic anthropology: the early Qur'an describes 'man' (*al-insān*) as naturally 'ungrateful to his Lord' (Q 100: 6, see also 80: 17), 'violently enamoured with possessions' (Q 100: 8), and inclined to 'set himself up as self-sufficient' (Q 96: 6–7; see also Q 80: 5 and 92: 8–9). In line with this pessimistic anthropology, the early Qur'an levels a miscellany of moral accusations at its audience, either directly in the second-person plural or by means of third-personal character sketches of the prototypical sinner. The vices castigated are the excessive 'love' and 'hoarding' of possessions (Q 70: 18, 89: 20, and 104: 2), miserliness (Q 53: 34 and 92: 8), the illusion that wealth will procure immortality (Q 104: 3), the use of false measures (Q 83: 1–3), and a failure to support orphans and the poor (Q 69: 34, 74: 44, 89: 17–19, 90: 14–16, and 107: 2–3).

It appears that the only sufficiently potent restraint of human selfishness and covetousness is the terror of eternal perdition. The core virtue of the early Qur'anic proclamations is therefore an attitude of fearful wariness (*taqwā*, verb *ittaqā*) of God (Q 91: 8, 92: 5.17, and 96: 12), and it is 'the God-fearers' (*al-muttaqūn*) who feature as the positive contrary of 'the Deniers' (Q 51: 15, 52: 17, 54: 54, 68: 34, 69: 48, 77: 41, and 78: 31).[26] Further references to fear and dread abound,[27] and the main purpose of the early Qur'an's gruesome warnings and sketches of hell is evidently to drive home, with maximum literary effect, the horrors of damnation.[28] Jolted by eschatological terror, humans will be empowered to dominate their natural selfishness and greed. This transformative

shift will express itself most visibly in the willingness to renounce one's possessions for charitable purposes. Thus, Q 92: 5 closely conjoins fearful wariness and charitable giving, and the importance and purificatory effect of almsgiving is also highlighted in a host of further passages.[29] God-fearing humans will furthermore be assiduous performers of prayer (for example, Q 70: 22–23.34 and 87: 14–15). This tallies with the fact that the early surahs demand or refer to the performance of various liturgical activities, namely, prostration (Q 84: 21 and 96: 16), bowing (77: 48), the 'glorification' of God (for example, 69: 52 and 87: 1), and the holding of prayer vigils (Q 52: 48–49 and 73: 1–2).[30]

The Christian background of early Qur'anic eschatology

The early Qur'an's eschatological kerygma displays manifold parallels to Christian eschatological discourse.[31] Most obviously, the Qur'anic announcements of an eschatological earthquake (for example, Q 73: 14, 79: 6–7, and 99: 1), of a darkening and scattering of the celestial bodies (for example, Q 81: 1–2 and 82: 2), of a trumpet blast triggering the Resurrection (Q 69: 13, 74: 8, and 78: 18), of a displacement or destruction of the mountains (for example, Q 69: 14, 70: 9, and 101: 5), and of the opening of record books in preparation for the Last Judgement (Q 81: 10) all have patent counterparts in the New Testament.[32] One can moreover discern a number of phraseological parallels; for example, the Qur'anic affirmation that God's 'affair' will transpire 'in the blink of an eye' (Q 54: 50) is very similar to a Pauline metaphor (1 Corinthians 15: 52), the designation of the end of the world as 'the Hour' harks back to passages like Matthew 24: 36 and 25: 13, and the frequent Qur'anic 'on that day' (*yawma'idhin*) also has a New Testamental equivalent (see Matthew 7: 22).

As already mentioned in Chapter 6, such New Testamental eschatological motifs recur widely in later Christian writings, including the Syriac homilies attributed to Ephrem (d. 373) and to Jacob of Serugh (d. 521).[33] The latter exhibit numerous correspondences with Qur'anic statements about the end of the world, the Day of Judgement, and the afterlife, and their eschatological terminology can frequently be mapped on to Qur'anic equivalents, often etymologically related ones.[34] Moreover, as demonstrated already in 1926 by the Swedish scholar Tor Andrae, Syriac Christian literature, such as the writings ascribed to Ephrem, articulate a general type of piety centred on the fear (Syriac *deḥlā*) of God and damnation that is hauntingly similar to the early Qur'an.[35] Syriac homilies are redolent of the Qur'an in a considerable number of respects: they criticise man's excessive 'love' of material possessions, his miserliness, and his insatiable desire to 'have more'; they draw on themes of social criticism enshrined in the Hebrew Bible, such as the demand to protect orphans and the poor or the condemnation of false measures (cf. Q 83: 1–3); they follow Matthew 6: 5–6 in censuring ostentatious praying (cf. Q 107: 6); and they ascribe a special salvific significance

to almsgiving.[36] Furthermore, the early Qur'anic endorsement of vigils is highly reminiscent of the prayer regimen of Christian monks.[37]

In view of this multitude of intersections, it seems justified to describe the early Qur'an as putting forward an Arabised restatement of core elements of Syriac-Christian eschatological piety, which the Qur'an considers to be identical with the teaching of 'the scriptures of Abraham and Moses' (Q 53: 36–37, and 87: 18–19).[38] Despite such manifest continuity, however, the early Qur'an's appropriation of Christian eschatological discourse is very selective. For instance, the early Qur'anic proclamations consistently avoid ascribing any soteriological or eschatological role to Jesus Christ. Thus, it is God rather than Christ whom the Qur'an casts in the role of the eschatological judge arriving together with the angels (cf. Matthew 16: 27 with Q 89: 22).[39] In fact, the figure of Jesus is completely absent from the early surahs and receives no mention until Q 19: 16–40, 21: 91–94, and 43: 57–65, all of which must postdate the early Meccan surahs.[40] As a result, the early Qur'an steers clear of any intervention in the theological controversies that had such pivotal significance for late antique Christians.[41] The early Qur'an furthermore eschews any reference to major Christian rituals like baptism or the Eucharist, or to an apostolically sanctioned church hierarchy. The early Meccan surahs thus subject Syriac-Christian eschatological piety to a systematic act of theological expurgation: virtually any specifically Christian content is removed, leaving behind an individualistic eschatology that is, first, unencumbered by any theological commitments beyond the belief in an omnipotent creator and judge and, second, did not require its audience to align themselves with any one of the competing Christian churches of late antiquity. Rather than submission to an ecclesiastical hierarchy, acknowledging the early Qur'an's truth claim only required submission to the Qur'anic Messenger's prophetic charisma.

Given the early Qur'an's pronounced convergence with Syriac eschatology and the Qur'anic opponents' evident familiarity with the idea of a final judgement, we cannot infer from the early surahs' lack of explicit references to Jesus or to Christianity that these texts stem from an environment that had no direct contact with Christians. Our best hypothesis is that the early Meccan surahs arose from and spoke to a cultural habitat that had for some time been exposed to Christian missionary preaching yet had so far proved largely impervious to it. This preaching, probably delivered in Arabic, would have drawn inspiration from Syriac homiletic literature in stoking fear of eternal damnation. The early Qur'anic surahs isolate this eschatological strand of ideas, denuding it of doctrines and practices that are peculiar to Christianity or to one particular kind of Christianity and making it the lynchpin of a new revelation in Arabic.

The early Qur'an represents a moment of eschatological ignition within a syncretistic pagan milieu in which, until the advent of the Qur'an, denial of and doubts about the Last Judgement would appear to have been the default position. Apocalyptic speculations about the imminent end of the world and Christ's Second

Coming were rife throughout the Near East during the sixth and early seventh century CE,[42] and it seems very probable that the irruption of eschatological urgency that is documented by the early Qur'an was fuelled by such a combustible atmosphere. Yet by contrast with properly apocalyptic texts, such as the Biblical book of Daniel, the Qur'an exhibits almost no concern with predicting the final chapters of history that would usher in the end of the world.[43] Thus, when the Qur'an catalogues various antecedents of the eschatological judgement these are virtually always of a cosmic rather than a historically specific nature, as documented by Q 82: 1–4. Unlike, for instance, Nebuchadnezzar's vision of four world empires that is reported in Daniel 2, the Qur'anic proclamations do not tie the advent of God's judgement to major contemporary developments in the sphere of international politics.[44] Moreover, even though the early surahs betray an attitude of imminent eschatological expectation, they nonetheless refuse to commit themselves to a prediction of the exact time of the end (Q 79: 42–45). A literary sermon by Jacob of Serugh takes exactly the same position,[45] which further underscores the intimate link between the early Qur'an and the moralistic and pietistic brand of eschatology found in Syriac homiletic literature.

It is appropriate to conclude this section with a brief assessment of literary resemblances between the early Qur'anic surahs and Syriac texts.[46] One such affinity pertains to the strings of eschatological temporal clauses that are found, for instance, at the beginning of surahs 81, 82, and 84. A homily by Jacob of Serugh features a very similar concatenation of 'when' clauses, and further cases of serial parallelism can be found in other Syriac homilies. Moreover, the way in which Syriac texts depict the afterlife anticipates the Qur'an's marked penchant for antithetical juxtapositions of the saved and the damned; and the Qur'anic use of refrains in surahs like Q 54, 55, and 77 brings to mind the response verses that punctuate Syriac hymns. Nonetheless, the Qur'anic proclamations are marked by at least one major idiosyncrasy: unlike the writings attributed to Ephrem or Jacob, they generally present themselves as divine speech rather than as human discourse that draws on, cites, and interprets an existing scriptural corpus. It is true that the most important literary device by which this is achieved, the extensive deployment of a divine voice, may to some degree be patterned on divine pronouncements contained in the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible.[47] Yet the Qur'anic proclamations go much further than any part of the Biblical canon in styling extensive portions of text as divine speech. As a result, already many of the early Meccan surahs, by contrast with Syriac homiletic literature, stake out a radical claim to constitute original revelation. This doubtlessly had a very important part to play in their becoming the nucleus of a new scripture.

One must also not overlook the fact that the early Meccan surahs adapt indigenous Arabian patterns of literary expression as well. These include the rhymed prose and the enigmatic introductory oaths that were reportedly characteristic of pagan oracles.[48] Moreover, Qur'anic descriptions of paradise have

been shown to deploy motifs that are characteristic of the banquet scenes found in early Arabic poetry.[49] Thus, the early Qur'an articulates its message of an inevitable, perhaps even impending, divine judgement by fusing literary forms of diverse provenance into artful compositions in 'clear Arabic' (Q 26: 195).[50] The rhetorical effect thus achieved should be credited with a significant role in ensuring that the Qur'anic proclamations proved capable of inspiring the formation of at least a small community of eschatologically minded God-fearers around Muhammad, who would then become the nucleus of the Islamic *ummah*.

Historical signs

From very early on, the Qur'anic proclamations seek to buttress the proposition that God will enact a universal judgement at the end of the world by putting forward arguments: the 'Deniers' are not presented as failing to make a leap of faith, but as rejecting perfectly obvious divine 'signs' (singular *āyah*) and thus, ultimately, as being insufficiently receptive to reasonable persuasion.[51] This link is very explicit in Q 83: 10–13, quoted above, according to which the deniers of the Day of Judgement are dismissive of God's 'signs', and the same accusation recurs in other early Meccan passages (Q 68: 15, 74: 16, and 78: 27–28). Such signs fall into two classes, representing two general argumentative strategies. The first one is an appeal to various precedents for a punitive divine intervention in human history, while the second one invokes God's creative power as manifested in nature – the inference being that a deity capable of creating and maintaining the cosmos is also capable of orchestrating a resurrection of the dead. Both lines of argument are explicitly designated as 'signs', even though Western scholars sometimes give greater prominence to the second aspect of the concept.[52] I shall first turn towards historical signs and then discuss cosmic ones. Throughout, I shall retain my focus on the early Meccan surahs.

The basic inference underlying the appeal to historical signs is encapsulated in Q 89: 6–14:

> [6] Have you[s] not seen how your Lord dealt with ᶜĀd,
> [7] Iram with its pillars,
> [8] the like of which had not been created in the land,
> [9] and Thamūd, who hewed the rocks in the valley,
> [10] and Pharaoh, the one with the stakes,
> [11] who exceeded all bounds in the land
> [12] and wreaked much mischief in it?
> [13] Then your[s] Lord poured out upon them a scourge of punishment;
> [14] your Lord waits in ambush.

God has unleashed destructive punishments upon sinful peoples in the past; therefore the addressees of the Qur'an, too, would do well to be on their guard

against the final judgement that is announced later on in the surah (Q 89: 21–26). In fact, the eschatological horizon foreshadowed by past acts of divine retaliation may be implicit already in v. 14, for another early Meccan verse states that it is 'hell' that 'waits in ambush' (Q 78: 21).

Succinct references to previous divine punishments are also found in surahs 53 and 85. We again encounter the tribes of ʿĀd (Q 53: 50) and Thamūd (53: 51 and 85: 18) as well as Pharaoh (85: 18), in addition to the 'people of Noah' (53: 52) and the 'overturned settlement' (53: 53), a reference to Sodom and Gomorrah.[53] A further example of punitive divine action is contained in surah 105, which briefly recounts God's annihilation of the 'people of the elephant', traditionally linked with an abortive campaign against Mecca by the South Arabian king Abraha.[54] In a more summary fashion, Q 77: 16–17 has the divine voice remind its addressees that God has 'destroyed the ancients' and will 'cause the later ones to follow them'.

While the foregoing verses confine themselves to brief reminiscences, others present a more sustained narrative and, crucially, introduce a third protagonist into the plot besides God and the sinful collective that is obliterated. This is the figure of a human emissary whom God sends to deliver a final warning before His punishment comes to pass. Two of the earliest surahs deploying such a warner figure are Q 91: 11–15 and 79: 15–26. The latter passage recounts Moses' confrontation with Pharaoh, who is accused of 'exceeding all bounds' (Q 79: 17, cf. 89: 11) and urged by Moses to 'purify himself' (Q 79: 18). Yet despite being presented with a miraculous 'sign' (Q 79: 20),[55] Pharaoh continues to 'deny' and to 'disobey' (Q 79: 21) and even arrogates a divine status to himself (Q 79: 24). In retaliation, God 'seizes' him so that he may serve as 'a warning example for the next world and for this one' (Q 79: 25).

The entire narrative is of course rooted in Exodus 7–11, yet the Qur'anic version involves a crucial change of emphasis: Moses is not charged with the liberation of the Israelites, who do not even appear in Q 79, but rather has the task of persuading Pharaoh to 'purify himself' and to fear God (Q 79: 16–19).[56] Moses and the Qur'anic Messenger thus emerge as functionally equivalent figures. This is explicitly underscored in Q 73: 15–16:

> [15] We have sent to you[p] a messenger as a witness against you,
> just as We sent a messenger to Pharaoh.
> [16] Yet Pharaoh disobeyed the messenger,
> and so We seized him with a violent grasp.[57]

From very early on, therefore, the Qur'anic proclamations exhibit a marked tendency to model Muhammad and Moses upon each other.[58] This is also illustrated by Q 53: 1–18, which describes two visionary experiences of the Qur'anic Messenger that are suggestive of the initiation of Moses.[59]

Q 91: 11–15 presents the intriguing case of a Moses-like messenger figure being introduced into an extra-Biblical narrative, the story of the downfall of

the tribe of Thamūd, whom we already saw alluded to in a number of other early verses. The shape in which this legend circulated prior to its appropriation by the Qur'an is illuminated by a poem ascribed to Muhammad's older contemporary Umayyah ibn Abī l-Ṣalt, which is probably authentic.[60] Its basic storyline agrees with the Qur'anic version insofar as it reports Thamūd to have been punished because one member of the tribe slew a camel that had been consecrated to God. Unlike Umayyah's version, however, the Qur'anic account features a 'messenger of God' who urges appropriate treatment of 'God's camel' and demands that it be allowed to drink. This proves fruitless: the messenger is accused of being a liar, an action designated by the same verb (*kadhdhaba*) that we also found being used for denial of the afterlife.[61] As punishment for their sins, the tribe is then wiped out. Like Moses, the messenger sent to Thamūd, who is identified as Ṣāliḥ in another early Meccan surah (Q 26: 142),[62] confronts a situation that is recognisably similar to that of Muhammad.

The Thamūd story in surah 91 adapts an existing Arabian tradition to a pattern that was henceforth to become the backbone of a large portion of Qur'anic narratives, commonly referred to as punishment legends or punishment narratives.[63] The pattern is thrown into particularly sharp relief in the extensive middle part of surah 26 (vv. 10–191), which relates a cycle of seven Biblical and extra-Biblical stories in such a way as to highlight their far-reaching conformity to one and the same plot scheme: God dispatches a messenger to admonish a certain people to worship and to fear Him, yet the messenger is dismissed as a liar,[64] upon which God annihilates the messenger's disobedient addressees. The surah's accounts of Moses, Abraham, Noah, Hūd (sent to the tribe of ʿĀd), Ṣāliḥ (sent to Thamūd), Lot, and Shuʿayb are all modelled on this template, even if not all seven messengers are depicted as having been sent to their own people.[65] The structural parallels between different punishment legends are similarly pronounced in the narrative cycle Q 54: 9–42. It consists of five pericopes, each one opening with the formulaic accusation that the group in question was guilty of 'dismissing as a lie / as a liar' (*kadhdhaba*) God's warnings or the messenger who had been sent to them (vv. 9, 18, 23, 33, and 41–42).

The past acts of divine retribution recounted in these narratives do not merely seek to establish that God will not hesitate to call sinners to account and that His might is irresistible. They also prefigure the ultimate and universal retribution that will come to pass at the end of history; in other words, God's punishments of earlier peoples function as pre-enactments of the *eschaton*. This is subtly but clearly signalled by details of their literary presentation. For instance, Q 26: 189 concludes a retelling of the story of Shuʿayb by reporting that his compatriots were seized by 'the punishment of a mighty day', thus employing an expression that Q 83: 4–5 applies to the Resurrection.[66] Thus, when an earlier verse of surah 26 has Hūd threaten the tribe of ʿĀd with 'the punishment of a mighty day' (vv. 135), it is not obvious that this should necessarily be taken to apply to the past

chastisement that is said to have annihilated ᶜĀd rather than to God's universal judgement at the end of the world. Such ambiguity is important: the Qur'anic proclamations present the Last Judgement not as a solitary and unprecedented event but rather as the culmination of God's punitive interventions in the past.

It is noteworthy that the plot scheme of Qur'anic narratives about earlier messengers as it emerges during the early Meccan period is flexible, admitting an emphasis not only on the aspect of punishment but also on the aspect of deliverance. This is very much the case for the narrative cycle found in Q 37: 75–148. As we saw in Chapter 4, the surah as a whole exhibits a focus on God's assistance to his 'chosen' or 'believing servants', and many of the stories in the surah's middle part concentrate on God's rescue of beleaguered believers. This explains why the narrative cycle in surah 37 is, unusually, concluded by a story with a happy ending: Jonah, after having been saved from the belly of the fish that had swallowed him, succeeds in converting 'a hundred thousand or more' (Q 37: 147–148).

Cosmic signs

The second category of Qur'anic signs does not focus on God's punitive interventions in past history but on His munificent creation and maintenance of man's present natural environment. An early example is Q 78: 6–16:

> [6] Have We not made the earth a smooth expanse,
> [7] and made the mountains tent pegs,
> [8] and created you[p] in pairs,
> [9] and made sleep so that you might rest,[67]
> [10] and made night as a garment,
> [11] and made the day so that you might earn your livelihood,[68]
> [12] and built above you seven strong ones,
> [13] and made a radiant lamp?
> [14] And do We not send down abundant water from the rain-clouds[69]
> [15] in order to bring forth grain and plants
> [16] and luxuriant gardens?

The vision of nature that arises from such affirmations of God's works is radically at odds with that articulated in pre-Islamic poetry, which generally portrays the natural world as desolate and hostile to human survival. The Qur'anic cosmos, by contrast, is a hospitable space that a benevolent creator has carefully optimised for human habitation.[70] God has 'made the earth submissive to you', Q 67: 15 states in a manner that brings to mind Genesis 1: 28, in which God encourages Adam and Eve to 'subdue' the earth. Crucially, however, the Qur'an ascribes the subduing of the earth to God Himself rather than imposing it on man. The attitude thus inculcated in humans is one of gratitude towards God rather than the pre-Islamic poet's stance of heroic self-assertion in the face of an

inimical and threatening environment. As Angelika Neuwirth has underscored, this vision of the natural world shows tangible affinity with the Biblical book of Psalms. More specifically, the passage from surah 78 cited above is marked by palpable intersections with Psalm 104, according to which God 'stretches out the heavens like a tent' and has 'laid the foundations of the earth' (cf. Psalm 104: 2.5 and Q 78: 7),[71] waters the mountains and thereby brings forth grass and vegetation (cf. Psalm 104: 13–14 and Q 78: 14–16), has made the sun (cf. Psalm 104: 19.22 and Q 78: 13) and has established night and day (cf. Psalm 104: 20 and Q 78: 9–10, and Psalm 104: 23 and Q 78: 11).[72]

Qur'anic reminders of God's creation are designed to demonstrate not only man's duty to thank God, but also the latter's power to terminate the cosmic system that He has set up. This is why the Qur'an's Psalmically inspired depictions of the world's present workings and the scenarios of eschatological devastation discussed above form implicit counterparts. When the end arrives, all the components of the cosmic system that figure in the passage just cited from surah 78 will disintegrate: the heaven will sway, open up, melt, or be rent asunder; the sun will be enveloped or collide with the moon; the earth will quake and open up to release the dead; and the mountains – whose seeming imperishability is emphasised in a poem by Muhammad's contemporary Labīd – will be moved, melted, or pulverised.[73] What God has made, God can and will unmake. The implicit contrast between both sets of scenes is further underscored by the fact that God's creative action exhibits a marked tendency to be described by transitive active verbs (for example, Q 78: 7: God 'made the mountains tent-pegs'), whereas the world's eschatological destruction is mostly depicted by intransitive or passive verbs (for example, Q 77: 10: the mountains 'are pulverised'; Q 78: 20 or 81: 3: the mountains 'are moved').

It is noteworthy that Qur'anic affirmations of God's works are overall more interested in accentuating how nature is geared towards the fulfilment of human needs than in recounting events of the primordial past. This focus on the present orderliness and functionality of the world rather than on God's exploits in the past is particularly visible in passages that treat the 'creation' of man, arguably the single most prominent cosmic sign adduced in the early surahs. Although the Biblically based narrative of Adam's creation figures in a considerable number of Qur'anic passages, as we saw in Chapter 6, references to the creation of man as a cosmic sign of God's power generally focus on the growth of the human embryo (Q 75: 37–40):

[37] Was he [man] not a drop of ejaculated semen?
[38] Then he became a clot;
and He [God] created and formed [man].
[39] and made of him two kinds, male and female.
[40] Is that one [God] not capable of reviving the dead?

Just like the sending down of rain in Q 78: 14 and elsewhere, this passage describes a natural occurrence – the gradual formation of humans in the maternal womb – as an instance of divine creation. Thus, it is primarily in the unfolding of seemingly autonomous natural processes that the Qur'an detects God's creative presence.[74]

Qur'anic reminders that humans are created by God serve to establish the creator's power to refashion them at the Resurrection. This inference is made explicit not only in Q 75: 40, just quoted, but also in Q 86: 8: 'He [God] is capable of bringing him [man] back.' It is worth observing that the argument deducing God's power to resurrect the dead from His creation of humans from sperm is entirely traditional: it is found already in second-century Christian writers like Justin and Athenagoras, and is rooted in pre-Christian Jewish literature (2 Maccabees 7: 22–23).[75] The early Meccan surahs therefore confront their addressees' doubts about the Resurrection by deploying an argument that had a prehistory of at least several centuries. Here, as elsewhere, one is reminded of the Qur'an's self-description as 'confirming what precedes it' (for example, Q 2: 97).

