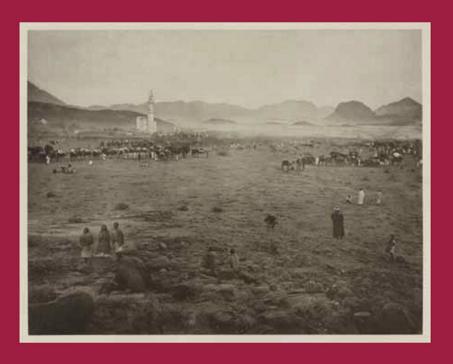# The Qurʾānic Pagans and Related Matters

Collected Studies in Three Volumes

VOLUME 1

BY

PATRICIA CRONE

EDITED BY

HANNA SIURUA

BRILL

The Qur'ānic Pagans and Related Matters

Islamic History and Civilization

Patricia Crone, 29 January 2004
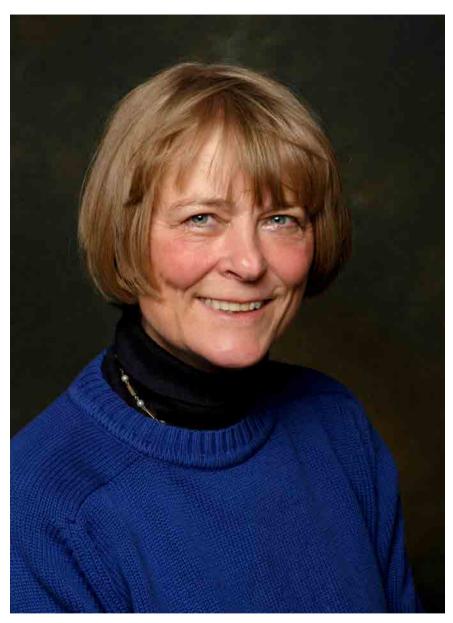PHOTOGRAPH BY CLIFF MOORE/INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY,
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Editor's Preface

The origins of this collection of studies lie in Patricia Crone's February 2013 visit to Leiden, where she received an honorary doctorate from Leiden University and gave a lecture on how the field of Islamic studies had changed over her lifetime. Subsequent discussions between her and Petra Sijpesteijn over the possible publication of that lecture grew into the idea of compiling a collection of her recent, forthcoming and unpublished articles. Professor Crone herself selected, arranged and in some cases revised the articles to be included in the collection. Most of the articles are reprinted, but a few are published for the first time in this collection; these include articles 14 and 15 in volume 1 and articles 3, 8, 9 and 10 (the lecture mentioned above) in volume 3.

Each volume focuses on a particular theme. The present volume brings together studies on the community from which Muḥammad emerged and the book that he brought; the second volume is dedicated to Iranian religious trends both before and after the arrival of Islam; and the third volume treats Islam in the historical context of the ancient Near East, with special attention to materialists, sceptics and other 'godless' people. Each volume includes a bibliography of Professor Crone's publications.

All of the articles have been typeset anew, but the page numbers of the original publications (wherever available) are indicated in the margin. Where note numbering has changed in the reprint as a consequence of revisions, the original note numbers are given in superscript at the beginning of the affected notes.

I have edited the articles with a very light hand. Errors and misprints have been corrected, the author's revisions and additions have been incorporated, incomplete and previously forthcoming citations have been updated and the transliteration of Arabic and Persian has been standardised to follow the Arabic transliteration scheme of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (modified in the case of elisions). The few editorial interventions beyond these are bracketed and marked as mine ('Ed.'). Citation, punctuation and spelling practices in each article reflect those of the original publication, with only minor, silent changes.

I would like to thank Sabine Schmidtke, María Mercedes Tuya and Casey Westerman at the Institute for Advanced Study; Kathy van Vliet, Teddi Dols and Arthur Westerhof at Brill; Ahmed El Shamsy, Itamar Francez, M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, Masoud Jafari Jazi, Martin Mulsow, Bilal Orfali, Petra Sijpesteijn and Frank Stewart for help with queries; Mariam Sheibani for research assistance;

Dana E. Lee for her editorial work; and especially Michael Cook, Professor Crone's literary executor, who oversaw the finalising of the volumes once Professor Crone was no longer able to fill that role herself.

Hanna Siurua
Chicago, January 2016

Author's Preface

These articles mostly seek to reconstruct the religion of the Messenger's opponents, but also to locate other clues to the religious environment in which Islam arose. They do so partly by breaking away from traditional *tafsīr* and partly by relating the Qurʾān to earlier religious writings in the Near East, to see where on the map of religious developments of the Near East we can place the book. This approach is often called 'intertextual'. Others call it study of 'borrowings', a term I strongly dislike. Practically every thought we have in our heads came into them from our parents, siblings, friends and colleagues. Most of them are inherited, the rest acquired later, a few developed by ourselves. Our ideas reflect the intellectual environment in which we grew up. Of course they are 'our own', but we do not arrive from the moon with identities and thoughts shared with nobody else. We would have a hard time functioning in human society if we did. Because our ideas reflect the environment in which we have grown up and later function, one can identify our environment on the basis of our writings. Does this mean that we 'must have borrowed or inherited' all our views from earlier belief systems rather than elaborated them from our own principles and assumptions? This is what Sidney Griffith claims we implicitly claim about the Qurʾān (S. Griffith, 'Syriacisms in the "Arabic Qurʾān": Who were "those who said 'Allāh is third of three'" according to *al-Māʾida* 73?', in M.M. Bar-Asher and others (eds.), *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies in Mediaeval Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the Qurʾān Presented to Haggai Ben Shammai*, Jerusalem 2007, 83*–110*, note 20). His reasoning presumably is that things rooted in the pre-Islamic Arabian tradition are native and those which come from outside Arabia are foreign, and thus borrowed. But did the Christian Arabs 'borrow' Christianity from the Syrians and Greeks? It seems a primitive response. Our own assumptions are imbided with the environment, shaped by earlier generations. We develop our own thought on that basis. What students of the Qurʾān are interested in is the basis on which the Qurʾān developed its own assumptions and tenets. I do indeed 'borrow' ideas from others. As scholars we are endlessly doing it, and footnoting our sources. Novelists, filmmakers, painters and composers borrow too, without using footnotes. What it amounts to is that we build up our view of the world or a particular subject in interaction with others, from whom we are always picking up new information, evaluations and analyses. One has to have a pretty insecure sense of identity to reject this elementary truth as a demeaning attempt to deny our 'originality', whatever exactly that may be. The Messenger was different because he was a prophet who got it all from God, but that is a religious dogma to which no empirical scholar can subscribe qua scholar (as

a believer it is a different matter). From a scholarly and natural science point of view, all humans are human with human knowledge acquired the human way.

Does this mean you can't be a scholar and a believer? Evidently not. A great deal of cutting-edge scholarship on the Bible is written by believers, whose interest in the subject arises from their faith, but who do their best not to let it colour their research. Robertson Smith, taken to court for blasphemy, yet a devout believer all his life, is an obvious example. Faith is about the transcendent, not open to empirical enquiry. The clash only arises because believers express the inexpressible in the same human, empirical language as that used for everything else. They ground their faith in history, but history as corroboration of dogmatic positions rather than history as seen from the vantage point of that time itself.

What good is it to understand how it was in its own time? One reason is that you cannot see regularities or formulate general trends ('rules' is more than one can hope for) if you judge in terms of how it looks now. The second reason is less utilitarian. Would you not like to be understood for what you were in your own time rather than what some will make of you? We live short lives, try to make our mark, hoping for some kind of afterlife in memories about us. We owe it to past people to try to understand them, just as we hope future people will respect us. The third reason is the sheer excitement of seeing past landscapes, of learning to understand 'the Other'. We never know whether we have succeeded; the same is true in everyday life. We never reach anything like perfect understanding. But we try. This is part of the attempt to understand how the world has got to be the world we inhabit now.

In the course of my career I have had occasion to change my view on some things, and on top of that a great many views I have never held have been imputed to me. It may accordingly be in order for me to outline what I have in fact said in the course of my career, and where I stand now.

Contrary to what many people imagine, Michael Cook and I did not say much about the Qur'ān in *Hagarism* (1977). We suggested that it was put together on the basis of earlier Muslim ('Hagarene') religious works (*Hagarism*, 17 f.), which is in a sense what the tradition itself tells us. *Kānat al-Qur'ān kutuban*, as the rebels against 'Uthmān complain, counting his collection of the many books into one among his misdeeds. But as the tradition sees it, all these books were records of Muḥammad's revelations, whereas we thought they might represent 'a plurality of traditions'; and we also proposed that they were put together after the reign of 'Uthmān, in the time of 'Abd al-Malik, as suggested by stories about al-Ḥajjāj. The main argument was that they had been put together fast.

Thereafter I said nothing about the question till two articles published in 1994. In one article I remarked that Wansbrough had a point in not treating the Qurʾān as Muḥammad's own word, but I nonetheless treated it as such for the purposes of the article ('The First-Century Concept of *Hiǧra*', *Arabica* 41, 1994, pp. 352–387). In 'Two Legal Problems Bearing on the Early History of the Qurʾān' (*Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 18, 1994, pp. 1–37) I suggested mid-Umayyad codification again, this time to explain the gap between Qurʾānic legislation and early Islamic law. I was struck by the fact that there are Qurʾānic passages that even the earliest exegetes do not understand, and that these passages include some of major legal importance. The exegetes merely guess. But as I noted, they never change the text they do not understand, and late codification is actually a very bad solution to this problem. If they all reproduce the same text without understanding what it means, the obvious inference is that they are dealing with scripture that was already old in their time, not that it was elevated to scriptural status later. This is my position now. Much of the Qurʾān must be older, whether adapted by the Messenger or not.

In 2010 Behnam Sadeghi published the result of his work on a palimpsest found in Ṣanʿāʾ (B. Sadeghi and U. Bergmann, 'The Codex of a Companion of the Prophet and the Qurʾān of the Prophet', *Arabica* 57, 2010, pp. 343–436). Carbon dating assigned the lower level to the first half of the seventh century. To me, this was a breakthrough. The palimpsest undoubtedly came from a complete Qurʾān. There was a complete Qurʾān by the second half of the seventh century. It was not identical with the one we have today in every detail, but the variants do not change the fact that it is the same book. There is also the question of whether it included all the suras now in it, more specifically whether it included *sūrat al-baqara* or left it as a separate book. But for all that, we have a hard fact: the Qurʾān existed by the time when the tradition says it existed. There is no longer any good reason to doubt that ʿUthmān set up a commission that produced a Qurʾān.

I have not said a word about the history of the Qurʾān since 1994 and do not in fact have any views on it. I did not intend ever to work on the book. In 1999, however, Gerald Hawting published his book *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History* (Cambridge 1999), and I was asked to review it. I found the idea of Muḥammad's opponents as monotheists utterly implausible. Skeptic though I was about almost everything the tradition told me, I had no doubt that Islam had arisen in a pagan environment, and I had spent a great deal of time trying to work out a particular feature of Arabian paganism (in 'Tribes without Saints', on the distribution of holy men in Arabia, an article published for the first time in this collection).

I found paganism much more interesting than Judaism and Christianity and was pained by Hawting's attempt to write it out of the origins of Islam altogether, but I obviously had to check his evidence. This was when I started reading the Qurʾān systematically, with a view to seeing how far it was in line with the traditional account. I was quite shocked. It was obvious that Hawting was right: the so-called *mushrikūn* were not the pagans depicted in the tradition. It was also obvious that I had never really read the book before, not even the parts I thought I had read. I suffered yet another shock when I was asked to write the entry on 'War' for the *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān* (included as article 8 in the present volume). Islam having arisen in a belligerent tribal environment, I expected this belligerence to be clear in the book. I had never appreciated how difficult it was for the Messenger to persuade his audience to go to war, and how much he himself insists on tit for tat, no more. The blood-curdling passages are mobilising rather than legislating. Around then I also reread Maḥmūd Shaltūt on holy war (*al-Qurʾān wa'l-qitāl*, Nazareth 1948). He goes in for understanding the Qurʾān in the light of the Qurʾān. The first time I only saw the apologetics. The apologetics were still clear the second time round, but so was the fact that practically everything he said was right. The Qurʾānic treatment of war is quite unlike what one expects a tribal environment to produce, indeed quite unlike what the jurists made of it. As Shaltūt notes, they have to postulate endless abrogation to make things fit.

These shocks made me work more on the Qurʾān. My interest was in the *mushrikūn*, the Messenger's opponents, the people he is breaking away from. What sort of people were they, practicing what kind of religion? I began by studying the natural environment reflected in the Qurʾān. It is so surprising that everything the Messenger says to the *mushrikūn* is based on the assumption that they were agriculturalists or seafarers, not traders. All the significant discussion of trade comes in the Medinese suras and is directed to the Messenger's own followers. The *mushrikūn* were growers of olives. This means that the environment reflected in the Meccan suras, or at least in sura 6, cannot be Mecca, or for that matter Medina. Somewhere in northern Arabia is possible. About the same time I wrote an article based on the tradition that went in precisely the opposite direction ('Quraysh and the Roman Army: Making Sense of the Meccan Leather Trade', article 2 in the present volume): I made sense of the Qurashī leather trade that had bothered me since I wrote *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (1987). Muḥammad's opponents are traders there, not agriculturalists as in the Meccan suras, and it is hard to say it is invented. A trading center is involved in the rise of Islam, but it is not the community reflected in the Meccan suras.

Several of the articles in this volume are about the religion of the *mushrikūn*. All work on the Qur'ān focuses on the Messenger, his view, and his sources; there is not a single monograph nor, to my knowledge, was there even a single article on the religion of his 'pagan' opponents or their view of him. It was somewhat like writing the rise of Christianity on the basis of the gospels without ever wondering what kind of religious community it is that Jesus is operating in and disagreeing with. Of course, our knowledge of Palestinian Judaism in the time of Jesus is indescribably better than our knowledge of any religion in Arabia in the time of Muḥammad. But one can in fact learn something from the Qur'ān, or so I contend.

My work on the Qur'ān is done on the basis of the Qur'ān alone, for the reasons set out in the article 'The Religion of the Qur'ānic Pagans: God and the Lesser Deities' (article 3 in the present volume). I do sometimes use the exegetical literature, especially when there are problems, but I use it as secondary literature and do not feel obliged always to cite it before giving my own understanding, let alone to restrict my own interpretations to a choice from among theirs. I often found the exegetes much less given to storytelling and *asbāb al-nuzūl* than I expected. The Islamicist account of the rise of Islam is overwhelmingly based on ḥadīth, indeed on ḥadīth as opposed to the Qur'ān, reflecting the preference for tradition that prevailed among Muslims themselves until quite recently. It is the revolt against traditional *tafsīr*, the move back to the Qur'ān, of the modernists that allows all of us to take the Qur'ān as evidence in a way that would have been unthinkable forty years ago.

Finally, I should say something about the believers to whom I am a bête noir. They see me as engaged in a crusade against Islam, which is not at all the case. I am simply a historian interested in the secular question of how a new religion arose. I do not believe that God is speaking in the Qur'ān or anywhere else in the world historical literature, but I am not trying to prove that since I take it for granted. It is the premise on which I work. Even if I privately believed that God had inspired this or that religion, I could not use this belief in my historical research. Historians study what people believe about God and the effects this has on history. Whether their beliefs are true or false according to the historian is neither here nor there, since they had the effect they had regardless of what he/she thinks. Historians do end up showing that history did not develop as the believers said, but the fact that the Bible is not a reliable historical record does not mean that people stop believing in Judaism or Christianity, and the same applies to Islam. It is true that once a revealed book or religious tradition is shown to be fallible in terms of secular history, it loses something of its authority; belief becomes a more voluntaristic and individualistic matter. For purposes of authority, a community deferring to a single infallible scripture is

indeed preferable. If I were a Muslim committed to the traditional structures of authority, I would also be violently opposed to someone like myself. But in terms of belief, history is neither here nor there.

Patricia Crone
Princeton, July 2014

List of Original Publications and Acknowledgments

How Did the Quranic Pagans Make a Living?*

Among the better known essay questions set for students of Islamic subjects in the UK is the one asking for comments on the dictum that 'The Quran is the only reliable source for the rise of Islam'. Students typically respond with an account of the formation of the canonical text and a comment that however we envisage this process, the Quran is not a source rich in historical information. Few could disagree with that. Historians of the life and times of the Prophet use the Quran as explained in *tafsīr*, which supplies the names, dates, stories and other supplementary data that they need, and they unwittingly tend to do so even when they think they are using the Quran alone. But we may have reached the point of under-estimating the book as a source. Rich in historical evidence it may not be, but we are not in the habit of squeezing it for information either, presumably because the sheer abundance of the exegetical material seems to make it unnecessary. With so many works of *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth* and *sīra* to attend to, one comes to think of Quranic statements as in the nature of mere captions for which the substance must be sought elsewhere. This is entirely in order for historians of readers' reactions to the book, but it evidently will not do for those interested in the society out of which the book emerged. In what follows I shall ignore the exegetical tradition in order to look at the Quran on its own, with a view to answering one simple question: how does it envisage the *mushrikūn* with whom it takes issue as making a living?

1 Agriculture

In sura 36 the Prophet is told to warn a people whose fathers had not been warned and who were both heedless and unresponsive: admonished or otherwise, they would not believe; rather, they mocked the Messenger (36:6–10, 30). Among the signs with which the Messenger tries to persuade these obstinate people is that God revives dead land and brings forth grain (*ḥabban*) of which they eat, as well as gardens of date palms and grapes (*jannāt min nakhīl wa-aʿnāb*), and that He causes springs (*al-ʿuyūn*) to gush forth in them so that

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they may eat of the fruit. 'It was not their hands which made it, so will they not give thanks?', he says (vv. 33–35). The same point is made at 56:63 f.: 'Have you considered the soil you till? Do you yourselves sow it, or are We the sowers?'[1] In these passages the unbelievers are agriculturalists who foolishly think that they are causing grain, date palms, grapes and the like to grow. They are suffering from the human propensity to arrogance, for in actual fact it is God who causes these things to appear.

One is mildly surprised by these passages, given that the Meccans, with whom the obstinate people are traditionally identified, are well known to every Islamicist as traders whose city was located in a barren spot. But they are only two out of many passages in the Quran which suggest that the Prophet's opponents were agriculturalists, whatever else they may have been in addition. God's revival of dead land is a prominent theme, both as a sign of His awesome power and as a proof of the resurrection, and the reference is overwhelmingly to cultivated plants, not to the flowers that appear in the desert in spring or other wild vegetation. God causes luxuriant gardens (*ḥadāʾiq dhāt bahja*) to | grow (27:60; cf. 80:30). He sends down rain, producing plants (*nabāt*) of all kinds, including greens (*khaḍir*), grain (*ḥabb*), date palms (*nakhl*), and gardens (*jannāt*) of grapes (*aʿnāb*), olives (*al-zaytūn*) and pomegranates (*al-rummān*) (6:99), or simply fruits of all kinds (7:57; cf. 14:32). Other passages mention grain and (other) plants (78:15), gardens, grain and date palms (50:9 f.), date palms and grapes (16:67; 23:19), date palms, grain, grapes and olives (16:11), and grapes, dates, olives, fruits and fodder, all of which are 'goods for you and your cattle (*matāʿan lakum wa-li-anʿāmikum*)' (80:27–32). Here the unbelievers are not explicitly said to be growing such things themselves, however.

That they were agriculturalists is none the less clear from the fact that they had agricultural rituals of which the Messenger strongly disapproves. 'They assign to God, out of the harvest and cattle that He has multiplied, a portion saying, "This is for God"—so they assert—and this is for our associates. But the share of their associates does not reach God, whereas that which is for God reaches their associates' (6:136); 'And they say, this cattle and harvest are forbidden (*ḥijr*), nobody should eat it except whoever We wish, as they claim' (6:138). The ritual seems to consist in the consecration of the first fruits of agriculture and the first offspring of domestic animals to the divine, and it is one of the many passages showing that the *mushrikūn* believed in the same

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1   In translations from the Quran in this article, 'you' is always in the plural unless otherwise noted, and the translations are usually modified versions of Arberry or Yusuf Ali.

God as the Messenger.[2] Apparently, the portions dedicated to God and His 'associates' were left to be eaten by 'whoever God wished', perhaps meaning the poor and travellers. They were in any case forbidden to the owners of the first fruits/offspring themselves.

The Messenger responds partly by denying that God would receive any of it (all would go to the 'associates', i.e. the lesser divine beings, who are implicitly identified as demonic here) and partly by setting out how one should actually behave. He reiterates that it is God who is responsible for the growth of gardens, date palms (*al-nakhl*), seed produce (*zarʿ*) of various kinds, olives (*al-zaytūn*), and pomegranates (*al-rummān*) and adds: 'eat of their fruits when they fructify and pay the due (*ḥaqqahu*) thereof on the day of their harvest, and do not be prodigal: God does not like the prodigal. And of cattle some are for burdens and others for meat. Eat of what God has provided you with and follow not in the footsteps of Satan' (6:141 f.). Once again, it is clear that we are in an agricultural community. Both the infidels and the believers have fields, gardens and cattle; both harvest grain, olives and pomegranates, but they have different views on how God wishes the harvest to be handled.

The pagans also had other rituals to do with cattle. There were animals on which it was forbidden to ride and others over which they would not mention the name of God (i.e. when they slaughtered them); apparently, slaughter was normally hallowed (6:138). There was also a custom of reserving the unborn young of some animals for the men of the community, forbidding their wives to eat of them unless the young were stillborn, in which case they would share them (6:139). Apparently, it was pairs of animals that were set aside in one or all of these rituals, for the Messenger responds by listing pairs of sheep (*al-ḍaʾn*), goats (*al-maʿiz*), camels (*al-ibl*) and cows/oxen (*al-baqar*), sarcastically asking exactly what it is that God is supposed to have forbidden: two males or two females, or the unborn young of two females? And were the unbelievers present when God ordered such a thing? All this, he says, is something they have falsely attributed to God in order to lead people astray | (6:143 f.). Once again, he responds by setting out the truth: nothing is forbidden unless it is carrion, blood, pork, or meat hallowed to other than God (6:145). Elsewhere, he tells a warning parable culminating in the same rules (16:112–116).

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Here, then, we see that it was not just camels that the infidels kept, but also sheep, goats, cows and oxen. 'He has created cattle for you. In them is warmth (*difʾ*) and benefits and you eat of them', as sura 16:5 says; 'and there

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2　See W.M. Watt, 'Belief in a "High God" in Pre-Islamic Mecca', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 16, 1971; G.R. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam* (Cambridge, 1999).

is beauty in them for you, when you bring them home to rest (in the evening) and when you drive them forth abroad to pasture (in the morning) (*wa-lakum fīhā jamāl ḥīna turīḥūna wa-ḥīna tasraḥūna*)' (16:5). The reference here is to the flocks that one can still see being driven to and from villages on a daily basis in the Middle East, and the remark that their owners found them beautiful is particularly suggestive: we are in a rural community in terms of values too. When the owners are said to derive warmth from their cattle, the reference is to the goods made 'of their wool, fur, and hair' listed among the benefits of cattle in another passage (in which they are not however described as their owners) (16:80). On the day of judgement mountains will be 'like carded wool' (101:5).[3] People are told not to break their covenants with God and thus behave like a woman who unravels the thread she has spun[4] (16:91 f.), while the infidels are reminded that cattle provide them with food and drink, and that they ride on them (23:21; 36:71–73, where they are explicitly described as owning them). They also had horses, mules and donkeys, on all of which they rode (16:8).

That we are in an agricultural community is confirmed by two parables. One is about a group of people who own a garden and decide to collect its fruit the next morning; they resolve to do so without saying 'God willing', however, and the garden is ruined during the night (*ṭāfa ʿalayhā ṭāʾif min rabbika*); ignorant of this, they set out the next morning, determined to prevent poor people from getting into the garden first, and when they find it ruined, they turn to God in repentance, expressing the hope that He will give them a better garden than this (i.e. in the next world, 68:17–33).[5] The moral, as so often, is that humans must learn to recognize their own impotence vis-à-vis God, who here manifests His power through some destructive force of nature. The second parable, which is much longer, concerns two men, who prove to be a believer and an unbeliever (18:32–44). God gave two gardens to one of them (not, as one expects, a garden to each, though this was probably how an earlier version was told). The gardens were of grapes, each garden was surrounded by date palms (*nakhl*), and there was a field (*zarʿ*) and a canal (*nahr*) in between. Both gardens produced abundant produce. We are not told what the other man received, but he clearly was not doing as well, for the owner of the two gardens boasted to him of his superior wealth and power. The wealthy man also wronged himself by going into his garden (now in the singular), saying, 'I do not think that this

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3   Thus Yusuf Ali (Arberry has 'like plucked wool-tufts').

4   Or like the woman who unravelled the thread she span (a reading suggestive of Penelope).

5   The parable is taken to refer to firstfruits in J. Benthall, 'Firstfruits in the Quran', in A.I. Baumgarten (ed.), *Sacrifice in Religious Experience* (Leiden, 2002) (following Décobert). He does not discuss 6:136.

will ever perish, nor do I think that the hour is coming (*qāʾima*); and if I am really to be returned to my Lord, I will surely find something better there in exchange'. The poor man responded by asking him whether he did not believe in God, who had created him from a sperm-drop, though the wealthy man had not denied God's existence: here as so often, *kufr* seems to lie not in unbelief, but rather in failure to take account of God in one's thought and action. The wealthy man had apparently compounded his | arrogance with *shirk*, however, for the poor man continued by affirming that 'He is God, my Lord and I do not associate anyone with my Lord'. The poor man also told the wealthy man that the latter should have said, 'as God will, there is no power except in God', when he went into his garden thinking that it would never perish, and that although he was not himself well endowed with wealth and sons, the Lord might give him something better than this garden (i.e. in the next world). The poor man added that God might also send a thunderbolt against the wealthy man's garden, turning it into mere sand, or He might make the water run off underground so that he would never be able to find it again; and God apparently did just that, for the continuation tells us that the rich man's fruits were destroyed (*uḥīṭa*), and that he went around wringing his hands and wailing, 'If only I had not associated anyone with my Lord'. There was nobody to help him apart from God Himself, the only source of protection.

This is a portrait of the archetypal *mushrik*. Here, as elsewhere in the Quran, he is a man well endowed with wealth and sons (68:14; cf. 8:28, 18:46; 57:20) who believes in God, but ascribes partners to Him, only to find out that the supposed partners cannot or will not help him against God (e.g. 16:27; 26:92 ff.; 28:62 ff.; 46:5). Here as elsewhere, too, he denies that the day of judgement is about to come anytime soon or at all (e.g. 17:51; 25:11; 34:3; 45:32) and has his doubts about the resurrection. Often, the *mushrikūn* reject the idea of bodily resurrection out of hand (e.g. 13:5; 17:49–52, 98; 22:5; 36:78), or perhaps even the afterlife (e.g. 6:29, 150; 34:8); at the very least they did not fear any reckoning (*ḥisāb*) (78:27). Here there is no reference to the form that afterlife might take, and the idea of a return to God is not positively ruled out, but the possibility of other-worldly punishment is denied. As so often, it is by arrogance that the *mushrik* wrongs himself:[6] he is too pleased with himself, too confident in his own all too human power, and too lacking in fear of God to listen to warnings when they come. 'He thinks that his wealth will make him last for ever', as 104:3 puts it. God duly inflicts disaster on him, destroying his garden in

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6 Cf. *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān* (ed. J.D. McAuliffe), (Leiden, 2001–), s.v. 'arrogance' (Nasr Abu Zayd).

much the same way that He destroyed past nations. The Messenger repeatedly warns his infidel opponents that a similar disaster will soon overtake them too.

The archetypal *mushrik* is an agriculturalist, then. In line with this, the nations to whom earlier prophets were sent are also depicted as agriculturalists. Hūd told his people that God had given them cattle and sons, gardens and springs (26:133 f.), promising them abundant rain if they would repent (11:52); Ṣāliḥ asked his people if they would remain secure in their gardens, springs, fields and date palms with spathes almost breaking with the weight of the fruit (26:146–148). 'Have they not travelled in the land and seen how those before them ended up?', the Messenger asks, noting that the nations in question wronged themselves and came to a bad end even though 'they were more powerful than them; they tilled the land and developed it more than they have done' (*wa-athārū ʾl-arḍ wa-ʿamarūhā akthara mimmā ʿamarūhā*, 30:9 and, more briefly, 40:21). Saba' had two gardens and were told to 'eat of the sustenance [provided] by your Lord', but they turned away from God, so He sent a flood which destroyed their gardens (34:15 f.). The people that Moses took out of Egypt were also agriculturalists: they left behind gardens, springs and fields (44:25 f.; cf. 26:57–59).

391   All the suras adduced so far are classified as Meccan, though there is dis-agreement about 6:141 ('eat of their fruits when they fructify and pay the due thereof on the day of their harvest').[7] The division of the suras into Meccan and Medinese comes from the tradition, of course, and no attention has been paid to it so far; but readers wondering if the many references to agriculture could date from after the Prophet's *hijra* to the agricultural oasis at Yathrib should know that as far as the tradition is concerned, the answer is 'no'.

We do, however, hear about agriculture in the suras identified as Medinese as well. Thus a parable likens those who spend in the path of God to a grain of corn that sprouts seven ears, each containing a hundred grains: in the same way, God grants manifold increase to whom He will (2:261). Or those who spend in God's path are like a garden on a hill which doubles its produce when it is hit by heavy rain and manages perfectly well with dew at other times (2:265), whereas those who spend to show off to human beings are like a rock covered by a thin layer of soil: heavy rain washes it away so that they can do nothing (2:264). What the infidels spend on this world is like a freezing wind that ruins

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7   The problem was the relationship between the rule imposed in this verse and *zakāt*, imposed in Medina, not the depiction of the believers of agriculturalists. See for example Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (Tehran, 1413), xiii, 213.

the harvest of men who have wronged themselves (3:117). There are people who speak agreeably about this world, but actually aim to spread corruption and ruin harvests and offspring (*al-ḥarth wa'l-nasl*, 2:205). And who would want to have a garden of date palms, grapes and fruits of all kinds with canals flowing underneath when he is stricken with old age and has weak offspring, only to have it destroyed by a whirlwind with a fire, the Messenger asks in a likeness that escapes me (2:266). All this is much as before, except that the canals in the last passage are running underneath the gardens (presumably in the form of *qanāt*s), as they also do in Paradise, rather than between them (in the forms of springs and canals), as they do among the *mushrikūn*. The cow that the Israelites were commanded to sacrifice is envisaged as 'not broken in to plough the soil or water the cultivated land' (*lā dhalūl tuthīru 'l-arḍ wa-lā tasqī 'l-ḥarth*) (2:71), and the desirable things of this world still include cattle and cultivated land (*al-anʿām wa'l-ḥarth*) (3:14).

'Agriculture and vegetation figure prominently in the Qurʾān, reflecting their significance in the environment in which the text was revealed', Waines remarks in an article anticipating most of what I have said so far.[8] So indeed they do. How are we to reconcile this with the traditional claim that the *mushrikūn* lived in a barren valley? 'The Qurʾān suggests less severe austerity', Waines observes. The entire area may have been more fertile than it looks thanks to sophisticated irrigation techniques, Heck adds: the remains of as many as nineteen dams or more are still extant in the Ḥijāz.[9] But leaving aside that these dams were largely or wholly built after the rise of Islam and that none of them seems to be in Mecca, we do not actually solve the problem by postulating that Mecca was fertile, for it is the Quran itself that describes the Abrahamic sanctuary as located in an uncultivated valley (*wādin ghayr dhī zarʿ*) (14:37), just as it is the Quran itself that places the *mushrikūn* in a fertile setting.

This clearly poses the question of whether the Quran envisages the Abrahamic sanctuary as the residence of the *mushrikūn*. It is certainly not impossible, for it says that when Abraham settled offspring by the sanctuary, | he asked God to feed them with fruit (14:37): maybe the assumption here is that agriculture emerged later. Alternatively, does the Quran envisage the Abrahamic sanctuary as deserted except for a small family of custodians maintained by pilgrims and other visitors, implying that the agricultural community of the

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8   D. Waines, 'Agriculture', in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, 40.

9   G.W. Heck, '"Arabia without Spices": An Alternate Hypothesis', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123, 2003, 566.

mushrikūn was located somewhere else? That too is possible. In fact, both possibilities seem to have suggested themselves to the earliest readers of the Quran, for there are traditions in which Mecca is unusually fertile, this being how it was under Ketura, Jurhum, the Amalekites and Quṣayy (but not apparently in the time of the Prophet),[10] and there are others in which it is a desert sanctuary until Muʿāwiya started digging and building there, provoking a storm of protest: he had no right to plant gardens in a place that God Himself had described as devoid of cultivation; Mecca ought to remain a place with wide unbuilt spaces, accessible to everyone, a place where the pilgrims would pitch their tents as they had in the past, not one of towns and fortified mansions (*madāʾin wa-quṣūr*).[11] But the Quran also says that God had established a safe sanctuary (*ḥaraman āminan*) while people around the unbelievers were being snatched away (29:67), and when people refuse guidance on the grounds that they would be snatched away from their land if they followed it, the retort is, 'Have we not established for them a secure sanctuary (*ḥaraman āminan*) to which every kind of fruit is brought as a provision from Us?' (28:57). This could be taken to suggest that the unbelievers did live in their sanctuary, but also that they did so without developing it agriculturally: the fruits came from outside.[12] This was the solution for which the tradition settled. It was in response to Abraham's prayer that God instituted the two trading journeys with which He freed Quraysh from hunger and fear, according to some;[13] or it was in response to Abraham's prayer that He moved Ṭāʾif from Syria to Arabia, as we are also told;[14] the fruits came from the neighbouring towns and villages, as many say;[15] indeed, it was by making the neighbouring towns and villages carry provisions to Mecca that God

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10   See the sources cited in P. Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Oxford and Princeton, 1987), 198, n. 134.

11   Al-Kalbī in al-Bakrī, *Muʿjam mā istaʿjam*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1858), 58; M.J. Kister, 'Some Reports Concerning Mecca from Jāhiliyya to Islam', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 15, 1972, 86 ff., both cited in Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 197 f. (where *quṣūr* is translated as palaces). For Muʿāwiya's agricultural development of the region, see also below, n. 17.

12   The alternative reading would be that they had simply sought refuge at the sanctuary during some crisis when they risked being 'snatched away' from the land on which they normally lived and worked.

13   Mentioned in al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* (Beirut, 1947), iv, 803, *ad* 106:4, where the two journeys are mentioned (without being described as having anything to do with trade, cf. below, n. 28).

14   Thus for example al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān* (Beirut, 1988), viii, 235, *ad* 14:37; cf. also M.J. Kister, 'Some Reports Concerning Ṭāʾif', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 1, 1979, n. 77.

15   Thus for example Ṭabarī, al-Māwardī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī *ad* 14:37.

enabled Quraysh to stop going on their two trading journeys, as adherents of the view that Meccan trade came to an end some time before the rise of Islam declared.[16]

How, then, do the exegetes handle the verses in which the polytheists are implicitly or explicitly described as agriculturalists? Oddly, they seem to ignore the problem. It is indeed only if one's interest is in the historical context of the revelation that the oddity of the examples employed to persuade the infidels stands out: to any other reader, the book will come across as adducing universally intelligible points of eternal validity. But the early exegetes did take an interest in the historical context. It is also true that the exegetical literature is | vast, so that it is impossible to pronounce with confidence on what is or is not in it, especially when so many Quranic verses are involved. It is difficult to believe that the problem went unnoticed. But an examination of a fair sample of the exegetical literature on the most blatantly problematic passages, those presenting the infidels as cultivators of olives, yielded a blank.

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The answer one would have expected the exegetes to come up with is that the passages concerning agriculture refer to places outside Mecca, and above all to Ṭā'if, where the Meccans owned gardens. What other solution could there be? It works up to a point, too; for date palms, pomegranates and grapes all fit in effortlessly at Ṭā'if. Grain and olives are more of a problem, however. After the conquests, when Muʿāwiya and other wealthy Qurashīs began a massive agricultural development of the Ḥijāz, grain came to be harvested there on a major scale,[17] and it could perhaps be argued that some was grown there before the

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16   Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, ed. ʿA.M. Shiḥāta (Cairo, 1979), iv, 861f., *ad* sura 106; al-Kalbī in Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq* (Hyderabad, 1964), 262f.; cf. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 205ff.

17   For Muʿāwiya digging wells and canals and planting gardens in Mecca (reportedly as the first to do so), see Kister, 'Some Reports', 89f.; cf. also his dam at Ṭā'if (G.C. Miles, 'Early Islamic Inscriptions near Ṭā'if in the Ḥijāz', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 7, 1948) and the dams mentioned in Heck, 'Arabia without Spices', 566. For Muʿāwiya's agricultural enterprises in Medina in the Ḥijāz and the tensions they provoked, see M.J. Kister, 'The Battle of the Ḥarra: Some Socio-economic Aspects', in M. Rosen-Ayalon (ed.), *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet* (Jerusalem, 1977), 38ff., and above, n. 11; for other Qurashīs, see Heck, 'Arabia without Spices', 565, who inadvertently assumes their activities to be pre-Islamic. Heck also adduces the indisputably pre-Islamic Abū Ṭālib as an example of a class of entrepreneur who were 'sufficiently wealthy that no external investment capital was necessary to underwrite their productive ventures', claiming that he was 'among the Makkan wheat growers who sold their own produce', and that 'in addition to being a major grain broker, Abū Ṭālib was a perfume merchant' ('Arabia without Spices', 561, 571). For all this he refers the reader to Ibn Qutayba, who merely says that 'Abū Ṭālib sold perfume, or perhaps/sometimes (*rubbamā*) he sold wheat (*al-burr*)' (Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif* ed.

rise of Islam as well. But the tradition invariably associates grain with Syria.[18]
After the conquests there may, for all we know, have been attempts at olive cul-
tivation in the Ḥijāz, too;[19] but if there were, they did not succeed, for obvious
reasons: in its cultivated form, the olive (*Olea europaea*) is a tree adapted to
Mediterranean conditions. It does grow wild in the montane woodlands and
shrublands of Arabia, including the Ṭāʾif region, but it does so as part of vege-
tation linking Arabia with Africa rather than the Mediterranean, in the form of
the subspecies *africana*.[20] The cultivated olive has the disadvantage, from an
394 Arabian point of view, of requiring winter chill in order | to flower and fruit.[21] It

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F. Wüstenfeld (Leiden, 1850), 283; ed. Th. ʿUkāsha (Cairo, 1969), 575; ed. M.I.ʿA. al-Ṣāwī
(Beirut, 1970), 249; in the parallel version given by Ibn Rusta, the *burr* is replaced by *lubān*,
cf. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 53n). Where does Heck find the information that he was a grain
broker (as opposed to trader), that he was a major one, that he grew his own produce, or
that he was wealthy enough to manage without external investment capital?

18   Cf. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 98, 104, 139–141, 150, 160. It is also from Syria that the grain
comes in all the examples adduced by Heck, 'Arabia without Spices', 573 (as regards that
of ʿAbdallāh b. Judʿān, for which he does not specify the place of origin, see Crone, *Meccan
Trade*, 104). Heck none the less proposes that the Meccans could both import and export
such things (having produced them at Ṭāʾif and elsewhere), depending on 'the basic
functioning of free market economies', adducing the trading patterns between modern
Michigan and Wisconsin as an example ('Arabia without Spices', 573). But leaving aside
that we never see the Meccans export such things, they were not participants in a modern
capitalist economy based on rapid distribution of information and goods, low transport
costs, and a population purchasing its goods (foodstuffs included) in the open market.

19   Much agricultural experimentation in the wake of the conquests is presupposed by the
crop diffusion studied by A.M. Watson, *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World*
(Cambridge, 1983).

20   S.A. Ghazanfar and M. Fisher (eds), *Vegetation of the Arabian Peninsula* (Dordrecht, 1990),
69, 91–93, 130; more briefly also A.G. Miller and T. Cope, *Flora of the Arabian Peninsula
and Socotra*, i (Edinburgh, 1996), 20 f., 26. This is clearly the plant known to the Arabs as
ʿ*utum* or 'mountain olive' (*zaytūn jabalī*), which grew in the Sharāt and (in a taller form)
in Oman; it had black fruits like grapes which were not edible, or it did not fruit, and it
was used medicinally, as well as for toothpicks (Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnawarī, *Kitāb al-nabāt*,
s-y, ed. M. Ḥamīdallāh (Cairo, 1973), nos. 574, 686, s.vv. 'shahs' and "utum". Compare the
distribution in Ghazanfar and Fisher, *Vegetation*, 91–93, 130, with a reference to medicinal
use at p. 250).

21   Two weeks at temperatures below 14°C (57°F) are required in order to induce some flow-
ering in most cultivars (B. Schaffer and P.C. Andersen (eds), *Handbook of Environmen-
tal Physiology of Fruit Crops* (Boca Raton, Fla., 1994), i, 171), but colder temperatures are
required for worthwhile crops. FAO speaks of a dormancy period of about two months
with average temperatures lower than 10°C (50°F) (http://www.fao.org/nr/water/cropinfo

could not have produced a crop in either Mecca or Medina,[22] and though Ṭā'if looks more promising, it is in the northern oasis of Jawf (formerly Dūmat al-Jandal) that olive cultivation is reported to have succeeded in modern times.[23] The sources for Arabia on the eve of Islam invariably describe olives as coming from Syria.[24] When the Quran tries to persuade the infidels with examples involving grain and olive cultivation, we would thus have to assume that the reference is to villages in Syria that the Meccans passed through on their business journeys and/or to estates they had acquired there and on which they grew such crops themselves.

Taking the passages in question to refer to Ṭā'if and Syria does not entirely solve the problem, however. For one thing, there remains the question of how an uncultivated valley with a single spring could sustain the sheep, goats, cows, oxen, camels, mules, donkeys and horses with which the pagans are credited in the Quran, or how pasture could be found for them outside Mecca on a daily basis. For another thing, there is something contrived about this reading. A preacher will normally try to get through to people by speaking to them about the things that matter most to them, and the tradition is quite clear that whatever else the pre-Islamic Quraysh may have been up to, they were first and foremost traders. One would not try to convert stockbrokers in Man-

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_olive.html); a Californian company defines the best winter temperatures as lying around −2.8°C to −3.9°C (25°F to 27°F), while rarely falling below −6.1°C (21°F). Areas with regular winter temperatures as high as 12.2°C (54°F), rarely frosting or reaching −2.2°C (28°F), are described as unsuitable or marginal for commercial olive groves ('Peaceful Valley Farm Supply' at http://www.groworganic.com/organic-gardening/articles/how-to-choose-olive-trees).

22 The lowest temperatures recorded in Mecca and Medina during the eleven years of 1985–1995 were 10°C (50°F) and 3°C (37°F) respectively. (The maximum temperatures were 49.5°C (121°F) and 47.5°C (118°F), with a mean of 30.8°C (87°F) and 27.9°C (82°F) respectively.) See the chart in Ghazanfar and Fisher, *Vegetation*, 22.

23 The lowest temperatures in Ṭā'if and Jawf (Jouf) in the period mentioned in the previous note were −1.2°C (30°F) and −7.0°C (19°F) respectively. (The highest were 39.5°C (103°F) and 46.0°C (117°F), with means of 22.9°C (73°F) and 21.2°C (70°F) respectively.) For olives at Jouf, see 'Saudi Arabia Map' at www.scf.use.edu/~muzain/itp 104/project/introduction.htm.supplementary result. [Ed.: The URL is now defunct.] Unfortunately, A.M. Migahid, *Flora of Saudi Arabia*, ii (Riyadh, 1989), 74, who identifies *Olea europaea* as cultivated, only gives the distribution for the wild variety.

24 Cf. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 104, 139; Heck, 'Arabia without Spices', 573 (casting Meccans carrying oil from Syria by camel caravan as an early version of the 'mobile oil corporation'). The olive is also associated with Syria in al-Dīnawarī, *The Book of Plants*, *a-z*, ed. B. Lewin, Uppsala and Wiesbaden (Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift) 1953, no. 466, s.v. 'zaytūn'.

hattan by playing on their fears for their subsidiary ventures or invoking the marvels of products they had seen on their business journeys; rather, one would speak to them of stock market crashes, depression, unemployment, financial ruin, and the ultimate worthlessness of a life devoted to the pursuit of wealth. *Mutatis mutandis*, this is clearly what the Quranic preacher is doing too. He is addressing himself to people whose livelihoods were in their gardens and fields, and he is doing so with a wealth of local detail showing that he is at home in this milieu himself: there were gardens with trellises (for grapevines) and gardens without them (*ma'rūshāt wa-ghayr ma'rūshāt*, 6:141); palms might be single-stemmed or double-stemmed (13:4);[25] neighbouring tracts, grape gardens, palm trees, and fields might all be watered by a single water source (13:4); gardens were sometimes, perhaps typically, surrounded by palm trees and separated by sown fields and canals (18:32 f.); and of all the disasters that could befall a plot, the ultimate nightmare was that the water should disappear | underground and cease to be recoverable (18:41). There was a rich vocabulary to do with the date palm, as well as terms for clover, leaves or stalks of grain, stubble, gardens with thickly planted trees (*jannāt alfāf*) (78:16), and more besides.[26]

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In short, there can be no doubt that in these suras the Messenger is active in an agricultural environment. What is more, sura 6:141 makes it clear that the population he is addressing cultivated the various crops, including the olives, themselves; it mentions produce of diverse kinds, as well as olives and pomegranates of similar and dissimilar kinds, and adds, 'eat of their fruits when they fructify and pay the due thereof on the day of their harvest'. This rules out that the settlement in question was Mecca as normally understood. It must have been located somewhere in northern Arabia, and it must have been separate from the barren valley in which the sanctuary was located. So those who depict the sanctuary as a desert shrine without much of a permanent population are most probably right.