The transition to explicit monotheism

While an uncompromising insistence on God's oneness is arguably the doctrinal pivot of the Qur'anic corpus as a whole, the earliest surahs do not explicitly deny the existence of other deities besides the divine creator and judge, who is designated both as 'your[s] Lord' (*rabbuka*) and Allāh, 'God'.[76] To be sure, already the early Qur'anic proclamations emphasise God's power and omniscience to an extent that leaves little conceptual space for other divine or semi-divine beings to play an important religious role.[77] To some extent, then, the emergence of an explicitly monotheistic creed in later strata of the Qur'an may be seen as a natural theological development. Nonetheless, it would not have been doctrinally impossible for the Qur'anic proclamations to humour their pagan addressees by conceding the factual existence of a certain number of subordinate deities while rigorously curtailing these deities' functions and autonomous efficacy. This is not, however, what happened, and the line taken by subsequent Qur'anic texts was a frontal renunciation of any divine beings other than Allāh. This monotheistic turn then induced a radical polarisation of the Qur'anic audience into Believers and Unbelievers – a polarisation that would eventually turn violent, as we shall see in the next chapter. It is fascinating that we can pinpoint with some confidence the texts in which this momentous step was first taken.

What appears to be the earliest passage testifying to an incipient disavowal of polytheism is a passage in surah 53 (vv. 19–22 and 24–25) rejecting the view that the three Arabian goddesses al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzah, and Manāt are daughters of God.[78] However, this brief polemic does not yet involve a general denial of the

existence of more than one deity. Most likely, the earliest verse in which such an affirmation is made is Q 37: 4, declaring that 'your[p] God is one'. As highlighted in Chapter 4, the statement, prominently placed at the beginning of the surah, functions as a doctrinal benchmark for various passages later on in the composition that condemn the veneration of beings other than God.[79] For instance, we find a denunciation of the view that God has female offspring (vv. 149–160) that is similar to surah 53. Unlike surah 53, however, here the rebuke is delivered against the background of the explicit pronouncements found in v. 4 and also in v. 35 (the latter asserting that 'there is no god but God', which was to become the first part of the Islamic confession of faith). Surah 37 thus marks a significant evolutionary step in the Qur'an's nascent theology.[80] This breakthrough towards explicit monotheism is then echoed in Q 51: 51 ('Do[p] not set up with God any other god') and 73: 9 ('The Lord of the east and the west – there is no god but Him').

The early Qur'anic professions of monotheism that have just been cited are distinctly reminiscent of Biblical formulations, namely, Exodus 20: 3 / Deuteronomy 5: 7 ('You[p] shall have no other gods beside me') and Deuteronomy 6: 4 ('Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one'). The Qur'an's swift progress towards explicit monotheism must therefore have been informed by Biblical precedent. This is also supported by the fact that two of the Biblically based narratives found in surah 37's middle part emphasise their protagonists' struggle against polytheism: Abraham censures his compatriots' worship of 'gods other than God' and risks his life by destroying these false deities (vv. 83–98), and Elijah decries his people's veneration of Baal (vv. 123–126). Thus, surah 37 is the earliest Qur'anic proclamation according to which the scriptural heritage associated with Abraham and other Biblical figures does not just centre on the belief in an eschatological reckoning, as maintained in Q 53: 36–42 and Q 87: 18–19, but also on monotheism. It seems that by looking back to the fate of Biblical protagonists like Abraham and Elijah, Muhammad and his followers concluded that the stubborn resistance to the idea of an eschatological judgement that they were encountering was ultimately rooted in a failure to worship God alone.

Why would such a nexus between dismissing the Resurrection, on the one hand, and failing to uphold God's unity, on the other, have made sense? The underlying assumption appears to be that reliance on subordinate deities, even if only for this-worldly benefits, is correlated with specious optimism: if humans are unconcerned about and dismissive of the coming judgement, and blind to the manifold signs pointing to it, this must be because they erroneously believe themselves to dispose of some effective means of protection against the divine judge, of having some sort of recourse to fall back upon, apart from living up to God's moral demands. According to the early Qur'an, such spurious optimism can be fed by many sources: it is made clear, for instance, that earthly

property and descendants will be of no avail to the resurrected (for example, Q 26: 88 and 92: 11); that on the Day of Judgement no one will benefit from anyone else's intercession (Q 26: 100 and 74: 48); and that no one will be able to invoke a divine pledge of eschatological immunity (Q 37: 156–157, 54: 43, and 68: 37–40). It is in this context that we encounter the earliest Qur'anic occurrences of the root *sh-r-k*, used to denounce the illegitimate partnering of other beings with God: Q 68: 41 poses the rhetorical question of whether the Qur'anic addressees are foolishly counting on the assistance of divine 'associates' (*shurakā'*) on the Day of Judgement, and Q 52: 43 asks, in a similarly polemical context, 'Or do they have some god beside God? God is far exalted above that which they associate [with Him]!' The concept of 'associate' gods powerfully caricatures the Qur'an's opponents as mistakenly believing God's punitive justice to be constrained and hedged in by divine business partners to whom one could appeal independently.[81]

Of course, an explicit affirmation of the idea that subordinate deities will provide some sort of assistance – perhaps by means of intercession – to their worshippers on the Day of Judgement does imply recognition of the fact that such a judgement will indeed come to pass. It seems unlikely that the Qur'anic opponents would have conceded this, given that they are mostly depicted as vociferously denying that the Resurrection would take place at all.[82] Thus, while the Qur'anic Deniers may well have operated with the notion of intercession, it would have involved them in a stark inconsistency had they understood such intercession to be eschatological. Instead, it would appear to be the Qur'anic proclamations, informed by an unshakeable certainty that the Judgement will indeed come about, that shift their opponents' claims from the present to the eschatological future, thereby celebrating the utter uselessness of any associate deities in the one situation when everything is at stake, when man's eternal salvation or damnation hangs in the balance.[83]

Polemics in the later Meccan surahs

The literary genres found in the early Meccan proclamations also remain prominent components of later Meccan surahs: we continue to encounter depictions of heaven and hell, narratives about the fate of previous divine messengers, and reminders of how God's power and wisdom are attested by natural phenomena. Increasingly, however, these early Meccan text types become surrounded by and absorbed into ever more extensive polemics. Polemical passages begin to occur fairly early on in the Qur'an's process of emergence, for example, at Q 37: 14–18, which already exhibit the characteristic Qur'anic technique of combining quotations of the Messenger's adversaries ('they say: …') with rejoinders imposed on him by the divine voice ('say: …'). However, in the early surahs such polemical exchanges do not possess nearly the same dominance as

in late Meccan texts like surahs 6, 10, or 13. For example, in surah 6 even the brief Abraham narrative found at the centre of the composition, in vv. 74–83, is heavily tinged with a polemical quality. Thus, vv. 74–79 – which describe how Abraham, by contemplating various heavenly bodies, came to realise the sole existence of one God, 'who created the heavens and the earth' – are followed by an account of the speech that Abraham delivered when 'his people disputed with him' regarding his theological insight (vv. 80–83). Narrative has become engulfed by polemic.

The main issues that are at stake in the Meccan surahs' polemical or, as one may say in Qur'anic terms, 'disputational' passages are three.[84] Two of them have already come up in earlier sections of this chapter: the Qur'an's opponents are attacked for denying the eschatological resurrection of the dead and for 'associating' subordinate deities with God. A third area of disagreement is centred on the person of Muhammad. Q 81: 15–28 or 53: 1–18 demonstrate that the Qur'anic proclamations began to comment on their own origin and function as well as on the person of Muhammad at a relatively early stage, and once again the relevant material becomes increasingly disputational by exhibiting the typical quotation-rejoinder pattern pointed out above ('they say: …' – 'say: …'; for example, Q 17: 88–96). Rather than accepting Muhammad's claim to have been charged with delivering divine warnings, his opponents scorn him as a 'sorcerer', a 'soothsayer', a 'poet', or someone who is 'possessed by *jinn*' (for example, Q 7: 184, 10: 2, 21: 5, 34: 8, and 52: 29–30) and dismiss the Qur'anic proclamations as a fabrication and as originating in a human source (Q 16: 103 and 25: 4–5). They also demand that Muhammad prove his credentials by means of some suitably spectacular confirmatory miracle (for example, Q 6: 8–9, 17: 90–93, and 25: 7), an expectation that the Qur'an rejects. The Qur'an's frequent self-referential statements, highlighted in Chapter 1, must be read against this background: it is because the revelatory provenance of the Qur'anic proclamations and Muhammad's status as a divine emissary were so widely rejected that the Qur'anic texts keep reiterating them.[85]

In Meccan polemics that treat the three topics just surveyed, the Messenger's opponents consist virtually exclusively in the pagan 'Unbelievers' and 'Associators'. Even though Q 29: 46 admonishes the listeners that they must 'only dispute with the People of the Scripture in the best manner',[86] the Meccan surahs contain relatively little material that is in direct conversation with Jews and Christians. Even two Meccan passages that unequivocally comment on and reject the divine sonship of Christ (Q 19: 34–40 and 43: 57–65) are primarily directed at Muhammad's 'associating' contemporaries (Q 43: 57).[87] Nonetheless, Meccan statements about Judaism and Christianity – who figure either as 'the Israelites' (see Q 17: 101 and 26: 197) or are designated with studiedly generic labels such as 'those who have been reciting the Scripture before you[s]' (see Q 10: 94)[88] – are appropriately given some attention here. These statements

tend to make the following two points. First, it is maintained that the proprietors of earlier revelations will, if asked, confirm the truth of specific Qur'anic claims and narratives (Q 10: 94, 16: 43, 17: 101, 21: 7, 43: 45, also 25: 59?) and that they generally recognise, rejoice in, and believe in, the Qur'anic revelations (Q 6: 20.114, 13: 36, 26: 197, 28: 52–53, and 29: 47). Second, on a more critical note, the followers of Moses and Jesus are chided for allowing disagreements and schisms to arise (Q 19: 37, 21: 93, 23: 53, and 43: 65).[89] By way of a qualification of the first point, it is even recognised that some of the resulting 'factions' (*aḥzāb*) may well deny part of the Qur'an's teachings, which would consign them to damnation (Q 11: 17 and 13: 36).

The Meccan Qur'an's general reluctance to call Jews and Christians by name and to engage with specific Jewish and Christian doctrines and practices must be deliberate. We may conjecture that within the context of an increasingly strident confrontation with the Associators, the Meccan proclamations were concerned to position themselves as representing a relatively united front of monotheistic judgement-fearers. Against this background, it is understandable that the Qur'anic texts display no rhetorical interest in advertising any quarrels they may have with fellow monotheists. The Meccan tendency to enlist the recipients of earlier revelations as confirmatory witnesses against the Associators is obviously pertinent here.

But it would be superficial to consider the Meccan stance towards Jews and Christians to be only a matter of adopting the most effective rhetorical strategy vis-à-vis the Associators. We saw above that already the theological vision articulated by the early Meccan surahs is one that purposefully prioritises an idea shared by all forms of late antique Judaism and Christianity – namely, belief in an eschatological resurrection of the dead and an ensuing judgement – while carefully sidestepping any doctrines that were specifically Christian. In subsequently articulating an explicit insistence on the oneness of God, the Qur'anic proclamations continue to follow the same tendency of restating what is deemed to be the inalienable and common core of the Biblical tradition, while refusing to be drawn into a dynamic of ever more complex doctrinal differentiation and demarcation that was prevalent in late antique religious history. Such gratuitous boundary-drawing is castigated as the key flaw of contemporary forms of monotheism, described as unwarranted disagreement (verb: *ikhtalafa*, Q 10: 93, 11: 110, 41: 45, and elsewhere) and division (verb: *tafarraqa*, Q 42: 13–14). Instead, the Qur'anic proclamations style themselves as putting forward what is at least potentially a theology of pan-monotheistic consensus, an ecumenical version of eschatology and monotheism whose adoption by present-day Jews and Christians would undo the deleterious rise of factionalism after Moses and Jesus.[90] Thus, even though the Meccan proclamations' immediate audience consists in the pagan Associators, they articulate the claim to be relevant and acceptable to the proprietors of earlier revelations as well.

As we shall see in the following chapter, this claim was put to the test in Medina, where the Qur'anic community entered into direct interaction with a local Jewish population. As a result, the ecumenical character of the Qur'anic religion receded very markedly, and it gradually morphed into one among several co-existing Biblically based religions, marked off from its immediate competitors, Judaism and Christianity, by a distinct set of ritual and legal prescriptions and engaged in overt polemic against specific Jewish and Christian doctrines and institutions.

Leaving Mecca

The Qur'an's protracted attempts to disprove the existence of the Associators' intermediate deities and to rebut their doubts about the Resurrection evidently met only with limited success. An important essay on surahs 10–15 by Walid Saleh emphasises the later Meccan surahs' profound sense of pessimism about the prospects of further preaching: 'most people' simply 'do not believe', the Qur'an states resignedly (Q 11: 17, 13: 1, and 40: 59).[91] Even more threatening to the credibility of Muhammad's preaching than this lack of missionary success would have been the fact that the divine punishment that had been so extensively announced by many Qur'anic passages was a long time coming. After all, the resounding implication of the various narratives rehearsed in many Meccan surahs was that a people who rejected their messenger's warnings and preaching would inevitably be annihilated by a catastrophic divine intervention, like the flood that destroyed the people of Noah. Yet as time went on, no such punishment materialised, despite the fact that the Associators' firm refusal to heed what Muhammad was telling them had become unmistakably obvious. The Associators are even depicted as scornfully demanding that God speed up the threatened punishment (for example, Q 10: 48–51).[92]

A number of late Meccan passages consequently attempt to explain why God was so unexpectedly 'delaying' (*akhkhara*) His punishment and to reassure Muhammad's listeners that the delay was only temporary (Q 11: 8.104, 16: 61, and 35: 45). How grave a cognitive dissonance was caused by this 'crisis of divine tarrying'[93] is documented by a number of verses going so far as to recognise the possibility that God may hold back from meting out His punishment until after Muhammad's death (Q 10: 46, 13: 40, 40: 77, and 43: 41–42): 'Muhammad's fate is starting to look different from that of the prophets he is supposed to resemble', Saleh comments.[94] A particularly stark expression of the despair that appears to have gripped the late Meccan community as a consequence of this quandary occurs at Q 12: 110: 'Only when the messengers despaired and thought that they had been lied to, Our assistance reached them, and [only] those whom We wished were delivered. Our violent grasp cannot be averted from the sinful people.'[95] Although the verse reiterates that God's

intervention will come, it will arrive only when the entire community, including the Messenger himself, have been overwhelmed by utter hopelessness.[96] In sum, the Qur'anic proclamations had arrived at a serious impasse.[97]

Saleh is surely right in suggesting that the Qur'anic community's emigration to Medina is best viewed as an attempt to come to grips with this crisis of divine tarrying: the hijrah was not just a prudent act of strategic withdrawal but a way out of the late Meccan impasse. To be sure, the hijrah may have been perceived as theologically anomalous; to leave Mecca without the threatened punishment having yet occurred could well have appeared as an act that was completely unprecedented in previous prophetic history. If so, we would have expected the hijrah to compound, rather than defuse, the above-mentioned cognitive dissonance. After all, for much of the Meccan period the Qur'anic proclamations had over and over again impressed on Muhammad's followers that the ministry of all of God's messengers conformed to a recurrent pattern. But *did* the Meccan community perceive the hijrah as an act without historical precedent? It is tempting to seek a prototype for the hijrah in the Israelite Exodus from Egypt. Yet the Exodus in its Qur'anic guise does not easily lend itself to such a reading. This is so because a number of Meccan retellings of the story of Moses very much convey the impression that after the drowning of Pharaoh and his army the Israelites were given possession of Egypt rather than of another land across the sea.[98] Nor do Meccan texts describe the Exodus by means of the root *h-j-r*, from which the word *hijrah* is derived.[99]

However, if one combs the Meccan surahs for occurrences of this root that do not appear to be Medinan insertions,[100] one does come across at least one potential antetype for the community's relocation to Medina. The relevant passage is Q 29: 16–27, which retells, once again, the story of Abraham's confrontation with his unbelieving people and the latter's ensuing attempt on his life, from which God then delivered him (v. 24). V. 26, the pericope's conclusion, introduces the figure of Lot, who is also the main protagonist of the following narrative:

> And Lot believed him,
> and he [Abraham] said, 'I am going to emigrate to my Lord.
> He is the Mighty and the Wise.'

That the speaker here is intended to be Abraham rather than Lot is supported, among other considerations, by the parallel Q 37: 99, where Abraham makes a similar pronouncement at the same point in the narrative ('I am going to my Lord; He will guide me').[101] What Abraham is reported to have said at Q 29: 26, however, is literally, 'I shall perform the hijrah to my Lord' (*innī muhājirun ilā rabbī*). Hence, if the verse is indeed an original component of the surah, the Qur'anic community would have been disposed to view their departure to Medina as re-enacting Abraham and Lot's emigration to the Promised

Land – the Promised Land being where God is said to have displaced Abraham and Lot in Q 21: 71: 'And We delivered him [Abraham] and Lot to the land that We have blessed for all created beings.' It bears noting in this context that one reason why an understanding of the hijrah as conforming to an Abrahamic example would have been possible is the fact that the Meccan narratives about Abraham's confrontation with his idolatrous compatriots are generally not very specific as to whether the latter were indeed annihilated as thoroughly as other groups, such as the people of Noah. Thus, Q 21: 70 and 37: 98 only report that Abraham's enemies were made to be 'the losers (*al-akhsarīn*)' or 'the inferior ones (*al-asfalīn*)', but this could relatively easily have been interpreted, or re-interpreted, to mean nothing more than that their plan to kill Abraham had failed. This would have facilitated a retrospective equation of the circumstances under which Abraham was forced to leave his home with those under which the Qur'anic Believers emigrated.

Viewed through the lens just suggested, the hijrah would have ceased to appear as an entirely precedentless act: the story of Abraham and Lot's migration would have supplied the community with a prototype for their decision to leave despite the fact that the Associators had not yet been wiped out, rather than to continue waiting for a miraculous divine intervention. This choice marked a crucial shift from passivism to activism: in removing themselves to Medina, the community itself came to execute God's promised deliverance rather than merely expecting to be its passive object. The Qur'an's Medinan layer documents that they ultimately came to view themselves not just as agents of God's deliverance but also of His retribution: God will punish the Associators 'by your hands' (*bi-aydīkum*), the Believers are told in Q 9: 14.[102]

Notes

1. Figures 3 and 4 in Sinai, 'Inner-Qur'anic Chronology', demonstrate that the 95 per cent confidence intervals for surahs before and after this suggested cut-off point almost never overlap. Two exceptions are Q 110, whose anomalous status was already discussed in Chapter 5, and Q 73*. Q 103 and 52 also overlap with surahs after my proposed cut-off point, but not so their original versions Q 103* and 52*.
2. Q 37: 158 implies that the *jinn*, too, are subject to divine judgement.
3. In the early Meccan surahs, the expression 'Day of Resurrection' (*yawm al-qiyāmah*) occurs at Q 68: 39 and 75: 1.6, while 'Day of Separation' (*yawm al-faṣl*) appears at Q 77: 13.14.38 and 78: 17.
4. For a more detailed analysis of the early Qur'an's eschatological discourse, on which this section and the next liberally draw, see Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma'. This is in turn inspired by Andrae, *Der Ursprung*. A concise German summary of the former chapter can be found in Sinai, 'Der Koran', pp. 142–8. For another treatment of Qur'anic eschatology, see Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, pp. 37–70.
5. The surah is also discussed in Sinai, 'The Qurʾān', as a prism for evaluating the redactional approach of Bell.

6. A reading variant has this verse begin with *yawmu* in the nominative: 'the day on which no soul …'.
7. Such Qur'anic *idhā* clauses resemble the 'condition precedents' that have been identified as one of the components of Greek, Babylonian, and other oracular texts. See Stewart, 'Mysterious Letters', pp. 332–9, which highlights further similarities.
8. On the Qur'anic use of *kadhdhaba*, see n. 61 below.
9. On the semantics of the word *dīn*, see Chapter 5, n. 66. That the early surahs use the word in the sense of 'judgement' rather than 'religion' is clear from the fact that they employ *al-dīn* interchangeably with *yawm al-dīn* (cf. Q 82: 9, 95: 7, and 107: 1 with Q 74: 46 and 83: 11). This is especially obvious from the alternation of both expressions in close proximity, at Q 82: 9.15.17–18 and Q 51: 6.12.
10. The idea also appears in other Qur'anic passages, e.g., Q 86: 4. See Paret, *Kommentar und Konkordanz*, on Q 6: 61, and Eichler, *Die Dschinn*, pp. 87–90.
11. For further remarks on this surah, see Neuwirth, *Frühmekkanische Suren*, pp. 280–90, and Sinai, 'The Qurʾān'.
12. Examples are Q 74: 8, 75: 7–9.26–29, 77: 8–11, 78: 18–20.38.40, 79: 6–7.34–36.46, 80: 33–36, 81: 1–13, 84: 1–5, 86: 9, 89: 21–23, 99: 1–3, 100: 9–10, and 101: 4–5. Note that Q 75: 26–30 describes the individual death, not the arrival of the *eschaton*.
13. E.g., Q 74: 9–10, 75: 10.22.24.30, 79: 8, 80: 37–42, 88:2.8, 89: 23.25, 99: 4, and 100: 11. On Q 75: 26–30, see the previous note. Eschatological temporal clauses and *yawmaʾidhin* statements in the early Meccan surahs are succinctly treated in Robinson, *Discovering*, pp. 104–5.
14. See, e.g., Q 78: 21–36, 83: 7–28, 84: 7–15, 88: 2–16, 92: 5–11.14–21, Q 99: 7–8, and 101: 6–9.
15. Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 29*, 180, 191, and elsewhere. See also, based on Neuwirth, Robinson, *Discovering*, pp. 105–6.
16. Later parallels are Q 6: 164, 17: 15, 35: 18, and 39: 7. The phrase is an echo of Galatians 6: 5; see Sinai, 'Sūrat al-Najm', pp. 17–18.
17. In the Christian case, the notion of saintly intercession with the divine judge springs to mind, and in the Rabbinic case the doctrine of the special merit that is acquired by Abraham and bequeathed to the people of Israel (*zekhut avot*). Post-Qur'anic Islam, too, often takes a far more collectivist approach to the question of salvation by attributing to the Prophet, and also to other groups of persons, the power to intercede on behalf of Muslims who have committed grave sins; see Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, pp. 178–9.
18. See also the contrast between 'denying the fairest matter' (*al-ḥusnā*, presumably salvation in paradise) and 'deeming true (*ṣaddaqa*) the fairest matter' in Q 92: 6.9 and the reference to the 'deeming true' (*ṣaddaqa*) of the Judgement at Q 70: 26. However, this latter verse belongs to an extended catalogue of virtues encompassing 70: 22–35 that may well be in its entirety a later addition (Neuwirth, *Frühmekkanische Suren*, pp. 435 and 441, revising her earlier assessment in Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 201–2). Later Medinan surahs speak not of the 'deeming true of the Judgement', but of 'belief in the Last Day' (e.g., Q 2: 8.62, 24: 2, and 65: 2).
19. The predicate *wāqiᶜ* at Q 51: 6, 52: 7, 70: 1, and 77: 7 (cf. also Q 56: 1.2 and 69: 15) is best translated as 'is about to fall' (thus Bell and also Shoemaker, *Death*, pp. 161 and 165).
20. Shoemaker, *Death*, pp. 158–71 (but see the reservations about one aspect of his treatment in Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma', section entitled 'The Qur'anic vision of the Judgement and the hereafter').
21. See Crone, 'The Quranic *Mushrikūn*', pp. 445–6.
22. See also Q 37: 53. Other early Meccan parallels are Q 56: 47–48 and, with less verbal overlap, 79: 10–12. A slightly later parallel is Q 50: 3. For a full overview, see Paret, *Kommentar und Konkordanz*, on Q 13: 5.