11   Travels by Land and Sea

Agriculture was not the only economic activity pursued by the *mushrikūn*, however. They also travelled by both land and sea, possibly for trade. There is

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25   As so often with technical terms, different explanations and translations are offered. The main point here is their technical nature.

26   Waines, 'Agriculture', 41 f.

an obscure reference to a 'journey (*riḥla*) in winter and journey in summer' in 106:2, and an equally obscure reference to people who wronged themselves by asking God for longer intervals between their journeys (*rabbanā bāʿid bayna asfārinā*, 34:19). Whether these journeys were made by land or sea one cannot tell. But one of the benefits derived from cattle was that 'they carry your heavy loads to a land that you would not (otherwise) reach except with great distress' (16:7). It is also journeys by land that spring to mind when we are told that God provided the 'houses of the skins of cattle that you find light on the day you journey and the day you alight' (16:80), though the unbelievers presumably slept in tents when they arrived at their destination by sea as well; and the Quran often asks the infidels whether they have not gone around in the land (*a-wa-lam yasīrū fī ʾl-arḍ*) and seen the remains of past nations, or it tells them to do so (16:36; 27:69; 30:9, 42; 40:82; 47:10; cf. 22:46).

References to sailing and the sea are both numerous and vivid (suggesting that the Prophet had been to sea, as has been remarked before).[27] The people addressed rode not just on cattle, but also on ships (23:22; 40:80; 43:12), and they were guided by the stars in darkness on both land and sea (6:97; cf. also 10:22). God sent the winds 'so that the ship may sail at His command and so that you may seek of His bounty' (30:46), they are reminded. 'You (sg.) see the ships going through it so that you (pl.) may seek of His bounty' (16:14; 35:12); 'it is He who makes the ship sail on the sea so that you may seek of His bounty' (17:66), as variant versions say (cf. also 22:65; 31:31). When the people addressed were caught in storms at sea they would call upon God alone, but they would ascribe partners to Him when they reached dry land (10:22 f.; 29:65; 31:32); and the infidels are compared to men on journeys by land and sea alike in a sura classified as Medinese: their deeds are like the mirage in the desert that a man parched with thirst mistakes for water, or like shadows on a dark ocean with waves piling on top of waves and clouds like shadows piling on top of each other so that one can scarcely see a hand in front of one's eyes (24:39 f.).

Some of these journeys could have been commercial in nature. 'Seeking of God's bounty' (i.e. seeking a living) certainly seems to be an expression for trading in some passages (cf. 2:198; 62:10, discussed below). But contrary to the impression frequently conveyed by the secondary literature, the Quran does not connect any of these journeys with trade.[28] Some of the moving about in

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27 C.C. Torrey, *The Commercial-Theological Terms in the Koran* (Leiden, 1892), 2n; and, probably more deeply, W.W. Barthold, 'Der Koran und das Meer', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 1929.

28 Torrey claims that sura 106 'might well be the words of a tradesman to his fellows, calling on

the land should probably be connected with pasturing, and the journeys by sea
sometimes seem to be for fishing. Thus one passage says that 'He made the |
sea subservient to you so that the ship may sail in it by His command and so
that you may seek of His bounty' (45:12), and a variant spells this out as 'It is
He who has made the sea subservient to you so that you may eat of it tender
(or fresh) meat (*li-taʾkulū minhu laḥman ṭariyyan*) and so that you may extract
from it ornaments that you wear' (16:14). We should envisage the *mushrikūn* as
fish-eaters, then, and as decorating themselves with sea-shells, or perhaps (as
the exegetes suggest) with pearls. In line with this we are told that God has let
two big bodies of water flow together, while at the same time a barrier keeps
them apart, and these two bodies of water produce *luʾluʾ* and *marjān*, usually
translated 'pearls and coral' (55:19–22). Another passage tells us that 'the two
seas are not equal, the one sweet, good to taste (*furāt*) and pleasant to drink,
the other salty and bitter. Yet from each you eat tender (or fresh) meat, and you
extract ornaments for you to wear; and you see the ship ploughing through it
so that you may seek the bounty of God' (35:12). In short, the people addressed
in these verses lived near a body of fresh water and another of salt water, and
obtained food and decorative items from both of them. One would assume the
salt water to be the Red Sea, well known for its coral reefs, and the sweet water
to be the Nile, which flows into the Mediterranean without losing its separate
nature. Rivers also flow into the sea in the Persian Gulf, which likewise has
coral reefs, but the two rivers constitute two distinct bodies of sweet water,
not one, as in the case of the Nile, and it is in any case somewhat unlikely that
the Prophet should have been active in eastern Arabia. Different types of shells
from Egypt have been found at Nessana in the Negev, inhabited by members of
the Roman army. They include a freshwater shellfish from the Nile and two salt
water mollusks, along with a variety of purely decorative shells used as beads in
necklaces, but not apparently any pearls or coral.[29] Wherever exactly we are to
locate the Messenger's audience in these suras, one would assume them to have
resided in an environment similar to that of the Negev, but further to the south.
It is a startling idea that the Meccans should have been fishermen, let alone that
they should have eaten fresh-water fish, even though one would imagine that
it was cured. Which river or lake could be intended in this passage? There is
a parable about fishermen in the Quran. 'Ask them about the town which was

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them to recognize the goodness of Allah in prospering their winter and summer caravans'
(*Terms*, 2), and Heck also holds that 'the Qurʾān speaks of annual trading caravans to
Yemen and Syria' ('Arabia without Spices', 572). But this is simply exegetical interpretation
of 106:2, and only one out of many (cf. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 205 ff.).

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29   H.D. Colt (ed. and tr.), *Excavations at Nessana*, i (London, 1962), 66 f.

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close by the sea when they violated the Sabbath', it starts (7:163). But one would take this story to be about Jews, and perhaps addressed to them as well, though the sura is classified as Meccan.

III   Trade

The only explicit reference to trade in the Meccan suras comes in the form of exhortations against cheating with weights and measures. God had established the balance 'so that you should not transgress in weighing; weigh with justice and do not skimp in the balance' (55:7 f.), one passage says, moving on from there to God's creation of the date palm, grain and sweet-smelling plants (*al-rayḥān*). 'Give full measure when you measure and weigh with a balance that is straight' (17:35); 'Fill up the measure and the balance with justice' (6:152). Shu'ayb is presented as saying much the same (7:85; 11:84 f.; 26:181), and those who exact full measure for themselves while giving less than due to others are fiercely denounced (83:1–9). One would take these exhortations to refer to internal exchanges rather than commerce with outsiders, let alone long-distance trade. There are similar denunciations of cheating with weights and measures in the Old Testament, where the setting is agrarian.

The overwhelmingly agrarian atmosphere of the Meccan suras is all the odder in that the Prophet's language is suffused with commercial metaphors from the start, especially in connection with reward and punishment.[30] Humans are envisaged as having an account with God, who enters their acts on the debit side or credit side in a book or ledger (*kitāb*, *imām*), which is both clear (*mubīn*) and meticulous: nothing is left out (10:61; 18:49; 21:94; 34:3; 36:12; 45:28 f.; 78:29; cf. *kitāb ḥafīẓ* at 50:4). Every soul is seen as pledged (*rahīna*) to God, i.e. as security for the debts it has accumulated (74:38, cf. 52:21),[31] and acts are also described as advances made to God (*aslafat*, *aslaftum*), who will redeem them on the day of judgement (10:30; 69:24). On the day of reckoning (*yawm al-ḥisāb*) every individual will be confronted with his own personal account book, or every nation will be confronted with its record (45:28 f.). Righteous individuals will be given their books in the right hand, sinners in the left or from behind (in the unobtrusive manner used by | discreet creditors) (69:19, 25; 84:7 f., 10 f.; cf.   397

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30   [29]For all this, see Torrey, *Terms*, 8 ff.

31   [30]In 52:21 every man seems to be pledged (*rahīn*) in the sense of ensuring that God will repay him in full for his good deeds.

also 56:8 f.),[32] and all will be asked to read their records aloud (69:19; 17:13 f.: *iqra' kitābaka*); literacy is taken for granted. In an alternative metaphor, souls will be weighed, and people whose acts are heavy will prosper while those whose deeds weigh light in the balance will be losers (23:102 f.; 7:8 f.; 101:5). Unlike the *mushrik*s, God uses just scales (21:47) and gives full measure, whether of rewards or punishments: every soul will be paid its due.[33] These commonly used metaphors apart, one passage counsels against selling the compact of God for a small price (16:95; compare the expression used of the literal sale in the story of Joseph, 12:20), and another speaks of buying idle tales (31:6), but metaphors to do with buying and selling are much more common in the suras classified as Medinese.[34]

In principle, these metaphors could simply have formed part of the inherited religious language, for most of them are attested before the rise of Islam, in some cases even in Arabic poetry.[35] But their use in the Meccan suras is so consistent and vivid that one would assume them to reflect current conditions, or at the very least a recent commercial past.[36] The commercial transactions reflected in them could, however, have been largely or wholly internal.

IV   The *Mushrik* Community: Summary

All in all, the Quranic passages addressed to or concerned with *mushrikūn* take us to a mixed economy in which the cultivation of grain, grapes, olives and date palms was combined with the rearing of sheep, goats, camels, cows, oxen and other animals, and also with maritime activity, at least in part for fishing. The community was sufficiently differentiated for internal exchanges, and there may have been external trade as well, but not on a scale sufficiently important for the preacher to attempt to pull at the heartstrings of the *mushrik*s via that subject. God is never described as punishing people by ruining trading ventures, allowing caravans to be plundered or burying them in sandstorms, and there are no parables about trade in the book. For all that, the metaphors

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32   [31]Hence the expression *aṣḥāb al-yamīn* in sura 74:39, where every soul is pledged 'except for those of the right hand'.

33   [32]Torrey, *Terms*, 22 f., 32 f., with other metaphors to do with weighing at p. 15.

34   [33]When the day of judgement is called a day on which there is no *bay'* (14:31, again in the Medinese 2:254), the meaning seems to be that there will be no ransoming rather than there will be no buying and selling (Torrey, *Terms*, 42).

35   [34]Torrey, *Terms*, 9 f.

36   [35]Torrey, *Terms*, 13 f.

testify to a well-developed system of keeping written accounts, suggesting a community of some sophistication for all its rural setting. A high level of literacy is presupposed.

v   The Community of Believers

We may now turn to the passages regulating the behaviour of the believers in a manner showing that they have come to form a community, if not necessarily a politically independent one. We have already encountered some of these passages: they implied that the believers were agriculturalists like the *mushrik*s. This is not what all of them do, however. A fair number of them, almost all classified as Medinese, describe the believers as traders.

‘O you who believe, do not eat up your property with vanities among your-selves, but let there be trade (*tijāra*) by mutual consent’, 4:29 proclaims: trade was a good thing. For all that, the believers should remember that nothing could be more important than God and His Messenger: ‘Say: if your fathers, | sons, brothers, spouses and clan, the wealth you have gained, the commerce you fear may slacken (*amwāl iqtaraftumūhā wa-tijāra takhshawna kasādahā*), and the dwellings you like, (if all these things) are dearer to you than God and His Messenger and striving in His cause, then wait until God brings His command (i.e. doom)’ (9:24). The ideal believers were men ‘whom neither commerce nor buying and selling (*al-tijāra wa’l-bay‘*) can divert from the remembrance of God, the performance of prayer, and the giving of alms’ (24:37). But this was more than could be said about most of them: ‘O you who believe, when the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of God and leave off buying and selling (*al-bay‘*); that is best for you, if only you knew. When the prayer is finished, you may disperse in the earth seeking of God’s bounty .... But when they see some trade (*tijāra*) or amusement, they scatter running after it, leaving you (sg.) standing. Say: what is with God is better than any amusement or trade. God is the best of providers’ (62:9–11). Elsewhere we hear of believers who were ‘travelling in the land, seeking of God’s bounty’ (73:20), presumably as traders.[37] ‘It will not be reckoned as a sin against you if you seek God’s bounty’, as we are told in a regulation of the pilgrimage (2:198): here too one would read

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37   [36]This sura is Meccan, but as the reference to holy war shows, the end is addressed to members of a politically active community. The end also differs from the earlier part of the sura by not having any rhyme. All verse divisions of the Quran leave the entire passage as a single, strikingly long verse (cf. A. Spitaler, *Die Verszählung des Koran* (Munich, 1935), 66; I owe this reference to Michael Cook).

the passage as referring to trade (which is also how the exegetes read it), since there cannot have been many other ways of making an income during the pilgrimage. Gold was sometimes deposited with the People of the Book: some would faithfully return a whole *qinṭār* entrusted to them, while others would refuse to return a *dīnār* unless one persisted, claiming not to have any moral obligations to gentiles (3:75).

We are thus left in no doubt that the believers were engaged in, indeed preoccupied with, trade. In line with this, there is a fair amount of regulation of commercial transactions. God had permitted buying and selling, but He had prohibited usury (2:275 f.), and though the believers were entitled to their capital sums, they should be gentle with debtors and fear the day when every soul would be paid what it earned (2:279–281). When people borrowed money, it was recommended that they have a scribe record the agreement as dictated by the debtor or a representative of his and witnessed by two men, or by a man and two women; it was best for all commercial transactions to be written, unless they were completed on the spot, and all should be witnessed, whether written or not (2:282). But if the believers were travelling and could not find a scribe, a pledge would do (in lieu of a record). Things deposited on trust should be faithfully returned (2:283). Unlike the regulation of the harvest rituals and the injunctions regarding fair weights and measures, these rules are laid down without polemics against pagan ways of doing things.

There is also much commercial imagery in the Medinese suras, mostly to do with buying and selling rather than accounting.[38] Much of it is used against Jews and *mushrikūn*, who are said to sell God's signs or compact for a small price, or who are warned not to do so (2:41; 3:187; 5:44; 9:9; cf. the Meccan 16:95), or praised for not doing so (3:199), or who conceal revelation or make it up in order to sell it for a small price (2:79, 174), or who sell their faith or their souls for such a price (2:90, 102; 3:77), or buy this life with the next (2:86), while they and others buy error or falsehood with guidance, or unbelief at the price of faith (2:16; 3:177; 4:44; cf. also 5:106). By contrast, there are | people who sell their souls seeking God's pleasure (2:207), in particular those who give their lives and property to the cause: 'Let those fight in the path of God who sell the life of this world for the next' (4:74); 'God has purchased from the believers their selves and their property in return for Paradise. They fight in God's path, kill and are

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38   [37]The shift is noted by Torrey, *Terms*, 35. Compare Didache 12:5 ('trafficking upon Christ'); Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:17 ('peddling the word of God for profit'); and Ephraim on 'the merchandise of their lives' (*S. Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion, and Bardaisan*, ii (London, 1921), 153, 25–31, no. 40).

killed. ... Rejoice in the bargain that you have concluded with Him' (9:111).[39] Or again, 'O you who believe, shall I lead you to a commerce (*tijāra*) that will save you from a grievous penalty? That you believe in God and His Messenger and strive in the path of God with your property and your selves. That will be best for you, if only you knew' (61:10 f.). Devoting one's wealth and/or life to Him is now cast as a loan (*qarḍ*) that God will repay several times over: 'The men and the women who pay alms, giving God a goodly loan, shall have it doubled for them and receive a generous reward' (57:18; 73:20[40]). 'Fight in the path of God and know that God is hearing and knowing. Who will give God a goodly loan, so that He may double it many times over?' (2:244 f.). 'Who will give God a goodly loan, so that He may double it?' (57:11, 64:17). 'Whatever you spend in God's path shall be repaid to you, you will not be wronged' (8:60). Believers who are sitting on the fence are described as doing bad business with God: having bought error with guidance, 'their commerce is profitless (*fa-mā rabiḥat tijāratuhum*)' (2:16). By contrast, 'Those who recite the book of God and perform prayer and spend of what We have provided them with, privately and publicly, they are hoping for a commerce that will never fail (*tijāratan lan tabūra*)' (35:29).[41]

VI Overall

The Quran is quite rich in information on the livelihoods of both *mushrikūn* and believers, but the result is puzzling. The book describes the two as living together in a community overwhelmingly based on agriculture while also depicting the believers as forming a community of their own in which trade was a prominent occupation. More crudely put, it describes the *mushrikūn* as agriculturalists and the believers as traders: the situation is the reverse of what one expects. It should not be too difficult to reconcile the picture of the believers' community given in the Quran with that of the Prophet's Medina presented in other sources, but its description of the community shared by *mushrikūn* and believers can hardly be said to be suggestive of Mecca as

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39   Compare the Smyrnaeans' description of martyrs 'purchasing at the cost of one hour a release from eternal punishment' (*The Letter of the Smyrnaeans or the Martyrdom of Polycarp*, tr. J.B. Lightfoot, 2:3). They go straight to heaven, *they sell their lives to God for eternal life*—here's the root of the Quranic image, though it is still not quite there.

40   [38]For the date of 73:20, see above, note 36 [37].

41   [39]Sura 35 is classified as Meccan, but this particular passage reflects a community of believers (without presupposing political independence).

we know it from the tradition. Where do we go from there? I do not wish to burden this paper with conjecture, so I simply leave the reader with the question.

Quraysh and the Roman Army: Making Sense of the Meccan Leather Trade*

According to the Islamic tradition, Quraysh, the Prophet's tribe, made their living in pre-Islamic times as traders who frequented a number of places, above all southern Syria, where they sold a variety of goods, above all leather goods and other pastoralist products such as woollen clothing and clarified butter, perhaps live animals as well. That they made (or had once made) a living selling goods of this kind in Syria is the one of the few claims regarding the rise of Islam on which there is complete agreement in the tradition.[1] One is thus inclined to think that there is some truth to it. It raises two problems, however. The first is that the tradition also identifies Quraysh as the pagans (*mushrikūn*) who are addressed in the Quran. This is a problem because the Quran itself describes these pagans as agriculturalists rather than traders,[2] but I shall leave that problem aside here. What follows is based on the assumption that the rise of Islam had something to do with an Arabian community dominated by traders who sold leather goods and other pastoralist products in southern Syria. How this society relates to that reflected in the Quran is problematic, but we may take it that it existed, whether in Mecca, Medina or elsewhere. The purpose of this article is to suggest how the trade could have been viable.

This takes us to the second problem. The tradition locates the trading society in question so far away from southern Syria that it is hard to see how its members could have made a living by trading there unless they specialized in commodities which were low in bulk and weight and could be sold at very high prices. If the traders set out from Mecca, they had to make enough of a profit to cover food, water and other expenses, such as tolls, for men and animals

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* My thanks to David Kennedy for help with archaeological questions when I first started thinking about the leather trade and to Michael Cook, Rebecca Foote, John Haldon, David Kennedy again, Chase Robinson, and the participants in the Colloquium on the theme 'From Jāhiliyya to Islam' in Jerusalem, 2006, especially Larry Conrad and Michael Lecker, for comments on earlier versions of the article.

1 P. Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Oxford and Princeton, 1987), chs 4, 5, with the sources claiming that they stopped trading some time before the rise of Islam at 110 f.

2 P. Crone, 'How Did the Quranic Pagans Make a Living?', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 68/3, 2005, 387–399 [Ed.: included as article 1 in the present volume].

for two months, this being how long it took for a caravan to make the journey to Syria and back according to one tradition;[3] setting out from Medina would only shorten the journey by some 350 km. The spices and aromatics in which Quraysh have long been assumed to trade were the right kind of commodity from that point of view, but the idea that Quraysh traded in such goods has turned out to be what is nowadays called an Orientalist myth. Admittedly, there may have been some trade in gold. Several gold mines are attested in the Ḥijāz, and Gene Heck suggests that gold and silver (from silver mines run by the Persians) contributed to "the expansion of the local employment base" and served, among other things, as input in industrial production, as the investment capital that underwrote that production, and as "the currency base for financing import acquisitions".[4] A medieval scholiast, on the other hand, informs us that the caliph ʿUmar wanted to cut camel hides in the shape of dirhams for use as currency "because of the scarcity of gold and silver".[5] But however this discrepancy is to be resolved, the fact remains that it is leather, hides, woollens, and clarified butter rather than gold or silver that are consistently identified as the star items of export from Mecca; the only other item regularly mentioned is perfume. Muḥammad's great-grandfather, Hāshim, is said to have founded the trade by obtaining permission from the Byzantine authorities for the Meccans to sell Ḥijāzī leather goods and clothing in Syria; of a Meccan who wanted to be client king on behalf of the Byzantines we are told that he intended to pay tribute to his overlords in hides, *qarẓ* (a tanning agent), and clarified butter; ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ sold leather and perfume in Egypt; of the Prophet himself we are told that he traded in hides; and the same is said of other Qurashīs, not just in Mecca but also in Medina: when ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf arrived in Medina, for example, we are told that he bought skins, cottage cheese and clarified butter which enabled him to import grain and flour from Syria.[6] But hides, leather and other pastoralist products were heavy and bulky, and though camels would be self-transporting, all these goods were widely |

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3 Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, ed. M. al-Saqqā, I. al-Abyārī and ʿA.-Ḥ. Shiblī, second printing (Cairo, 1955), i, 398. For tolls, see the story in al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, *al-Akhbār al-muwafaqqiyyāt*, ed. S.M. al-ʿĀnī (Baghdad, 1972), 625, no. 413; Abū ʼl-Baqāʼ Hibatallāh, *Kitāb al-manāqib al-mazyadiyya*, ed. S.M. Darādika and M.ʿA.-Q. Khuraysāt (Amman, 1984), i, 67 f.

4 G.W. Heck, ' "Arabia without spices": an alternate hypothesis', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123, 2003, 555; cf. also Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 93 ff.

5 *Dīwān Abī Tammām bi-sharḥ al-khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī*, ed. M.ʿA. ʿAzzām (Cairo, 1951–1965), i, 260 f. (bāb al-madīḥ, qāfiyat al-bāʼ, *ad* 18:45).