23. Crone, 'The Quranic *Mushrikūn*', pp. 450–1.
24. Crone, 'The Quranic *Mushrikūn*', p. 451.
25. See Q 74: 43–47, 92: 8–9, and 107: 4–7; see also Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma', section entitled 'The moral vision of the early Qur'an'.
26. Instead of juxtaposing 'the God-fearers' and 'the Deniers', Q 83: 29.34 contrast 'the Believers' (*alladhīna āmanū*) and 'the Unbelievers' (*al-kuffār*), thus anticipating two collective terms that become dominant in later surahs. There are a few more references to 'the Believers' in early Qur'anic texts, but at least some of these can confidently be regarded as later insertions (e.g., Q 95: 6 and 103: 3).
27. The relevant verbs are *khashiya*, *khāfa*, and *ashfaqa*, see, e.g., Q 87: 10, 79: 40, and 70: 27, the latter explicitly identifying 'the punishment of their Lord' as the object of such fear. Further references are given in Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma', section entitled 'The moral vision of the early Qur'an'.
28. See, e.g., Q 70: 15– 18, 74: 26–30, 77: 32–33, 78: 21–26, 82: 14–16, 88: 2–7, 101: 8–11, 104: 4–7, and 111: 3–5.
29. Q 51: 19, 69: 34, 70: 24–25, 74: 44, 89: 18, 90: 13–16, 92: 18, and 107: 3.
30. For further remarks on the importance of prayer in the early Qur'an, see Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma', section entitled 'The moral vision of the early Qur'an'.
31. For a treatment that emphasises a wider late antique, rather than specifically Christian, background, see Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, pp. 56–67.
32. See, for instance, Mark 13: 8 and Revelation 6: 12, 11: 13, and 16: 18 (earthquake); Matthew 24: 29 and Revelation 6: 12–13 (on the celestial bodies), Matthew 24: 31, Revelation 11: 15, 1 Corinthians 15: 52, 1 Thessalonians 4: 16 (trumpet blast), Revelation 6: 14 and 16: 20 (displacement of the mountains), and Revelation 20: 12 (opening of record books). For a detailed register of parallels, see the appendix to Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma', which relies, inter alia, on Brady, 'Book of Revelation', and Andrae, *Der Ursprung*.
33. Especially the authenticity of the homilies ascribed to Ephrem is not always certain; see the introduction to Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma', with further references.
34. For a detailed register of eschatological parallels between the Qur'an and Syriac texts, see the appendix to Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma'. Some of the most prominent terminological correspondences between Qur'anic Arabic and Syriac are *yawm al-dīn* ('Day of Judgement') = *yawmā d-dinā*, *al-qiyāmah* ('the Resurrection') = *qyāmtā*, *faṣl* ('separation') = *puršānā*, *yawma'idhin* ('on that day') = *b-haw yawmā*, *ḥashara* ('to assemble', namely the resurrected) = *kanneš*.
35. Andrae, *Der Ursprung*; Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma', sections entitled 'The moral vision of the early Qur'an' and 'The Syriac background'.
36. Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma', section entitled 'The Syriac background'. A concise overview is given in Sinai, 'Der Koran', p. 145.
37. Andrae, *Der Ursprung*, pp. 191–6 (building on A. J. Wensinck); Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma', sections entitled 'The moral vision of the early Qur'an' and 'The Syriac background'.
38. Note that both references to the 'scriptures of Abraham and Moses' follow or precede brief recaps of the Qur'an's individualistic eschatology (Q 53: 38–42 and 87: 9–17). See also Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma'; on the meaning of the phrase 'the scriptures of Abraham and Moses', see Chapter 6, n. 1.
39. Rudolph, *Die Abhängigkeit*, p. 36; El-Badawi, *The Qur'ān and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions*, p. 185.
40. See Rudolph, *Die Abhängigkeit*, p. 64; Leszynsky, *Die Juden in Arabien*, pp. 39–41; Lammens, *L'Arabie occidentale*, p. 4.

41. This dogmatic aloofness is put to polemical use in Q 19: 37, 21: 93, and 43: 65, which summarily allude to the dogmatic discord of Christian 'factions', represented as being contrary to Jesus's own appeal to serve God alone. See also the section 'Polemics in the later Meccan surahs' below.
42. Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire*.
43. Andrae, *Der Ursprung*, p. 4; Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma', section entitled 'The Qur'anic vision of the Judgement and the hereafter'. On apocalyptic literature in general, see Collins (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*.
44. A passage that could be adduced as an exception here is Q 30: 2ff., which reminds its recipients of a defeat (or, depending on the vocalisation of v. 2, a victory) of the Romans and predicts the latter's eventual victory (or, depending on the vocalisation of v. 3, their eventual defeat). But notwithstanding the eschatologically charged temporal qualifier 'on that day' (*yawma'idhin*) in v. 3, these events are not explicitly presented as a harbinger of the end, as they might have been in properly apocalyptic writings. For evidence that God's 'assistance' (*naṣr*), which is invoked in Q 30: 5, can refer to an inner-historical divine intervention, see 12: 110 and 30: 47. For an inner-historical reference to the coming to pass of God's 'promise' (*wa'd*), see Q 17: 2–8. Regarding the use of *yawma'idhin* in Q 30: 3, see 26: 189. An apocalyptic interpretation of Q 30: 2ff. is defended in Tesei, '"The Romans Will Win!"'.
45. Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma', section entitled 'The Qur'anic vision of the Judgement and the hereafter'.
46. See in more detail Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma', sections entitled 'The Syriac background' and 'The Qur'anic vision of the Judgement and the hereafter'.
47. Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma', section entitled 'The early Qur'anic kerygma and its milieu'.
48. See Chapter 1, n. 31, and Chapter 3, n. 25, as well as Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma', section entitled 'The early Qur'anic kerygma and its milieu'.
49. Horovitz, 'Das koranische Paradies'.
50. Similar affirmations recur in a large number of later verses, e.g., 12: 2, 16: 103, 20: 113, and 43: 3.
51. Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, pp. 72–3, notes that the word *āyah* seems to have been in use already in pre-Qur'anic Arabic but also underscores that its meaning in the Qur'an closely converges with the usage of the Syriac cognate *ātā*. See also Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, vol. 1, pp. 412–13. Cf. Chapter 1, n. 32.
52. E.g., Robinson, *Discovering*, p. 109. For early Meccan verses in which the term 'sign' is used to refer to historical exempla, see Q 26: 67.121.139.158.174.190, 51: 37–38, and 54: 15; for its use in a cosmic context, see Q 51: 20. An overview of relevant material from the entire Qur'an is provided by Abrahamov, 'Signs'.
53. On the expression *al-mu'tafikah*, see Horovitz, 'Jewish Proper Names', pp. 187–8, and Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, pp. 13–14.
54. The fact that this brief reminiscence opens with the same question formula as Q 89: 6 – 'Have you[s] not seen how your Lord dealt with X?' – provides a clear indication that it is also meant to function as a historical example for God's willingness and ability to unleash devastating punishment (Paret, *Kommentar und Konkordanz*, on Q 105: 1).
55. Q 79: 20 only states that God showed Pharaoh 'the greatest sign'. This is likely an allusion to the confirmatory 'signs' that God grants to Moses in Exodus 4: 1–9 (see also Exodus 7: 8–13). Within the Qur'an, the two miracles – the transmutation of Moses' rod into a serpent and the striking of his hand with leprosy – are reported, among other verses, in the later passage Q 20: 17–23, which echoes Q 79: 20 by describing these miracles as some

of God's 'greatest signs' (20: 23). For further Qur'anic parallels, see Paret, *Kommentar und Konkordanz*, on Q 20: 17–23.

56. Note that the Moses narrative in Q 44: 17–33, which belongs to the early Meccan surahs as defined above, does feature the liberation of the Israelites, as do later accounts. See Sinai, 'Inheriting Egypt', pp. 201–2.
57. The verb *ʿaṣā*, 'to disobey', also occurs in connection with Pharaoh in Q 79: 21.
58. See Neuwirth, *Scripture*, pp. 277–305.
59. Sinai, '*Sūrat al-Najm*', pp. 15–16. In support of the contention that the object of vision in Q 53 is God himself, see Sinai, '*Sūrat al-Najm*', p. 8, with n. 19.
60. Sinai, 'Religious Poetry'.
61. The semantic difference between *kadhdhaba* = 'to deem something to be a lie', 'to deny' and *kadhdhaba* = 'to deem someone to be a liar' is exclusively signalled by their respective object: when used in the former sense, the verb takes a prepositional object preceded by *bi-*; when used in the second sense, the verb takes a direct object in the accusative. For early Meccan occurrences of the second signification, see, apart from Q 91: 14, Q 26: 12.105.117 (and elsewhere in the surah), 37: 127, and 54: 9. It seems probable that *kadhdhaba* is to be placed against the background of Syriac *kaddeb*, which can likewise mean 'to deny', with the object of denial figuring as a propositional object, and 'to dismiss someone as a liar' (Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, vol. 1, p. 1678, referencing, e.g., the Peshitta's use of *kaddeb* + suffix pronoun at Job 24: 25).
62. See Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, p. 18.
63. Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, pp. 10–32; Marshall, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers*.
64. Q 26 is replete with occurrences of *kadhdhaba*; see vv. 6, 12, 105, 117, 123, 139, 141, 160, 176, and 189.
65. The Abraham, Noah, and Lot pericopes identify the respective messenger's addressees as his 'people' (vv. 70, 105, and 160); and Noah, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, and Lot are designated as the 'brother' of their addressees (vv. 106, 124, 142, and 161). The two exceptions are Moses, who according to Q 26: 11 was sent to the people of Pharaoh, and Shuʿayb, sent to the 'people of the thicket' (*aṣḥāb al-ayka*, the consonantal skeleton of which is here spelled *ʾṣḥb lykh*).
66. 'Do those not think that they will be raised / to a mighty day?' Cf. also Q 78: 2.
67. Literally: 'and made your sleep a rest'.
68. Literally: 'and made day as a livelihood'.
69. The verb *anzalnā* at Q 78: 14 is best translated with an English present tense; see Reuschel, *Aspekt und Tempus*, pp. 155–6.
70. Neuwirth, 'Geography', pp. 300–3.
71. The Peshitta has *yarīʿtā* at Psalm 104: 2. While the cognate Hebrew word that it translates is often rendered as 'curtain', the Syriac term also means 'tent'.
72. A detailed discussion of the relationship between Q 78 and Psalm 104 is found in Neuwirth, 'Qurʾanic Readings of the Psalms', pp. 740–5. Neuwirth also notes that Psalmic motifs are likely to have reached the Qur'anic milieu not through 'fixed texts but a common liturgical language promoted through oral tradition' (ibid., p. 737).
73. The following correspondences between early Meccan creation references and eschatological scenarios stand out: (i) creation/destruction of the heaven(s): cf. Q 51: 47, 78: 12, 79: 27–28, 88: 18, and 91: 5 with 52: 9, 55: 37, 69: 16, 70: 8, 73: 18, 77: 9, 78: 19, 81: 11, 82: 1, and 84: 1; (ii) creation/destruction of the sun: cf. Q 78: 13 and 91: 1 with 75: 9 and 81: 1; (iii) creation/destruction of the earth: cf. Q 51: 48, 77: 25–26, 78: 6, 79: 30–31, 88: 20, and 91: 6 with 56: 4, 73: 14, 79: 6–7, and 99: 1–2; (iv) creation/destruction of the mountains: cf. Q 77: 27, 78: 7, 79: 32, 88: 19 with 56: 5, 70: 9, 73: 14, 77: 10, 78:

20, 81: 3, 101: 5, and others. The line by Labīd can be found in Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 81.

74. Usage of the concept of 'creation' (*kh-l-q*) in relation to the growth of human embryos is standard in the early Meccan surahs; see, for instance, Q 77: 20–23, 80: 18–19, and 86: 5–7. The earliest verse that links the notion that man is created by God with the Biblical narrative of the creation of Adam from clay would appear to be Q 55: 14. Later Meccan passages like Q 18: 37, 23: 12–14, or 32: 7–9 coordinate man's original creation from clay and God's ongoing creation of all humans in the womb by prefixing the former to the various developmental stages involved in the latter.
75. Lehmann and Pedersen, 'Der Beweis'.
76. Given that both appellations can alternate in the same surah, there is no reason to doubt their equivalence at least within the Qur'an. *Rabb* + possessive pronoun as a title for God occurs, among other verses, at Q 79: 16.19.40.44, 82: 6, 83: 15, 84: 6.15, 85: 12, 87: 1.15, 89: 6.13–16.22.28, 91: 14, 92: 20, 93: 3.5.11, 94: 8, 96: 1.3.8, 99: 5, 100: 11, 105: 1, and 108: 2; for Allāh, see Q 79: 25, 82: 19, 84: 23, 85: 9.20, 87: 7, 88: 24, 91: 13, 95: 8, 96: 14, and 104: 6.
77. See inter alia Q 82: 19, 84: 15.23, 85: 12–16, 86: 8, 87: 7, 88: 24–26, 89: 25–26, 90: 4–10, 91: 14–15, and 96: 14.
78. Vv. 23 and 26–32 were probably added later; see Sinai, '*Sūrat al-Najm*', p. 9.
79. See vv. 22–23, 35, 85–87, 123–126, 149–160, and 161–163.
80. The fact that Q 37 is the more doctrinally advanced text compared to Q 53 (providing that one concedes the secondary nature of Q 53: 23.26–32) matches their difference in mean verse length: that of Q 37 runs to 31.2 transcription letters, that of Q 53* only to 24.09.
81. On possible antecedents for the Qur'anic use of the root *sh-r-k*, see Chapter 3, n. 54.
82. But see Q 70: 6–7.
83. See Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', pp. 158–9.
84. Ettinghausen, *Antiheidnische Polemik*, pp. 6–7. – The Qur'anic verbs for the activity of disputing are *jādala* (e.g., Q 11: 32, 13:13, 16: 125, 18: 56, 40: 4–5.35.56.69, and 42: 35) and also *ḥājja* (e.g., Q 6: 80 and 42: 16) and *taḥājja* (Q 40: 47). One of the earliest surahs employing these derivatives of the roots *j-d-l* and *ḥ-j-j* seems to be Q 40, whose mean verse length is 89.20 transcription letters. Expressed in Nöldekian terms, the Qur'an's disputational vocabulary is very much a late Meccan and Medinan phenomenon.
85. Sinai, 'Qurʾānic Self-Referentiality'.
86. Cf. also Q 16: 125, although this parallel does not name the Scripturalists.
87. It seems likely that the passage from Q 43 refers back to the long narrative about Mary and Jesus in Q 19: 16–33 (which does not actually name Jesus). If that is correct, then Q 43: 57–58 indicate that some of the Qur'an's opponents attempted to make polemical hay of surah 19's positive portrayal of Jesus as implicitly endorsing the latter's divine status and thus as being no different in principle from a belief in a plurality of deities. Q 43: 59, quite rightly, emphasises that Q 19 only calls Jesus a 'servant' of God (19: 30). It is probable that Q 19: 34–40, which have been identified as a later interpolation before (Müller, *Die Propheten*, vol. 1, p. 28, Paret, *Kommentar und Konkordanz*, on Q 19: 34–40), were added to the preceding narrative as a postscript designed to preclude such an understanding. It stands to reason, therefore, that Q 19: 34–40 and Q 43: 57–65 are roughly contemporaneous. This is also borne out by noteworthy lexical overlap between the two passages, consisting in (i) the verb *imtarā*, 'to be doubtful' (Q 19: 34 and 43: 61), (ii) the virtual identity of Q 19: 36 and 43: 64, the latter verse being presented as a statement of Jesus himself ('God is my Lord and your[p] Lord, so serve Him! This is a straight path'), and (iii) the reference to a subsequent 'disunity' (verb *ikhtalafa*) of 'the factions' (*al-aḥzāb*), followed by an eschatological woe (*fa-waylun li-lladhīna* …) (Q 19: 37 and 43: 65).

88. Other generic phrases used are *ahl al-dhikr*, 'the people of [God's] admonition' or perhaps 'the people of invocation [namely, of God]' (Q 16: 43 and 21: 7; see Ambros, *Concise Dictionary*, p. 104) and 'those who inherited the Scripture after them [namely, after Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus]' (Q 42: 14).
89. See Chapter 5, n. 39.
90. Despite my criticism of Fred Donner's account of the Qur'anic and early post-Qur'anic 'Believers' as constituting an ecumenical movement of monotheists that included Jews and Christians (see Chapter 5, n. 38), his account could be adapted to yield a very useful analysis of how the Qur'anic community prior to the hijrah positioned itself vis-à-vis other monotheists: namely, as spearheading a movement reviving the two principal doctrines of all prior revelations, monotheism and the Resurrection, while putting aside all needless, unwarranted, and divinely disapproved doctrinal hair-splitting and factiousness.
91. Saleh, 'End of Hope'.
92. The verb *istaʿjala* is used already in early Meccan surahs, e.g., at Q 37: 176 and 51: 14.59.
93. Saleh, 'End of Hope', pp. 119–21.
94. Saleh, 'End of Hope', pp. 109–10 (quoting p. 110).
95. On textual variants for the crucial phrase *wa-zannū annahum qad kudhibū*, see Paret, *Kommentar und Konkordanz*, on Q 12: 110. As argued in Saleh, 'End of Hope', p. 122, n. 27, and Sinai, 'Inheriting Egypt', p. 213, n. 51, the superior reading is certainly, 'they thought that they had been lied to [namely, by God]', rather than 'they thought that they had been deemed to be liars [namely, by their audience]'.
96. Cf. Saleh, 'End of Hope', p. 114.
97. I owe the metaphor to Saleh, 'End of Hope', pp. 107–8 and 113–14.
98. Sinai, 'Inheriting Egypt'.
99. Bori, '"All We Know"', p. 320.
100. This excludes Q 16: 41.110, which assure those who have emigrated on God's behalf of divine reward and forgiveness.
101. I am indebted to a talk by Uri Rubin (delivered on 7 March 2017 at the Israel Institute for Advanced Studies) for alerting me to this understanding of the verse. Apart from Q 37: 99, it deserves to be noted that the subject pronoun in Q 29: 27 ('And We gave him Isaac and Jacob …') evidently refers to Abraham, not to Lot. The translations of Paret, Jones, and Abdel Haleem take Lot to be the speaker, as does Bori, '"All We Know"', p. 315, but ascription of the utterance to Abraham is common among Islamic exegetes, such as al-Ṭabarī and al-Zamakhsharī. For another Meccan verse in which the root *h-j-r* (albeit in the first verbal form rather than the third) appears in connection with Abraham, see Q 19: 46 (highlighted in Bori, '"All We Know"', p. 313).
102. See also Q 9: 52. I am grateful to Saqib Hussain for drawing my attention to both verses.

CHAPTER 8

The Medinan surahs

In response to the late Meccan impasse, sketched at the end of the preceding chapter, the Medinan surahs exhibit a number of seminal shifts that amount to a considerable transformation of the Qur'anic religion. Some of the pertinent differences have already come into view in connection with our general profiling of the Medinan Qur'an in Chapter 5, and the present chapter will survey them in more detail. It may be useful to begin with a succinct overview, which will serve as an agenda for the sections that follow.

(i) As we have seen, Meccan punishment legends would have inculcated in the Qur'anic community a stance of passively awaiting God's decisive intervention. In the Medinan surahs, this passivism gives way to activism, as indicated by the very act of leaving Mecca. The most conspicuous expression of this shift towards activism is the demand for militancy, for the taking up of arms against the Associators instead of a continued proffering of arguments.

(ii) A second shift leads from the Meccan surahs' eschatological and monotheistic ecumenicalism towards a confessional demarcation of the Qur'anic community from Jews and Christians. Not only the substantial amount of Medinan polemics against Judaism and Christianity but also the emergence of a specifically Qur'anic body of law may be understood to bolster this development.

(iii) A third major shift that can be observed in the Qur'an's Medinan stratum consists in a perceptible elevation of the status of Muhammad, already briefly touched upon in Chapter 5. Whereas the Meccan surahs present him as a mere 'warner', a spokesperson entrusted with the delivery of divine admonishments, the Medinan surahs cast him as fulfilling a role of communal leadership, including the adjudication of disputes as well as the mediation of divine forgiveness, and appreciably amplify his authority.

Militancy in the Medinan Qur'an

That the Believers' recourse to military violence against the Associators was a turning point is openly acknowledged by the Qur'an itself. According to Q 4: 77, the members of the Qur'anic community were first instructed to 'restrain

your[p] hands, perform prayer, and pay the alms' and only subsequently was 'fighting prescribed for them'. Not everyone in the community appears to have been keen to follow this command: 'Our Lord, why have you prescribed fighting for us? Why have you not granted us a short delay?', some of the addressees are quoted as saying. Yet the Medinan Qur'an unwaveringly upholds the duty to combat the Associators. Henceforth it was the military victories of the Believers by means of which God was believed to exact His punishment of the Meccan Unbelievers, rather than by a natural disaster of the sort that had befallen the people of Noah, the ʿĀd, or the Thamūd. As David Marshall has emphasised, we are here confronted with two different paradigms of divine punishment, one Meccan, the other Medinan.[1] The Medinan surah's general lack of punishment legends, pointed out in Chapter 5, is obviously linked to the replacement of one paradigm by the other.[2] Interestingly, the Qur'an itself endeavours to reduce the appearance of a disjuncture between the two by integrating the new doctrine that God's retribution is meted out via the Believers' military victories with the earlier Meccan expectation of a direct divine intervention. Thus, surah 8 describes the Believers' military victory at Badr in a manner that presents it as the fulfillment of the Qur'an's earlier threats of a divine chastisement.[3]

How does this Medinan turn to militancy manifest itself in concrete terms? The material testifying to battles between the Believers and the Unbelievers was already briefly surveyed in Chapter 2. Apart from allusions to actual clashes that emphasise God's support of the Qur'anic community in battle (for example, Q 8: 7–19.42–44), many passages urge the addressees to fight and reprimand those who are unwilling to do so (for example, Q 9: 38–57). We also encounter normative pronouncements on the conduct of warfare, for instance, on the division of spoils (Q 8: 41).[4] From a purely quantitative perspective, the importance that the Medinan Qur'an ascribes to warfare against the Unbelievers is therefore clear. This section and the next will attempt to flesh out the contours of Medinan militancy and to situate it against its late antique background.

The Qur'anic terminology for militancy is dominated by two verbs: 'to fight' (*qātala*), which together with the verbal noun *qitāl* occurs almost seventy times, and 'to struggle' (*jāhada*),[5] which together with the noun *jihād* and the active participle *mujāhid* has more than thirty occurrences. In both cases, the religious dimension involved is often explicitly signalled by the prepositional phrase 'in the path of God'. Given that *jāhada* is much less specific than *qātala*, can we assume that the Qur'an necessarily envisages 'struggling' to involve violence? Non-Medinan occurrences of the verb *jāhada* are indeed best construed as having a non-military meaning,[6] and even some Medinan verses admit both a military and a non-military understanding.[7] But in other Medinan cases, the context requires a military interpretation (for example, Q 9: 81–86). This is the case especially where the verb *jāhada* is accompanied by the more explicit *qātala*,

'to fight'. In sum, it seems undeniable that 'struggling in the path of God' does often connote the enactment of physical violence.

As Reuven Firestone has shown, the Qur'an contains highly diverse pronouncements on the topic of religiously motivated warfare. At one end of the spectrum lie verses that Firestone describes as 'strongly advocating war for God's religion'.[8] Some of these go so far as to imply that the cessation of warfare against the Unbelievers requires the latter's conversion or at least their renunciation of what the Qur'an deems to be polytheistic beliefs and practices. According to Q 9: 5, the Associators must be fought 'wherever you encounter them' unless they 'repent and perform the prayer and pay the alms', with prayer and almsgiving likely standing in for full espousal of the Qur'anic religion. In the same vein, Q 8: 39 and similarly Q 2: 193 demand that the Unbelievers are to be fought 'until there is no more temptation (*fitnah*) and all religion (*dīn*) is God's'.[9] At least if one respects the perfectly general wording of these statements, the Believers are here clearly charged with the task of enforcing proper worship of the one God.[10] This resonates with a wider late antique trend towards the 'promotion of religious uniformity' that is observable both in the Byzantine and the Sasanian sphere.[11]

However, other Medinan verses form very marked counterpoints to the statements just surveyed, endowing the Qur'anic discourse on violence with a distinctly polyphonic quality. For example, Q 47: 4 implies a much more limited military objective than the preceding: the Believers are authorised to pardon unbelieving captives or to accept ransom (*fidāʾ*), yet the verse omits any demand that the Unbelievers must modify their beliefs or cult. Famously, one verse even recognises that there can be 'no compulsion in religion' (Q 2: 256)[12] and thereby expresses, at least at first sight, a view that is diametrically opposed to Q 2: 193, 8: 39, and 9: 5.[13] There are also verses that justify the exercise of violence as responding to, and as only justifiable because of, prior aggression and harassment by the opponents rather than being warranted simply by the latter's different beliefs (for example, Q 22: 39–40).[14] The exercise of violence is furthermore presented as subject to certain constraints, although these constraints remain rather ill-defined; thus, Q 2: 190 calls upon the addressees to 'fight in the path of God those who fight you, but do not transgress; for God does not love the transgressors'.