6 Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 98; cf. also M.J. Kister, 'O God, tighten Thy grip on Muḍar', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 24, 1981, 261 f.

available in the desert areas of Syria itself. How could Quraysh have made a living by laboriously carrying coal to Newcastle? That is how the problem was formulated in 1987.

In 2003 Heck suggested an answer: Mecca and Syria imported and exported much the same products, just as Wisconsin, which has its own dairy herds, imports cheese from Michigan, or as Western business men will have their suits tailored in Hong Kong in preference to what they can get at home: the dynamic was "nothing more than demand, price, and preference—the basic functioning of free market economics".[7] Good though it is to see the problem taken up for serious discussion, Heck's solution is difficult to accept. He unwittingly envisages Quraysh as participants in a modern consumer economy in which people buy all their requirements on the open market, presupposing an industrial economy in which goods are mass produced and rapidly distributed over huge distances at a low cost thanks to the replacement of human and animal labour by modern machinery and high-tech devices. A return trip from Michigan to Wisconsin does not take two months. But Quraysh served a society in which most people were peasants who produced the bulk of their requirements in their own households or villages and in which goods were few and expensive because they had to be made by hand and transported by humans or animals. Though Syria was a highly urbanized and commercialized society by the standards of the time, customers were not always numerous enough in a particular area to support permanent markets, as opposed to markets held at regular intervals. Still less, of course, were there any supermarkets offering endless choice at no particular cost.

For all that, Heck is right to think about supply and demand. There was at least one organization capable of generating significant demand in premodern times, namely the state, and Arabia did lie on the doorstep of the Roman empire. What the author of *Meccan Trade* did not know, twenty years ago, was that the Roman army swallowed up colossal amounts of leather. The army needed leather for tents, scabbards, shields, shield covers, baggage covers, kit bags, purses, horse armour, saddles, reins and other horse-gear, sandals, boots, belts, wine skins, water skins, as well as diverse slings, strings, laces and straps for use in arms and clothing.[8] On top of that, hides were used in military

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7   Heck, 'Arabia without spices', 573 f.

8   C. van Driel-Murray, 'The production and supply of military leatherwork in the first and second centuries A.D.: a review of the archaeological evidence', in M.C. Bishop (ed.), *The Production and Distribution of Roman Military Equipment* (BAR International Series 275, Oxford, 1985), 44; P. Stephenson and K.R. Dixon, *Roman Cavalry Equipment* (Stroud, 2003), 35, 39 f., 42, 80, 83 f., 95, 106 (fig. 92), 107, 112 f.; M. Leguilloux, *Le cuir et la pelleterie à l'époque romaine*

fortifications.[9] It has been estimated that a single legion of the classical type (about 5,000 men) required the hides of some 65,700 goats, or a smaller number of calves, simply for the tents it used on | campaigns.[10] The number of cattle required to supply all the troops with all the equipment of leather they needed must have been staggering. On top of that, of course, soldiers needed food and clothing, and live animals were needed for transport.

According to Wells, many communities in the frontier zone responded to the Roman presence by adapting their economic systems to the Roman demand for leather, foodstuffs or other things, and the new trade in its turn affected these societies, so that one can sometimes identify "increases in social status among individuals who played organizational roles in the expanding trade systems"; and the effects were not limited to the frontier area: the demand for supplies also had "significant effects in lands outside the imperial borders".[11]

Could it have been by supplying the Roman army in Syria with leather and other pastoralist products that Quraysh acquired wealth and organizational skills? The question can be restated as three. First, was the Roman army in Syria large enough to generate significant demand for such products? Secondly, were there any changes that could explain an apparent expansion of trade to the south of the imperial border in the period before the rise of Islam? And thirdly, is there anything in the Islamic tradition to support the idea that the leather goods that Quraysh exported were destined for military use? In a nutshell, the answer to the first two questions is positive while that to the third is "insufficient information". Disappointing though this is, it should at least suffice to keep the hypothesis on the books until further information turns up, as one hopes it will; for as will be seen in the conclusion, the hypothesis has great explanatory potential.

(Paris, 2004), 145 ff. (this last drawn to my attention by B. Isaac); T.K. Kissel, *Untersuchungen zur Logistik des römischen Heeres in den Provinzen des griechischen Ostens (27 v. Chr.– 235 n. Chr.)* (St Katharinen, 1995), 221 f. (drawn to my attention by D. Kennedy).

9   See below, n. 32.

10   Kissel, *Untersuchungen*, 223 f., where the number of calves is put at 27,000; the number is doubled in P.S. Wells, *The Barbarians Speak: How the Conquered Peoples Shaped Roman Europe* (Princeton and Oxford, 1999), 145, who speaks of 54,000 calves, which sounds more plausible, but he does not give his source.

11   Wells, *The Barbarians Speak*, 141 ff., 225; cf. also his shorter version, 'Production within and beyond imperial boundaries: goods, exchange, and power in Roman Europe', in P.N. Kardulias (ed.), *World-Systems Theory in Practice: Leadership, Production and Exchange* (Lanham, 1999).

The Roman Army in Syria

It goes without saying that we do not have any reliable figures for the size of the Roman army in the east. We do have some rough information, however. Agathias claims that the Byzantine empire disposed of 645,000 men until Justinian (527–565) reduced the total to 150,000 men. Whitby suspects that the first figure is exaggerated and the second minimized, but he accepts the second *grosso modo*, arguing that the 150,000 men should be understood as the field army to the exclusion of the frontier troops (*limitanei*): the inclusion of the *limitanei* would double or even treble the figure, giving us some 300,000 to 450,000 in all.[12] Treadgold argues along | the same lines and arrives at a similar figure.[13] In Whitby's view, this remained the rough size of the army throughout the sixth century, without any significant decline despite the plague which began in 541 and recurred at regular intervals thereafter.[14] He regards it as conceivable that the total Roman military strength in the eastern provinces should have been in excess of 100,000,[15] but does not volunteer figures for Syria and Mesopotamia on their own. Isaac, basing himself on inscriptions, papyri and documentary evidence rather than literary sources, agrees that there is no evidence for large-scale reduction of the provincial army in Palestine (though he emphasizes that the total number of troops was not large).[16] Parker, by contrast, speaks of widespread abandonment of forts and demobilization of *limitanei* in favour of increased reliance on tribal allies such as the Ghassānids in the fifth and sixth centuries;[17] and Kaegi holds that Heraclius' army can only have been about two-thirds or even one-third the size of Justinian's. In

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12 M. Whitby, 'Recruitment in Roman armies from Justinian to Heraclius (ca. 565–615)', in A. Cameron (ed.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, III: States, Resources and Armies* (Princeton, 1995), 73 f.

13 W. Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army 284–1081* (Stanford, 1995), 59 ff., 162, table 11.

14 Whitby, 'Recruitment', 92–103.

15 Whitby, 'Recruitment', 101, n. 188.

16 B. Isaac, 'The army in the late Roman East: the Persian wars and the defence of the Byzantine provinces', in Cameron, *States, Resources and Armies*, 137, 144.

17 S.T. Parker, 'Retrospective on the Arabian frontier after a decade of research', in P. Freeman and D. Kennedy (eds), *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East*, part i (BAR International Series 297(i), Oxford, 1986), 633, 648 ff., where the defence of the region is handed over to the Ghassānids; S.T. Parker, 'The Roman frontier in Jordan: an overview', in P. Freeman et al. (eds), *Limes XVIII. Proceedings of the XVIIIth International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies Held in Amman, Jordan (September 2000)*, i (BAR International Series 1084(i), Oxford, 2002), 80; cf. also Parker, *Romans and Saracens: A History of the Arabian Frontier* (Winona Lake, IN, 1986), 84 f., 111 f.

his view, Agathias' figure of 150,000 for Justinian's army is exaggerated rather than minimized. Like Whitby and Treadgold, however, Kaegi seems to assume that Agathias' figure is for the field army rather than the entire army inclusive of frontier troops, for he estimates Heraclius' troops at 130,000 at the higher end and 98,000 at the lower (as opposed to the 100,000 to 50,000 or fewer that would constitute two-thirds to one-third or less of Agathias' figure). Of these he thinks that about 50,000 were mobile.[18]

Kaegi further conjectures that under Heraclius a mere 18,000 troops were stationed in Syria and Mesopotamia, of whom only 5,000 or fewer remained in the three Palestinian provinces and Arabia, inclusive of "friendly but irregular Arab hired guards". Exactly what he means by that is unclear. He equates regular soldiers with non-Arabs and Arab soldiers with tribesmen providing irregular service, so that one cannot tell where he places the Arab *limitanei* (such as those at Nessana), who were regular troops.[19] But 5,000 men is the size of a classical legion, and Roman soldiers apparently used leather tents in both halves of the empire, though it is only in the western half that tents and other leather objects are well represented | in the archaeological record (due to the preservation of vegetable-tanned leather in waterlogged deposits).[20] In a letter cited in the *Historia Augusta*, the emperor Valerian (253–260) orders his procurator of Syria, Zosimus, to furnish the legion *V Martia* with annual supplies including "thirty half-score of hides for the tents": *legio IV Martia* (there was no *V Martia*) was stationed at Betthorus, possibly Lejjūn, in Arabia.[21] Even the Bedouin used tents of leather, as well as of hair, in those days (as indeed in Old Testament times as well),[22] and the Quranic opponents of the Prophet also used "houses

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18   W.E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (Cambridge, 1992), 39 ff.

19   Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, 40 f., where the total number of troops is for "non-Arab Byzantine soldiers" that could be deployed against Arabs.

20   Van Driel-Murray, 'Production and supply', 43 f.; below, n. 70.

21   *Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Claudius*, 14, 3; *Notitia Dignitatum Or.* 37, 22, cf. S.T. Parker (ed.), *The Roman Frontier in Central Jordan: Interim Report on the Limes Arabicus Project 1980–1985* (Oxford, 1987), 196, 807 f. It is perhaps also worth noting that the troops kept "under skins" (*sub pellibus*), i.e. in tents, during a freezing winter in Anatolia in the mid-first century had been transferred from Syria (Tacitus, *Annals*, 13, 35). But *sub pellibus* was a standard phrase for "in the camp" and could have been used even when the tents were made of something else.

22   G. Jacob, *Altarabisches Beduinenleben* (Berlin, 1897), 41; A. Khan, 'The tanning cottage industry in pre-Islamic Arabia', *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 19, 1971, 85; R.G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs from the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam* (London and New York, 2001), 173. Cf. *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, ed. P.J. Achtemeier (New York, 1996), s.v. 'tent', where it is also noted that the apostle Paul, a tent-maker who stayed with

of the skins of cattle" on their journeys (Q. 16:80). If we take Kaegi's "Arab hired guards" to include Arab *limitanei*, it would follow that even in a severely depleted state, the troops in southern Syria required some 65,700 goats just to equip themselves with tents. How often they could be expected to replace them in the course of their careers I do not know, but the quantities involved are enormous regardless: some 7,500–10,000 goats will also have been required to supply them afresh with shields,[23] and many more goats, sheep and camels will have been required for saddles, sandals, boots, belts, water skins, wine skins and other containers, scabbards, bridles, and straps of diverse kinds, most of which will have had comparatively short lifespans. Even in a severely reduced form, then, the military presence will have represented a substantial demand.

Of course, the demand will not have been as heavy if most of Kaegi's 5,000 men were hired guards rather than *limitanei*. But leaving aside that Whitby and Treadgold would double or treble the number of regular troops, the Ghassānids, who may or may not have replaced them, will also have needed leather for their military gear (though there can hardly be much doubt that they were more lightly equipped); and in any case, we should not look at southern Syria alone, but rather consider the demand of all the Roman troops in Syria and Mesopotamia, for all drew on the resources of the same region. What is more, the Persian army must have drawn on that region too, presumably swallowing up leather and hides on much the same scale as its Roman rival. Between them, the two armies will | have represented an enormous demand. In addition, the inhabitants of Arabia themselves used leather for military equipment such as shields, body armour, and siege engines,[24] and both they and their customers in the Roman empire (as in that of the Persians) used hides, skins and leather for a wide variety of non-military products too, such as writing material,[25]

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tent-makers in Corinth, could have worked with either leather or hair, since tents were often made of leather in Hellenistic times, too.

23 Cf. Kissel, *Untersuchungen*, 225, on the basis of van Driel-Murray, 'Production and supply'.

24 F.W. Schwarzlose, *Die Waffen der alten Araber* (Göttingen, 1886, repr. Hildesheim, 1982), 325, 353, 355; for siege engines, see al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1866), 55 (drawn to my attention by Michael Lecker).

25 Cf. S.A. Stephens, 'Book production', in M. Grant and R. Kitzinger (eds), *Civilization of the Ancient Mediterranean* (New York, 1988); H. Roberts and T.C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (London, 1983), ch. 2; M. Maraqten, 'Writing materials in pre-Islamic Arabia', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 43, 1998, 288 ff.; Y. Rāghib, 'Les plus anciens papyrus arabes', *Annales Islamologiques* 30, 1996, 14, fig. 3 (document on leather from 44/664 f.; drawn to my attention by Lennart Sundelin); H.D. Colt (ed.), *Excavations at Nessana*, i (Princeton, 1950), 55 (codex cover); J. Naveh, 'A Syriac amulet on leather', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 42, 1997,

coffins, building material,[26] boats, tents, shoes (including camel shoes), sandals and other items of clothing, bags, buckets, basins, pillows, oil skins, butter skins, wine skins, water skins, water pipes, ropes and straps of various kinds.[27] As Conrad says, leather was the plastic of the age.[28] How one might go about estimating the size of the local supply I do not know, but what with so heavy an overall demand, the pressure on the local resources must have been considerable.

The demand of the Roman army for food, clothes and equipment was primarily met by taxation and requisitioning from the local population rather than market exchanges, but even so, the market played a considerable role in the process.[29] By the third century the supply of food to the military (*annona militaris*) had become a regular tax. Initially, it was paid in kind, but later it was often commuted, both for collection and for delivery; the same is true of that portion of the land tax which was assessed in foodstuffs for the army. Regardless of how it was collected, the troops always received their rations in kind when they were in transit, in garrison | towns or on active service; but at other times they might draw their rations in cash, and they seem to have preferred to do so whenever it was possible. They were in that case free to buy their own food on the open market. New recruits were given their first uniform for free, and probably horses, weapons and other equipment too, but they had to pay for such things thereafter and received an annual cash allowance for this purpose, too. Arms could only be purchased from imperial depots, or so at least in principle, for Justinian had made the manufacture of arms an imperial monopoly;

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33, referring to other Syriac texts on leather. The Persians are said to have written on hides and parchment (*al-julūd wa'l-raqq*) to the exclusion of papyri because they did not want to write on imported material (al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-wuzarāʿ waʾl-kuttāb*, ed. M. al-Saqqā et al. (Cairo, 1938), 138.20).

26   Maraqten, 'Writing materials', 291.

27   Leguilloux, *Cuir et la pelleterie*, 94 ff., 159 ff.; Khan, 'Tanning cottage industry in pre-Islamic Arabia', 85 f., 91; Jacob, *Altarabisches Beduinenleben*, 44 f.; M. Maraqten, 'Wine drinking and wine prohibition in Arabia before Islam', *Seminar for Arabian Studies* 26, 1993, 96 f.; E.W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London, 1863–1893), s.vv. "urwa', 'naʿl'; Colt, *Excavations at Nessana*, i, 56 (pillow, purse, sandals, boots, belt).

28   L. Conrad, 'The Arabs', in *Cambridge Ancient History*, xiv (*Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, A.D. 425–600*), ed. A. Cameron, J.B. Ward-Perkins and M. Whitby (Cambridge, 2000), 687 f.

29   Cf. Kissel, *Untersuchungen*, 221–234 ('Leder als Bestandteil der *annona militaris*'); Strabo, *Geography*, 4.5.2, 5.1.8, 11.2.3, on cattle and hides imported from Britain, Illyria and the Black Sea nomads in return for goods such as olive oil, wine, seafood (to the Illyrians) and clothing (to the nomads) in the early empire (my thanks to D. Kennedy for these references).

but clothing and horses could be bought either through the military authorities or from private suppliers in the open market.[30] Where tents, bridles, straps, scabbards, belts, water skins, wine skins, sacks and bags were purchased is not stated, but one would assume items of direct military relevance such as tents, horse-gear, and shields to have been acquired from the military authorities as well, not (or not just) from private traders.[31] The military authorities will also have been responsible for procuring hides for purposes such as strengthening the gates and posterns of forts.[32]

Needless to say, soldiers did not like spending their allowance on equipment. Justinian's general Belisarius was praised for replacing weapons lost in battle out of his own pocket,[33] and another generous man, the Patriarch of Antioch, earned himself popularity by donating money, clothing, food and other things to freshly mobilized troops, or perhaps fresh recruits, in 589.[34] Since the troops were often poorly clad and ill-equipped, the emperor Maurice (582–602) proposed that they should be provided with free equipment and clothing in return for reduced pay, but the soldiers preferred their pay, and it is not clear that the proposal went through.[35] The troops continued to buy their own equipment partly from government depots and partly on the open market, or so at least one would infer from the information relating to Umayyad times. Generally speaking, | the Byzantine system continued with some changes, notably the disappearance of the state monopoly on the manufacture of arms.[36]

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30 A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602* (Oxford, 1964), i, 670–674; J. Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians* (Bonn, 1984), 113 f.; Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, 36. On the *annona* see also B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East*, revised edition (Oxford, 1992), 285 ff.; W.E. Kaegi, 'The "Annona Militaris" in the early seventh century', *Byzantina* (Thessalonika) 13, 1985; F. Mitthof, *Annona Militaris: die Heeresversorgung im spätantiken Ägypten* (Florence, 2001).

31 Cf. Kissel, *Untersuchungen*, 230 f., with reference to an earlier period. For a seventh-century Greek letter from Egypt concerning a despatch of leather and hides, see A. Papathomas (ed.), *Fünfunddreissig griechische Papyrusbriefe aus der Spätantike* (Corpus Papyrorum Raineri, vol. 25, Munich and Leipzig, 2006), no. 35 (drawn to my attention by A. Papaconstantinou). Unfortunately, the context is not very clear.

32 Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, 291 (in connection with a visit of Diocletian to Egypt in 298, where they procure them as part of the *annona*).

33 Procopius, *Wars*, vii, i, 8 (cited in Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, i, 671; Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, 113).

34 Whitby, 'Recruitment', 82. They were raised from the register (*ek katalogou*—or as the Arabs would say, *min al-dīwān*), but Whitby argues that they were fresh recruits.

35 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, i, 670 f.; Whitby, 'Recruitment', 86.

36 M. El Abbadi, '"Annona Militaris" and "rizḳ" at Nessana', *Atti del XVII Congresso Inter-*

In short, sixth-century Syria and Mesopotamia accommodated some 18,000 men (according to Kaegi) or twice or three times that number (according to Whitby), all in regular need of food, clothing and a large variety of products manufactured from the skins and hides of sheep, goats, and camels, which were also required for the upkeep of the many forts in the region and for the acquisition of which they will have been in competition with their Persian counterparts. Some 5,000 or more of these men were to be found in the three provinces of Palestine and Arabia which constituted the southern part of Roman Syria. Against this background it is easy to see that it could have been highly profitable to transport leather, hides, woollens, foodstuff and other commodities produced by the pastoralists beyond the imperial frontier for sale in Syria, whether to the imperial authorities or private manufacturers and/or distributors, or directly to the soldiers themselves. But how far beyond the frontier? If the tradition is right, it was profitable to organize the supply of pastoralist products from a distance so enormous that we have to postulate acute demand and very high prices indeed. What could have generated such conditions?

The Changes

Only three changes seem relevant. The first is the end of the commercial predominance of Palmyra after the suppression of its revolt in 273; we know that the Palmyrenes traded, among other things, in skins (though not necessarily for military use, of course).[37] The second is the growth of the pilgrim traffic to Mount Sinai and other sacred sites in the southernmost part of the empire from the fourth century onwards: sleeping in tents, carrying water in skins, and buying supplies from the Bedouin on the way, they must have added to the demand for pastoralist products in the region.[38] But the pilgrim traffic dwindles into insignificance compared to the third change, the escalation of warfare between Rome and Iran.

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nazionale del Papirologia, iii (Naples, 1984), 1057–1062; P. Crone, 'The early Islamic world', in K. Raaflaub and N. Rosenstein (eds), *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1999), 312 f. The topic deserves a monograph.

37   J.-B. Chabot, *Choix d'inscriptions de Palmyre* (Paris, 1922), 29 f.

38   C.A.M. Glucker, *The City of Gaza in the Roman and Byzantine Periods* (BAR International Series 325, Oxford, 1987), 96 ff.; cf. Antoninus Placentius in P. Mayerson, 'The first Muslim attacks on southern Palestine (A.D. 633–634)', *American Philological Association* 95, 1964, 186 f. (where no money is passed because the Arabs would not trade during their "holy days").

The wars had begun already in the second century, when the Romans expanded into Mesopotamia (Syria had become a Roman province as early as 64–63 BC). Trajan campaigned against the Parthians in 114–117, as did Marcus Aurelius and his co-emperor Lucius Verus in 162–165, as well as | Septimius Severus in 195–196 and 198–199, and Caracalla in 215–217; as a result, Edessa and Hatra became client kingdoms of Rome while Mesene was annexed by the Parthians. Latin dedications show Roman detachments to have been present at Hatra in 235 and around 238–240.[39] At the same time, the Romans expanded southwards too. Trajan annexed the Nabataean kingdom in 106 AD and turned it into the province of Arabia, where Bostra became the base of the legion *III Cyrenaica*. By the time of Septimius Severus (193–211), the Romans had fortified and garrisoned al-Azraq at one end of Wādī Sirḥān and posted a centurion from the Bostra legion at Dumata (Dūmat al-Jandal, now Jawf) at the other end.[40] A bilingual Greek–Nabataean inscription at Rawwāfa, to the southwest of Tabūk, erected (probably) by a military unit of Thamūd commemorates the erection of a temple dedicated to Marcus Aurelius (161–180) and his co-emperor Lucius Verus (161–169).[41] Even further south, between al-Ḥijr (Madā'in Ṣāliḥ) and al-ʿUlā, graffiti dating from the second and/or third century reveal the presence of mounted units (one of them of *dromedarii*), a mere 300 km or so from Yathrib.[42]

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39 M. Sartre, *The Middle East under Rome* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2005), 135 f., 145 ff., 345.

40 G.W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1983), 98 f.; M. Speidel, 'The Roman road to Dumata (Jawf in Saudi Arabia) and the frontier strategy of *Praetensione Colligare*', *Historia* 36, 1987 (reprinted in his *Roman Army Studies* (Stuttgart, 1992), ii), 213 f. The date of the Azraq inscription is disputed, see Sartre, *Middle East under Rome*, 555, n. 151, with further literature.