Does the link between the Believers' empowerment to exercise violence and their having been the victims of prior aggression mean that the Medinan surahs advocate militancy solely as a pragmatic measure of defence?[15] This view would be to downplay the fact that Medinan texts frequently foreground militancy as a significant constituent of the Qur'anic ideal of piety. For example, 'fighting' or 'struggling' in God's path appear in various promises of eschatological reward,[16] and being prepared to 'emigrate and struggle in the path of God' (Q 2: 218) is closely associated with belief. Emigration and militancy thus come across as the ultimate hallmark of genuine religious commitment. The same is implied by the

fact that Q 3: 142 and 47: 31 link 'struggling' in the path of God with the virtue of steadfastness (*ṣabr*).[17] Even more conspicuously, injunctions to militancy often occur near commands to give alms or to 'spend in the path of God' (for example, Q 2: 190–195, 2: 215–218, and 47: 35.38). This may be linked to the fact that the Qur'an describes both militancy and charity in terms of the economic metaphor of 'lending God a fair loan' (Q 2: 245, 57: 11.18, 64: 17, 73: 20), manifestly a resonance of the Biblical equation of charity with 'lending unto God' in Proverbs 19: 17.[18] In any case, the Medinan Qur'an portrays militancy very much as a core religious virtue. This is vividly underscored by Q 61: 4: 'God loves those who fight in His path in ranks, as though they were a solid edifice.'[19]

Perhaps surprisingly to some Western readers, the Qur'an assumes the expectation that the Believers will be prepared to 'kill and be killed' for the sake of salvation to be shared by the Torah and the Gospel (Q 9: 111). The point is reinforced by the fact that according to Q 2: 246, the situation of the Qur'anic Believers closely resembles that of the Israelites after Moses, insofar as the latter, too, had been 'expelled' from their 'abodes' and were subsequently commanded to 'fight in the path of God' (cf. the overlap with Q 2: 191, addressed to the Qur'anic Believers). Furthermore, as observed by Nevin Reda, the prayer uttered by Saul and his 'hosts' in Q 2: 250 ('Grant us help against the people who are Unbelievers') parallels the prayer that is ascribed to the Qur'anic community at the very end of surah 2, in v. 286.[20] Q 3: 146 generalises even further by maintaining that 'many a prophet' led his fearless followers into battle:

> How many a prophet has there been,
> together with whom great throngs have fought!
> They were not enfeebled by what befell them in the path of God,
> nor did they become weak or surrendered.
> God loves those who are steadfast.

The Medinan Qur'an, it seems, envisions the faithful past and present as an embattled community whose religious commitment will invariably be tested in violent confrontation.

Militancy is an integral component of the Medinan vision of piety, then, not just a circumstantially necessary measure of defence. This illuminates the Qur'an's frequent employment of the verb *jāhada* alongside or instead of the more univocal verb *qātala*, since *jāhada*, given its semantics of exertion and committed struggle, is much more suited than *qātala* to playing the role of what one may call a virtue term – that is, a term that does not just descriptively specify a certain behaviour, such as *qātala*, but also implies that the behaviour in question is exemplary and paradigmatic. This use of *jāhada* appears to be a Qur'anic innovation.[21]

Reuven Firestone has emphasised that the Qur'anic injunctions to religiously motivated warfare form a noticeable contrast with ancient Arabian intertribal

raiding, which he characterises as 'nonideological'[22] and as following an established 'protocol' that generally served to limit bloodshed.[23] By contrast, the Medinan Qur'an justifies the exercise of violence in terms of the opponents' religious convictions, calls for fighting until 'all religion becomes God's' (Q 8: 39, also 2: 193), and qualifies or abolishes what appear to be traditional Arabian constraints, such as the prohibition of fighting during the sacred months.[24] At least if we assume that the Qur'an is partly to be situated against an Arabian tribal background, the contrast observed by Firestone raises the question of how the Qur'an's novel stance on warfare is to be explained. Firestone himself holds that 'what began as traditional Arabian raiding forays (albeit against one's own kin) came to be considered divinely sanctioned because of historical circumstances'.[25] However, without discounting the potential importance of circumstantial factors, I would reiterate Saleh's point that the Medinan turn to militancy can be seen as being primarily a theological response to the late Meccan problem of the delay in God's punishment.[26] As the next section will attempt to show, the adoption of this militant solution is likely to have been profoundly informed by ideas that were current in the Qur'an's wider late antique environment. More precisely, there is very good reason to take seriously the Medinan Qur'an's explicit claim that its vision of militancy as a core religious virtue is continuous with Jewish and Christian teachings.

Qur'anic militancy and the Biblical tradition

It is especially by juxtaposing the Qur'anic data just surveyed with research by Michael Gaddis and Thomas Sizgorich that one gains a proper appreciation of the extent to which the Qur'an's endorsement of militant struggle 'in the path of God' exhibits major parallels to late antique episodes of militant Christian piety.[27] Gaddis and Sizgorich demonstrate that it is often the Christian holy man who violently confronts and ousts Jews and pagans as well as Christians perceived to be doctrinally deviant.[28] While a detailed rehearsal of the relevant Christian evidence is beyond the scope of this book, the link that the Qur'an establishes between enacting violence and being prepared to suffer it, between 'killing and being killed' (Q 9: 111), is certainly highly reminiscent of Gaddis's summary characterisation of the way in which a sixth-century hagiographical text represents the Egyptian bishop Macarius of Tkow: 'He was both willing to die for his faith, and willing to kill for it.'[29]

Against this background, the various instances of Christian anti-pagan and anti-Jewish rioting that are reported in late antique sources and discussed by Sizgorich bear a significant resemblance to the expulsion of the Medinan 'People of the Scripture' mentioned in Q 33: 26–27 and 59: 2–7.[30] Moreover, just as Christian militants 'violently imposed boundaries' between religious communities who normally seem to have gotten on with one another quite peacefully,[31]

so the Medinan Qur'an is keenly concerned to reinforce communal boundaries between Believers and Unbelievers: the Believers are repeatedly bidden not to 'take the Unbelievers as allies' (*awliyāʾ*), even if the latter should be their 'fathers and brothers' (Q 9: 23–24 and 60: 1–3).[32] Instead, the Believers are admonished to follow the example of 'Abraham and those who were with him', who dissociated from their unbelieving compatriots by declaring that 'hostility and hate have appeared between you and us forever' (Q 60: 4–6, also 9: 114). Just like late antique Christian holy men, the Qur'anic Messenger imposes and patrols a religious borderline that is by no means self-evident to all members of his flock: rather, it appears that parts of the Medinan community were not immune to thinking of the inhabitants of the sanctuary in the first place as relatives and former neighbours and not as religious foes. Notwithstanding the fact that participation in the hijrah would have presupposed a significant commitment to Muhammad and his message, the new world view insisting on a complete bifurcation between Believers and Unbelievers, justifying the exercise of violence, evidently took time to be fully assimilated.

This must be part of the reason why, as noted by Firestone, a segment of the Qur'an's audience seems to have been singularly unenthusiastic about fighting the Unbelievers.[33] Similar to the late antique texts studied by Sizgorich, the Qur'an discredits such lack of enthusiasm for militant behaviour by attributing it to base motives, such as preferring 'the life of this world to the world to come' (Q 9: 38).[34] Moreover, the Qur'an, like late antique Christian writings, justifies the exercise of violence on the basis of what Sizgorich calls 'narratives of victimisation'[35]: the Qur'anic community is frequently reminded that they were wilfully and unjustly 'expelled' (*akhraja*) and 'oppressed' (*istaḍʿafa*) by the Unbelievers (for example, Q 2: 191 and 8: 26),[36] while Medina's ousted Scripturalists are retrospectively tarred with the brush of treason (Q 33: 26).

That there is a high degree of similarity between the phenomenology of Qur'anic and late antique Christian militancy seems undeniable, then. We may take this to indicate real historical continuity, given that the Qur'an appeared at the margins of a cultural world that was in many respects dominated by Christianity. Ultimately, both Christian and Qur'anic valuations of militancy as a religious virtue have their joint origin in the Hebrew Bible, in figures like the priest Phinehas who, according to Numbers 25, murdered an Israelite man and his Midianite wife and thereby exemplified the virtue of violent 'zeal' on behalf of God (*qinʾâ* or *zêlos*), or the prophet Eliijah, who had the priests of Baal massacred (1 Kings 18).[37] Phinehas and Elijah were frequently held up as scriptural models of holy violence by late antique Christian authors, and one Christian bishop responsible for the destruction of a pagan temple, Porphyry of Gaza, was even lauded as a 'second Phinehas'.[38] It is against the background of such discourses that we must place the Qur'anic claim that the Torah and the Gospel, too, promise salvation in return for 'fighting in the path of God' (for example,

Q 9: 111). The Medinan shift to militancy as a way out of the late Meccan impasse thus has recourse to conceptual resources that are deeply embedded in the Biblical tradition more widely (although not therefore incapable of being kept in theological check).

That the Qur'anic community's access to Biblical notions of militancy was mediated by late antique Christian discourse is indicated by an intriguing intertextual overlap. According to Q 3: 169–170, those who have been 'killed in the path of God' are not dead but 'alive with their Lord', rather than having to spend the remaining time until the Resurrection in a state of slumber (similarly Q 2: 154).[39] Tor Andrae has pointed out that the phrase 'alive with their Lord' (*aḥyā'un ʿinda rabbihim*) corresponds exactly to the Syriac phrase *ḥayyē lwāth alāhā*, which a sixth-century Syriac Christian writer (Mar Ishay) applies to the martyrs.[40] Furthermore, Mar Ishay contrasts the true fate of the martyrs with unfounded prior opinion: 'they are believed to be already dead'.[41] The same contrast is found in the two Qur'anic passages just cited.[42] It could be objected that the parallel demonstrates merely that the Qur'an is familiar with the widespread Christian idea that martyrs are granted prompt access to paradise but that this does not establish a Christian precedent for the Qur'anic application of this idea specifically to those who actively enact – rather than just suffer – violence. However, as Sizgorich reminds us, a Christian martyr was by no means seen merely as a passive victim of persecution but rather as someone who actively 'defeats the power of the Roman state'.[43] This facet of Christian imaginations of martyrdom encouraged a confluence of discourses about martyrdom and militancy, a development that has been charted by Gaddis: the enactment of holy violence by late antique Christians was frequently portrayed as motivated by a desire for martyrdom.[44]

Still, the violence enacted or instigated by Christian holy men comes under the rubric of criminal assault and intercommunal rioting, rather than conventional warfare, which is what we seem to be confronted with in the Qur'an. Yet by the early seventh century, ordinary warfare could also be viewed as a form of militant piety. James Howard-Johnston draws attention to a passage in the Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor (d. 818), which reports that at about the same time when the Qur'an promised those 'killed in the path of God' immediate entry to paradise, the Byzantine emperor Heraclius similarly announced that those fighting the Sasanians would be recompensed with eternal life.[45] In Heraclius's address as reported by Theophanes Confessor, we find some of the same general ingredients that are noticeable in Qur'anic calls to militancy: the inculcation of a sense of victimhood ('the enemy' is accused of having 'inflicted terrible things on the Christians' and of 'the rape of our virgins'), the religious framing of a conflict that could perhaps have been perceived in purely secular terms ('the enemy' is 'armed with impiety'), and the promise of eschatological recompense ('the danger is not without recompense; nay, it leads to the eternal

life').[46] Even if it is far from certain that Qur'anic calls to militancy draw directly upon Heraclius's declaration, the construction of warfare as a form of militant piety that is visible in both texts emerges from a common source.

Hence, just as Qur'anic militancy is discontinuous with traditional Arabian tribal warfare, so it is continuous with broader late antique valuations of violent zeal. Firestone may well be right that historical circumstances specific to the Qur'anic milieu contributed to the escalating conflict between the Medinan Believers and the Unbelievers. However, it is vital to appreciate that this escalation, described by Firestone as an evolutionary 'jump',[47] proceeded via the appropriation of pre-existing late antique discourses on militant piety that are ultimately rooted in the Hebrew Bible. In the form of the Arab-Islamic conquests, this Medinan appropriation of Biblically derived notions of religious militancy then contributed to unleashing a perfect storm engulfing the very region from which the ideas just discussed had originally seeped into the Qur'anic milieu.

Beyond the remarks just made, the emergence of Qur'anic militancy must to some extent remain a matter of speculation. Two general possibilities present themselves. It may be that the act of leaving Mecca was not immediately accompanied by a turn towards militancy, and that such a development only occurred once the Qur'anic Believers found themselves in Medina and began raiding Meccan caravans for reasons of material gain. Perhaps a conflict that was initially more or less similar to conventional Arabian tribal raiding only gradually took on the confessional and ideological hue that mark the Qur'anic pronouncements just examined. Such a view would tally with Firestone's emphasis on historical circumstance. In favour of this account, one can observe that the objective of warfare against the Unbelievers that is articulated in Q 47: 4 appears closer to traditional tribal feuding than the demand for full-scale conversion of the Unbelievers set out in Q 9: 5. Since surah 47 has a relatively low mean verse length of 96.66 transcription letters, the text would accordingly seem to be a relatively early Medinan surah, while surah 9 – whose mean verse length is 127.88 transcription letters – is plausibly dated much later. To be sure, Firestone is sceptical that the Qur'an exhibits an 'incremental escalation in militancy',[48] but if the dating considerations just adduced are sound, some developmental statements may nonetheless be defensible.

Alternatively, the hijrah may have been part and parcel of the Qur'anic community's turn towards militancy. This view is supported by the fact that surah 61, whose mean verse length of 100.14 transcription letters points to an early Medinan date, already expresses most of the core components of Medinan militancy.[49] Believers who are unwilling to fight in God's path are accused of 'saying what you^{p} do not do' (vv. 2–3), thus presupposing that militancy is an inalienable concomitant of proper belief. The Believers' foes are safely identifiable with the pagan Associators, here represented as 'someone who has fabricated lies against

God even though he is being called to submission' (v. 7). It is furthermore intimated that the request for militant zeal has a precedent in previous revelations: the Believers are commanded to be 'helpers of God' just as Jesus's disciples agreed to be 'helpers of God' (v. 14); given that the Believers are required to be prepared to 'fight' on God's behalf, 'standing in ranks as though they were a solid edifice' (v. 4), it appears that Jesus's followers, too, are here understood as a committed band of warriors. This inference is borne out by the concluding statement that God made the followers of Jesus 'victorious' over the remaining Israelites. Also striking in comparison with the despair of the late Meccan surahs is v. 13's optimistic announcement of 'assistance from God and a near victory'. All in all, surah 61 may well be described as a militant manifesto, and its putatively early date indicates that the notion that zealous striving against the Unbelievers was an integral part of true faith developed early on in the Medinan period. This could support the hypothesis that the whole point of the hijrah was to set up a basis for military action against the Unbelievers rather than simply to enact God's promised deliverance of the Believers. In fact, given that surah 61 lacks any references to the Believers' expulsion, it is not inconceivable that the text preceded, or was at least roughly contemporaneous with, the hijrah.

The conjecture that the Qur'anic community's move to Medina and its turn towards militancy were two sides of the same development receives further support by the Constitution of Medina, the treaty reportedly concluded early after Muhammad's arrival at Medina. Its heading prominently deploys the Qur'anic concept of militant struggling: 'a document by Muhammad the Prophet between the Believers and Submitters of Quraysh and Yathrib and those who follow them, attach themselves to them, and engage in military struggle with them'. Militant 'struggle' against the Unbelievers or Associators, it may well seem, was an integral part of the Medinan *ummah*'s very raison d'être,[50] even if Q 47: 4 indicates that the aim of enforcing the Unbelievers' conversion to Qur'anic monotheism took some time to crystallise fully.

Glimpses of ritual symbiosis between the early Medinan Believers and Judaism

After assessing the Medinan Believers' stance towards the Associators, we must now turn to their relationship with the Scripturalists, whose presence in Medina is implied by a number of passages, especially Q 33: 26–27 and 59: 2–7. While the Qur'an does not unequivocally identify the Medinan 'People of the Scripture' as Jews, the circumstantial evidence supporting this assumption is sufficiently cumulative: the Constitution of Medina lists a number of Jewish tribes, and the Medinan surahs contain direct addresses of the 'People of the Scripture' in general as well as of the Jews (Q 62: 6) and of the Israelites (Q 2: 40.47.122 and 20: 80), yet do not feature any direct addresses of the

Christians or 'Nazoraeans'.[51] The Believers' relations with Jewish Scripturalists thus appear to have been both more significant and more tense than their relations with Christians, although this does not of course rule out a certain Christian presence as well.[52]

The Meccan portions of the Qur'an make it probable that when Muhammad and his followers arrived at Medina, they understood themselves to represent an ecumenical kind of monotheistic and eschatological piety that was clearly marked off from the beliefs and practices of the pagan Associators but not at all clearly marked off from Judaism and Christianity. Despite the Meccan critique of Jewish and Christian disagreements that was briefly explored in the previous chapter, the Qur'anic Believers likely ascribed significant religious prestige to both communities. We saw above that the Meccan surahs invoke the recipients of earlier revelations as witnesses to the truth of Muhammad's revelations. They also cast the ancient Israelites as paradigmatic 'servants' (*ʿibād*) of God who were harassed and persecuted on account of their monotheistic belief.[53] Hence, despite the occasional criticism of the Israelites' religious track record (Q 17: 4–8), the Meccan community most probably identified relatively closely with them, and this would naturally have affected their stance towards the Israelites' contemporary descendants, the Jewish tribes of Medina.

Given this point of departure, it is not surprising that the early Medinan Believers adopted select elements of Jewish ritual. For example, Q 2: 142–150 decree that henceforth the Qur'anic Believers are to face the Meccan sanctuary during prayer, and imply that this new direction of prayer, or *qiblah*, will set the Qur'anic community apart from earlier recipients of 'the Scripture' (v. 145). The Meccan *qiblah* is said to replace a previous one (v. 142), but no further details about the latter are given. Nonetheless, there is no reason to doubt the post-Qur'anic tradition's claim that the *qiblah* abolished in Q 2: 142–150 was directed towards Jerusalem, in accordance with Jewish custom.[54] In addition, the Medinan Believers initially seem to have embraced Jewish fasting practices. This is not only supported by post-Qur'anic accounts to the effect that upon arriving at Medina the Prophet commanded his followers to adopt the Jewish fast on the Day of Atonement.[55] There is also Q 2: 183–184, which orders the Believers to fast on 'a fixed number of days' (v. 184) and implies that this is in accordance with what was prescribed to 'those before you' (v. 183). These verses are plausibly understood as instructing the Believers to adhere to the fasting regime followed by Medina's Jewish tribes, which may be surmised to have been similar to late antique Rabbinic practice.[56] It is furthermore relevant that vv. 185–186, which substitute the duty to fast 'for a number of days' with the month-long fast of Ramaḍān, have been shown to be in conversation with a scriptural verse traditionally read on Jewish fast days, Isaiah 55: 6.[57] Such Biblical undertones would make eminent sense if the fast of Ramaḍān, like the Meccan *qiblah*, replaced an earlier Judaising practice.

Finally, the fact that Q 62: 9–11 documents that the Qur'anic Believers observed a congregational prayer on Friday, the same day on which Jews perform rituals marking the onset of the Sabbath, can hardly be accidental.[58] V. 9 instructs the Believers to 'leave off their trading affairs' when 'the call to prayer is made on the day of congregation (*yawm al-jumuᶜah*)', which indicates that Friday was a market day in Medina.[59] The passage cannot have been meant to institute a communal prayer on Friday in the first place; v. 11 makes it quite clear that the passage addresses attendance problems at a congregational prayer that had already come into existence. We may conjecture that the emergence of a Friday prayer was not independent from the Believers' contact with Medina's Jewish population. After the prayer, the Believers are encouraged to return to whatever business they were previously engaged in:

> [10] When the prayer has ended,
> disperse[p] in the land
> and seek God's bounty.
> And invoke God much, so that you may prosper.

This can be read as rejecting the Jewish Sabbath rest: the Qur'an validates the practice of holding a special prayer service on Friday yet stresses that this service does not introduce an entire day of repose (cf. Q 16: 124). Such a construal is corroborated by the fact that the immediately preceding verses, Q 62: 5–8, condemn Jewish disobedience of the Torah (v. 5) as well as the Jews' alleged claim that they are 'God's allies to the exclusion of all other people' (v. 6). Even though the point of the ensuing comment on the Friday prayer is overtly to discourage the Believers from departing the prayer early and 'leaving you[s] [Muhammad] standing there' (v. 11), the passage's literary context naturally suggests that it also has a bearing on the Believers' relationship to the Jews. It must be noted, however, that v. 11's censure of those Believers who 'when perceiving merchandise or amusement scatter to it' indicates that the addressees did not observe the Jewish Sabbath rest. This contrasts with the Believers' likely adherence, at some point in time, to Jewish fasting practices and the Jewish direction of prayer.

All things considered, the Qur'an preserves a number of tantalising glimpses of ritual symbiosis between the early Medinan Believers and the Medinan Jews. There was clearly no full observance of Jewish ritual by the Believers, which would have entailed the Sabbath rest as its most visible component. Nonetheless, the Believers' adoption of elements of Jewish ritual, however eclectic, may well have gone further than is now recoverable from the Qur'an. It is important to appreciate the significance of this as a point of departure for subsequent developments. First, there is no compelling argument for following earlier generations of Orientalists in interpreting such ritual symbiosis as a superficial strategic manoeuvre by which Muhammad, conceived as a shrewd politician whose complete control over the Qur'anic Believers is assumed to be self-evident, attempted

to win over the Medinan Jews.[61] Rather than accounting for early Medinan ritual in terms of deliberate and strategic choices imposed by Muhammad on his compliant adherents, it is far more persuasive to emphasise the degree to which the Qur'anic community as a whole would naturally have gravitated towards a participation in or partial mimesis of Jewish rites, given the mostly respectful statements that the Meccan surahs make about the Israelites and 'those who have been reciting the Scripture before you[s]' (Q 10: 94).

Such a modified perspective gives rise to further reflections. When Meccan surahs invoke the recipients of earlier revelations as confirmatory witnesses against the pagan Associators, they assume that the charismatic authority of the Qur'anic Messenger coincides completely with the traditional authority that marks existing forms of monotheistic and eschatological piety, most notably, Judaism and Christianity. Yet what we subsequently witness in Medinan polemics against the Jews and Christians, such as Q 2: 40–123 or the respective parts of Q 5: 12–120, is a complete decoupling of these two sources of authority. The Qur'anic Messenger and the revelations received by him are now unequivocally set up in judgement over the correctness of Jewish and Christian beliefs: 'O People of the Scripture! Our Messenger has come to you making things clear to you after an interval between the messengers', Q 5: 19 asserts. Muhammad is thus invested with indisputable doctrinal authority vis-à-vis the Jews and Christians, rather than just being envisaged as God's emissary to the pagan Associators.

At this point, some speculation about the counterfactual becomes illuminating. Was it inevitable that the Medinan uncoupling of two sources of religious authority that were previously assumed to be largely in alignment would lead to the unequivocal elevation of the prophetic authority of the Messenger? It seems appropriate to insist on the fundamental openness of historical developments here and to recognise that the ultimate outcome might well have been very different. When the Qur'anic community relocated to Medina, they entered a force field governed by two gravitational poles, the charismatic authority of Muhammad, on the one hand, and the established prestige residing in the liturgical and exegetical culture of the Medinan Jews, on the other. That the former pole would prove superior to the latter is something that a historian cannot take for granted. This is illustrated by the phenomenon of gentile sympathisers of Judaism in the ancient world, who participated in certain Jewish rituals yet stopped short of full conversion.[62] The dominance of a Jewish-inspired form of monotheism in Ḥimyar in the fourth century CE, briefly mentioned in Chapter 3, illustrates the considerable appeal that Judaism could display in pre-Islamic Arabia.