41 For the interpretation of the Thamūd in this inscription as an ethnic unit of the Roman army, see M.C.A. MacDonald, 'Quelques réflexions sur les saracènes, l'inscription de Rawwāfa et l'armée romaine', in H. Lozachmeur (ed.), *Présence arabe dans le croissant fertile avant l'Hégire* (Paris, 1995), 98 ff. (drawn to my attention by D. Kennedy). For earlier views, see G.W. Bowersock, 'The Greek-Nabataean bilingual inscription at Ruwwāfa, Saudi Arabia', in J. Bingen et al. (eds), *Le Monde Grec: Hommages à Claire Préaux* (Brussels, 1975; reprinted in his *Studies on the Eastern Roman Empire*, Goldbach, 1994); Bowersock, *Roman Arabia*, 96 f., 157; D. Graf, 'Qura ʿArabiyya and Provincia Arabia', in P.-L. Gatier et al. (eds), *Géographie Historique au Proche Orient: Actes de la Table Ronde de Valbonne, 16–18 Septembre 1985* (Paris, 1988; reprinted in his *Rome and the Arabian Frontier: from the Nabataeans to the Saracens*, Aldershot, 1997), with a helpful list of other literature on the inscription in note 6.

42 Bowersock, *Roman Arabia*, 95 f., 107, 157; cf. Graf, 'Qura ʿArabiyya', who rejects the idea that

All this is likely to have had a major impact on the local economies whether
northern Ḥijāz was actually incorporated in the Roman empire or not (which
is disputed).[43] It is well known that the settled rural population increased
enormously in Syria under Roman rule and that marginal lands such as dry
73 steppe and stony highlands were occupied more intensely than | at any time
before.[44] Part of this expansion is likely to have been driven by the military
need for supplies. In the province of Arabia the establishment of a legionary
base at Bostra and detachments elsewhere undoubtedly stimulated the local
production of grain at the expense of pastoralism, as shown in the steady
extension of settlement into the steppe area between the Decapolis and Bostra
in the centuries before the Arab conquests. One would infer that the Romans
simultaneously drove up the demand for leather and caused the local supply
to decline, causing the military to look further afield for its needs.[45]

It was all in the nature of a mere prelude, however. Around 224 the Parthi-
ans were ousted by the Sasanids and under them the wars intensified. They
launched their first attack on the Roman empire in 230, determined to take
Nisibis, and there was intermittent war until they conquered it, perhaps in
235 or 238; there were battles again in 243–244, 252–253 (and/or 256), 259–
260, 283, 297–298, 359 and 363, with localized warfare in 337–350 and 359–
361. By then both Hatra and Palmyra had lost their autonomy, the former
annexed by the Persians in 240–241, the latter suppressed by the Romans after
its revolt in 273. Thereafter a spirit of co-operation between the empires pre-
vailed, except for a brief interlude of war in 421–422 and 441. But in 502 Kavād
launched a surprise attack, to which Anastasius responded by assembling an
army of 52,000 men; Kavād annihilated this army, other troops took over and
the war continued to 506. In 528 the Romans launched a counter-offensive,
again with sizeable numbers of troops: Belisarius commanded 25,000 men at
Dāra in 530 and 20,000 men at Callinicum in 531. In 540 Khusraw I invaded,
starting warfare in Mesopotamia which continued until 544. In 573 Justin II
invaded with an army said to have numbered 120,000 men, an obvious exag-
geration, but we may take it that it was enormous; and this time warfare con-

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there was a toll station there and suggests that the troops were *exploratores*, "probes and
protusions from the imperial borders [which] provided surveillance of the major routes
leading into the provinces and monitored any dramatic settlement changes or population
shifts along the frontiers".

43   See Graf, 'Qura 'Arabiyya'; also the preface to his *Rome and the Arabian Frontier*, xi f.

44   K. Butcher, *Roman Syria* (London and Los Angeles, 2003), 140.

45   I owe this point to David Kennedy.

tinued to 589. In 603 Khusraw II declared war on Byzantium, starting the all-out war which ended with Khusraw II's death and Heraclius' victory in 628.[46]

To the settled people of Syria and above all Mesopotamia the constant warfare was a dire calamity, not only in the sense that they risked being killed or carried off into captivity, but also in the sense that they were squeezed dry whenever an army passed through their land, not least when the army was led by an emperor.[47] Common effects of the wars included "the depopulation of the countryside, shortages of agricultural labour, declining tax revenues, and the migration of skilled farmers to safer | localities".[48] In other words, the wars will have served further to increase the imperial demand for leather while at the same time reducing the local supply; and from 541 onwards, the repeated outbreaks of plague on the Byzantine side will have reinforced the downward trend.[49]

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But for traders from the pastoralist regions, beyond the reach of the imperial taxation system, well away from the invasion routes and shielded by low population densities from the plague, the wars will have been a golden opportunity. The number of tents, weapons and other supply and equipment assembled, damaged, lost, replaced, and destroyed again by the two empires in the course of these campaigns must have been enormous. Not all of the troops will have bought their equipment from scratch when a campaign began, of course, nor will all of them have equipped themselves in Syria, since they were assembled from far afield; but it must have been in or near the war zone that the bulk of the equipment was obtained. That the demand exceeded the resources of the Syrian desert is hardly open to doubt, for an imperial army placed an enormous strain on local resources even at the best of times. Two centuries later, when the heir apparent al-Mahdī was stationed at Rayy with an army said to number a mere 30,000 men, the demand for supplies was felt as far away as Sīstān.[50] By

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46 Pieced together from J. Howard-Johnston, 'The two great powers in Late Antiquity: a comparison', in Cameron, *States, Resources and Armies*, 160–164; Whitby, 'Recruitment', 101; R.N. Frye, 'The political history of Iran under the Sasanians', in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, iii(1), ed. E. Yarshater (Cambridge, 1983). Where slightly different dates are given for the same campaigns, my choice is haphazard.

47 Cf. Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, 290 f.

48 F.R. Trombley, 'War and society in Rural Syria *c.* 502–613 A.D.: observations on the epigraphy', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 21, 1997, 158. The earlier warfare is assumed to have been bad for trade in Palmyra too (cf. Sartre, *Middle East under Rome*, 351).

49 Cf. Conrad, 'The Arabs', 696.

50 G. Khan (ed. and tr.), *Arabic Documents from Early Islamic Khurasan* (Oxford, 2005), nos. 3, 21, dated 148 and 158. The second document, which relates to the taxes for 157, is

analogy, the demand created by the Perso-Byzantine wars could have been felt not just in Mecca and Medina, but even as far away as Yemen (where Quraysh were active, too).

As in the earlier period, the warfare in Syro-Mesopotamia had repercussions further south. New legionary bases were established at Aela (Ayla) and Legio (Lajjūn);[51] and Diocletian (286–316) linked the road which ran from Bostra to Dumata (at a distance of some 560 km) with the *Strata Diocletiana*, which ran from the Euphrates to southern Syria, joining them at al-Azraq (where al-Walīd II later resided); he also provided for regular patrolling of the Dumata road.[52] But the Romans later withdrew from their southernmost positions, and in the sixth century they are not known to have had any outposts south of Tabūk.[53] They continued to involve themselves in Arabian affairs, however, now preferring to use client kings, partly tribal rulers such as those of Tanūkh, Ghassān and Kinda and partly the king of Ethiopia. By contrast, the Persians opted for direct occupation of the peninsula, though they too used tribal allies. They occupied the eastern coast in the course of the third century and in *c.* 570 | they added Yemen, where rivalry between Persia and Axum (representing Rome) is discernible already in the late third and early fourth centuries.[54] It is well known that the two empires were competing for control of the India trade, but given that armies could no more function without leather and hides in those days than they can without oil today, it seems unlikely that their involvement in Arabia should have been driven by the India trade alone.[55]

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problematic in that al-Mahdī had by then been back in Iraq for six years. For the size of his army at Rayy when he was actually there, see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul waʾl-mulūk*, ed. M.J. de Goeje et al. (Leiden, 1879–1901), iii, 304.19, year 145. See also Khan's discussion in the introduction, 37 ff. (Addendum: The claim that the demand for supplies was felt all the way to Sīstān when al-Mahdī went to Rayy is not quite correct, for al-Mahdī himself went to Sīstān twice, in 141/758 f. and 159/775 f., as Khan makes perfectly clear even though I overlooked it.) [Ed.: This later addendum by Professor Crone and her handwritten notes on the article make it clear that she was aware of problems with this footnote, but she did not have the opportunity to produce a revised version of it.]

51   Sartre, *Middle East under Rome*, 361, cf. also 350, on Bostra and Adraha (Adhriʿāt).

52   Speidel, 'Roman road to Dumata', 214 ff. (with a map). For (the future) al-Walīd II at al-Azraq, see Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, ii, 1743, and the annotation in C. Hillenbrand (tr.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, xxvi (Albany, 1989), 91, n. 465.

53   Cf. J.E. Dayton, 'A Roman/Byzantine site in the Hejaz', *Proceedings of the Sixth Seminar for Arabian Studies* (London, 1973).

54   Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 46 ff.

55   Similarly M.G. Morony, 'The Late Sasanian economic impact on the Arabian peninsula', *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān* 1/2, 2001–2002, 25.

The Islamic Tradition

Who, apart from the tax-paying peasants of the Roman (or for that matter the Persian) empire supplied hides, skins and leather for use by the imperial troops? Palmyra may have continued to play a role in the trade even after the suppression of its revolt in 273, for numerous buildings on the outskirts of the city, observed on aerial photographs and still unexcavated, should perhaps be interpreted as lodgings for travelling merchants and some of them could have been erected (or simply remained in use) after the revolt.[56] In any case, there must always have been many suppliers. One would have expected the client kingdoms of Kinda, Ghassān, and Ḥīra to have been among them, but concrete evidence is hard to come by. We do hear that al-Nuʿmān of Ḥīra organized annual caravans to ʿUkāẓ, where he bought leather (al-udum) and clothing from Yemen.[57] According to Fraenkel, the tribute paid by the Arabs to Nuʿmān of Ḥīra included leather, but it is impossible to tell where he has the information from.[58] It is noteworthy, though, that the story of the would-be client king of Mecca assumes skins and other pastoralist products to be goods that the Byzantines would appreciate from such a king. This goes well with the claim that the king of Ethiopia liked leather goods better than other Meccan products,[59] and it fits the record on the Roman side as well, for the Romans are known to have collected tribute in hides from client kings on the Germanic frontier in the early empire.[60] Did a client king of Heraclius' such as Ukaydir of Dūma, a Christian relative by marriage of Abū Sufyān, also pay tribute in goods of | this kind?[61] No evidence seems to be available. Of the Persians we do know that they founded numerous tanneries in Yemen when they conquered it in the late sixth century;[62] and of one caravan sent by the Persian governor of Yemen

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56   J.-M. Dentzer, 'Khāns ou casernes à Palmyre? À propos de structures visibles sur des photographies aériennes anciennes', *Syria* 71, 1994, 45–112, esp. 107n (my thanks to Rebecca Foote for this reference).

57   Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, i, ed. M. Ḥamīdullāh (Cairo, 1959), 101.2; also Abū 'l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī* (Cairo, 1927–1974), xxii, 57, without mention of their Yemeni provenance.

58   S. Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen* (Leiden, 1886), 178. The reference he gives is wrong.

59   Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, i, 334.11; al-Wāqidī, *Kitāb al-maghāzī*, ed. M. Jones (Oxford, 1966), ii, 742–744; cf. the doublets involving ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, ii, 277.10; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, i, 232.11.

60   Tacitus, *Annals*, iv, 72, on the Frisians: they supplied ox hides for the use of the military.

61   See *EI²*, s.v. 'Ukaydir b. ʿAbd al-Malik' (Lecker).

62   Ibn al-Mujāwir in Khan, 'Tanning cottage industry in pre-Islamic Arabia', 97.

to the Persian emperor we learn that it included leather belts; but they were ornamented and probably luxury goods rather than humble products destined for troopers.[63]

That leaves us with the Meccans. The tradition casts Hāshim, Muḥammad's great-grandfather, as the founder of Meccan trade, thereby dating its inception to *c.* 450–470;[64] but how seriously this should be taken is uncertain. The tradition tends to move the founder of the trade too close to Muḥammad's time,[65] while at the same time associating him with stories so legendary that one wonders if the trade did not start earlier than the tradition says. For all we know, they could have been traders long before we meet them in the Islamic tradition.

However this may be, the story does not identify Hāshim's customers, but the version given by Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 146/763) is certainly compatible with the suggestion that they included the military. According to him, Hāshim attracted the attention of the Byzantine emperor (*qayṣar*) in Syria by cooking *tharīd*, a dish unknown to the non-Arabs, and persuaded him to issue a safe conduct to Qurashī merchants in Syria so that they could sell leather goods and clothing there, arguing that this would be cheaper for the Syrians; thereafter he negotiated safe conducts, allegedly called *Īlāf*, from the tribes between Syria and Mecca so that the Qurashī merchants could travel to Syria in peace; this he did by undertaking to have the merchants collect goods produced by these tribes on the way to Syria, and drive along their camels too according to some,[66] sell them on their behalf, and hand over their share of the profit on their return.[67] In other words, he stepped in as middleman between the pastoralist suppliers in the desert and unspecified customers in Byzantine Syria with the blessing of the Byzantine authorities.

This is one out of many stories told in explanation of a Quranic verse in which the enigmatic word *Īlāf* occurs (Q. 106:1). There is no reason to think that

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63   *Aghānī*, xvii, 318; C.J. Lyall (ed. and tr.), *The Mufaḍḍaliyyāt* (Oxford, 1918–1924), i, 708 (where they are belts of gold); cf. also Morony, 'Late Sasanian economic impact', 36 f.

64   Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 98, and the sources cited there.

65   In the *Nihāyat al-ʿarab* "Caesar" is replaced by a Ghassānid king, Jabala b. Ayham, a contemporary of the rise of Islam who participated in the battle of Yarmūk rather than somebody active four generations earlier. Here Hāshim also negotiates agreements with Abraha, who only came to power around 531, and Kavād (488–530), who did start ruling early enough to fit (M.J. Kister, 'Some reports concerning Mecca from Jāhiliyya to Islam', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 15, 1972, 61 f.).

66   Al-Jāḥiẓ and al-Thaʿālibī in Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 103. We also hear of a Byzantine trader who sold a cloak for a hundred camels in Mecca itself (*Aghānī*, xviii, 123).

67   See the references in Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 98, n. 43.

this verse alludes to any such arrangement or that pre-Islamic | safe conducts were actually known as *Īlāf*;[68] but though the story is wrong as exegesis, the agreements it invokes are likely to have been a genuine Arabian institution, and Quraysh could well have been among those who used it. If so, the Byzantine emperor who figures in it is presumably a legendary version of a Byzantine governor of southern Syria who authorized Quraysh to trade in the region. Without a safe conduct (*amān*) from him, it is implied, they would be treated as hostile aliens. The Byzantines did in fact try to keep external trade under strict control for reasons of security and a regular flow of customs duties alike;[69] but for all that, the prominence of "Caesar" in the story is striking: it could be taken to imply that Hāshim organized the supply of pastoralist products from the tribes of north-western Arabia not just with the permission of the authorities, but also for the use of the authorities themselves.

This is impossible to prove, however. Quite apart from the fact that leather seems to be poorly represented in the archaeological record of Roman Arabia,[70] the literary sources do not preserve much information about the nature of the trade. Apart from "Caesar", the people that the Meccans are described as encountering in Syria are mostly monks and ecclesiastical personnel: Baḥīrā who spots Muḥammad, an Alexandrian deacon who encounters 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ,[71] a bishop in Damascus to whom al-Walīd b. al-Mughīra owed money. It is only in the last story that there is a suggestion of commercial dealings, and in another version of that story the money is owed to the bishop of Najrān, with different implications.[72] All one can say is that the tradition envisages

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68   Cf. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 205 ff.

69   An imperial edict of 408–409 identifies Nisibis, Artaxata and Callinicum as the only places where traders coming from Mesopotamia could bring their goods into the empire, and the peace treaty of 561 instructs the Arabs to bring their goods to Daras and Nisibis instead of trying to smuggle them in, threatening them with dire punishments. At the designated points of entry, they could be searched for proof that they were *bona fide* traders rather than spies and also made to pay (I. Kawar (alias Shahid), 'The Arabs in the peace treaty of A.D. 561', *Arabica* 3, 1956, 192 f., 196; cf. above, n. 3).

70   For a cheekpiece of an iron helmet with leather fragments adhering to its inner surface, see J.P. Oleson et al., 'Preliminary report of the al-Ḥumayma excavation project 1995, 1996, 1998', *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 43, 1999, 411 (drawn to my attention by Rebecca Foote); for other items, see Colt, *Excavations at Nessana*, i, 55 f. (codex cover, pillow, purse, sandals, boots, belt).

71   Below, n. 78.

72   Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-munammaq*, ed. Kh.A. Fārūq (Hyderabad, 1964), 226.3; Kister, 'Some reports concerning Mecca', 73, citing al-Zubayr b. Bakkār. There is also a version in which it is a Thaqafī who owes the money to al-Walīd b. al-Mughīra (Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, i, 411.1).

Quraysh as trading at fairs rather than at forts or military headquarters, and
that it seems to think of their customers as Arabs rather than Greeks and
Aramaeans, conjuring up a trade of a very different kind from that proposed
here.[73] Of course, the people that Quraysh encountered in southern Syria will
mostly have been Arabs, in the sense of people whose first language was Arabic;
but judging from the Nessana and Petra papyri, the latter saw themselves as first
and | foremost Christians and loyal subjects of the Romans, and it will have
been as imperial subjects rather than as Arabs that they traded with Quraysh if
the latter were suppliers to the army. The stress on the Arab nature of Qurashī
trade (including the strong stress on activities at fairs in Arabia itself) should
perhaps be explained as a product of the rise of Islam, and the same is obviously
true of the stress on encounters with men of religion. It is almost entirely in
connection with events and institutions of religious significance that we hear
about the trade. But though the impression conveyed by the sources is easily
explained away, we do not thereby gain the information we need to answer the
question.

One can still try to divine the ultimate destination of their goods by following
them along their routes to see where they traded. Here the best one can
say is that the information is compatible with the hypothesis that the wares
of Quraysh were meant for military use; again, there simply is not enough
information for an answer.

Where Did Quraysh Go?

Quraysh are said to have traded in (the later *jund*s of) Palestine[74] and Jordan,[75]
as well as in Phoenicia[76] and Egypt.[77] Occasionally, they are depicted as also vis-
iting major cities such as Jerusalem or Alexandria,[78] Damascus, Tyre, Antioch,

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73   Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 151 f.; cf. ch. 7, and the explanation of the trade tried out there.

74   ʿIkrima in al-Suyūṭī, *Kitāb al-durr al-manthūr fī ʾl-tafsīr biʾl-maʾthūr* (Beirut, 1983), viii, 638,
       ad 106:2.

75   See Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 119, n. 54 (Muqātil, supported by Abū ʾl-Baqāʾ).

76   E.W. Brooks (tr.), 'The chronological canon of James of Edessa', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen
       Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 53, 1899, 323.

77   Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883), AM 6122; tr. C. Mango, R. Scott
       and G. Greatrex, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern His-
       tory, AD 284–813* (Oxford, 1997), 464.

78   In al-Kindī, *The Governors and Judges of Egypt*, ed. R. Guest (Leiden and London, 1912),
       6 f., ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ goes to Egypt for trade, which takes him to Alexandria; but in Ibn ʿAbd

and even Ankara.[79] But there are only two places in which they are regularly said to have been active, namely Buṣrā in Transjordan and Gaza on the Mediterranean. An exegete adds that they travelled not just to Buṣrā, but also to Adhriʿāt in Transjordan.[80] For this and what follows see the map in Figure 1.

Buṣrā is Bostra, the capital of the Roman province of Arabia, a garrison city housing the Third Cyrenaican Legion (which has left numerous | inscriptions), raised to the status of metropolis by Philip the Arab, a native of Shahba in the Ḥawrān who rose through the army to become Roman emperor (244–249).[81] It was also the site of a famous fair which Muḥammad | himself is said to have visited, both as a child and as the agent of Khadīja: this was where the monk Baḥīrā spotted him.[82] By Hāshim's time, legions were smaller than in the early empire and typically consisted of some 1,000–1,500 men, so it was not an enormous market. But it was not negligible either, and it did have a weapons industry: blades from Buṣrā are vaunted in pre-Islamic poetry.[83] It was a city in which the makers of goat-skin bags were sufficiently wealthy to have reserved seats in the theatre,[84] and it was also famed for products such as wine and grain,

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al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, ed. C.C. Torrey (New Haven, 1922), 53 ff., he and other Qurashīs are trading in Jerusalem when he meets a deacon who takes him to Alexandria without there being any suggestion that he traded there.

79   Cf. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 118 f. (the story set in the Ḥawrān should be removed from 118, n. 53, since it fits Buṣrā and Adhriʿāt, but cf. also the reference given below, n. 188); al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abṣār*, ed. A. Zakī Pasha, i (Cairo, 1924), 342 (citing the fourth/tenth-century al-Khālidī), where a prediction story has ʿUmar go to Antioch for trade; Jacob of Edessa, above, n. 76, where Muḥammad goes down to trade in Tyre and elsewhere. Tyre was the Mediterranean outlet of Bostra (cf. Sartre, *Middle East under Rome*, 197; Sartre, *Bostra, des origines à l'Islam* (Paris, 1985), 132).

80   ʿIkrima in the report cited above, n. 74.

81   He was not necessarily an ethnic Arab (as opposed to just a native of the area known as Arabia), but he was clearly perceived as a (Syrian or Arab) non-Greek. His father, Iulius Marinus, was a Roman citizen, however; his brother was also a member of the army, and both sons spoke Greek, presumably also Latin, whatever they may have spoken with their mother. The entire family could have made it through the army. See F. Millar, *The Roman Near East 31 BC–AD 337* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), 530 f.; C. Körner, *Philippus Arabs. Ein Soldatenkaiser in der Tradition des antoninisch-severischen Prinzipats* (Berlin, 2002), ch. 2.

82   Sartre, *Bostra*; Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, 123 f.; D.L. Kennedy and D.N. Riley, *Rome's Desert Frontier from the Air* (London, 1990), 125; *EI²*, s.v. 'Boṣrā'. See Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 116, n. 34; 118, n. 50; 219 f.

83   Schwarzlose, *Waffen*, 55, 131.

84   Sartre, *Middle East under Rome*, 199.

FIGURE 1   *Qurashī routes to Syria*

which were exported to distant destinations, by sea all the way to India and by caravan to the Arabian peninsula; perhaps they were among the goods carried back by Quraysh.[85]

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85   Schwarzlose, *Waffen*, 55, 131; Jacob, *Altarabisches Beduinenleben*, 98; Sartre, *Bostra*, 129 ff. (with much reference to Lammens); in Sartre, *Middle East under Rome*, 198 f., no evidence suggests that Bostra had a significant caravan trade, but this book stops in 273.

From Buṣrā one could travel to Adhriʿāt (Adra[h]a, modern Derʿa), some 106 km south of Damascus. It was the capital of the Ḥawrān, a region dominated by the Ghassānids, and the site of another famous fair, which Qurashī traders may have visited.[86] There too they could have sold their leather to local merchants, this time to those working for the imperial armoury in Damascus;[87] they could also have traded with the Ghassānids. Either way, they could have purchased grain, oil and wine for the return journey here too, the town being famed for all three. Grain and oil are both seen as coming from Syria in the tradition, and the same is usually (but not invariably) true of wine.[88] Gaza is where Hāshim is said to have died. Muḥammad's own father is envisaged as being on his way back from Gaza with merchandise when he died in Medina; and many other Qurashīs, including the Umayyads, are said to have traded there.[89] It does not seem to have had either an armoury or a military presence, though the sixty soldiers from Gaza allegedly martyred by the Muslims are presented as its | garrison;[90] but it was a flourishing port from where the products brought by Quraysh could have been exported to other cities, such as Caesarea and Alexandria, and it was also a centre of the pilgrim traffic.[91] Quraysh could have bought grain, oil and wine there as well, for all three were produced in the Negev at the time, and Gaza exported wine to places as distant as Gaul.[92]

So far, so good. There is a major problem, however, in that in order to get to Gaza, Bostra and Adhriʿāt, Quraysh must have passed through several places where one would have expected them also to trade if their goods were destined for military use, but which are not mentioned in connection with their commercial activities. Thus an exegete tells us that Quraysh journeyed to Syria

<div style="margin-left:auto">81</div>

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86   *EI²*, s.v. 'Adhriʿāt'.

87   Cf. Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, 275.

88   Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 98, 104 f., 139 f.; Maraqten, 'Wine drinking and wine prohibition in Arabia', 96 ff., 101, 105.

89   *EI²*, s.v. 'Ghazza'; Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 110, 115, n. 21, 118; for Muḥammad's father, see Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, i, 92. ʿUmar is said to have made his fortune there (al-Isṭakhrī, *al-Masālik waʾl-mamālik*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1870), 58; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*, ed. J.H. Kramers (Leiden, 1938–1939), 172).

90   The *Passio* is the only report we have of troops stationed in Gaza itself in the Roman and Byzantine period (Glucker, *Gaza*, 58); their presence would be due to the exceptional circumstances. See also R.G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It* (Princeton, 1997), 347 ff.; D. Woods, 'The 60 martyrs of Gaza and the martyrdom of Sophronius of Jerusalem', *Aram* 15, 2003, 129–150 (reprinted in M. Bonner (ed.), *Arab-Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times* (Aldershot, 2004)).

91   Glucker, *Gaza*, 96 ff.

92   Colt, *Excavations at Nessana*, i, 272, 230; Glucker, *Gaza*, 93 f.

by the coastal route via Ayla to Palestine in the winter and (by the inland route via Tabūk) to Buṣrā and Adhriʿāt in the summer.[93] If Quraysh had travelled for something approaching a month by the time they reached Ayla (Roman Aela, modern ʿAqaba), one wonders why they did not simply unload all their goods there, for Ayla housed the *X Legio Fretensis*, or at least it had done so in the past. But though one can make a case for the view that they purchased goods at Ayla, presumably in return for some of their own,[94] there is no recollection of trade with either military authorities or soldiers in that town. But then it could simply be that the legion was not there any more, for it is last attested in the *Notitia Dignitatum* (early fifth century), and Ayla seems to have been denuded of troops by the time of the Prophet.[95]

The problem recurs on the route to Transjordan. Contrary to what the exegete implies, the coastal route via Ayla could be used not just to reach Palestine (here presumably meaning Gaza), but also to travel to Buṣrā and Adhriʿāt in Transjordan. If Quraysh travelled via Ayla to Transjordan, one would expect them to have continued from Ayla along the *Via Nova Traiana* to Adhruḥ or Udhruḥ (Adroa), a legionary fortress some 120 km further north, and from there to Bostra. They will have passed several fortresses on the way,[96] but they are never said to have traded at any of them. In some cases the explanation could be that the fortresses had been abandoned: for example, the population of Auara (Hauare, Hauanae, Ḥumayma, where the ʿAbbāsids were later to reside) between Ayla and Adhruḥ seems to have been entirely civilian from the early fifth century onwards,[97] and it is not clear whether Adhruḥ was still a legionary base in | the sixth century (though it was certainly occupied).[98] But a recently discovered papyrus shows that there were regular troops

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93   ʿIkrima in al-Suyūṭī, *Durr*, viii, 638, *ad* Q. 106:2. Compare Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 108.14, where Abū Bakr orders ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ to go to Syria by the Ayla route and others to go via Tabūk, ʿAmr being headed for Palestine and the others for Jordan and Damascus.

94   Cf. below, text to nn. 119–120.

95   Mayerson, 'First Muslim attacks', 169 f., 174 f.; Isaac, 'The army in the Late Roman East', 141, 149.

96   See the maps in Parker, *Romans and Saracens*, 7, 38, 88, with discussion in chs 2–4.

97   J.P. Oleson, 'King, emperor, priest and caliph: cultural change at Ḥawar (ancient al-Ḥumayma) in the first millennium A.D.', *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan* 7, 2001, 575. It had been abandoned already at the end of the third century, but only for a time (ibid., 574; cf. J.P. Oleson et al., 'Preliminary report of al-Ḥumayma excavation project, 2000, 2002', *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 47, 2003, 45. My thanks to Rebecca Foote for these references).

98   For Adhruḥ, see D. Kennedy, 'The Roman frontier in Arabia (Jordanian sector)', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 5, 1992, esp. 480–482; Kennedy and Riley, *Rome's Desert Frontier*,

at the fortress of Zadakathon (Zadagatta, Zodocatha, Ṣadaqa) to the north of
Auara as late as 593–594, for example.[99] Though the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*
claims that Adhruḥ was visited by Qurashī caravans, none of the sources listed
in the bibliography says anything of the kind (the author is Lammens, revised
by Veccia Vaglieri), and the only way to postulate that Quraysh traded there
would seem to be by conjecturing that the sources have inadvertently turned
Adhruḥ into Adhriʿāt.[100]

If Quraysh went via Tabūk, they will have proceeded to Maʿān rather than
to Adhruḥ.[101] Maʿān was a well-known centre of caravan routes twenty kilome-
tres south-east of Adhruḥ, and we do hear of Qurashīs at a place called al-Zarqāʾ
between Maʿān and Adhruḥ.[102] There is no evidence that they serviced any of
the fortresses near Maʿān, however, though one of these forts may have been

131–133; Isaac, 'The army in the Late Roman East', 141, 149; A. Killick, 'Udruh and the
trade through southern Jordan', *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan* 3, 1987,
173 ff.

99   L. Koenen, R.W. Daniel and T. Gagos, 'Petra in the sixth century: the evidence of the
carbonized papyri', in G. Markoe (ed.), *Petra Rediscovered* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 2003), 254
(my thanks to Glen Bowersock for introducing me to the Petra papyri); cf. also Z.T. Fiema,
'The military presence in the countryside of Petra in the C6th', in P. Freeman et al. (eds),
*Limes XVIII. Proceedings of the XVIIIth International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies
Held in Amman, Jordan (September 2000)*, i (BAR international series 1084(i), Oxford, 2002),
133.

100 It must in fact be Adhruḥ that lies behind Adhriʿāt in the passage discussed below, n. 102,
but in the exegetical claim that Quraysh travelled to Buṣrā and Adhriʿāt, the order of the
names suggests that the exegete meant what he said (above, n. 80). He could of course
simply be correcting what he took to be a mistake in his material, and Buṣrā rather than
Adhriʿāt could lie behind all the general references to Quraysh in the Ḥawrān or Damascus
region.

101 See the map in Parker, *Romans and Saracens*, 88.

102 Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, ed. E. Sachau et al. (Leiden, 1904–1940), iii/1, 37 (ed. Beirut, 1957–1960,
iii, 55): ʿUthmān was between al-Zarqāʾ and Maʿān on his way to Syria when a voice told
him that Aḥmad had come. Elsewhere it is a member of a Hudhalī caravan on its way to
Syria who hears it (op. cit., i/1, 105; ed. Beirut, i, 161); in Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, i, 28, ʿAmr b. al-
ʿĀṣ passes through al-Zarqāʾ on his way back to Mecca. Al-Zarqāʾ is here glossed as a place
in the region of Maʿān "two *marḥala*s from Adhriʿāt", but that is impossible: there were
some 300 km between Maʿān (in the Sharāt) and Adhriʿāt (in the Ḥawrān), and a good pack
camel can travel no faster than 40–45 km a day (Colt, *Excavations at Nessana*, i, 66). Wāqidī
(or a later glossator) must be confusing Adhriʿāt with Adhruḥ here. For an enigmatic site
between al-Zarqāʾ and Adhruḥ of possible relevance here, see D.L. Kennedy, *The Roman
Army in Jordan*, second edition (London, 2004), 182 f., on Jebel Tahuna, in conjunction with
Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1866–1873), ii, 924, s.v. ʿal-Zarqāʾ.

83 fully functioning in the sixth century.[103] Nor do | they seem to have stopped fur-
ther north at Lajjūn (Legio), a legionary camp 13 km east of the *Via Nova Traiana*
which accommodated some 1,000–1,500 troops and which was occupied until
the mid-sixth century.[104] The tradition barely even remembers its existence.[105]
Nor is there any mention of Philadelphia/ʿAmmān, which they would also have
passed through in order to reach Buṣrā, or of Gerasa/Jurash, unless Jurash is
what the sources have in mind when they present Quraysh as trading in Jor-
dan.[106] It is possible that travellers from the Ḥijāz to Bostra (whether via Ayla
or Tabūk) could skirt the arable region of the Roman province almost entirely
by using a military road running east of *Via Nova Traiana*, roughly along the
lines of the later *ḥajj* route, the Ḥijāz railway, and the highway today.[107] If this is
what they did, one would assume them to have been wholesalers who had no
interest in customers on the way.

   So much for the route to Transjordan. Now let us follow Quraysh to Gaza.
Having gone to Ayla, as the exegete says, they could be expected to have
proceeded northwards along the *Via Nova Traiana* to Petra (modern Wadi
Musa, 10 km west of Adhruḥ), and to have taken the road north-west from there
to Gaza, passing through settlements with a military presence such as Oboda
(ʿAvdat) and Elusa (al-Ḥalaṣa) on the way.[108] But the sources do not seem to
remember a single place between Ayla and Gaza in connection with Qurashī
trade; most strikingly, they never seem to mention Petra. We do not even know
what it was called in Arabic at the time. (Literally translated, Petra is al-Ḥijr,
but al-Ḥijr is ancient Hegra near Madāʾin Ṣāliḥ and a place in Mecca.) Maybe

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103   Cf. Koenen, Daniel and Gagos, 'Petra in the sixth century', 254, on Ammatha (Hammam);
      also highlighted in Fiema, 'Military presence', 133.

104   See Parker, *Romans and Saracens*, 58 ff.; Kennedy, *Roman Army in Jordan²*, 154 ff.

105   It is mentioned as a town in Palestine in al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-
      aqālīm*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1906), 162; but Yāqūt, who identifies it as a place on
      the road from Syria to Mecca and places it near Taymāʾ, much too far south (*Muʿjam*,
      iv, 351, s.v. 'al-Lajjūn'; cf. also R. Schick, 'El-Lejjūn in Arabic sources', in Parker, *Roman
      Frontier in Central Jordan*, 199 ff.). By al-Lajjūn, the geographers normally understand Legio
      in the Tiberias region, which is also the main topic of Yāqūt's entry and the only place
      mentioned in *EI²*, s.v. 'Ladjdjūn'. The claim that it lay on the highway between Damascus
      and Egypt must refer to the Transjordanian Lajjūn, and presumably the same is true of
      Yāqūt's information that it had a *masjid Ibrāhīm* with a round rock and a spring that
      Abraham had caused to flow on his way to Egypt.

106   See the reference given above, n. 75.

107   D. Kennedy, personal communication. The existence of this road is questioned by D.F.
      Graf, 'The *Via Militaris* in Arabia', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51, 1997.

108   Isaac, 'The army in the Late Roman East', 140.

Quraysh did not go to Petra, then, but rather headed north-west immediately
on reaching Ayla, travelling along mere tracks. The tracks would eventually
have brought them to a place where they could have turned north-east to go
to Nessana (modern Awja Hafir), which had not only a military presence (until
about 590), but also a ninety-six-bed establishment for travellers;[109] and the
track | continued from there to Elusa, where they would have joined the main
road to Gaza. But Nessana and Elusa are also absent from the record. Maybe
Quraysh went all the way from Ayla to Raphia and proceeded from there along
the coast to Gaza. Whatever they did, it is hard to make sense of Theophanes'
claim that when the Saracens invaded Palestine, they were guided to the district
of Gaza by local Arabs alienated by the Byzantines: he implies that the invaders
did not know the way themselves.[110] It has been suggested that the invaders
were coming by a route they did not normally take, more precisely from the
direction of Sinai.[111] But it is difficult to believe that there was any route that
Quraysh did not know, given that they had been trading in the region for at
least a century by the time of the invasions and had been making themselves
at home there too: Hāshim is credited with settling Qurashīs in the towns or
villages (*qurā*) of Syria; several Qurashīs lived there for extended periods, and
it was a Qurashī in the pay of the *vicarius* Theodore who acted as informant
to the latter, thereby enabling him to defeat the Muslims at Mu'ta, according
to Theophanes:[112] like the would-be client king 'Uthmān b. al-Ḥuwayrith, the
Qurashī community in Syria would seem to have thrown in its fortunes with the
empire. As far as the need for guides to Gaza is concerned, the most plausible
explanation would seem to be either that Theophanes is passing on garbled
rumours or else that the invaders were not the Arabs who normally traded
there.

   All in all, the sources cannot be said to remember anything about how
Quraysh reached Gaza, Buṣrā, or (if they went there) Adhri'āt. Perhaps this
should be related to the problem of how to envisage the different communities
involved in the rise of Islam. Alternatively, it could be construed as evidence
that Quraysh were wholesalers: since they sold to regular customers in places
where for one reason or another they had succeeded in establishing contacts,

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109   C.J. Kraemer, *Excavations at Nessana*, iii (*Non-literary Papyri*) (Princeton, 1958), nos. 14–20
        (soldiers' archive), 31 (division of estate including the "caravanserai"), cf. the discussion at
        pp. 19 ff., 27 f. The "caravanserai" may have been just one of two such establishments in the
        town.

110   Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM 6123 (tr. Mango, 466).

111   Mayerson, 'First Muslim attacks', 160 ff.

112   Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 117 f.; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM 6123 (tr. Mango, 466).

they did not stop to trade with other potential customers on the way, but on the contrary took the fastest routes, and so the places they passed through or skirted were forgotten.

But it has to be said that they do not come across as wholesalers. Apart from the fact that they are depicted as trading at fairs, at least one Qurashī, Abū Sufyān, is envisaged as trading in both Gaza and Transjordan.[113] But the military presumably had much the same annual needs in Gaza and Transjordan, so that if Quraysh were wholesalers, one would have expected them to despatch separate caravans carrying much the same goods, led by | much the same people, to the same destinations every year. By contrast, the needs of individual soldiers and quartermasters could well have varied sufficiently for one and the same trader to travel now here and now there, or even for the same caravan to visit both regions in the same season. That Quraysh catered to individual needs is perhaps also suggested by the very fact that they sold leather goods, that is to say tanned products, perhaps manufactured too, not just the raw hides that the western barbarians of the early empire are depicted as selling, though Quraysh traded in them too.[114] As we have seen, the soldiers of the sixth-century army had cash to spend,[115] and that Quraysh dealt with them directly is further suggested by the information that they also sold perfume.[116] Perhaps we should envisage them as shifting local goods from one fair to another, trading as they travelled after the fashion of the caravaneers attested

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113 Gaza was the *matjar* of ʿAbd Manāf (who included the Umayyads and the Hāshimites), and a famous story has Abū Sufyān go to Gaza with other traders during the armistice between Muḥammad and the Meccans (Ṭabarī, i, 1561; *Aghānī*, vi, 345, both from Ibn Isḥāq); elsewhere he goes all the way to the Ghawṭa (or, as the text has it, *ghuwayṭa*) of Damascus with Umayya b. Abī ʾl-Ṣalt (Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, ix, ed. ʿA. Shīrī (Beirut, 1995), 262.1, s.v. ʿUmayya b. Abī ʾl-Ṣalt'); he also had an estate in the Balqāʾ during his trading days (Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 129.6).

114 For the western barbarians, see above, n. 29. It was hides that the would-be client king intended to send as tribute to the Byzantines and that the Prophet himself traded in and received as a gift from Abū Sufyān; it was also hides that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf traded in after his arrival in Medina; but it is leather which is mentioned in connection with Hāshim's foundation of the trade, ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ's goods, and the gift to the Ethiopian king (cf. the references in Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 98, where the distinction is not properly brought out). For tanning at Ṭāʾif, Medina and elsewhere in Arabia, see Khan, 'Tanning cottage industry in pre-Islamic Arabia', 90 ff.; Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, viii, 184 (Beirut, viii, 252). In Medina, it seems to have been a female activity, though the Prophet himself is also depicted as having been engaged in it.

115 Above, text to notes 30–35.

116 Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 95 ff.

in the Nessana documents, who seem to have turned their attention to any enterprise that looked remunerative as they went along: their main business was in live animals (camels, donkeys, horses), but wool, textiles, clothing, iron, grain, wine and oil figure in their records too.[117] The supposition that Quraysh were traders of this type would make sense of an isolated report depicting a group of them as selling cotton (*quṭn*) in Syria, here in the sense of Damascus;[118] for implausible though this sounds, they could have picked up cotton at Ayla, where it would have arrived from India, or in the Jericho area, where it is known to have been cultivated in the sixth century.[119] Another isolated report depicts them as trading in "leather, clothes, pepper, and other things which arrived by sea", an odd assortment of goods which is also suggestive of retailers who traded on the way: they could have picked up the pepper and other maritime goods at Ayla, too.[120] Casting them as traders of this kind would also suit the archaeological evidence suggesting | that most commercial activity along the road from Ayla to Gaza and elsewhere in the Negev during the Byzantine period was local in nature (though one wonders how far archaeology can really reveal such things).[121]

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Conclusion

Did Quraysh make their wealth by organizing supplies to the Roman army? As things stand, a case can be made for it, but not proved. New sources keep being discovered, however, both by archaeologists and literary historians. On the archaeological front the most spectacular recent example is Petra, long assumed to have been ruined by the earthquake of 551, but now discovered to have been a flourishing settlement until the early seventh century; a whole

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117 Kraemer, *Nessana*, iii, 27, 251 ff. (no. 89). Incidentally, a satirical poem depicts Quraysh as selling donkeys too, but not in Syria (Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 104).

118 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq: tarājim al-nisāʾ*, ed. S. al-Shihābī (Damascus, 1982), 322, with variants 322 ff.

119 Cf. A. Watson, *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World* (Cambridge, 1983), 34. Cotton does not seem to have been cultivated in lower Egypt or the Mediterranean in pre-Islamic times, but it is attested for Jericho in the sixth-century Gregory of Tours. For the India trade at Ayla, see Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 43 f.

120 Qummī in Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 78.

121 Cf. G. Avni, 'The Byzantine–Islamic transition in the Negev: an archaeological perspective' (paper presented at the Jāhiliyya Conference in Jerusalem, 2006; published in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 35, 2008).

family archive of papyri covering the period from at least 537 to 592 has been found there, carbonized, but in the process of being deciphered.[122] (This discovery makes the Muslim silence on Petra particularly strange.) In general, we know vastly more about Roman Syria, Palestine and Arabia now than thirty years ago,[123] and the same is likely to be true thirty years from now. The constant stream of new publications, not to mention easily searched databases, also holds out hope that further evidence can be found. But for the moment, the hypothesis that Quraysh were suppliers to the Roman army must be said to involve an uncomfortable amount of guesswork.

The hypothesis is none the less attractive, not only because it completely solves the coals-to-Newcastle problem, but also because it would contribute to the explanation of the cataclysmic changes in Arabia that we know as the rise of Islam. Skins, hides, manufactured leather goods, clarified butter, Ḥijāzi woollens, and camels were all modest products on which it seemed impossible, twenty years ago, that Quraysh could have become very rich. But the army was by far the single largest item of public expenditure in the Byzantine empire on the eve of Islam, and no doubt the same was true of the Sasanid empire too; and as Brent Shaw reminds us, "the largest proportion of this military expenditure was directed (or redistributed) to the periphery of the empire, indeed mainly to the war zones on the frontiers | where most of the military establishment was located".[124] For some five hundred years, and above all in the century and a half before the Arab conquests, the key war zone was the Syrian desert. For centuries, in other words, a significant proportion of the public revenues of the two empires which dominated the region was spent in areas inhabited by Arabs, in remuneration for services provided by Arabs and, as one would now like to add, for products supplied by Arabs such as the cheap leather goods

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122   Koenen, Daniel and Gagos, 'Petra in the sixth century'; cf. also J. Frösén, 'Archaeological information from the Petra papyri', *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan* 8, 2004.

123   As late as 1975 not a single military site on the Arabian frontier had been excavated, as Parker observes ('Retrospective on the Arabian frontier', 633); for the "virtual explosion" in our knowledge of Roman Arabia, see also Graf's preface to his *Rome and the Arabian Frontier*, vii. But it is still the case that "no excavation has been conducted with the economy as a primary focus along the entire length of the eastern frontier" (S. Kingsley and M. Decker, 'New Rome, new theories on inter-regional exchange: an introduction to the East Mediterranean economy in Late Antiquity', in Kingsley and Decker (eds), *Economy and Exchange in the East Mediterranean during Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2001), 9; my thanks to Robert Hoyland for drawing this work to my attention).

124   B.D. Shaw, 'War and violence', in G.W. Bowersock, P. Brown and O. Grabar (eds), *Interpreting Late Antiquity: Essays on the Postclassical World* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2001), 141.

and clothing promised by Hāshim to the Byzantine "emperor". Humble though the products were, they could have generated very considerable revenues, over a very long period, and not just in Mecca: the entire region inhabited by the Arabs, from Mesopotamia to the Yemen, is likely to have been affected by imperial demands.