Given that the early Medinan Believers show at least incipient parallels to the ancient phenomenon of gentile sympathisers of Judaism who did not become full proselytes, we must recognise that the Qur'anic community after the hijrah

might have become stuck in precisely such a position. The consequence, of course, would have been a far-reaching dissipation and neutralisation, rather than amplification, of the Messenger's charismatic authority as well as a stalling of the genesis of Islam as we know it. Hence, what is at stake in Medinan polemics against the Jews and Christians as well as in the Medinan surahs' establishment of distinctly Qur'anic rituals, such as the fast of Ramaḍān and the Meccan *qiblah*, is ultimately the very existence of the Believers as an independent religious community that was more than a group of gentile monotheists orbiting around Medinan Judaism with its fully formed communal identity. To be sure, the Qur'anic Believers may have begun demarcating themselves from their Jewish neighbours relatively early after their arrival at Medina. Post-Qur'anic sources date the change of the *qiblah* and Muhammad's 'break with the Jews' to the second year after the hijrah,[63] and even if one is minded to regard such extra-Qur'anic dates with scepticism, the polemical comments on Judaism in Q 62: 5–8, briefly adduced above, belong to a surah whose mean verse length of 100.18 transcription letters places it towards the beginning of the Medinan period (although it is of course impossible to infer an absolute date from this). Yet even if the 'parting of the ways' between the Medinan Believers and the Medinan Jews may have begun fairly soon after the Qur'anic community's relocation, this should not mislead us into taking it for granted.[64] The following sections explore how the respective processes of communal demarcation, understood as contingent and open historical developments, are reflected in Medinan polemics and Medinan law.

The Believers' communal distinctness from Jews and Christians

One of the two main routes by which the Believers' demarcation from other monotheistic communities proceeded is the explicit critique of Scripturalist beliefs and practices. Not only are Jews and Christians condemned for grave doctrinal errors – for instance, flouting the non-divine status of Jesus (Q 4: 171–172, 5: 17.72–77.116–118, and 9: 30–31) – but they are also accused of wilfully distorting, fabricating, or concealing the teachings of their scriptural heritage (for example, Q 2: 79, 4: 46, and 5: 15).[65] It ought to be noted that the arguments deployed against Judaism are partly appropriated from the New Testament and from subsequent Christian anti-Jewish polemic: thus, the Israelites' veneration of the Golden Calf (for example, Q 2: 51.92 and 4: 153) and their responsibility for 'unjustly killing the prophets' (for example, Q 2: 61.91 and 4: 155) are already invoked in the speech that Stephanus is said to have delivered before the Jewish high priest (Acts 7: 41.52), leading to his death by stoning. The Qur'anic accusation of scriptural falsification, too, has a background in Christian polemics against Judaism.[66]

Although the Israelites and the Jews generally come in for more hostile comments than the Christians,[67] some Qur'anic statements regarding the 'People of the Scripture' display a noticeable tendency towards parallelism: both communities are reported to voice an exclusive and unwarranted claim to salvation (Q 2: 111–113); both are charged with deifying a human being – namely, Jesus and Ezra (Q 9: 30) – and their leaders (Q 9: 31); both Christian and Jewish leaders are accused of embezzling communal funds (Q 9: 34), and not only the adherents of the Torah but also those of the Gospel are said to be fettered by burdensome legal obligations from which Muhammad is meant to liberate them (Q 7: 157).[68] Rather than embarking, for example, on the unpromising task of trying to identify which late antique Jews considered Ezra to be 'the son of God', it seems preferable to understand such statements as manifestations of the Qur'an's relentless search for historical patterns and correspondences, an attitude already amply attested by the Meccan punishment legends. As a result, the Qur'anic perception of Judaism and Christianity exhibits a phenomenon that one may describe as 'coordinative transferral'. It is based on the Qur'anic assumption that humans tend to make the same religious mistakes over and over again and that many salient deficits that can be detected in one branch of the People of the Scripture must therefore have a counterpart in the other one. Hence, it is polemically alleged that the Christian deification of Jesus has a Jewish equivalent (Q 9: 30), while the Jews' liability to onerous legal obligations must have a Christian parallel (Q 7: 157).

As with Qur'anic statements on militancy, Medinan pronouncements about Judaism and Christianity run a wide gamut. For despite the Qur'an's criticism of the Scripturalists, it is also maintained that those Jews and Christians 'who believe in God and the Last Day and act righteously' will achieve salvation (Q 2: 62 and 5: 69).[69] Moreover, while the Medinan Qur'an generally expects the pagan Associators to convert to monotheism, the continued existence of Judaism and Christianity, and thus a significant degree of religious diversity, is considered to be divinely mandated (Q 5: 48):

> Had God wished, He would have made you[p] a single community,
> yet [He has not done so] in order to try you regarding what He has given to you.
> So strive to be foremost in good deeds.
> You will all return to God,
> and then He will apprise you of the matters about which you previously disagreed.

The Qur'an does, however, unequivocally deny the divine sonship of Jesus Christ. One cannot therefore assume that a Christian unwilling to renounce this doctrine would qualify as possessing true belief. Hence, notwithstanding the verse just quoted, the Qur'an does stake out an unquestionable claim to superiority: the Jews and Christians having violated their respective covenant with God, He has now concluded a new, third covenant with the Qur'anic Believers,

whose exemplary obedience, it is implied, distinguishes them from their predecessors.[70] This, too, amounts to the adaptation of a Christian motif, here turned against Christianity itself: just as Christians maintained that the Mosaic covenant had been superseded by a new and universal covenant based on faith in Christ, so the Qur'an similarly declares the Christian covenant to have been superseded by a third one – by a Very New Testament, as it were.

A similar redirection of Christian polemical ammunition against Christianity itself can be observed in the Qur'anic insistence to recapitulate the monotheistic 'creed' (*millah*) of Abraham (Q 2: 130.135, 3: 95, 4: 125, and 22: 78).[71] Abraham 'was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but rather a righteous gentile (*ḥanīf*),[72] one who submitted, and not one of the Associators', Q 3: 67 states. Such recourse to the figure of Abraham as a means of countering the claim that one needs to be a Jew or a Christian in order to be saved (see Q 2: 111.120.135) is structurally analogous to the way in which the figure of the patriarch is deployed by Paul: even when he was not yet circumcised, Abraham possessed 'the righteousness of faith' (Romans 4: 13), thus demonstrating that salvation was possible before and outside the Mosaic law.[73] Given that the Qur'anic community is understood to be both genealogically descended from Abraham (Q 2: 128–129)[74] and supremely faithful to Abraham's uncompromising monotheism, revealed by his willingness to forsake his own father on account of the latter's idolatry (for example, Q 43: 26–28), one Medinan verse explicitly identifies Abraham as the addressees' 'father' (Q 22: 78), a standard title in Jewish and Christian language (for example, Isaiah 51: 2 and Romans 4: 1). The Qur'an does not, however, confine itself to asserting the same right to Abraham's heritage as Jews and Christians, in a gesture of ecumenical generosity, but goes further: 'the nearest people to Abraham are those who follow him and this Prophet and the Believers' (Q 3: 68). Jews and Christians are thereby stripped of their entitlement to appeal to Abraham, just as they are divested of being in possession of a valid covenant with God.

Qur'anic law

A second medium through which the Medinan Believers are set apart from Judaism and Christianity is Qur'anic law. It is surely no coincidence that surah 2 contains both an extended series of attacks on the Israelites and the People of the Scripture (vv. 40–123) and the Qur'an's most expansive legal corpus (vv. 153–283). Crucially, the appearance of Qur'anic law is not adequately explained simply by positing a practical need, in post-hijrah Medina, to resolve questions and disputes to do with such everyday matters as marriage, divorce, and inheritance. For such issues could have been settled, and could even have been settled by Muhammad, without being accorded the very significant literary presence that they possess in the Medinan surahs. Hence, just like the Qur'anic

shift from passivism to militant activism, the Medinan turn towards religious law should not simply be explained as an accidental consequence of historical circumstance but must be appreciated as a theological choice.[75]

In trying to work out the rationale behind the Qur'an's novel interest in laying down detailed rules of behaviour, we are assisted by a programmatic passage from surah 5, vv. 44–50.[76] Continuing on from a polemical altercation with the Jews, beginning at v. 41, the passage gives expression to a new understanding of what divine revelations are there for: God sent down the Torah so that the prophets, the 'rabbis' (*rabbāniyyūn*), and the 'scholars' (*aḥbār*) might 'adjudicate' (*ḥakama*) among the Jews 'according to what they have been entrusted with of God's Scripture' (v. 44); God subsequently revealed the Gospel so that the Christians might do the same (v. 47); and, finally, the Qur'anic Messenger is likewise urged to 'adjudicate' according to what 'God has sent down' (v. 49). V. 50 then insists that not seeking out the Messenger's adjudication is tantamount to preferring 'the judgement of ignorance' (*ḥukm al-jāhiliyya*).[77] Thus, Medinan law is underpinned by the doctrine that a core function of divine revelations consists in providing human communities with a means of adjudication that is informed by divine knowledge rather than human ignorance. The epistemological framework that is employed here – only revelation can help avoid 'ignorant' adjudication – constitutes an appreciable departure from the Meccan Qur'an, which confines itself to general appeals to practise justice and solidarity with the poor, but does not hint that humans require detailed divine instruction as to what, precisely, just action consists in.[78] Parenthetically, it appears an overstatement to describe Q 5: 44–50 as the 'birth-hour of Muslim law'.[79] More probably, the passage was preceded by a significant amount of Qur'anic legal stipulations that were now retrospectively provided with an explicit theological foundation. An early stage of this development can actually be detected in the Constitution of Medina, which already portrays Muhammad as a divinely backed arbiter of last resort.[80]

Basic considerations of historical likelihood dictate that this shift in the Qur'anic understanding of the purpose of prophetic revelations did not occur independently of the Believers' cohabitation with a Jewish community that possessed precisely such an understanding of the role of revelation and a corresponding body of scripturally based law, which the Jewish tradition designates by the Hebrew term *halakhah*.[81] That the emergence of Qur'anic law is to be placed against a Rabbinic background is also supported by the fact that Q 5: 44–50 expressly style Muhammad's task of revelatory adjudication as conforming to Jewish precedent. Moreover, the passage makes prominent use of a Rabbinic loan-word: the divine voice's assertion in Q 5: 48 that 'for each of you[p] We have established a path (? *shirᶜah*) and a custom (*minhāj*)' rather than making humankind 'a single community (*ummah*)' employs an Arabic word that is derived from the Rabbinic term *minhāg*.[82]

As the segment of Q 5: 48 just quoted makes clear, the Medinan Qur'an considers legal ordinances to form a crucial pillar of the Believers' communal distinctness. It is defensible, then, to characterise Medinan law as providing the Believers with a counter-*halakhah* – a distinctive 'path and custom' that enshrined their communal separateness from the Medinan Jews, just as their monotheistic and eschatological beliefs set them apart from the pagan Associators. This is not to deny that many aspects of Qur'anic law bear no direct relationship to specific Rabbinic stipulations and that a proper contextualisation of the full scope of Qur'anic law must also take into account Christian church orders such as the *Didascalia Apostolorum*,[83] as well as secular imperial law, as documented by the *Syro-Roman Law Book*.[84] Local custom is another potential foil, although it is doubtful whether we have any reliable access, say, to the inheritance practices of early seventh-century Western Arabia. Nonetheless, in a number of cases we are able to discern specific links between Qur'anic behavioural rules and Rabbinic law, as illustrated by the change of the *qiblah*, the institution of the fast of Ramaḍān, and the Friday prayer.[85] In all three cases, one observes an intricate interplay of appropriation and differentiation: like Medina's Jewish inhabitants, the Qur'anic Believers have a designated prayer direction, single out one of the days of the week by means of a special service, and are required to fast; yet they pray towards a different place, do not observe a day of rest following their congregational prayer, and observe a month-long daytime fast.

The same interplay of an appropriation of elements of Rabbinic law accompanied by clear gestures of differentiation – an operation that could be characterised as 'differential appropriation' – is found elsewhere, too. For instance, Medinan law endorses the Biblical prohibition of pork (Q 2: 172–173, 5: 3, 6: 145, and 16: 114–115), a highly conspicuous feature of Rabbinic dietary law that was widely viewed as an emblem of Jewish or at least Judaising practice.[86] At the same time, however, the Qur'an dismisses the full edifice of Rabbinic dietary law as a divine punishment for the sins of the Israelites (Q 4: 160–161 and 6: 146) or as an unduly restrictive human construct (Q 3: 93–94), while insisting that Qur'anic law, by contrast, is not onerous (Q 2: 185: 'God desires ease for you^{p}, not hardship'; cf. also Q 5: 6 and 22: 78) and that God wants the Qur'anic Believers to consume 'the good things that We have provided for you^{p}' (Q 2: 172).[87] Two other overlaps with Rabbinic law are the Qur'an's espousal of the Biblical view that menstruation entails a state of ritual impurity (Q 2: 222)[88] and surah 5's deployment of the notion of ritual expiation (Arabic *kaffārah*, Hebrew *kappārâ*),[89] while the Qur'anic permission of sexual intercourse 'during the night of the fast' (Q 2: 187) may well be a targeted inversion of its Rabbinic prohibition on the eve of the Ninth of Av and the Day of Atonement.[90]

The Medinan consolidation of communal boundaries vis-à-vis the two earlier Biblically based religions finds its most severe expression in the demand that the Qur'anic Believers must 'not take Jews and Christians as your^{p} allies (*awliyāʾ*);

they are allies of each other, and whoever of you becomes their ally is one of them' (Q 5: 51). Yet here, too, it behoves us to note that the Qur'an speaks with many voices. What appears to be a late addition to surah 5 authorises the Believers to practise commensality and partial intermarriage with 'those who have been given the Scripture' (Q 5: 5).[91] The intercommunal borderline that is so carefully constructed in many Medinan proclamations thus becomes 'partially porous' again, even though this does not imply an erasure of the borderline as such.[92]

Jerusalemising Mecca

There is one more aspect of the Medinan surah's differential appropriation of Jewish traditions that deserves at least concise treatment here. This is the Medinan upgrading of the Meccan Kaʿbah, alternatively designated as the 'Inviolable House' or the 'Inviolable Place of Prostration'. To be sure, already Meccan proclamations underscore God's protection of the sacred precinct of Mecca (Q 28: 57, 29: 67, 95: 3, and 106: 4) and have Abraham pray for Mecca's prosperity after having settled some of his 'descendants' (*dhurriyyah*) there (Q 14: 35–41).[93] In the Medinan surahs, however, the Meccan sanctuary is given a far more momentous status: the Qur'an now ratifies some version of the pilgrimage to God's House (Q 2: 158.196–200, 3:96–97, 5:1–2.94–97, and 22: 30–37), requires that the Believers face the 'Inviolable Place of Prostration' during prayer, and narrates how Abraham and his son Ishmael founded the House (Q 2: 124–129 and 22: 26–29, also 3: 96–97). What matters in the present context is that both Q 2: 124–129 and Q 3: 96–97 depict the House in such a way as to endow the Believers with a sanctuary that is both different from yet equivalent in status to Jerusalem.

This tendency is most perceptible in the Abraham pericope in surah 2. Its opening verse (v. 124: 'And when Abraham was tested by his Lord by means of certain words and he fulfilled them …') indicates that the ensuing account of Abraham and Ishmael's foundation of the Kaʿbah is meant to follow on from the narrative of Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son in Q 37: 99–113.[94] This suggests that Abraham's attempted sacrifice took place at Mecca. The Hebrew Bible, of course, locates Abraham's sacrificial 'binding' of Isaac on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22: 2), which is elsewhere identified as the site of Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 3: 1); the ram that Abraham is ultimately bidden to sacrifice in lieu of his son (Genesis 22: 13) therefore initiates the sacrificial cult at the site of the Jerusalem Temple. Surah 2 transfers this Abrahamic pre-history of the Temple to the Meccan House.[95] Another Jerusalemising aspect can be detected in the opening of Q 2: 125, whose reminder of how God 'made the House a meeting-place and a sanctuary for the people' is reminiscent of Isaiah 56: 7: 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.'[96] Joseph Witztum

has furthermore demonstrated that the Qur'anic portrayal of Abraham and Ishmael's 'raising' of the 'foundations of the House' (Q 2: 127) reflects post-Biblical Jewish and Christian traditions about Abraham and Isaac's erection of the sacrificial altar on which, according to Genesis 22, Abraham intended to offer up his son in sacrifice.[97] Finally, the brief comment on Abraham and the sanctuary at Q 3: 96–97 likewise signals that the House is equivalent in status to the Jerusalem Temple: when v. 96 calls the House divinely 'blessed' (*mubārak*), it echoes Qur'anic references to the Holy Land and the Jerusalem Temple, described as 'the land that We have blessed for all created beings' (Q 7: 137 and 21: 71.81; see also 34: 18) and 'the distant place of prostration, the surroundings of which We have blessed' (Q 17:1).

The result of this exceedingly artful Jerusalemisation of the Meccan House is, again, an interplay of similarity and difference that should by now be thoroughly familiar: like the Medinan Jews, the Qur'anic Believers dwell in exile, banished from a sanctuary whose origins go back to their forefather Abraham, yet that sanctuary is not Jerusalem but Mecca. Thus, the Medinan upgrading of the Meccan House should not be read as a gesture of compromise towards the Associators, as if the Qur'anic claim to their sanctuary was somehow liable to defuse, rather than exacerbate, tensions with them. Rather, the Medinan presentation of the House functions primarily as a marker of communal distinctness between the Believers and Medina's Jewish residents.

Muhammad the Prophet

It was pointed out above that the Medinan Qur'an sets the Qur'anic Messenger up as an authoritative judge over the correctness of Jewish and Christian beliefs and practices. Whereas the Meccan surahs occasionally argue for Muhammad's claim to be an emissary of God by invoking Jews and Christians as confirmatory witnesses, in the Medinan surahs his prophetic charisma comes to preponderate unequivocally over the prestige of established Biblically based religions like Judaism and Christianity. In this sense, the noticeable elevation of Muhammad's status that Chapter 5 adduced as one of the Medinan Qur'an's doctrinal characteristics, like the Medinan turn towards religious law and the Medinan upgrading of the Meccan sanctuary, can be seen to be intimately connected to the Believers' demarcation from the People of the Scripture. It is because the Believers are led not merely by a divinely mandated warner but by a fully fledged prophet (*nabiyy*) whose status is at least equal, if not superior, to that of Moses and Jesus that the Qur'anic community is immune to Jewish and Christian claims to possess a privileged understanding of God's revelation or to stand in a privileged salvific relationship to Him.

As already intimated in Chapter 5, the most prominent expression of Muhammad's Medinan elevation in status is the theme of obedience to 'God

and His Messenger'.[98] 'Who obeys the Messenger has obeyed God', Q 4: 80 asserts, leading David Marshall to observe a 'godward movement' of the Medinan Messenger.[99] Q 33: 21 transcends the domain of mere calls for obedience by describing the Messenger as a 'good exemplar for those who place their hope on God and the Last Day, and frequently invoke God': the Messenger is here credited with the function of a comprehensive ethical role model emulating whom will increase one's prospects of passing eschatological scrutiny. Indeed, the topos of obedience to the Messenger is one of the respects in which the Qur'an's impact on classical Islam is most pervasively felt, second only to the Islamic scripture's insistence on the oneness and omnipotence of God and its relatively late turn towards religious law: without the Medinan calls to obey and emulate Muhammad, the post-Qur'anic emergence of the hadith canon would have lacked a crucial and perhaps indispensable impetus.

The importance of the topos of obedience to the Messenger justifies the question of whether we can identify the earliest point at which it manifests itself in the Qur'an, as we were able to do with regard to the Qur'anic transition to explicit monotheism. Arguably the strongest candidate is Q 64: 8–13, a passage opening with the command to 'believe in God and His Messenger and the light that We have sent down' (v. 8) and concluded by the order to 'obey God and obey the Messenger' (v. 12). Surah 64 is considered to be Medinan by Nöldeke and Schwally, although they also remark on its similarity to the Meccan corpus.[100] The surah's low mean verse length of 89.28 transcription letters is certainly more easily accommodated by a Meccan dating. In fact, the only properly Medinan feature of the surah is its employment of the obedience formula in v. 12. Moreover, and contrary to the view of Nöldeke and Schwally, v. 14 – according to which the addressees have 'enemies' among their wives and children – is very plausibly located in a pre-hijrah setting, in which religious differences within the same family must have been acute. We may conjecture, therefore, that surah 64, like the militant manifesto that is surah 61, is at most a very early post-hijrah proclamation in which some key doctrinal traits of the Medinan Qur'an first begin to come into view. Incidentally, both compositions share references to God's 'light' (Q 61: 8 and 64: 8), apparently a metaphor for Muhammad's ministry, and the demand for 'belief in God and His Messenger' (Q 61: 11 and 64: 8).

Another early Medinan text that attests to a gradual rise in Muhammad's status and a widening of his functions is surah 47, whose mean verse length is likewise comparatively low (96.66). We have already encountered the admonishment to militancy that is found in v. 4, while vv. 32–33 reiterate the demand for obedience to the Messenger. Intriguingly, v. 19 instructs the Messenger to 'seek forgiveness for your sins and on behalf of the believing men and women'. This, too, is a topos: similar statements recur elsewhere in the Medinan surahs (Q 4: 64, 24: 62, 60: 12, and 63: 5–6), creating the impression that God's

grace and forgiveness are held to require mediation by Muhammad rather than being directly available to all members of the Qur'anic community. It would appear that it is the exceptional proximity to God attributed to the Medinan Messenger, his 'godward movement', that qualifies him to play such a role; Q 9: 128 even attributes to him the qualities of kindness and mercy that are elsewhere predicated only of God.[101] The sacerdotal quality that is here imparted to the Messenger is further amplified by verses that charge Muhammad with 'purifying' the Believers (Q 2: 129.151, 3: 164, and 62: 2). Q 9: 103 ties such purification to the Messenger's receipt of the Believer's alms (*ṣadaqāt*) and then underscores the efficacy of the Messenger's prayers: 'your[s] prayers are a comfort for them'. Conversely, those presuming to 'purify themselves', thereby attempting to circumvent the Messenger, are condemned (Q 4: 49–50 and 53: 32).[102] There is certainly a noticeable contrast between the verses just cited and two early Meccan statements that praise 'him who purifies himself' (*man tazakkā*, Q 87: 14) or who purifies his own soul (Q 91: 9) and that give no hint that there may be anything problematic about the aspiration of human self-purification.[103]

Not only the quasi-priestly role that the verses just surveyed ascribe to the Messenger but also the equation of obedience to the Messenger with obedience to God strongly suggest that the figure of the Christian bishop served at least as a partial template for the Medinan boosting of Muhammad's status and role. Like the Qur'an, post-Biblical Christian writings identify obedience to the bishop with obedience to God, and some of the functions of the Medinan Messenger are closely paralleled by the responsibilities of Christian bishops, who were in charge of redistributing charitable donations to the needy (cf. Q 9: 58–60.103) and presided over special courts, thus bringing to mind the Messenger's responsibility for communal adjudication. Similar to Q 5: 48–49's call upon the Messenger to 'adjudicate between them according to what God has sent down', a Christian church order, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, commands the bishops to 'judge sinners according to the Scripture'. Furthermore, just as the Messenger is said to function as a 'good exemplar' for the Believers (Q 33: 21), so Christian bishops were understood to be a 'good exemplar' to their flocks. As regards the Medinan tendency to underscore the Messenger's special proximity to God, this, too, has a parallel in the presentation of the bishop as a locus of divine presence.[104]

The hypothesis that the Medinan presentation of Muhammad is partially patterned on the figure of the Christian bishop is additionally buttressed by Holger Zellentin's recent argument that a number of Qur'anic statements about Christian dignitaries who are designated as *ruhbān* (Q 5: 82 and 9: 31.34) and about the corresponding institution of *rahbāniyya* (Q 57: 27) do not narrowly refer to monks and monasticism, as has generally been assumed, but rather to communal 'overseers', or bishops, more generally, whether or not these were

celibate.[105] The institution of the Christian episcopate must accordingly have been known to the Qur'anic audience, lending further plausibility to the contention that it became an important paradigm of communal religious leadership after the Qur'anic community had relocated to Medina.

Nonetheless, Muhammad's status is of course ultimately very different from that of a Christian bishop, whose authority rests on ordainment by an ecclesiastical hierarchy. By contrast, Muhammad's authority is charismatic, grounded in a direct link to God, rather than institutionally mediated. Possibly, the Medinan surahs' emphasis on Muhammad being a prophet, rather than just a messenger, is in part designed to drive home the categorical difference between him and Christian bishops, despite an undeniable phenomenological similarity between the kinds of communal leadership exercised by both. In fact, Muhammad is presented as more than just a prophet among others: he is claimed to have been announced by Abraham (Q 2: 129.151), by Jesus (Q 61: 6), and in the Torah and the Gospel (Q 7: 157 and 48: 29), statements that position him and the Qur'anic Believers as the effective fulfilment of prior prophetic history. Other Medinan verses jubilantly assert that Muhammad's ministry is equivalent to a gift of divine 'light', a term that is variously linked to God's mercy, forgiveness, and guidance (Q 9: 32.33, 57: 28, 61: 8–9, and 64: 8). The apex of the Medinan elevation of Muhammad is arguably formed by surah 33. It implies his superiority over previous prophets by placing him at the head of an otherwise chronological catalogue of them (v. 7), and contains the characterisation of Muhammad as a 'good exemplar' to which attention has already been drawn above (v. 21). Most famously, the surah calls Muhammad 'the seal of the prophets' (v. 40), a metaphor that probably does connote, as traditionally claimed, that he is God's final emissary.[106] At the end of the Qur'an's emergence, then, Muhammad has become a figure who surpasses all earlier prophets, is announced by all his major predecessors, brings the phenomenon of prophecy to completion, models how the Believers are to live a righteous life, and endows them with as full an access as possible to God's mercy, guidance, and light. The Qur'anic Messenger has become a core part of the Qur'anic message by acquiring unique salvific importance.

Notes

1. Marshall, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers*, especially pp. 153–7.
2. The redactionally hybrid character of surah 22, covered in Chapter 5, explains the fact that different sections of it reflect both the Meccan paradigm of unmediated punitive intervention by God Himself and the Medinan paradigm according to which the Believers serve as agents of God's punishment; the former is palpable in v. 48, stating that God 'seized' many a sinful settlement in the past, while the latter informs vv. 38–40.
3. Marshall, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers*, pp. 133–44. A similar approach is exemplified by Q 47: 10, which first restates the Meccan topos that the remains of earlier peoples who

were destroyed by a divine punishment are there for everyone to see and then threatens the Unbelievers with 'the like of it' (*amthāluhā*), rather than with exactly the same fate. As in Q 8, the substantial difference between the two paradigms of punishment is glossed over.

4. For a full list of passages relevant to this and the previous categories, see Sinai, 'The Unknown Known'. Medinan battlefield reminiscences are listed in Chapter 2, n. 52.
5. In view of the fact that *jāhada* can readily be used with an accusative object (see Q 9: 73 = 66: 9, 25: 52, 29: 8, and 31: 15), I prefer to translate the verb as 'to struggle' rather than 'to strive'. Thus, *jāhada* does not merely denote individual exertion but also connotes the confronting of opposition: the world view implied is one according to which God's revelatory address of humans will inevitably encounter opposition, with one's commitment to God's revelation being measured by one's willingness to confront such opposition.
6. E.g., Q 25: 52 and 31: 15. The problem of distinguishing military and non-military uses of the word is discussed in Landau-Tasseron, 'Jihād'.
7. For instance, that the injunction to 'struggle on behalf of God as behoves Him' (*wa-jāhidū fī llāhi ḥaqqa jihādihi*) at Q 22: 78 is to be interpreted in a military sense can only be inferred from the more explicit references to fighting in vv. 38–41 and 58–60.
8. Firestone, *Jihād*, pp. 84–91.
9. On the term *fitnah* – which is derived from *fatana*, 'to subject someone to temptation or to trials' – see Ambros, *Concise Dictionary*, p. 208. Here the meaning must be the termination of the Unbelievers' ability to tempt Believers to apostatise.
10. I am therefore distinctly sceptical of the claim that '[n]owhere in the Qur'an is changing people's religion given as a cause for waging war' (Abdel Haleem, *Understanding*, p. 61). Of course, it will always be possible to salvage preconceived notions about what the Qur'an must or must not be saying by imposing convenient restrictions on the text. Thus, Abdel Haleem's translation of the phrase *wa-yakūna l-dīnu kulluhu li-llāhi* at Q 8: 39 – rendered by him as 'all worship is devoted to God alone' – adds the qualifier '[a]t the Sacred House' and thereby bends Q 8: 39, and similarly Q 2: 193, into a mere call for purging worship at the Meccan sanctuary; see Abdel Haleem (trans.), *The Qur'an*, pp. 21–2 and 112.
11. Hoyland, 'Early Islam', p. 1057.
12. See Crone, '"No Compulsion"', especially pp. 164–70 (arguing that the verse asserts the unfeasibility of human coercion in religious matters and pointing out late antique precedents). Cf. also Q 10: 99. The explicit endorsement of religious pluralism at Q 5: 48 is not necessarily pertinent here: that verse occurs in the context of comments on Judaism and Christianity and may therefore not consider the Associators' religion to be part of divinely ordained religious diversity.
13. Harmonisations are possible, even if I would consider them to be forced. For instance, it could be suggested that Q 2: 193 and 8: 39 only anticipate that the Unbelievers, duly impressed by the way in which the Believers' victories evince the truth of their monotheistic creed, will voluntarily renounce their former polytheism.
14. Firestone subsumes such statements under the category of verses expressing 'restrictions on fighting' (Firestone, *Jihād*, pp. 73–6).
15. E.g., Abdel Haleem, *Understanding*, p. 61.
16. See Q 3: 142.157–158.195, 4: 74, 8: 74, 9: 16.20–22, 22: 58–59, and 47: 4–6.31.
17. I owe the observation of this link between the roots *j-h-d* and *ṣ-b-r* to an undergraduate essay by Benjamin Skretting. See also Q 16: 110. Two other cases in which the virtue of patience is invoked in a military context are Q 2: 250 and 3: 146.
18. Anderson, *Charity*, pp. 30–1 and *passim*. See also Q 5: 12.
19. Q 3: 146 likewise links military engagement to being loved by God.
20. Reda, *al-Baqara Crescendo*, p. 88.

21. I have not so far been able to find any relevant occurrence of the third form of the verbal root *j-h-d* in the body of early Arabic poetry, although I have only checked Ārāzī and Muṣāliḥah (eds), *al-ᶜIqd al-thamīn*. Nor does *jāhada* constitute an obvious calque of an Aramaic term.
22. Firestone, *Jihād*, p. 39.
23. Firestone, *Jihād*, p. 34.
24. See Q 2: 217 and, less transparently, 9: 36. The two verses are discussed in Firestone, *Jihād*, pp. 75 and 86–8.
25. Firestone, *Jihād*, p. 132.
26. Saleh, 'End of Hope', pp. 106–7 and 120–1.
27. Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, especially pp. 151–207; Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*.
28. For some examples, see Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*, pp. 4, 12, 108–11, and 131–4.
29. Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, p. 188 (based on the *Panegyric to Macarius of Tkow*).
30. Cf. especially the anti-Jewish pogrom reported in John of Ephesus, 'Lives of the Eastern Saints', pp. 90–1, brought to my attention by Lucy Parker. The instigator of the incident, a sixth-century monk by the name of Sergius, is also discussed in Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*, pp. 131–4.
31. Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*, p. 104; see also, ibid., p. 109.
32. Further calls not to 'take the Unbelievers as allies' are found at Q 3: 28, 4: 89–90.139.144, and 8: 72–75.
33. Firestone, *Jihād*, pp. 77–84. See, e.g., Q 2: 216 and 3: 156.
34. Other base motives imputed to those hearers averse to fighting are the desire to create 'affliction' or 'temptation' (*al-fitnah*) among the Believers (Q 9: 48) and a craving for physical comfort (Q 9: 81). Cf. Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*, pp. 109–10.
35. Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*, pp. 65–79, citing p. 69 (with a slight orthographic change).
36. The charge of unjust expulsion also occurs at Q 2: 217, 3: 195, 9: 13, 22: 39–40, and 60: 1.8–9; on oppression, see also Q 4: 97–98. Cf. also Q 22: 60.
37. Although 1 Kings 18 does not explicitly describe Elijah's actions as a case of zeal, late antique Christian authors did so (Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, pp. 184–6). Cf. also Philippians 3: 6, where Paul attributes his earlier persecution of the church to zeal.
38. Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, pp. 181–6.
39. Cf. also Q 22: 58–60.
40. Andrae, *Ursprung*, pp. 162–3.
41. Syriac: *mestabrin hwaw d-mitu men kadu*. See Scher (ed. and trans.), 'Traités', p. 32.
42. Q 2: 154: 'Do^{p} not say of those who are killed in the path of God, "dead"!'; Q 3: 169: 'Do^{s} not reckon those who were killed in the path of God as dead!' This parallel between the Qur'anic statements and the Syriac text is not noted by Andrae.
43. Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*, p. 55. See also Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, p. 160, who observes that 'Christians understood martyrdom not in terms of passive endurance of violence but rather as active spiritual combat against the demons thought to drive their persecutors'.
44. Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, p. 160–8. Gaddis also notes that this was not unchallenged and that there was a strong tendency to insist that martyrdom must not be sought out; for example, the 'Council of Elvira in Spain, at the beginning of the fourth century, explicitly stated that those who were killed for breaking idols were not to be honored with the title of martyr' (ibid., p. 176).
45. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, p. 447.
46. Mango and Scott (trans.), *Chronicle*, pp. 438–9 (p. 307 in the Greek original).
47. Firestone, *Jihād*, p. 127.
48. Firestone, *Jihād*, p. 50.

49. See the brief discussion of the surah in Saleh, 'End of Hope', pp. 105–6.
50. Lecker, *Constitution*, p. 32, § 1 (slightly modifying Lecker's translation). See also the reference to 'fighting in the path of God' in § 19 and the recurrence of 'in the path of God' in § 21 (Lecker, *Constitution*, p. 34). The terms 'Unbeliever' (*kāfir*) and 'Associator' (*mushrik*) are used in §§ 15 and 23 of the treaty (Lecker, *Constitution*, pp. 33–4).
51. Sinai, 'The Unknown Known', p. 58.
52. This could be inferred from Q 5: 82–85, according to which the Christians profess belief in the Messenger. However, one wonders whether the passage may not be just as aspirational or extrapolative as, for example, the Meccan assertion that 'those to whom We have given the Scripture rejoice in what has been sent down to you[s]' (Q 13: 36).
53. See Sinai, 'Inheriting Egypt', pp. 200–2 (on the Moses narrative in surahs 20, 26, 40, and 44) and pp. 211–12.
54. See Neuwirth, *Scripture*, pp. 219–23. Neuwirth considers it likely that the Jerusalem *qiblah* was established already prior to the hijrah. Irrespective of whether that is correct or whether the Jerusalem *qiblah* was only adopted in Medina, as a direct consequence of the Qur'anic Believers' encounter with Jewish ritual, the crucial fact remains that the early Medinan community's prayer direction was identical to that of the Medinan Jews.
55. Goitein, *Studies*, pp. 95–6.
56. Rabbinic Judaism recognises additional fast days besides the Day of Atonement, such as the Ninth of Av, traditionally held to be the date of the destruction of the First and Second Temple.
57. Rivlin, *Gesetz*, p. 11; Goitein, *Studies*, pp. 99–100.
58. See Rivlin, *Gesetz*, pp. 17–21, especially p. 20, n. 3.
59. Cf. also the reference to 'trade' or 'merchandise' (*tijārah*) and 'amusement' (*lahw*) in v. 11. On the designation of Friday as 'the day of congregation', see Rivlin, *Gesetz*, pp. 19–20, n. 3.
60. See Rivlin, *Gesetz*, pp. 17–21; for a different view, according to which the establishment of a Qur'anic Friday prayer involved 'no intention of polemics against the older religions', see Goitein, *Studies*, pp. 111–25 (citing p. 125).
61. E.g., Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, pp. 198–204, who speaks of 'Muḥammad's attempts to reconcile the Jews'.
62. The extent and nature of the phenomenon is controversial, given the fragmentary nature of the sources. See Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, pp. 342–82, and, from the perspective of Rabbinic sources, Hayes, 'The "Other"', pp. 255–7.
63. Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, pp. 201–4.
64. On the term 'parting of the ways', see Dunn (ed.), *Jews and Christians*.
65. Reynolds, 'Scriptural Falsification'.
66. Reynolds, 'Scriptural Falsification'.
67. See also the much more positive valuation of the Christians as opposed to the Jews at Q 5: 82–86.
68. On the latter verse, see Crone, 'Jewish Christianity', pp. 233–4. According to Neuwirth, Q 7: 157 is part of a Medinan addition to surah 7 (Neuwirth, 'Meccan Texts – Medinan Additions?', pp. 80–5).
69. Sinai, 'The Unknown Known', pp. 78–80.
70. For the accusation of Jewish and Christian covenant violation, see Q 2: 27.63–64.83–85, 3: 187, 4: 154–162, and 5: 12–14.70–71. That the Qur'anic Believers are in possession of a covenant with God is asserted at Q 5: 7. Cf. also the latter's response, 'We hear and obey', with that ascribed to the Israelites at Q 2: 93 (cf. also 4: 46).
71. The 'creed of Abraham' is also mentioned at Q 6: 161, 16: 123, and 12: 38, all of which occur in ostensibly Meccan surahs; see Chapter 5, n. 56.

72. On the word *ḥanīf*, derived from Syriac *ḥanpā* = 'gentile', see de Blois, '*Naṣrānī* (Ναζωραῖος) and *ḥanīf* (ἐθνικός)', pp. 16–25.
73. De Blois, '*Naṣrānī* (Ναζωραῖος) and *ḥanīf* (ἐθνικός)', pp. 22–3.
74. On Q 2: 128–129, see Chapter 4, section 'The long surahs: Q 2 as an example'.
75. This line of thought is inspired by Saleh, 'End of Hope', pp. 106–7.
76. See Goitein, *Studies*, pp. 126–34.
77. On the Qur'anic semantics of the root *j-h-l*, see Ambros, *Dictionary*, p. 64.
78. By way of utilising a helpful distinction put forward by Fred Donner, we may say that the Meccan Qur'an expresses a 'paraenetic' or exhortatory kind piety, whereas the Medinan Qur'an displays a turn towards a 'legalistic' type of piety. See Donner, *Narratives*, pp. 64–6 and 90–1, as well as Sinai, 'The Unknown Known', p. 67.
79. Thus Goitein, *Studies*, pp. 126–34.
80. §§ 26 and 52 of the treaty stipulate that 'whatever you differ about should be referred to God and Muhammad' and that 'every major crime or dispute between the people of this treaty from which evil is to be feared should be referred to God and Muhammad' (Lecker, *Constitution*, pp. 35 and 38; translation slightly modified).
81. Goitein, *Studies*, p. 133. For an introduction to the concept of *halakhah*, see Jacobs and De Vries, 'Halakhah'.
82. Hirschfeld, *Beiträge*, pp. 89–90; Horovitz, 'Jewish Proper Names', p. 225; Jastrow, *Dictionary*, pp. 797–8.
83. See pioneeringly Zellentin, *The Qurʾān's Legal Culture*.
84. Selb and Kaufhold, *Das Syrisch-römische Rechtsbuch*. Like the Qur'an, the *Syro-Roman Law Book* addresses, for instance, whether male and female children inherit equal or unequal shares and what the inheritance rights of surviving parents are (Selb and Kaufhold, *Das Syrisch-römische Rechtsbuch*, vol. 2, pp. 22–5 = § 1; cf. Q 4: 11–12). Also noteworthy is the fact that some paragraphs of the *Syro-Roman Law Book* open with explicit references to questions (e.g., Selb and Kaufhold, *Das Syrisch-römische Rechtsbuch*, vol. 2, pp. 28–9 = beginning of § 5: 'The law has been asked'), similar to Q 2: 189.215.217.219.220.222, 4: 127.176, 5: 4, and 8: 1. See also Leicht, 'The Qurʾanic Commandment', pp. 605 (n. 27) and 608. However, Crone cautions that the *Syro-Roman Law Book* may only have been translated into Syriac after the Arab conquests in an attempt 'to refute Arab accusations to the effect that Christianity had no law' (Crone, *Roman, Provincial and Islamic Law*, p. 12). For a detailed discussion of the date of the text and of its translation into Syriac, see Selb and Kaufhold, *Das Syrisch-römische Rechtsbuch*, vol. 1, pp. 43–52.
85. The possible link between the Qur'anic commandment to commit loan agreements to writing (Q 2: 282) and Rabbinic law is studied in Leicht, 'The Qurʾanic Commandment'.
86. Zellentin, *The Qurʾān's Legal Culture*, pp. 99–100. In support of a Medinan dating of Q 6: 145 and 16: 114–115, see Sinai, 'Dietary Tetralogue'. For the Biblical prohibition of pork, see Leviticus 11: 7.
87. The lightness of Qur'anic law is also emphasised by the fact that a number of Qur'anic stipulations are accompanied by hardship clauses; see Q 2: 184.185 and 5: 3.6.
88. On menstruation, see Leviticus 18: 19 and 20: 18 as well as Ezekiel 18: 6.
89. The word *kaffārah* ('expiation', 'atonement') occurs at Q 5: 45.89.95. It would appear to be an Arabisation of Hebrew *kappārâ* and/or Aramaic *kippūrā* = Hebrew *kippūr* (Horovitz, 'Jewish Proper Names', p. 220; cf. Jastrow, *Dictionary*, pp. 657 and 662; see also Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, p. 250, who notes the equivalent Arabic *kaffara ʿan* = Hebrew *kippēr*, and Pennacchio, *Emprunts*, pp. 138–9). Note that the word *jazāʾ*, used virtually synonymously at Q 5: 95, normally designates God's eschatological recompense; it is only in surah 5 (vv. 33, 38, and 95) that it is employed to refer to a divinely ordained inner-worldly sanction for

specific infractions (although the word is also used in its eschatological meaning, in v. 85). To be sure, there are a few verses outside surah 5 that stipulate expiatory procedures (Q 2: 196, 4: 92, and 58: 3), yet none of these utilises the word *kaffārah*. A terminologically explicit notion of ritual expiation is thus peculiar to surah 5. References to God's 'expiating' (*kaffara ʿan*) of the sins of the Believers are much more common, of course (e.g., Q 3: 193.195 or 29: 7). Q 2: 271, which highlights the expiatory merit of almsgiving, comes closest to surah 5 in this regard. That surah 5 is particularly preoccupied with the theme of expiation and atonement also emerges from the fact that the pronouncement on oaths at 5: 89 parallels 2: 225 yet unlike the later stipulates an expiatory procedure (perhaps yielding the corollary that 5: 89 is posterior to 2: 225). How this theme fits together with other concerns of surah 5 remains to be explored; it is possible that the issue is linked to the fact, highlighted by Hirschfeld and again by Cuypers, that surah 5 styles itself as a Qur'anic equivalent of Deuteronomy (Hirschfeld, *New Researches*, p. 133; Cuypers, *The Banquet*, pp. 93–7). In any case, given the Aramaic background of *kaffārah* = 'expiation' and the contexts in which the term is used, it seems a very safe conclusion that the Qur'an adopts the notion of ritual atonement from Rabbinic Judaism.

90. Geiger, *Judaism and Islam*, p. 158; cf. Babylonian Talmud, Taanit, 30a.
91. See in detail the pertinent section in Sinai, 'Processes of Literary Growth'.
92. Cf. Freidenreich, *Foreigners*, p. 140: 'Although Qurʾan 5.5 condones a partially porous boundary between believers and People of the Book by allowing food exchange across this border, it still maintains the distinction between these groups and is quite conscious of the hierarchical nature of the relationship which it addresses.'
93. See Chapter 5, n. 51.
94. Note especially the occurrence of derivatives of the root *b-l-w* in both Q 2: 124 and 37: 106 (Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung*, p. 136; Witztum, 'Foundations of the House', pp. 33–4).
95. See already Rivlin, *Gesetz*, pp. 24–5, as well as Witztum, 'Foundations of the House', p. 38, and Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung*, p. 142.
96. Rivlin, *Gesetz*, p. 25, n. 1.
97. Witztum, 'Foundations of the House'.
98. A much more detailed discussion of the heightened authority and wider range of functions with which the Medinan Qur'an endows the Messenger can be found in Sinai, 'Muhammad as an Episcopal Figure', and also Sinai, 'The Unknown Known', pp. 68–71.
99. Marshall, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers*, pp. 164–75.
100. Nöldeke et al., *History*, vol. 1, p. 186.
101. Paret, *Kommentar und Konkordanz*, on Q 9: 128; Marshall, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers*, pp. 170–3.
102. Q 53: 32 is a later addition to a Meccan surah; see Sinai, '*Sūrat al-Najm*', p. 9.
103. I owe my awareness of this contrast to Paret, *Kommentar und Konkordanz*, on Q 4: 49.
104. See in more detail and with pertinent references, Sinai, 'Muhammad as an Episcopal Figure'.
105. Zellentin, '*Aḥbār* and *Ruhbān*'.
106. Rubin, 'Seal', p. 74, based on Ambros, *Dictionary*, p. 83.

Bibliography

Note: For Arabic sources, the alphabetic ordering of authors' names ignores the Arabic article *al-* as well as the letter *ʿayn*.

ʿAbd al-Bāqī, Muḥammad Fuʾād, *al-Muʿjam al-mufahras li-alfāẓ al-Qurʾān al-karīm*, Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1364 AH.

Abdel Haleem, Muhammad A. S., 'Grammatical Shift for Rhetorical Purposes: *Iltifāt* and Related Features in the Qurʾān', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 55 (1992), pp. 407–32.

Abdel Haleem, Muhammad A. S., *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1999.

Abdel Haleem, Muhammad A. S. (trans.), *The Qur'an*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010 (reprinted with corrections).

Abrahamov, Binyamin, 'Signs', in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, 6 vols, Leiden: Brill, 2001–6, vol. 5, pp. 2–11.

Al-Azmeh, Aziz, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allāh and His People*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Ambros, Arne A., with Stephan Procházka, *A Concise Dictionary of Koranic Arabic*, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004.

Ammann, Ludwig, *Die Geburt des Islam: Historische Innovation durch Offenbarung*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2001.

Anderson, Gary A., *Charity: The Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013.

Andrae, Tor, *Der Ursprung des Islams und das Christentum*, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1926.

Ārāzī, Albīr and Salmān Muṣāliḥah (eds), *al-ʿIqd al-thamīn fī dawāwīn al-shuʿarāʾ al-sittah al-jāhiliyyīn: ṭabʿah jadīdah wa-muʿjam mufahras*, Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1999.

Arberry, A. J. (trans.), *The Koran Interpreted*, 2 vols, London: Allen & Unwin, 1955.

al-Azraqī, *Kitāb akhbār Makkah* = Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (ed.), *Die Chroniken der Stadt Mekka*, vol. 1: *el-Azraki's Geschichte und Beschreibung der Stadt Mekka*, Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1858.

Bannister, Andrew G., *An Oral-Formulaic Study of the Qur'an*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.

Bauer, Hans, 'Über die Anordnung der Suren und über die geheimnisvollen Buchstaben im Qoran', in Rudi Paret (ed.), *Der Koran*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche

Buchgesellschaft, 1975, pp. 311–35; originally published in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 75 (1921), pp. 1–20.

Bauer, Thomas, 'The Relevance of Early Arabic Poetry for Qurʾanic Studies including Observations on *Kull* and on Q 22:27, 26:225, and 52:31', in Neuwirth et al. (eds), *The Qurʾān in Context*, pp. 699–732.

Beck, Edmund (ed. and trans.), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones III*, 2 vols, Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1972.

Bell, Richard, *A Commentary on the Qurʾān*, eds C. Edmund Bosworth and M. E. J. Richardson, 2 vols, Manchester: University of Manchester, 1991.

Bell, Richard (trans.), *The Qurʾān Translated, with a Critical Re-Arrangement of the Surahs*, 2 vols, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937.

Ben-Eliyahu, Eyal, Yehudah Cohn, and Fergus Millar, *Handbook of Jewish Literature from Late Antiquity, 135–700 CE*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Berg, Herbert, 'The Implications of, and Opposition to, the Methods and Theories of John Wansbrough', *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 9 (1997), pp. 3–22.

Bezold, Carl (ed. and trans.), *Die Schatzhöhle*, 2 vols, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1883 and 1888.

Bobzin, Hartmut, 'The "Seal of the Prophets": Towards an Understanding of Muhammad's Prophethood', in Neuwirth et al. (eds), *The Qurʾān in Context*, pp. 565–83.