We see the effects of the wars in Syria itself. The constant presence of armies to be fed and equipped on the one hand, and the enrichment of desert-dwellers eager to spend their earnings in the local markets on the other, are likely to have been a factor in the profitability of oil, grain and wine production in peripheral areas such as the Syrian limestone massif and the Negev (though the wine came to be exported to distant regions as well).[125] Indeed, the constant warfare in Mesopotamia could have played a role in the general prosperity of Syria in the fifth and sixth centuries, often remarked upon but never entirely explained.[126] It also endowed the region with a new political importance. No less than three would-be emperors appeared in Syria in the third century, all three in connection with the Roman–Persian wars: Jotapianus in 248, Uranius Antoninus in 253, and Vaballathos (at the hands of Zenobia) in Palmyra in 270.[127]

But we see the effects in Arabia, too. The shift from Arabian spices and foreign luxury goods which had dominated the Arabian trade with the empires in the past to leather and other pastoralist products will have enriched the rearers of goats, sheep and camels at the expense of the townsmen, whose once flourishing cities recede from the literary and archaeological record from the third and fourth centuries onwards. That the wars between the two empires played a role in this decline has long been surmised.[128] What the empires needed now were allies who could mobilize manpower and other resources for military use, not suppliers of the amenities of civilization; and as the cities linked with the empires by trade in high-class goods, shared artistic and cultural tastes, and their own penchant for the amenities of civilization[129] gave way

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125   Cf. Kingsley and Decker, 'New Rome', 8 f.

126   Cf. S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, 2001), 212 f., and the literature cited there.

127   Sartre, *Middle East under Rome*, 347, 349, 350 ff.

128   Cf. A.H. Masry, 'The historic legacy of Saudi Arabia', *Aṭlāl* 1, 1977, 16.

129   For the most striking example, see R.A. al-Ansary, *Qaryat al-Fau: a Portrait of a Pre-Islamic Civilisation in Pre-Islamic Arabia* (Riyadh, n.d., preface dated 1982), especially the chapters on wall paintings and sculpture. The town was located 180 km north-east of Najrān and flourished between the second century BC and the fifth century AD (p. 29); according to Masry, it came to an end already in the fourth (cf. the preceding note).

88   to phylarchs and client kingdoms, new sectors of the Arabian | population
were drawn into the imperial systems, encountering them mainly, or in many
cases probably only, as war machines. It is from the third century onwards
that we begin to encounter Arab kings in the inscriptions along with the tribal
groupings and the language familiar from the Islamic tradition.[130] In short, in
political and cultural terms alike, it would seem to have been in the period in
which the Syrian desert was a major war zone that Muḥammad's Arabia was
formed.

Given that the war zone lay primarily at the northern end of the Syrian
desert, it is surprising that the principal Arab beneficiaries of the changes
were not the politically organized tribes of the Syrian desert itself, but rather
the hitherto stateless tribes of the northern peninsula, above all those of the
Ḥijāz.[131] But however this is to be explained, casting Quraysh as suppliers to
the imperial armies would have the additional advantage of placing them at
the heart of the network of military information, making them fully informed
of the size and whereabouts of the Byzantine armies, their victories, defeats
and immediate plans, and probably their modes of fighting as well. Arminius,
the Germanic leader who annihilated Varus' army of 15–20,000 men in the
Teutoburg forest in AD 9, had actually served in the Roman army. This is more
than we can postulate for any Qurashī to date, but as suppliers to the army
they will have been in a similarly advantageous position. We could moreover
postulate that the Persian conquest of Syria and Egypt is likely to have been a
serious blow to the suppliers and that this too is likely to have contributed to
the drastic political changes in the peninsula.[132]

The wars between Byzantium and Persia have often been considered an
important factor facilitating the Arab victories in the sense that they left the
two empires financially ruined, militarily depleted and, in the Persian case,
politically disorganized as well. What has not been considered before is the
possibility that the wars affected the Arabs themselves, allowing them to gain
wealth, organizational skill, and knowledge of imperial ways, and eventually to
use this knowledge against the by now ruined and disorganized empires. This
is what is being proposed here. In other words, if Quraysh were suppliers to the
Byzantine army or, more generally, if the Arabs were suppliers to the imperial

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130   R. Hoyland, 'Arab kings, Arab tribes, Arabic texts and the beginnings of (Muslim) Arab
historical memory in the Late Roman inscriptions', in H. Cotton, R. Hoyland, J. Price and
D. Wasserstein (eds), *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman
Near East* (Cambridge, 2009).

131   The problem is noted by Howard-Johnston, 'The two great powers', 164.

132   I owe this point to John Haldon.

armies, we would be able to reinstate trade as a major factor in the rise of Islam, but with the trade as the product of war rather than the imperial love of luxury goods. As far as the political aspect of the rise of Islam is concerned, in short, the theory would be that the Perso-Roman wars destabilized not just the empires, but also their Arab neighbours.

Postscript

This article is not about the Quran, and it does not fit the evidence of the first article at all, but that is the very point of including it. It serves to illustrate that with occasional exceptions, the tradition simply does not fit what we learn from the book. As far as this particular subject is concerned, the information in the tradition makes splendid sense; all that is wrong with it is that there is too little of it. But it isn't the Quranic community that it is describing.

151   # The Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans: God and the Lesser Deities*

1   The Qurʾānic Evidence

It is well known that the *mushrikūn* with whom the Qurʾān takes issue believed in God. Like the Messenger, they called him Allāh, and both sides seem fully to have accepted that they were talking of the same deity. In Izutsu's words, the polytheist understanding of God was "surprisingly close to the Islamic concept".[1] Since the *mushrikūn* are assumed to have been pagans whereas the Messenger explicitly identified his God as the God of Moses and Jesus, this is

152   something of a problem. Why did the pagans accept the identification? You | do not make the Biblical God acceptable to devotees of a deity such as El, Zeus, or Wodin simply by saying that the two are the same, however comparable their positions within their respective divine realms or, as in this case, their names. The God of Abraham and Moses was a deity who had revealed Himself to a particular people at particular times and whose story was told in the Bible and para-Biblical literature, which the pagans cannot have recognized as their own unless we envisage them as pagans of a somewhat unusual kind. But the pagans of the Qurʾān do seem to accept that Allāh is the God of the Jews and Christians, and also to know the Biblical stories that the Messenger retells or alludes to in a manner suggesting that he expected them to recognize even the barest hints. The implication, often noted before, is that his opponents had themselves come to identify Allāh with the God of the Jews and the Christians, and that material of Biblical origin was circulating among them. In short, they do seem to have been pagans of an unusual type.

What kind of pagans were they, then? The question has acquired particular urgency since the publication in 1999 of Hawting's *Idea of Idolatry*, which demonstrated how little the pagans of the Qurʾān have to do with those of the tradition.[2] In what follows I go through the Qurʾānic information on their

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1   T. Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran*, Tokyo, 1964 (repr. Salem, N.H., 1987), pp. 98, 101.

2   G.R. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam*, Cambridge, 1999.

beliefs regarding God and the lesser deities with a view to starting a systematic examination of their religious identity based entirely on the Qurʾān and indisputably pre-Qurʾānic evidence.[3] The first part of this article examines the Qurʾānic evidence; the second part deals with the well-known hypothesis that the pagan Allāh was a "high God" and tries to relate the Qurʾānic evidence to the late antique context. The Islamic tradition is excluded from both parts on the principle that we have to start by understanding the Qurʾān on the basis of information supplied by the book itself, as opposed to that of later readers, and to understand this information in the light of developments known to have preceded its formation rather than those engendered by the book itself. There cannot, of course, be any doubt that in the long run the tradition will prove indispensable for an understanding of the Qurʾān, both because it preserves early information and because it embodies a millennium and a half of scholarship by men of great learning and high intelligence on whose shoulders it is good to stand. Indeed, we cannot completely get off their shoulders even if we try, since we normally rely on their dictionaries for the lexical meaning of the words in the book. But we | must start with the most elementary of historical tasks: separating the primary source from the secondary.

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In modern academic usage, the terms primary and secondary sources often stand for the literature written by the people we study and the modern scholarly work based on it, but this is actually a trivialising use of a distinction of fundamental importance. A primary source is one which takes us as far back as we can get; a secondary source is based on a primary one. Al-Ṭabarī and the exegetes he cites are secondary sources in relation to the Qurʾān, though they also preserve evidence which is primary to us. The primary and secondary information must always be kept separate. This rule has been so consistently violated for so long in the case of the Qurʾān and the tradition that reading the Qurʾān on its own is deeply de-familiarising, at least to somebody coming to the book from history rather than Qurʾānic studies. Few historians know the Qurʾān as a primary source. It is with a view to reintroducing it as a primary source that I shall ignore the tradition in what follows, or at best refer to it as secondary literature like any other.

Some practical preliminaries: the Qurʾān takes issue with many groups without always making it clear whom it is targeting, but much of what it says is directed against people who are accused of *shirk* (ascribing partners to God),

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3 Another article will appear as "Angels versus Humans as Messengers of God: the View of the Qurʾānic Pagans", in P. Townsend and M. Vidas (eds.), *Revelation, Literature, and Community in Late Antiquity*, Tübingen, 2011, pp. 315–336 [Ed.: included as article 4 in the present volume].

who are often called *mushrikūn* (polytheists) and *kāfirūn* (infidels), and who
are not called Jews or Christians, though the same polemics are sometimes
directed against people called Jews, Christians or People of the Book as well. It
is with these *mushrikūn* that the article is concerned. Where there is ambiguity
about the polemical target, I note it, or give some indication of the grounds on
which I take the target to be the *mushrikūn*. Those of them who appear as van-
ished nations I take to be thinly disguised versions of the Messenger's contem-
poraries without further ado. I translate *mushrikūn* as "polytheists" or "pagans"
as a matter of convenience, without prejudice to the question of what they
actually were. I accept the distinction between Meccan and Medinese suras
in the sense of suras reflecting the Messenger's periods before and after his rise
to a position of religious and political leadership, since some such distinction
is clear in the Qurʾān itself (without being associated with particular places).
My Qurʾānic translations are usually doctored versions of Arberry, Yūsuf ʿAlī, or
Paret, and "you" and "your" should always be understood as a plural unless the
contrary is indicated.

1   *The Sovereign God*

The Messenger and his pagan opponents worshipped the same God. This is
clear above all from the Messenger's repeated insistence that his opponents

154   are guilty of *iftirāʾ ʿalā ʾllāh*, falsely ascribing things to God: they were claiming |
the authority of his God for things that he regarded as utterly untrue. "Who
does more wrong than the one who attributes a falsehood to God (*iftarā ʿalā
ʾllāhi kadhiban*)?", as he asks in connection with those who worship false gods
(18:15; cf. 6:21; 7:37; 10:17; 11:18; 29:68; 61:7; etc.; cf. also the Medinese 4:40). "They
say, 'God has begotten offspring' … Say: those who attribute a falsehood to God
will never prosper" (10:68f.). His opponents retort in kind: "He is just a man
attributing a falsehood to God", they say in a vanished nation with reference to
his talk about the resurrection (23:38; cf. 34:8; perhaps also 42:24). Both sides
claimed to know best what God stood for. In line with this the Messenger
repeatedly voices amazement at the fact that people who understood the
nature of God so well could be so misguided.[4] If you asked the polytheists
who had created the heavens and the earth and made the sun and the moon
subservient, they would say "God" (29:61; 31:25; 43:9); they would give the
same answer if you asked them who had created them (43:87); yet they were
deluded (*yuʾfakūna*) and did not understand (29:61; 31:25). Or again, if you
asked them to whom the earth and everything in it belonged, who was the lord

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4   Noted by Izutsu, *God and Man*, pp. 98f., 101, 119.

of the seven heavens and the throne, and who had sovereignty (*malakūt*) over everything, they would say "God", freely admitting that He was the protector against whom no protection could be given; yet they would not be admonished and were not God-fearing, but rather bewitched (23:84–89, here for their denial of the resurrection). In short, they were inconsistent: they recognized a single sovereign, creator God, yet somehow failed to think or behave accordingly.

2   *The Lesser Deities*

The pagans contradicted their own belief in a single, sovereign God by operating with a number of other deities in addition. The additional deities are not always called gods. Countless passages simply say that the Messenger's opponents have ascribed partners (*ashrakū*) to God; some passages say that they "have given God peers (*ja'alū lillāhi andādan*)" (14:30; 39:8; 41:9; cf. 34:33 and the Medinese 2:22, 165). But we are left in no doubt that deities are meant. The Messenger's opponents "have chosen for themselves gods who can create nothing but are themselves created" (25:3); "they have taken gods apart from God" (19:81; cf. 21:21, 24; 36:23; cf. 18:15, said by the Companions of the Cave). "They have taken gods apart from God in order to be helped" (36:74). "Do they have gods that can protect them from Us?" (21:43). No help was forthcoming from the beings worshipped as gods by the vanished nations when God destroyed them (46:28), and the scoffing *mushrikūn* | who set up another god (in the singular) in addition to God would soon learn their lesson (15:96). "Will you testify that there are other gods along with God?", the Messenger asks them (6:19). If there had been gods apart from Him, the heavens and the earth would have been thrown into disorder (21:22; cf. 17:42), he assures us, frequently exhorting against or otherwise indicating the heinous nature of setting up a god (again in the singular) along with God (*ma'a 'llāhi*, 15:96; 17:22, 39; 23:117; 25:68; 26:213; 28:88; 46:30; 50:26; 51:51; 72:18) or apart from him (*min dūnihi*, 18:14). That there is no god but God is the refrain of the book.

It is not just the Messenger who characterises the lesser beings as gods; his opponents are presented as doing so themselves as well. "What, has he made (all) the gods into one? That is indeed strange", they say, exhorting each other to "stay constant to your gods" (38:5 f.). "Are we to abandon our gods for a mad poet?" (37:36). "Do not abandon your gods", they say in the story of Noah (71:23). "Have you come to turn us away from our gods?", 'Ād's people ask their warner (46:22). "We are not going to abandon our gods merely on your word", Hūd's people tell theirs, explaining that maybe one of their gods has afflicted him with evil (11:53 f.). When Jesus is held up as an example to the Messenger's contemporaries, they will turn the subject into a disputation, saying, "Are our gods better or is he?" (43:57 f.). "Is this the man who talks of your gods", they

will mockingly ask when they see him (21:36); or they will say, "Is this the man whom God has sent as a messenger? He might have led us astray from our gods if we had not been constant to them" (25:41 f.). God reassured the Messenger that no such gods existed: "Ask the messengers whom We sent before you: have We set up gods to be worshipped apart from al-Raḥmān?" (43:45).[5]

The deities are rarely identified. Sometimes the offensive practice seems to be veneration of just one additional being: one passage quotes God as saying that one should not take two gods (*ilāhayni ithnayni*), for He is just one (16:51); another counsels the Messenger to turn away from scoffing *mushrikūn* who "set up another god along with God" (*jaʿalū maʿa ʾllāhi ilāhan ākhara*) (15:94–96); yet another says consigns whoever "sets up another God along with God" to hell (50:26, cf. his *qarīn* in the next verse); and still others say that one should not set up "another god along with God" (*ilāhan ākhara maʿa ʾllāhi*, 17:22, 39; 23:117; 25:68; 26:213; 28:88; 51:51). No second deity is named, however, except in the story of Elijah (Ilyās), where he appears as Baʿl (37:125), but this name undoubtedly comes from the Biblical tradition | rather than the Messenger's contemporaries.[6] Two passages suggest that the false deities included the heavenly bodies: the queen of Sheba and her people worshipped the sun apart from God (27:24); and "Among His signs are the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Do not prostrate to the sun or the moon, but prostrate to God who created them if it is Him you want to serve" (41:37). Numerous passages condemn lesser deities in the plural, occasionally even naming them: Noah complains to God that his people will not abandon Wadd, Suwāʿ, Yaghūth, Yaʿūq and Nasr, explicitly identified as gods (71:23); and a famous verse asks, "Have you (pagans) reflected on al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzā and Manāt?", implicitly identified as daughters of God (53:19 f.).[7] (The word "goddess" does not appear in the Qurʾān.) Of the handful of names we are given, most are attested in pre-Islamic inscriptions and/or theophoric names, so there is no doubt that at least some of the intermediary beings were genuine Arabian deities.[8] But what precisely was the nature of these deities in the eyes of the Messenger's opponents?

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5 This is one of several passages designed to prevent the Messenger from sliding into doubt about his message, cf. R. Paret, *Der Koran. Kommentar und Konkordanz*, Stuttgart, 1980, p. 229, *ad* 10:94.

6 Cf. 1 Kings 18:21, and the discussion in J. Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, Berlin and Leipzig, 1926, p. 101.

7 See further below, 11.

8 Cf. T. Fahd, *Le panthéon de l'Arabie centrale à la veille de l'Hégire*, Paris, 1968, under the names of the deities in question; Hawting, *Idolatry*, ch. 5 and the literature given there.

3   *Children of God/Angels*

Surprisingly, to someone coming to the Qurʾān from Ibn al-Kalbī and Ibn Isḥāq, the lesser beings are indiscriminately identified as gods, offspring of God, and angels.[9] To the pagans, the three expressions were probably synonymous: to be a son or daughter of God was simply to share in His nature (cf. further below, 11). But the Messenger takes the language of procreation literally. "They say, al-Raḥmān has begotten offspring (*ittakhadha waladan*)" (21:26; cf. 43:81; 19:88, 91 f.). "They falsely credit Him with sons and daughters (*banīn wa-banāt*), having no knowledge … How can He have offspring (*walad*) when He has no consort?" (6:100 f.). "Has your lord favoured you with sons and taken females (for Himself) from among the angels?" (17:40; similarly 16:57, 62; 43:16; 53:21 f.). "Ask them, does your Lord have daughters when they have sons? Or did We create the angels female while | they were watching? What they are saying is their own slanderous invention (*ifk*). Has God begotten children? They are lying. Did He choose daughters rather than sons?" (37:149–153; cf. also the Medinese 4:117). "Those who do not believe in the hereafter call the angels by female names" (53:27).

The Messenger frequently denies that God has offspring (*walad*) (6:101; 10:68; 17:111; 18:4; 19:35; 23:91; 43:81; etc.) and finds the idea of female angels utterly outrageous; he treats the ideas of many gods, female angels, and daughters of God as practically identical concepts.[10] The children of God include Jesus, and on one occasion both the Christians and the Jews are accused of believing in sons of God, al-Masīḥ in the case of the Christians, ʿUzayr in the case of the Jews (9:30). But no son of God other than these two is actually named. No daughters of God are explicitly named either, though al-Lāt, Manāt and al-ʿUzzā are implicitly identified as such (53:19–21, cf. 27).

As angels, the lesser gods/children of God occupied a slot that the Messenger himself recognized as legitimate, and the Islamicist literature often claims that it was he rather than the polytheists who classified them as angels, his purpose being to demote them to a suitably subordinate position.[11] This is difficult to

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9   Cf. P.A. Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, Leipzig, 1928, pp. 97 ff. Their identification as angels is briefly discussed by W.M. Watt, "The Qurʾān and Belief in a 'High God'", *Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants*, ed. R. Peters, Leiden, 1981, pp. 332 f., in response to Muslims who had questioned it (though it is well known to the exegetical tradition, too).

10   There were no females among the angels according to Theodoret (*Haereticarum Fabularum Compendium*, 5, 7; *Graecarum Affectionum Curatio*, 3, 89).

11   D.B. Macdonald, "Allāh", *EI²*; C. Brockelmann, "Allah und die Götzen, der Ursprung des islamischen Monotheismus", *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, 21 (1922), p. 102, agreeing

accept. He certainly treats them as genuine angels at times, with the qualification that the pagans have misunderstood them, but more commonly he tries to distinguish the false gods from the genuine angels (cf. below, no. 12). The claim that it must have been he who classified the pagan deities as angels seems to rest on a tacit assumption that only Biblical-type monotheists believed in angels at the time, which is not correct (cf. below, 11).

It is more difficult to tell exactly how we should envisage the angelic population in question. Did the adherents of female angels operate with female angels alone or see them as part of a larger cast including males? Did they single out three female angels (al-Lāt, Manāt and al-ʿUzzā) for special reverence, or were the three revered by different groups, or is the Messenger picking out those three as particularly offensive because of their pagan names? It is impossible to tell.

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4 *Intercessors*

The polytheists held their lesser deities to act as intercessors between God and themselves. "They worship, apart from God, that which neither harms nor benefits them, saying, those are our intercessors with God" (10:18). "Those who take [other beings] as friends (*awliyāʾ*) apart from God [say], We only worship them so that they may bring us close to God" (*li-yuqarribūnā ilā ʾllāhi zulfā*, 39:3). They worshipped them as gods as a means of getting close to God (*qurbānan*) (46:28): in short, they saw them as mediators. Most references to this belief take the form of denials that the lesser deities have the power to do what is expected of them. "Should I adopt gods apart from Him?", a believer from a vanished city asks, adding that "if al-Raḥmān wants to inflict some harm on me, their intercession (*shafāʿa*) will not be any use, nor will they be able to save me" (36:23). "Those whom they invoke apart from Him have no ability to intercede (*lā yamliku ... ʾl-shafāʿata*)", the Messenger declares (43:86). "Do they take intercessors apart from God?" (39:43). He is not denying that the angels can intercede, only that they can do so as powers in their own right. "Say, all intercession is God's" (39:44; cf. 78:37). "No intercession is of any use with Him except for those to whom He has granted permission" (34:22 f.; similarly 10:3; 19:87). The alleged offspring of al-Raḥmān are just servants raised to high honour who act by His command and offer no intercession, except for those who have found favour (with Him) (21:26–28). "How many angels

with Macdonald; A.T. Welch, "Allah and Other Supernatural Beings: the Emergence of the Qurʾānic Doctrine of *Tawḥīd*", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 47 (1979), pp. 740 f.; more cautiously also J. Chabbi, "Jinn", *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*.

there are in heaven whose intercession is of no use, except after God has given permission for whomever He wills and is pleased with" (53:26). The beings on whom the infidels called had no power unless they testified to the truth (43:86), presumably meaning acknowledged their own created status.