Boisliveau, Anne-Sylvie, *Le Coran par lui-même: Vocabulaire et argumentation du discours coranique autoréférentiel*, Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Bori, Caterina, '"All We Know is What We Have Been Told": Reflections on Emigration and Land as Divine Heritage in the Qurʾān', in Carlos A. Segovia and Basil Lourié (eds), *The Coming of the Comforter: When, Where, and To Whom? Studies on the Rise of Islam and Various Other Topics in Memory of John Wansbrough*, [Piscataway:] Gorgias Press, 2012, pp. 303–42.

Böwering, Gerhardt, 'God and His Attributes', in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, 6 vols, Leiden: Brill, 2001–6, vol. 2, pp. 316–31.

Bowersock, Glen W., *The Throne of Adulis: Red Sea Wars on the Eve of Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Brady, David, 'The Book of Revelation and the Qur'an: Is There a Possible Literary Relationship?', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 23 (1978), pp. 216–25.

Brock, Sebastian, 'Two Syriac Verse Homilies on the Binding of Isaac', *Le Muséon* 99 (1986), pp. 61–129.

Brockelmann, Carl, 'Allah und die Götzen: Der Ursprung des islamischen Monotheismus', *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 21 (1922), pp. 99–121.

Brown, Peter, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Budge, E. A. Wallis (trans.), *The Book of the Cave of Treasures*, London: The Religious Tract Society, 1927.

al-Bukhārī, *al-Ǧāmiᶜ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, eds Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb and Muḥammad Fuᵓād ᶜAbd al-Bāqī, 4 vols, Cairo: al-Maṭbaᶜah al-salafiyyah, AH 1400.

Bukharin, Mikhail D., 'Mecca on the Caravan Routes in Pre-Islamic Antiquity', in Neuwirth et al. (eds), *The Qurᵓān in Context*, pp. 115–34.

Burton, John, 'Linguistic Errors in the Qurᵓān', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 33 (1988), pp. 181–96.

Casanova, Paul, *Mohammed et la fin du monde: Étude critique sur l'Islam primitive*, Paris: P. Gauthier, 1911–24.

Christiansen, Johanne L., *'My Lord, Deliver Me from the People of the Evildoers* (rabbi najjinī mina l-qawmi l-ẓālimīna)' *(Q28:21): The Root* ẓ-l-m *and the Semantic Field of Oppression in the Qurᵓān*, PhD dissertation, Department for the Study of Religion, Aarhus University, 2016.

Collins, John J., *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.

Collins, John J. (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Cook, Michael, *The Koran: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Cragg, Kenneth, *The Event of the Qurᵓān: Islam in its Scripture*, Oxford: Oneworld, 1994.

Crone, Patricia, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987.

Crone, Patricia, *Roman, Provincial and Islamic Law*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Crone, Patricia, 'Two Legal Problems Bearing on the Early History of the Qurᵓān', *Jerusalem Studies of Arabic and Islam* 18 (1994), pp. 1–37.

Crone, Patricia, 'How Did the Quranic Pagans Make a Living?', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 68 (2005), pp. 387–99 (reprinted in Crone, *The Qurᵓānic Pagans*).

Crone, Patricia, 'Quraysh and the Roman Army: Making Sense of the Meccan Leather Trade', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 70 (2007), pp. 63–88 (reprinted in Crone, *The Qurᵓānic Pagans*).

Crone, Patricia, '"No Compulsion in Religion": Q 2:256 in Mediaeval and Modern Interpretation', in Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, Meir M. Bar-Asher, and Simon Hopkins (eds), *Le shīᶜisme imāmite quarante ans après: hommage à Etan Kohlberg*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2009, pp. 131–78 (reprinted in Crone, *The Qurᵓānic Pagans*).

Crone, Patricia, 'The Religion of the Qurᵓānic Pagans: God and the Lesser Deities', *Arabica* 57 (2010), pp. 151–200 (reprinted in Crone, *The Qurᵓānic Pagans*).

Crone, Patricia, 'Angels versus Humans as Messengers of God: The View of the Qurᵓānic Pagans', in Philippa Townsend and Moulie Vidas (eds), *Revelation, Literature, and Community in Late Antiquity*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011, pp. 315–36 (reprinted in Crone, *The Qurᵓānic Pagans*).

Crone, Patricia, 'The Quranic *Mushrikūn* and the Resurrection (Part I)', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 75 (2012), pp. 445–72 (reprinted in Crone, *The Qurᵓānic Pagans*).

Crone, Patricia, 'Jewish Christianity and the Qurʾān (Part One)', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 74 (2015), pp. 225–53 (reprinted in Crone, *The Qurʾānic Pagans*).

Crone, Patricia, *Collected Studies in Three Volumes*, vol. 1: *The Qurʾānic Pagans and Related Matters*, ed. Hanna Siurua, Leiden: Brill, 2016.

Crone, Patricia and Michael A. Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Cuypers, Michel, *The Banquet: A Reading of the Fifth Sura of the Qur'an*, trans. Patricia Kelly, Miami: Convivium Press, 2009.

Cuypers, Michel, *The Composition of the Qur'an: Rhetorical Analysis*, trans. Jerry Ryan, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

Dagorn, René, *La geste d'Ismaël d'après l'onomastique et la tradition arabes*, Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1981.

De Blois, François, '*Naṣrānī* (Ναζωραῖος) and *ḥanīf* (ἐθνικός): Studies on the Religious Vocabulary of Christianity and of Islam', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 65 (2002), pp. 1–30.

Delitzsch, Friedrich, *Babel and Bible: Two Lectures on the Significance of Assyriological Research for Religion*, trans. Thomas J. McCormack and W. H. Carruth, Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1903.

De Prémare, Alfred-Louis, *Les fondations de l'islam: Entre écriture et histoire*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002.

Déroche, François, *Qurʾans of the Umayyads: A First Overview*, Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Dmitriev, Kirill, 'An Early Christian Arabic Account of the Creation of the World', in Neuwirth et al. (eds), *The Qurʾān in Context*, pp. 349–87.

Donner, Fred M., *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, Princeton: Darwin Press, 1998.

Donner, Fred M., *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Dundes, Alan, *Fables of the Ancients? Folklore in the Qur'an*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003.

Dunn, James D. G. (ed.), *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999.

Dutton, Yasin, 'An Umayyad Fragment of the Qur'an and Its Dating', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 9 (2007), pp. 57–87.

Dutton, Yasin, 'Orality, Literacy and the "Seven *Aḥruf*" *Ḥadīth*', *Journal of Islamic Studies* 23 (2012), pp. 1–49.

Dye, Guillaume, 'The Qurʾān and Its Hypertextuality in Light of Redaction Criticism', paper read at the Fourth Nangeroni Meeting *Early Islam: The Sectarian Milieu of Late Antiquity?*, Milan, 15–19 June 2015, https://www.academia.edu/12358270/The_Quran_and_its_Hypertextuality_in_Light_of_Redaction_Criticism (accessed 17 April 2016).

Edzard, Lutz, 'Perspektiven einer computergestützten Analyse der qurʾānischen Morpho-Syntax und Satz-Syntax in kolometrischer Darstellung', *Arabica* 50 (2003), pp. 350–81.

Eichler, Paul A., *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, Leipzig: Verlag der Buchhandlung Klein, 1928.

El-Badawi, Emran I., *The Qurʾān and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2014.

Ettinghausen, Richard, *Antiheidnische Polemik im Koran*, Gelnhausen: F. W. Kalbfleisch, 1934.

Ewald, Heinrich, *Die Propheten des Alten Bundes*, vol. 1, Stuttgart: Adolph Krabbe, 1840.

Fahd, Toufic, *Le panthéon de l'Arabie centrale à la veille de l'Hégire*, Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1968.

Farrin, Raymond K., 'Surat al-Baqara: A Structural Analysis', *The Muslim World* 100 (2010), pp. 17–32.

Farrin, Raymond [K.], *Structure and Qur'anic Interpretation: A Study of Symmetry and Coherence in Islam's Holy Text*, Ashland: White Cloud Press, 2014.

Feldman, Louis H., *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Fiema, Zbigniew, Ahmad Al-Jallad, Michael C. A. Macdonald, and Laïla Nehmé, '*Provincia Arabia*: Nabataea, the Emergence of Arabic as a Written Language, and Graeco-Arabica', in Fisher (ed.), *Arabs and Empires*, pp. 373–433.

Firestone, Reuven, 'Abraham's Son as the Intended Sacrifice (*al-Dhabīḥ*, Qurʾān 37:99–113): Issues in Qurʾānic Exegesis', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 34 (1989), pp. 95–131.

Firestone, Reuven, *Jihād: The Origin of Holy War in Islam*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Fischer, Wolfdietrich, 'Das geschichtliche Selbstverständnis Muhammads und seiner Gemeinde: Zur Interpretation von Vers 55 der 24. Sure des Koran', *Oriens* 36 (2001), pp. 145–59.

Fischer, Wolfdietrich, *A Grammar of Classical Arabic*, trans. Jonathan Rodgers, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.

Fisher, Greg, *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Fisher, Greg (ed.), *Arabs and Empires before Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Fisher, Greg, Philip Wood, et al., 'Arabs and Christianity', in Fisher (ed.), *Arabs and Empires*, pp. 276–372.

Fluegel, Gustavus [= Flügel, Gustav] (ed.), *Corani Textus Arabicus*, second edition, Leipzig: C. Tauchnitz, 1841.

Fowden, Elizabeth K., *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Frankfurter, David, 'Syncretism and the Holy Man in Late Antique Egypt', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003), pp. 339–85.

Frede, Michael, and Polymnia Athanassiadi (eds), *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.

Freidenreich, David M., *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

Frolov, Dmitry, 'The Problem of the "Seven Long" Surahs', in Stefan Leder et al. (eds), *Studies in Arabic and Islam: Proceedings of the 19th Congress, Union Européene des Arabisants et Islamisants, Halle 1998*, Leuven: Peeters, 2002, pp. 193–203.

Gaddis, Michael, *There Is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Geiger, Abraham, *Judaism and Islam: A Prize Essay*, trans. F. M. Young, Madras: M.D.C.S.P.C.K. Press, 1898; originally published as *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?*, Bonn: F. Baaden, 1833.

Geyer, Rudolf, 'Zur Strophik des Qurâns', *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 22 (1908), pp. 265–86.

Gibson, Dan, *Qurʾānic Geography: A Survey and Evaluation of the Geographical References in the Qurʾān with Suggested Solutions for Various Problems and Issues*, Saskatoon: Independent Scholars Press, 2011.

Gignoux, Philippe, and Hamid Algar, 'Besmellāh', in Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, http://www.iranicaonline.org (print edition: vol. 4, fasc. 2, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1989, pp. 172–4) (last accessed 14 March 2017).

Gilliot, Claude, 'Creation of a Fixed Text', in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Qurʾān*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 41–57.

Goitein, S. D., *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*, Leiden: Brill, 1968.

Goldziher, Ignaz, *Muslim Studies*, vol. 2, trans. C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971; originally published as *Muhammedanische Studien*, vol. 2, Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1890.

Goldziher, Ignaz, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung*, Leiden: Brill, 1920.

Görke, Andreas, and Gregor Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte über das Leben Muḥammads: Das Korpus ʿUrwa ibn az-Zubair*, Princeton: Darwin Press, 2008.

Görke, Andreas, Harald Motzki, and Gregor Schoeler, 'First Century Sources for the Life of Muḥammad: A Debate', *Der Islam* 89 (2012), pp. 2–59.

Gräf, Erwin, *Jagdbeute und Schlachttier im islamischen Recht*, Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität Bonn, 1959.

Graham, William A., *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam: A Reconsideration of the Sources, with Special Reference to the Divine Saying or* Ḥadîth Qudsî, The Hague: Mouton, 1977.

Greenfield, Jonas C., 'From *ʾlh rḥmn* to *al-raḥmān:* The Source of a Divine Epithet', in Benjamin H. Hary, John L. Hayes and Fred Astren (eds), *Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, Communication and Interaction: Essays in Honor of William M. Brinner*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, pp. 381–93.

Griffith, Sidney, 'Christian Lore and the Arabic Qurʾān: The Companions of the Cave in *Sūrat al-Kahf* and in Syriac Christian Tradition', in Reynolds (ed.), *The Qurʾān in its Historical Context*, pp. 109–37.

Griffith, Sidney H., *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the 'People of the Book' in the Language of Islam*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

Gruendler, Beatrice, 'Arabic Script', in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, 6 vols, Leiden: Brill, 2001–6, vol. 1, pp. 135–44.

Hamdan, Omar, 'The Second *Maṣāḥif* Project: A Step towards the Canonization of the Qurʾanic Text', in Neuwirth et al. (eds), *The Qurʾān in Context*, pp. 795–835.

Hawting, Gerald R., *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Hawting, Gerald R., 'Eavesdropping on the Heavenly Assembly and the Protection of the Revelation from Demonic Corruption', in Wild (ed.), *Self-Referentiality*, pp. 25–37.

Hayes, Christine, 'The "Other" in Rabbinic Literature', in Charlotte E. Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 243–69.

Hayes, John H., 'Historical Criticism of the Old Testament Canon', in Magne Sæbø (ed.), *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation*, vol. 2: *From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008, pp. 985–1005.

Healey, John F., *The Religion of the Nabataeans: A Conspectus*, Leiden: Brill, 2001.

Heidemann, Stefan, 'The Evolving Representation of the Early Islamic Empire and its Religion on Coin Imagery', in Neuwirth et al. (eds), *The Qurʾān in Context*, pp. 149–95.

Herrero de Jáuregui, Miguel, *Orphism and Christianity in Late Antiquity*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010.

Hirschfeld, Hartwig, *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Ḳorân*, Leipzig: Otto Schulze, 1886.

Hirschfeld, Hartwig, *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qoran*, London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1902.

Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan*, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Holes, Clive, *Modern Arabic: Structures, Functions, and Varieties*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004.

Horovitz, Josef, 'Das koranische Paradies', in Rudi Paret (ed.), *Der Koran*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975, pp. 53–73 (originally published Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1923).

Horovitz, Josef, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1926.

Horovitz, Joseph [*sic*], 'Jewish Proper Names and Derivatives in the Koran', *Hebrew Union College Annual* (1925), pp. 145–227.

Howard-Johnston, James, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Hoyland, Robert G., *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997.

Hoyland, Robert G., *Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam*, London: Routledge, 2001.

Hoyland, Robert G., 'Epigraphy and the Linguistic Background to the Qurʾān', in Reynolds (ed.), *The Qurʾān in its Historical Context*, pp. 51–69.

Hoyland, Robert G., 'Arab Kings, Arab Tribes and the Beginnings of Arab Historical Memory in Late Roman Epigraphy', in H. Cotton et al. (eds), *From Hellenism to*

Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 374–400.

Hoyland, Robert G., 'The Jews of the Hijaz in the Qurʾān and in their Inscriptions', in Reynolds (ed.), *New Perspectives*, pp. 91–116.

Hoyland, Robert G., 'Early Islam as a Late Antique Religion', in Johnson (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, pp. 1053–77.

Hoyland, Robert G., review of Shoemaker, *Death*, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 134 (2014), pp. 728–30.

Ibn Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, edited in Jeffery, *Materials* (Arabic pagination).

Jacobi, Renate, *Studien zur Poetik der altarabischen Qaṣide*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1971.

Jacobs, Louis, and Benjamin De Vries, 'Halakhah', in Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (eds), *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, second edition, 22 vols, Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007, vol. 8, pp. 251–8.

Jansen, Johannes J. G., *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*, Leiden: Brill, 1974.

Jastrow, Marcus, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, 2 vols, London: Luzac & Co., 1903.

Jeffery, Arthur, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qurʾān: The Old Codices*, Leiden: Brill, 1937.

Jeffery, Arthur, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qurʾān*, Leiden: Brill, 2007 (originally published Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938).

John of Ephesus, 'Lives of the Eastern Saints', ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks, *Patrologia Orientalis* 17 (1923), pp. i–307.

Johns, Jeremy, 'Archaeology and the History of Early Islam: The First Seventy Years', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 46 (2003), pp. 411–36.

Johnson, M. D., 'Life of Adam and Eve (First Century A.D.): A New Translation and Introduction', in James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2: *Expansions of the 'Old Testament' and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works*, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011, pp. 249–95 (originally published 1983).

Johnson, Scott Fitzgerald (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Jones, Alan, *Early Arabic Poetry*, vol. 1: Marāthī *and* Ṣuʿlūk *Poems*, Reading: Ithaca Press, 1992.

Jones, Alan, *Early Arabic Poetry*, vol. 2: *Select Odes*, Reading: Ithaca Press, 1996.

Jones, Alan, 'The Oral and the Written: Some Thoughts about the Quranic Text', in K. Dévényi and T. Iványi (eds), *Proceedings of the Colloquium on Logos, Ethos, Mythos in the Middle East & North Africa*, Part One, Budapest: Eötvös Loránd University Chair for Arabic Studies & Csoma de Kőrös Society, 1996, pp. 57–66.

Jones, Alan (trans.), *The Qurʾān*, [Cambridge:] Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007.

al-Kalbī, Abū Mundhir Hishām ibn Muḥammad ibn Sāʾib, *Kitāb al-Aṣnām*, ed. Aḥmad Zakī, Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Amīriyyah, 1914.

Kaplony, Andreas, 'What Are Those Few Dots For? Thoughts on the Orthography of the Qurra Papyri (709–710), the Khurasan Parchments (755–777) and the Inscription of the Jerusalem Dome of the Rock (692)', *Arabica* 55 (2008), pp. 91–112.

Kenny, Anthony, *The Computation of Style: An Introduction to Statistics for Students of Literature and Humanities*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982.

al-Khaṭīb, ʿAbd al-Laṭīf, *Muʿjam al-qirāʾāt al-qurʾāniyyah*, 11 vols, Damascus: Dār Ṣaʿd al-Dīn, 2002.

Klar, Marianna, 'Through the Lens of the Adam Narrative: A Re-consideration of *Sūrat al-Baqara*', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 17 (2015), pp. 24–46.

Klar, Marianna, 'Re-examining Textual Boundaries: Towards a Form-Critical *Sūrat al-Kahf*', in Majid Daneshgar and Walid A. Saleh (eds), *Islamic Studies Today: Essays in Honor of Andrew Rippin*, Leiden: Brill, 2016, pp. 215–38.

Klar, Marianna, 'Text-Critical Approaches to Sura Structure: Combining Synchronicity with Diachronicity in *Sūrat al-Baqara*', Parts One and Two, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 19 (2017), pp. 1–38 and 64–105.

Klar, Marianna, 'Qur'anic Exempla and Late Antique Narratives', forthcoming in Muhammad Abdel Haleem and Mustafa Shah (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kraus, Hans-Joachim, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, third edition, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1982.

Krone, Susanne, *Die altarabische Gottheit al-Lāt*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992.

Kugel, James L., *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Kuhl, Curt, 'Die "Wiederaufnahme" – ein literarkritisches Prinzip?', *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 64 (1952), pp. 1–11.

Kümmel, Werner G., *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems*, trans. S. McLean Gilmour and Howard C. Kee, London: SCM Press, 1973.

Lammens, Henri, 'The Koran and Tradition: How the Life of Muhammad Was Composed', in Ibn Warraq (ed. and trans.), *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, Amherst: Prometheus, 2000, pp. 169–87 (originally published as 'Qoran et Tradition: Comment fut composée la vie de Mahomet', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 1 (1910), pp. 25–51).

Lammens, Henri, *L'Arabie occidentale avant l'hégire*, Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1928.

Landau-Tasseron, Ella, 'Jihād', in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, 6 vols, Leiden: Brill, 2001–6, vol. 3, pp. 35–43.

Lange, Christian, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Lecker, Michael, *The 'Constitution of Medina': Muḥammad's First Legal Document*, Princeton: Darwin Press, 2004.

Leemhuis, Frederik, 'Readings of the Qurʾān', in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, 6 vols, Leiden: Brill, 2001–6, vol. 4, pp. 353–63.

Lehmann, Edvard, and Johannes Pedersen, 'Der Beweis für die Auferstehung im Koran', *Der Islam* 5 (1914), pp. 54–61.

Leicht, Reimund, 'The Qurʾanic Commandment of Writing Down Loan Agreements (Q 2:282) – Perspectives of a Comparison with Rabbinical Law', in Neuwirth et al. (eds), *The Qurʾān in Context*, pp. 593–614.

Leszynsky, Rudolf, *Die Juden in Arabien zur Zeit Mohammeds*, Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1910.

Luxenberg, Christoph, *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran: A Contribution to the Decoding of the Language of the Koran*, Berlin: Hans Schiler, 2007.

Macdonald, Michael C. A., 'Ancient Arabia and the Written Word', in id. (ed.), *The Development of Arabic as a Written Language: Papers from the Special Session of the Seminar for Arabian Studies held on 24 July, 2009*, Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010, pp. 5–27.

Macdonald, Michael C. A., et al., 'Arabs and Empires before the Sixth Century', in Fisher (ed.), *Arabs and Empires*, pp. 11–89.

Madigan, Daniel A., 'Reflections on Some Current Directions in Qurʾanic Studies', *Muslim World* 85 (1995), pp. 345–62.

Madigan, Daniel A., *The Qur'ân's Self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Mango, Cyril, and Roger Scott, with the assistance of Geoffrey Greatrex (trans.), *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

Marshall, David, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers: A Qurʾanic Study*, Richmond: Curzon, 1999.

Marx, Michael Josef, and Tobias J. Jocham, 'Zu den Datierungen von Koranhandschriften durch die ^{14}C-Methode', *Frankfurter Zeitschrift für islamisch-theologische Studien* 2 (2015), pp. 9–43.

Maxwell, Jaclyn, 'Paganism and Christianization', in Johnson (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, pp. 849–75.

Melchert, Christopher, 'Ibn Mujāhid and the Establishment of Seven Qur'anic Readings', *Studia Islamica* 91 (2000), pp. 5–22.

Melchert, Christopher, 'The Relation of the Ten Readings to One Another', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 10 (2008), pp. 73–87.

Merk, Otto, and Martin Meiser, *Das Leben Adams und Evas*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998.

Meyer, Wilhelm (ed.), 'Vita Adae et Evae', in *Abhandlungen der philosophisch-philologischen Classe der königlich bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, vol. 14, Munich: Verlag der k. Akademie in Commission bei G. Franz, pp. 185–250.

Millar, Fergus, 'Hagar, Ishmael, Josephus and the Origins of Islam', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 44 (1993), pp. 23–45.

Millar, Fergus, *Religion, Language and Community in the Roman Near East: Constantine to Muhammad*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Mir, Mustansir, *Coherence in the Qurʾān: A Study of Iṣlāḥī's Concept of* Naẓm *in* Tadabbur-i Qurʾān, Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986.

Mir, Mustansir, 'The *Sūra* as a Unity: A Twentieth Century Development in Qurʾān Exegesis', in G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (eds), *Approaches to the Qurʾān*, London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 211–24.

Montgomery, James E., *The Vagaries of the Qaṣīdah: The Tradition and Practice of Early Arabic Poetry*, [Cambridge:] Gibb Memorial Trust, 1997.

Montgomery, James E., 'The Empty Ḥijāz', in id. (ed.), *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy: From the Many to the One: Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank*, Leuven: Peeters, 2006, pp. 37–97.

Motzki, Harald, 'The Collection of the Qurʾān: A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments', *Der Islam* 78 (2001), pp. 1–34.

Motzki, Harald, 'Dating Muslim Traditions: A Survey', *Arabica* 52 (2005), pp. 204–53.

Mourad, Suleiman A., 'Mary in the Qurʾān: A Reexamination of Her Presentation', in Reynolds (ed.), *The Qurʾān in its Historical Context*, pp. 163–74.

Müller, David Heinrich, *Die Propheten in ihrer ursprünglichen Form: Die Grundgesetze der ursemitischen Poesie erschlossen und nachgewiesen in Bibel, Keilschriften und Koran und in ihren Wirkungen erkannt in den Chören der griechischen Tragödie*, vol. 1: *Prolegomena und Epilegomena*, Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1896.

Müller, Friedrun, *Untersuchungen zur Reimprosa im Koran*, Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität Bonn, 1969.

Munt, Harry, *The Holy City of Medina: Sacred Space in Early Islamic Arabia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Naham, N., 'Drei Suren auf ihre strophische Gliederung untersucht', *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 28 (1914), pp. 370–5.

Nasser, Shady Hekmat, *The Transmission of the Variant Readings of the Qurʾān: The Problem of* Tawātur *and the Emergence of* Shawādhdh, Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Nehmé, Laïla, 'A Glimpse of the Development of the Nabataean Script into Arabic Based on Old and New Epigraphic Material', in Michael C. A. Macdonald (ed.), *The Development of Arabic as a Written Language*, Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010, pp. 47–88.

Nelson, Kristina, *The Art of Reciting the Qurʾan*, Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2001.

Neusner, Jacob (trans.), *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis*, 3 vols, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985.

Neuwirth, Angelika, 'Der historische Muhammad im Spiegel des Koran – Prophetentypus zwischen Seher und Dichter?', in Wolfgang Zwickel (ed.), *Biblische Welten: Festschrift für Martin Metzger zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, Freiburg: Universitätsverlag and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993, pp. 83–108.

Neuwirth, Angelika, 'Geography', in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, 6 vols, Leiden: Brill, 2001–6, vol. 2, pp. 293–313.

Neuwirth, Angelika, 'Meccan Texts – Medinan Additions? Politics and the Re-reading of Liturgical Communications', in Rüdiger Arnzen and Jörn Thielmann (eds), *Words, Texts, and Concepts Cruising the Mediterranean Sea: Studies on the Sources, Contents, and Influences of Islamic Civilization and Arabic Philosophy and Science*, Leuven: Peeters, 2004, pp. 71–93.

Neuwirth, Angelika, *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren*, second edition, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007.

Neuwirth, Angelika, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: Ein europäischer Zugang*, Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2010.

Neuwirth, Angelika, 'The House of Abraham and the House of Amram: Genealogy, Patriarchal Authority, and Exegetical Professionalism', in Neuwirth, et al. (eds), *The Qurʾān in Context*, pp. 499–531.

Neuwirth, Angelika, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (eds), *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu*, Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Neuwirth, Angelika, 'Qurʾanic Readings of the Psalms', in Neuwirth et al. (eds), *The Qurʾān in Context*, pp. 733–78.

Neuwirth, Angelika, *Der Koran: Handkommentar und Übersetzung*, vol. 1: *Frühmekkanische Suren: Poetische Prophetie*, Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2011.

Neuwirth, Angelika, *Scripture, Poetry and the Making of a Community: Reading the Qur'an as a Literary Text*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Nöldeke, Theodor, *Geschichte des Qorâns*, Göttingen: Verlag der Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1860.

Nöldeke, Theodor, Friedrich Schwally, Gotthelf Bergsträßer, and Otto Pretzl, *The History of the Qurʾān*, ed. and trans. Wolfgang H. Behn, Leiden: Brill, 2013 (quoted according to the pagination of the three-volume German original published under the title *Geschichte des Qorāns*, Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1909–38, which is given in the margins of the English version).

Owens, Jonathan, *A Linguistic History of Arabic*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Paret, Rudi, 'Signification coranique de *ḫalīfa* et d'autre dérivés de la racine *ḫalafa*', *Studia Islamica* 31 (1970), pp. 211–7.

Paret, Rudi (trans.), *Der Koran*, eighth edition, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001.

Paret, Rudi, *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz*, sixth edition, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001.

Pavlovitch, Pavel, '*Qad kunna* [*sic*] *lā naᶜbudu ʾllāha wa-lā naᶜrifuhu:* On the Problem of the Pre-Islamic Lord of the Kaʿba', *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 2 (1998–9), pp. 49–74.

Payne Smith, Robert, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, 2 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879–1901.

Pennacchio, Catherine, *Les emprunts à l'hébreu et au judéo-araméen dans le Coran*, Paris: Jean Maisonneuve, 2014.

Peters, Francis E., *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

Phillips, Elaine, '"They Are Loved on Account of the Patriarchs": *Zekhut Avot* and the Covenant with Abraham', in Steven A. Hunt (ed.), *Perspectives on Our Father Abraham: Essays in Honor of Marvin R. Wilson*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010, pp. 187–220.

Pohlmann, Karl-Friedrich, *Die Entstehung des Korans: Neue Erkenntnisse aus Sicht der historisch-kritischen Bibelwissenschaft*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012.

Popp, Volker, 'Die frühe Islamgeschichte nach inschriftlichen und numismatischen Zeugnissen', in Karl-Heinz Ohlig and Gerd-Rüdiger Puin (eds), *Die dunklen Anfänge: Neue Forschungen zur Entstehung und frühen Geschichte des Islam*, Berlin: Hans Schiler, 2005, pp. 16–123.

Reda, Nevin, *The al-Baqara Crescendo: Understanding the Qurʾan's Style, Narrative Structure, and Running Themes*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017.

Reuschel, Wolfgang, *Aspekt und Tempus in der Sprache des Korans*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996.

Reventlow, Henning Graf, 'English Deism and Anti-Deist Apologetic', in Magne Sæbø (ed.), *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation*, vol. 2: *From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008, pp. 851–74.

Reynolds, Gabriel S. (ed.), *The Qurʾān in its Historical Context*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2008.

Reynolds, Gabriel S., *The Qurʾān and its Biblical Subtext*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2010.

Reynolds, Gabriel S., 'On the Qurʾanic Accusation of Scriptural Falsification (*taḥrīf*) and Christian Anti-Jewish Polemic', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 130 (2010), pp. 189–202.

Reynolds, Gabriel S. (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Qurʾān: The Qurʾān in its Historical Context 2*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2011.

Ri, Su-Min (ed. and trans.), *La Caverne des trésors: les deux recensions syriaques*, 2 vols, Leuven: Peeters, 1987.

Rippin, Andrew, 'Literary Analysis of *Qurʾān, Tafsīr,* and *Sīra:* The Methodologies of John Wansbrough', in Richard C. Martin (ed.), *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985, pp. 151–63 and 227–32 (reprinted in Andrew Rippin, *The Qur'an and its Interpretative Tradition*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001, ch. 2).

Rippin, Andrew, 'The Function of *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* in Qurʾānic Exegesis', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 51 (1988), pp. 1–20.

Rippin, Andrew, 'Muḥammad in the Qurʾān: Reading Scripture in the 21st Century', in Harald Motzki (ed.), *The Biography of Muḥammad: The Issue of the Sources*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, pp. 298–309.

Rivlin, Josef J., *Gesetz im Koran: Kultus und Ritus*, Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrmann, 1934.

Robin, Christian J., 'Les "filles de Dieu" de Saba' à la Mecque: Réflexions sur l'agencement des panthéons dans l'Arabie ancienne', *Semitica* 50 (2001), pp. 113–92.

Robin, Christian J., 'À propos des "filles de Dieu": Complément à l'article publié dans *Semitica*, 50, 2001, pp. 113–192', *Semitica* 52–3 (2002–7), pp. 139–48.

Robin, Christian J., 'L'Arabie dans le Coran: Réexamen de quelques termes à la lumière des inscriptions préislamiques', in François Déroche et al. (eds), *Les origines du Coran, le Coran des origines*, Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2015, pp. 27–74.

Robin, Christian J., 'Ḥimyar, Aksūm, and *Arabia Deserta* in Late Antiquity: The Epigraphic Evidence', in Fisher (ed.), *Arabs and Emires*, pp. 127–71.

Robinson, Chase, *ᶜAbd al-Malik*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2005.

Robinson, Neal, 'Hands Outstretched: Towards a Re-reading of *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 3 (2001), pp. 1–19.

Robinson, Neal, *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*, second edition, London: SCM Press, 2003.

Rubin, Uri, 'The Great Pilgrimage of Muḥammad: Some Notes on Sūra IX', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 27 (1982), pp. 241–60.

Rubin, Uri, 'The Kaᶜba: Aspects of Its Ritual Functions and Position in Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Times', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 8 (1986): 97–131.

Rubin, Uri, 'Ḥanīfiyya and Kaᶜba: An Inquiry into the Arabian Pre-Islamic Background of *Dīn Ibrāhīm*', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990), pp. 85–112.

Rubin, Uri, 'The Seal of the Prophets and the Finality of Prophecy: On the Interpretation of the Qurʾānic Sūrat al-Aḥzāb (33)', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 164 (2014), pp. 65–96.

Rudolph, Wilhelm, *Die Abhängigkeit des Qorans von Judentum und Christentum*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1922.

Sadeghi, Behnam, 'The Chronology of the Qurʾān: A Stylometric Research Program', *Arabica* 58 (2011), pp. 210–99.

Sadeghi, Behnam, and Uwe Bergmann, 'The Codex of a Companion of the Prophet and the Qurʾān of the Prophet', *Arabica* 57 (2010), pp. 343–436.

Sadeghi, Behnam, and Mohsen Goudarzi, 'Ṣanᶜāʾ 1 and the Origins of the Qurʾān', *Der Islam* 87 (2012), pp. 1–129.

Saleh, Walid A., 'The Etymological Fallacy and Qurʾanic Studies: Muhammad, Paradise, and Late Antiquity', in Neuwirth et al. (eds), *The Qurʾān in Context*, pp. 649–98.

Saleh, Walid A., 'End of Hope: Sūras 10–15, Despair and a Way Out of Mecca', in Angelika Neuwirth and Michael A. Sells (eds), *Qurʾānic Studies Today*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2016, pp. 105–23.

Scher, Addaï (ed. and trans.), 'Traités d'Isaï le docteur et de Hnana d'Adiabene sur les martyrs, le vendredi d'or et les rogations, et confession de foi à réciter par les evêques nestoriens avant l'ordination', *Patrologia Orientalis* 7 (1911), pp. 1–91.

Schmitz, Bertram, *Der Koran: Sure 2 „Die Kuh". Ein religionshistorischer Kommentar*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2009.

Schoeler, Gregor, 'The Codification of the Qurʾan: A Comment on the Hypotheses of Burton and Wansbrough', in Neuwirth et al. (eds), *The Qurʾān in Context*, pp. 779–94.

Schoeler, Gregor, *The Biography of Muḥammad: Nature and Authenticity*, trans. Uwe Vagelpohl, ed. James E. Montgomery, Abingdon: Routledge, 2011 (originally published as *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996).

Selb, Walter, and Hubert Kaufhold, *Das Syrisch-römische Rechtsbuch*, 3 vols, Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2002.

Shah, Mustafa, 'The Early Arabic Grammarians' Contributions to the Collection and Authentication of Qur'anic Readings: The Prelude to Ibn Mujāhid's *Kītāb al-Sabᶜa*', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 6 (2004), pp. 72–102.

Shahîd, Irfan, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1989.

Shahîd, Irfan, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, vol. 2, part 1: *Toponymy, Monuments, Historical Geography, and Frontier Studies*, Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002.

Shoemaker, Stephen J., 'Christmas in the Qurʾān: The Qurʾānic Account of Jesus' Nativity and Palestinian Local Tradition', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 28 (2003), pp. 11–39.

Shoemaker, Stephen J., *The Death of a Prophet: The End of Muhammad's Life and the Beginnings of Islam*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

Shoemaker, Stephen J., *The Apocalpyse of Empire: Imperial Eschatology in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (forthcoming).

Sinai, Nicolai, 'Qurʾānic Self-Referentiality as a Strategy of Self-Authorization', in Wild (ed.), *Self-Referentiality*, pp. 103–34.

Sinai, Nicolai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung: Studien zur frühen Koraninterpretation*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'Spinoza and Beyond: Some Reflections on Historical-Critical Methodology', in Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann and Georges Tamer (eds), *Kritische Religionsphilosophie: Eine Gedenkschrift für Friedrich Niewöhner*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010, pp. 193–214.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'The Qurʾan as Process', in Neuwirth et al. (eds), *The Qurʾān in Context*, pp. 407–39.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'An Interpretation of *Sūrat al-Najm* (Q. 53)', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 13 (2011), pp. 1–28.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'Religious Poetry from the Quranic Milieu: Umayya b. Abī l-Ṣalt on the Fate of the Thamūd', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 74 (2011), pp. 397–416.

Sinai, Nicolai, '"Weihnachten im Koran" oder "Nacht der Bestimmung"? Eine Interpretation von Sure 97', *Der Islam* 88 (2012), pp. 11–32.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'When Did the Consonantal Skeleton of the Quran Reach Closure?', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77 (2014), pp. 273–92 (Part One) and 509–21 (Part Two).

Sinai, Nicolai, 'Gottes Wort und menschliche Deutung: Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von islamischer Schriftauslegung und historischer Kritik', in Andreas

Feldtkeller and Notger Slenczka (eds), *Deutung des Wortes – Deutung der Welt im Gespräch zwischen Islam und Christentum*, Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015, pp. 151–71.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'Historical-Critical Readings of Abrahamic Scriptures', in Adam Silverstein and Guy Stroumsa (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Abrahamic Religions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 209–25.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'Der Koran', in Rainer Brunner (ed.), *Islam: Einheit und Vielfalt einer Weltreligion*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2016, pp. 132–66.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'The Unknown Known: Some Groundwork for Interpreting the Medinan Qur'an', *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 66 (2015–16), pp. 47–96.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'Inheriting Egypt: The Israelites and the Exodus in the Meccan Qurʾān', in Majid Daneshgar and Walid Saleh (eds), *Islamic Studies Today: Essays in Honor of Andrew Rippin*, Leiden: Brill, 2016, pp. 198–214.

Sinai, Nicolai, *Der Koran: Eine Einführung*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 2017 (revised edition of *Die Heilige Schrift des Islams: Die wichtigsten Fakten zum Koran*, Freiburg: Herder, 2012).

Sinai, Nicolai, 'Processes of Literary Growth and Editorial Expansion in Two Medinan Surahs', in Carol Bakhos and Michael Cook (eds), *Islam and its Past: Jāhiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Qur'an*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 69–119.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'Going Round in Circles', review of Cuypers, *Composition*, and Farrin, *Structure and Qur'anic Interpretation*, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 19 (2017), pp. 106–22.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'Inner-Qur'anic Chronology', forthcoming in Muhammad Abdel Haleem and Mustafa Shah (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'The Eschatological Kerygma of the Early Qur'an', forthcoming in Hagit Amirav, Emmanouela Grypeou, and Guy Stroumsa (eds), *Apocalypticism and Eschatology in Late Antiquity: Encounters in the Abrahamic Religions, 6th–8th Centuries*, Leuven: Peeters.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'Two Types of Inner-Qur'anic Interpretation', forthcoming in Georges Tamer (ed.), *Exegetical Crossroads: Understanding Scripture in Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Medieval Orient*, Berlin: De Gruyter.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'The Qurʾān', forthcoming in Herbert Berg (ed.), *Routledge Handbook on Early Islam*, New York: Routledge.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'Muhammad as an Episcopal Figure', forthcoming in *Arabica*.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'Pharaoh's Submission to God in the Qurʾān and in Rabbinic Literature: A Case Study in Qur'anic Intertextuality', forthcoming in Holger Zellentin (ed.), *The Qur'ān's Reformation of Judaism and Christianity*.

Sinai, Nicolai, 'The Qur'an's Dietary Tetralogue: A Diachronic Reconstruction', in preparation.

Sizgorich, Thomas, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, translation revised by Chester D. Hartranft, in Philip Schaff (ed.), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 2, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf202.html (accessed 17 April 2016).

Speyer, Heinrich, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1988 (originally published Breslau: Marcus, between 1937 and 1939).

Spinoza, *Opera*, ed. Carl Gebhardt, vol. 3, Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitaetsbuchhandlung, 1925.

Spitaler, Anton, *Die Verszählung des Koran nach islamischer Überlieferung*, Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1935.

Sprenger, Aloys, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Moḥammad nach bisher grösstentheils unbenutzten Quellen bearbeitet*, second edition, 3 vols, Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1869.

Stefanidis, Emmanuelle, 'The Qur'an Made Linear: A Study of the *Geschichte des Qorâns*' Chronological Reordering', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 10 (2008), pp. 1–22.

Stewart, Devin J., '*Saj*ᶜ in the Qurʾān: Prosody and Structure', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 21 (1990), pp. 101–39.

Stewart, Devin J., 'Pit', in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, 6 vols, Leiden: Brill, 2001–6, vol. 4, pp. 100–4.

Stewart, Devin J., 'Notes on Medieval and Modern Emendations of the Qurʾān', in Reynolds (ed.), *The Qurʾān in its Historical Context*, pp. 225–48.

Stewart, Devin J., 'Poetic License in the Qur'an: Ibn al-Ṣāʾigh al-Ḥanafī's *Iḥkām al-rāy fī aḥkām al-āy*', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 11 (2009), pp. 1–56.

Stewart, Devin J., 'The Mysterious Letters and Other Formal Features of the Qurʾān in Light of Greek and Babylonian Oracular Texts', in Reynolds (ed.), *New Perspectives*, pp. 323–48.

Stewart, Devin J., 'Divine Epithets and the *Dibacchius: Clausulae* and Qur'anic Rhythm', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 15 (2013), pp. 22–64.

Stewart, Devin [J.], 'Poetic Licence and the Qur'anic Names of Hell: The Treatment of Cognate Substitution in al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī's Qur'anic Lexicon', in Stephen R. Burge (ed.), *The Meaning of the Word: Lexicology and Qur'anic Exegesis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 195–253.

Stewart, Devin J., 'Consensus, Authority, and the Interpretive Community in the Thought of Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 18 (2016), pp. 130–79.

Strack, H. L., and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. and ed. Markus Bockmuehl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.

Stroumsa, Guy G., *The End of Sacrifice: Religious Transformations in Late Antiquity*, trans. Susan Emanuel, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Stroumsa, Guy G., *A New Science: The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Stroumsa, Guy G., 'Jewish Christianity and Islamic Origins', in Behnam Sadeghi et al. (eds), *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts: Essays in Honor of Professor Patricia Crone*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, pp. 72–96.

al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn, *al-Itqān fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, 7 vols, al-Madīnah: Majmaʿ al-Malik Fahd li-ṭibāʿat al-muṣḥaf al-sharīf, AH 1426.

Taha, Mahmoud Mohamed, *The Second Message of Islam*, trans. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naʿim, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987.

Tesei, Tommaso, '"The Romans Will Win!" Q 30:2–7 in Light of 7th-century Political Eschatology', forthcoming.

Theodor, Yehudah, and Chanoch Albeck (eds), *Midrash Bereshit Rabbah*, second edition, 3 vols, Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1965.

Toral-Niehoff, Isabel, 'The ʿIbād of al-Ḥīra: An Arab Christian Community in Late Antique Iraq', in Neuwirth et al. (eds), *The Qurʾān in Context*, pp. 323–47.

Toral-Niehoff, Isabel, *Al-Ḥīra: Eine arabische Kulturmetropole im spätantiken Kontext*, Leiden: Brill, 2014.

ʿUmar, Aḥmad Mukhtār and ʿAbd al-ʿĀl Sālim Makram, *Muʿjam al-qirāʾāt al-qurʾāniyyah*, second edition, 8 vols, Kuwait: Dhāt al-Salāsil, 1988.

Van Bladel, Kevin, 'The Alexander Legend in the Qurʾān 18:83–102', in Reynolds (ed.), *The Qurʾān in its Historical Context*, pp. 175–203.

Versteegh, Kees, *The Arabic Language*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001.

Vollers, Karl, *Volkssprache und Schriftsprache im alten Arabien*, Straßburg: Trübner, 1906.

Wagner, Ewald, *Grundzüge der klassischen arabischen Dichtung*, vol. 1: *Die altarabische Dichtung*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1987.

Wagtendonk, Kees, 'Fasting', in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, 6 vols, Leiden: Brill, 2001–6, vol. 2, pp. 180–5.

Wansbrough, John, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977 (reprinted Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2004).

Wansbrough, John, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978 (reprinted Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2006).

Watt, W. Montgomery, *Muhammad at Mecca*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953.

Watt, W. Montgomery, *Muhammad at Medina*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956.

Watt, W. Montgomery, 'The Dating of the Qurʾān: A Review of Richard Bell's Theories', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 89 (1957), pp. 46–56.

Watt, W. Montgomery, *Bell's Introduction to the Qurʾān*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970.

Weil, Gustav, *Mohammed der Prophet, sein Leben und seine Lehre*, Stuttgart: Verlag der J. B. Metzler'schen Buchhandlung, 1843.

Weil, Gustav, *Historisch-kritische Einleitung in den Koran*, Bielefeld: Velhagen & Klasing, 1844.

Welch, Alford T., 'Muhammad's Understanding of Himself: The Koranic Data', in Richard G. Hovannisian and Speros Vryonis, Jr (eds), *Islam's Understanding of Itself*, Malibu: Undena Publications, 1983, pp. 15–52.

Wellhausen, Julius, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, second edition, Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1897.

Wild, Stefan, '"Die schauerliche Öde des heiligen Buches": Westliche Wertungen des koranischen Stils', in Alma Giese and J. Christoph Bürgel (eds), *Gott ist schön und er liebt die Schönheit: Festschrift für Annemarie Schimmel zum 7. April 1992 dargebracht von Schülern, Freunden und Kollegen*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1994, pp. 429–47.

Wild, Stefan (ed.), *Self-Referentiality in the Qurʾān*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006.

Wild, Stefan, 'Why Self-Referentiality?', in Wild (ed.), *Self-Referentiality*, pp. 1–23.

Wild, Stefan. 'Lost in Philology? The Virgins of Paradise and the Luxenberg Hypothesis', in Neuwirth et al. (eds), *The Qurʾān in Context*, pp. 625–47.

Witztum, Joseph, 'The Foundations of the House (Q 2: 127)', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 72 (2009), pp. 25–40.

Witztum, Joseph, 'Joseph among the Ishmaelites: Q 12 in Light of Syriac Sources', in Reynolds (ed.), *New Perspectives*, pp. 425–48.

Witztum, Joseph, 'Variant Traditions, Relative Chronology, and the Study of Intra-Quranic Parallels', in Behnam Sadeghi, Asad Q. Ahmed, Adam Silverstein, and Robert Hoyland (eds), *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts: Essays in Honor of Professor Patricia Crone*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, pp. 1–50.

Wüstenfeld, Ferdinand (ed.), *Das Leben Muhammed's nach Muhammed Ibn Ishâk bearbeitet von Abd el-Malik Ibn Hischâm*, 2 vols, Göttingen: Dieterichsche Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1858–60.

Zahniser, A. H. Mathias, 'Sūra as Guidance and Exhortation: The Composition of *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*', in Asma Afsaruddin and A. H. Mathias Zahniser (eds), *Humanism, Culture, and Language in the Near East: Studies in Honor of Georg Krotkoff*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997, pp. 71–85.

Zahniser, A. H. Mathias, 'Major Transitions and Thematic Borders in Two Long Sūras: *al-Baqara* and *al-Nisāʾ*', in Issa J. Boullata (ed.), *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qurʾān*, Richmond: Curzon, 2000, pp. 26–55.

Zebiri, Kate, *Maḥmūd Shaltūt and Islamic Modernism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

Zellentin, Holger M., *The Qurʾān's Legal Culture: The Didascalia Apostolorum as a Point of Departure*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013.

Zellentin, Holger M., '*Aḥbār* and *Ruhbān*: Religious Leaders in the Qurʾān in Dialogue with Christian and Rabbinic Literature', in Angelika Neuwirth and Michael A. Sells (eds), *Qurʾānic Studies Today*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2016, pp. 262–93.

Zenger, Erich, 'Der Psalter als Buch: Beobachtungen zu seiner Entstehung, Komposition und Funktion,' in Erich Zenger (ed.), *Der Psalter in Judentum und Christentum*, Herder: Freiburg, 1998, pp. 1–57.

Zirker, Hans, *Der Koran. Zugänge und Lesarten*, Darmstadt: Lambert Schneider, 2012.

Index of concepts, names, and Arabic terms

Note: The alphabetic ordering of Arabic names and terms ignores the Arabic article *al-*, the letter *ʿayn*, and all diacritics. Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to one (or more) of the notes found on that page. Names of scholars whose publications are cited in the notes but who do not appear in the main text are normally disregarded.

Index of Qur'anic passages

Note: The index only takes account of verses that are the subject of a minimal amount of comment and discussion; references that are primarily illustrative are normally disregarded. Qur'anic references (in bold) are separated from the following page numbers by a comma. Thus, **Q 1: 5**, 36n means that at least one of the notes on p. 36 contains a remark on Q 1: 5 while **Q 6**, 29–30, 126–7 means that pp. 29–30 and 126–7 contain a discussion of surah 6 as a whole.