The intercession that the pagans seek from the lesser gods seems to be this-worldly. When the believer informs his unbelieving people that the intercession of other gods will be of no avail if God decides to inflict some harm (*ḍurr*) on him (36:23), one takes the harm to be earthquakes, thunderbolts, violent winds ruining gardens or causing people to drown, and other forms of adversity with which God is known to test people in this world, rather than harm on the day of judgement; for the pagans doubted or denied the resurrection, or the afterlife altogether, or some of them did, and according to one passage, it was those who did not believe in the hereafter who called the angels by female names (53:27). "They have taken gods apart from God, so that they may be [a source of] power/glory (*ʿizz*) for them", as we are told (19:81), but here the reference could be to the day of judgement, for the next verse says that actually these claimed gods will prove to be their adversaries. The Mes|senger, who knows that the pagans will be resurrected, certainly stresses that the pagan gods/angels will prove useless on the day of judgement, too: "We do not see with you your intercessors of whom you claimed that they were your partners", God will tell the polytheists (6:94); "No intercessors will they have from among their partners" (30:13); and when the polytheists realize that the messengers sent to them spoke the truth, they will ask, "do we have any intercessors to intercede for us?" (7:53), admitting that "we have no intercessors" (26:100).

5 *The Creation*

Did the pagans credit the lesser deities or angels with any role other than that of intercessors? In particular, did they regard the lesser gods as partners in the creation? The answer seems to be no.

The Qurʾān often stresses that the lesser deities do not have any creative powers in a manner apt to suggest that the opponents disagreed: "O men, here is a simile, so listen to it. Those whom you invoke apart from God could never create a fly even if they all met for that purpose; and if the fly were to snatch away something, they would not be able to save it from it. Feeble are the seeker and the sought" (22:73; cf. also 13:16). "Say ... 'Show me what it is they have created in the earth, or do they have a partnership in the heavens (*am lahum shirkun fī ʾl-samawāti*)?' Or have We given them a book providing them with clear evidence?" (35:40; similarly 46:4); in other words, if the lesser deities existed, there should be evidence for them in the natural world or in a book

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revealed to the pagans. "Can any of your partners create for the first time and then repeat it?" (10:34), as they are also asked.

But it would probably be wrong to read these verses as implying that the pagans saw their gods or angels as participants in the creation. For one thing, as we have seen, if one asked them who had created the world or themselves, they would emphatically answer "God" (above, no. 1). For another thing, the question whether the deities or angels had a partnership in heaven (35:40; 46:4) has a sarcastic ring to it, an impression heightened by the information that the pagans regarded God as the lord of the earth and everything in it, and the lord of the seven heavens too (above, no. 1). This suggests that the Messenger is confronting his opponents with the (to him) absurd implications of their own beliefs: by worshipping these beings the pagans *implied* that the beings in question had a partnership in heaven, yet they themselves denied it. They were inconsistent, as he so often said. To the Messenger, absence of creative powers implied absence of divinity: if the alleged gods were not creators, they were created, and everything created was subservient, | like the sun and the moon that the *mushrikūn* themselves, or some of them, held God to have subjected to His will (29:61). A god was a creator: if there had been a god along with God, each god would have gone away with that which he had created (23:91). But the polytheists did not claim that their gods were creators: why then did they cast them as gods? "Those whom they invoke apart from God create nothing and are themselves created" (16:20), as he said; "do they associate [with Him beings] which cannot create anything, but are created themselves?" (7:191). "They have adopted gods, besides Him, who cannot create anything, who are created, who have no power to harm or benefit themselves, and who have no power over death, life or the resurrection" (25:3); or again, "call upon those whom you claim [as deities] apart from God! They do not possess as much as the weight of a mote in the heavens or on earth; they have no partnership in either of them" (34:22). As the Messenger saw it, the lesser gods were nothing, even on the pagans' own premises. This was the inconsistency he found so glaring that he could not understand why the pagans did not agree.

The reason why the pagans could not see the inconsistency is no doubt that from their point of view there was none. The fact that the lesser deities were not participants in the creation did not imply that they were either created or powerless. Rather, they were sons and daughters of God, by which one takes them to have meant manifestations or hypostases of the divine, like the Old Testament divinities known as sons of God, later called angels, or like Christ to the Christians (many of whom had once understood him as an angel, too; cf. below, ii, and the references in note 100). Since both sides were happy to call the intermediary beings angels, one might wonder why it mattered so much

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that the pagans also called them gods (cf. below, 11, for the Christian handling of this question). The answer seems to be that the Messenger saw a stark contrast between God and everything else whereas the pagans saw divinity as a spectrum. The Messenger repeatedly contrasts angels and God, but to his opponents this will have been absurd: their angels were of the same nature as God, the one slid into the other; they were greater and lesser manifestations of what was ultimately the same divine being. It was this line separating God from everything else which was at stake, and it certainly was not a trivial issue.

6   *God's Power*

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Just as the pagans held God to be the only creator, so they seem to have held Him alone to send down rain and provide sustenance for them. "If you ask them who sends down rain from the sky, reviving the land with it after it has been dead, they will certainly say, 'God'. Say: Praise be to God! But most of them don't understand" (29:63). Again, their inconsistency lies in recognizing just one power, yet operating with several. "Will they then have faith in falsehood (*bāṭil*), and deny/fail to be grateful for (*yakfurūna*) God's blessing, and worship things apart from God which have no power to provide them with sustenance from heaven and earth, and can do nothing?" (16:72f.); "Is there a creator other than God to give you sustenance from heaven and earth?", the Messenger asks, stressing that his opponents are deluded (*yuʾfakūna*) (35:3); "Those that you worship apart from God cannot give you sustenance", as Abraham told his people, accusing them of inventing falsehood (*ifk*) (29:17). Since the pagans would also affirm that the earth and everything in it belonged to God, the lord of all seven heavens and of the throne who was endowed with sovereignty (*malakūt*) over everything and the protector against whom no protection could be given (23:84–89), it is hard not to infer that they deemed God to be omnipotent.

7   *Angel Worship*

The Qurʾān often speaks of the pagans as actually worshipping their angels or deities: "Will they then have faith in falsehood and worship (*taʿbudūna*) things apart from God?" (16:73; cf. also 10:18); "You worship (*taʿbudūna*) idols apart from God" (29:17, where the speaker is Abraham). Exactly what did this worship amount to? Most obviously, did the pagans ever invoke the lesser gods, or one of them, on their own?

It seems not. Paret does admittedly translate the phrase *min dūni* on the assumption that this is what they must have done. Thus he renders the Medinese 4:117 (*in tadʿūna min dūnihi illā ināthan*) as meaning that "they pray to

nothing but female beings *instead of* Him" ("Statt zu ihm, beten sie zu nichts als weiblichen Wesen"). But the previous verse says that God does not forgive the ascription of partners to Him (*an yushraka bihi*, 4:116), implying that the worshippers of female beings are guilty of associating these beings with God, not of replacing Him with them. "Do not set up another deity *along with* God" (*lā tajʿal maʿa ʾllāhi ilāhan ākhara*), as other verses say (15:96; 17:22, 39; etc., cf. above, no. 2); "Do you testify that there are other gods *along with* God | (*maʿa ʾllāhi*)?" (6:19). The hoopoe found a woman ruling in Sabaʾ: she and her people were worshipping the sun apart from God (*min dūni ʾllāhi*); once again Paret takes the verse to mean that they worshipped the sun instead of God (27:24). Since Paret evidently would not deny that *shirk* was giving God partners rather than replacing Him with others, he may be translating on the assumption that the *mushrikūn* saw Allāh as an otiose high god, *i.e.* a creator God who played no role in the cult (cf. below). But sometimes Paret himself renders *min dūni ʾllāhi* as "apart from God" (*e.g.* 2:165), and God clearly did play a role in the cult of the *mushrikūn*: "the places of prostration (*al-masājid*) belong to God, so do not call upon anyone *together with* Him (*maʿa ʾllāhi*)" (72:18). "Do not prostrate to the sun or the moon, but prostrate to God who created them *if it is Him you want to serve*", as another sura counsels (*in kuntum iyyāhu taʿbudūna*, 41:37).

The idea that the pagans did not normally pray to God rests on some passages contrasting their behaviour at sea and on land. "When they ride on a ship, they call on God, in sincere devotion to Him alone, but when He delivers them safely to dry land, they ascribe partners" (29:65). They pray to God in sincere devotion to him when "a violent wind comes and the waves reach them on all sides, and they think they are about to perish", promising that "If You (sg.) will save us from this, we will be among the thankful", only to be "insolent on earth, wrongfully" when they are saved (10:22f.), perhaps by ascribing partners again, or perhaps just by forgetting about God in their behaviour (cf. 17:37). It is God who delivers them from the darkness of the land and sea, when they call upon Him humbly and silently (or secretly, *khufyatan*), promising to be thankful if they are saved: yet when He saves them, they ascribe partners to Him (6:63f.). Elsewhere we are told that the pagans will pray to God for a healthy child when its birth is approaching, promising to be grateful if they get one; yet when they do, they will ascribe partners "in that which He gave them" (7:189f.). More generally, "when trouble touches a man, he prays to Us (*daʿānā*)", but when he is given relief, he proceeds as if nothing has happened (10:12), probably by reverting to his partners, though again it is left unspecified. "When We remove the distress from you, some of you (*farīqun minkum*) will ascribe partners to their lord", as another passage says (16:54).

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What these passages imply is not that the Messenger's contemporaries, or some of them, normally prayed to their lesser deities rather than to God, but that they normally prayed to them as avenues to God, or to all of them together; at times of danger, however, they would address themselves to God alone, meaning directly to Him. They would forget their deities and behave | like true monotheists, as some put it.[12] "It is indeed remarkable that … the pagan Arabs used to have recourse to 'temporary monotheism' apparently without any reflection on the grave implication of such an act", as Izutsu says, perfectly capturing the Messenger's point of view.[13] But a Christian is not being a temporary monotheist when he prays directly to God instead of to Jesus or a saint. The pagans presumably also thought of themselves as monotheists whether they prayed directly to God or not, and conversely they hardly stopped recognizing their lesser deities when they bypassed them: one could present a petition to the king through a patron or one could throw oneself at directly at his feet if one was desperate enough. In the verses on how the pagans would pray to God for a healthy child, yet ascribe partners "in that which He gave them", they seem to credit the lesser beings with a role in their success even though they have not prayed to them, or at least they give thanks to them along with God. But only an enemy of intermediary beings could see an inconsistency here: unlike the Messenger, the pagans did not think in terms of a contrast between God and the angels/lesser deities.

In the continuation of the passage on how the pagans will pray to God for a child, yet credit the partners with a role in their success, the Messenger responds that the partners cannot create anything or help anybody, and challenges the pagans to test the power of the alleged partners by praying to them: "those whom you call upon apart from God are servants like yourself, call upon them and let them respond to you, if you speak the truth" (7:194). "Call on those whom you claim apart from God, they have no power to remove affliction from you or to change it", as another sura says (17:56). At first sight this is an odd proposition: calling upon these partners is precisely what the pagans are constantly accused of doing. The Messenger must mean that they should call on them on their own: his point is that insofar as the pagans' prayers were successful, it was thanks to God, not to the lesser beings, and that they could easily test this proposition by praying to the lesser beings alone. Once

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12   Watt, "Belief in a 'High God' in Pre-Islamic Mecca", *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 16 (1971), p. 39; cf. id., "Qur'ān and Belief in a 'High God'", p. 330 (cf. id., "The 'High God' in Pre-Islamic Mecca", *Actes du Vᵉ Congrès international d'arabisants et d'islamisants*, Brussels, [1971?], p. 502).

13   Izutsu, *God and Man*, p. 102.

again it is clear that they did not normally pray to them on their own. Rather, they prayed to God *and* the partners or to God *through* the partners, and occasionally directly to God, *bypassing* the partners. In short, their error was *shirk*, "associationism", not just in terms of belief, but also in terms of cultic behaviour.

164   In line with this, the pagans are guilty of assigning some of their harvest and their cattle to God *and* the partners, saying, "'This is for God'—so they assert—'and this is for our associates'" (6:136; cf. 16:56). They are not accused of setting aside such things, or making other gifts, to the lesser beings on their own. Nor are they accused of prostrating to them, devoting certain days to them, housing them in their own sanctuaries, appointing guardians to them, or making pilgrimages to them. In short, there is no reference to the practicalities of a cult of deities or angels separate from that of God.

8   *Law and Custom*

The pagans saw God, not their lesser deities or angels, as the source of their ritual law and customs. We are told that they would declare certain cattle and crops to be sacrosanct (*ḥijr*), saying that only those "whom We [*i.e.* God] wish" were allowed to eat them; they also had cattle "whose backs are forbidden", *i.e.* on which it was not allowed to ride and/or which could not be yoked for purposes of agricultural labour, and there were cattle over which they would not mention the name of God (*lā yadhkurūna 'sma 'llāhi 'alayhi*, 6:138). It is not clear whether they would simply omit His name, as suggested both here and in 6:121, or whether they would replace it with another: later the Messenger prohibits meat hallowed to somebody other than God (*uḥilla li-ghayri 'llāhi*), apparently with reference to the same malpractice (6:145; again 16:115). But if the pagans would dedicate some slaughters to a deity other than God, it is odd that they are only accused of omitting His name here: polemics are not conducive to understatement. More probably, the Messenger is sharpening the formulation the second time round. Maybe he could not see the difference between omitting God's name and mentioning that of another deity (just as he equated not believing in God with deifying oneself, cf. 26:23, 29; 28:38), or maybe he meant that the pagans would sometimes mention the names of the lesser beings as well as God's, which in his view amounted to hallowing it to "other than God": "should I seek other than God as my lord?", as he says in 6:164, though his target throughout this sura is *shirk*, not rejection of God for another deity. At all events, it was only over some cattle that they would not mention His name: the implication is that normally they mentioned it. Even when they departed from what the Messenger took to be God's wishes, they ascribed the rules to God Himself, falsely in the Messenger's view (*iftirā'an 'alayhi*) (6:138).

"Don't say … this is lawful and this is forbidden, thereby fathering falsehoods on God (*li-taftarū ʿalā ʾllāhi ʾl-kadhiba*); those who ascribe false things to God will never prosper" (16:116). "It was not God who instituted any of the *baḥīra* or *sāʾiba* or | *waṣīla* or *ḥām*, but those who do not believe are attributing falsehoods to God (*yaftarūna ʿalā ʾllāhi ʾl-kadhiba*)", as a Medinese sura says with reference to these and/or other pagan rituals (5:103). Again, the implication is that they see their customs as God-given. They do say, on one occasion, that "if God had wanted, we would not have worshipped (*ʿabadnā*) anything other than Him, we and our fathers, nor would we have forbidden anything apart from what He forbids" (*mā ḥarramnā min dūnihi min shayʾin*) (16:35), which could be taken to imply that they saw themselves as having forbidden these things on their own authority. But they appear not to have distinguished sharply between divine injunction and ancestral norms: "when they do a shameful thing (*fāḥishatan*), they say, 'This was our fathers' way, and God has ordered us to do it (*wa'llāhu amaranā bihā*)'" (7:28), as the Messenger observes. They would credit God with things they did not know about (*a-taqūlūna ʿalā ʾllāhi mā lā taʿlamūna*), as the same verse puts it, corroborating that they saw God as having ordained their ancestral ways.

In addition to invoking God's name over sacrifices, the pagans would swear by Him, at least when the oaths were of the strongest kind. (Whether they would invoke the lesser gods or angels in their less forceful oaths we are not told: we never see them swear by al-Lāt, Manāt, al-ʿUzzā or any other deities in the Qurʾān, only in the tradition). "They swear by God their most earnest oaths that if a sign were sent to them, they would believe in it" (6:109; cf. 100, 106 ff., identifying them as *mushrikūn*); "they swore their strongest oaths by God that if a warner came to them they would follow his guidance better than any other nation" (35:42, cf. 40 for their *shirk*). Apparently, they were familiar with the idea that God might send them a warner and had a notion of what kind of credentials to expect from such a person.[14] Again, there is more overlap between their religion and that of the Messenger than is customarily assumed. They also "swear their strongest oath by God that God will never resurrect those who die" (16:38). In other words, it was as believers in God, not in the sons or daughters of God, that they denied the resurrection.

9   *Determinism*

One of the more striking characteristics of the *mushrikūn* in the Qurʾān is that they express themselves in determinist terms. They repeatedly argue that what-

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14   See further Crone, "Angels versus Humans".

ever they do is right, since God would not otherwise have allowed them to do it. "If God had wanted, we and our fathers would not have ascribed partners, nor would we have forbidden anything (*mā ḥarramnā min shay'in*)", | as they say (6:148). Or again, "If God had wanted, we would not have worshipped anything other than Him, we and our fathers, nor would we have forbidden anything apart from what He forbids" (*mā ḥarramnā min dūnihi min shay'in*) (16:35). "If al-Raḥmān had wanted, we would not have worshipped them" (43:20). There were people, roundly denounced as unbelievers, who refused to practise charity on such determinist grounds: "Shall we feed those whom, if God has wanted, He would have fed?", they would ask (36:47).

It is possible that the pagans meant some or all of this sarcastically, but whether they did so or not, it was a difficult argument for the Messenger to refute, since it captured his own view of God's all-determining power. In fact, he frequently expresses himself in the same determinist vein as the pagans, especially when he is trying to make sense of the fact that he is being rejected. God has put veils over their hearts and deafness in their ears so that they do not understand, he says (6:25; 17:46; 18:57; similarly 2:7). God has put fetters around their necks right up to their chins, so that they cannot see, and covered things up for them (36:8 f.). He leads astray or guides whomever He wants (6:39); the unbelievers will not believe unless God wants it (6:111); and if it is hard for the Messenger to bear rejection, he should remember that "if God wanted, He would gather them to the guidance" (6:35; cf. 13:31). On several occasions God actually says exactly the same as the pagans themselves: "If God had wanted, they would not have ascribed partners [to Him]; We did nor appoint you to watch over them, nor did We make you their guardian [so stop worrying about it]" (6:107); "If your lord had wanted, they would not have done it, so leave them and their lies (*mā yaftarūna*) alone" (6:112). "If God had willed, they would not have done it, so leave them and their lies alone" (6:137, with reference to infanticide). In response to their argument that they would not have ascribed partners to God or forbidden anything apart from what He forbids, the Messenger first claims that this is how their predecessors had also refused to believe and that they are following nothing but conjecture (*ẓann*) (6:148), but in the end he agrees: "if He had wanted, He would have guided all of them" (6:149).

10   *Allāh and al-Raḥmān*

Though the Messenger and his opponents worshipped the same God under the name of Allāh, the modern literature often says that the Messenger also knew Him by a name with which the pagans were not familiar, namely al-Raḥmān, implying that his concept of God was shaped by additional | monotheist ideas

which the pagans did not share.[15] But both sides call Him al-Raḥmān in the Qurʾān. There are however also passages in which the *mushrikūn* are presented as not accepting, or even knowing, Him by this name, so how is this discrepancy to be resolved?

Let us start with the verses in which the pagans speak of al-Raḥmān as their own God. "They say, al-Raḥmān has begotten children … But they [the alleged children] are just servants raised to honour" (21:26). The reference is to children in the plural rather than a single son or sons in the dual (Christ and ʿUzayr), and so too is the response denying that the children can intercede in their own right (21:28), so the passage must be about the *mushrikūn*. In 43:19 f. we are told that the pagans "have made the angels who are servants of al-Raḥmān females", claiming that "if al-Raḥmān had wanted, we would not have worshipped them". In both passages the Messenger could be using his own name for God, but if the pagans were known to be unfamiliar with the name of al-Raḥmān, this would have jarred in the ears of the audience. The pagans are presented as using the name again in a warner story in which two messengers are sent to an unidentified people: the unbelievers reject the messengers, denying that al-Raḥmān has sent down anything to them (36:15), whereupon a lone believer, who supports the messengers, also speaks of God as al-Raḥmān (36:23). The fact that both sides are envisaged as speaking of al-Raḥmān suggests that the name itself was not an issue.

Now let us move to the other set of verses. In 13:30 the Messenger is told that God has sent him to recite revelation, but that they "do not believe in al-Raḥmān" (*yakfurūna biʾl-Raḥmāni*), to which he is to respond, "He is my lord, there is no God but He". This could mean that the pagans do not believe in God (like Pharaoh in 26:23, 29) or simply that they ascribe partners to Him, for *kufr* does not normally mean unbelief in the sense of denial of His existence: the pagans are usually unbelievers in the sense that their belief in the one God does not show in the way they speak and act (in the Messenger's opinion).[16] Here too their *kufr* seems to lie in "associationism", for the Messenger is instructed to respond by saying "He is my lord, there is no God but He". There is no reason to think that the issue is the name al-Raḥmān. In 21:36 we are told that "when the | unbelievers see you (sg.), they treat you with nothing but mockery, [saying,] 'Is this the one who talks (*yadhkuru*) of your gods?' They do not

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15   Cf. J. Jomier, "Le nom divin 'al-Raḥmān' dans le Coran", *Mélanges Louis Massignon*, Damascus, 1957, II, pp. 365 ff. (the claim is rooted in the tradition, cf. p. 367); similarly Welch, "Allah and Other Supernatural Beings", p. 735.

16   In 29:52, for example, we are told of the unbelievers that they *kafarū biʾllāhi* (29:52), though shortly afterwards they are said to affirm that He created the heavens and the earth (29:61).

believe when there is talk of al-Raḥmān (*wa-hum bi-dhikri ʾl-Raḥmāni hum* [sic] *kāfirūna*)". The repetition of the *hum* in the last line is odd, but the statement seems to mean no more than the previous passage: they do not believe in al-Raḥmān/God, either in the sense of denying his existence or in the sense of associating other gods with Him; either way, they do not believe in what the Messenger is saying about Him. In 25:60, however, we read: "When they are told, 'Prostrate to al-Raḥmān', they say, 'What is al-Raḥmān?' (*mā ʾl-Raḥmān*). Shall we prostrate to that which you order us?" This does at first sight suggest that they did not know al-Raḥmān. The response is not an explanation of al-Raḥmān's relationship with Allāh, however, but rather praise of Him as the creator and mention of the gratitude He deserves, followed by a description of His servants (they are humble and say "peace" when addressed by the ignorant); and though the name al-Raḥmān is used once more (v. 63), God is soon called Allāh again (vv. 68, 70) without any attempt to persuade the audience that the two are identical; this is simply taken for granted. Apparently, then, the issue was not the name here either. One may compare the passage with 26:23, where Pharaoh asks, "What is the Lord of the universe? (*mā rabbu ʾl-ʿālamīna*)" (26:23). The force of the question is not that he has never heard of God, but rather that he does not believe in Him: he cast himself as God (26:29). Or again, the unbelievers would say that "we do not know what the hour is", explaining that "we are just conjecturing and are not convinced" (*in naẓunnu illā ẓannan wa-mā naḥnu bi-mustayqinīna*, 45:32): they were not saying that the concept of the hour was unfamiliar to them, but rather that they doubted its reality. When the unbelievers ask, "What is al-Raḥmān?", one takes them similarly to be voicing doubts or denials, either of al-Raḥmān's existence or of the Messenger's understanding of Him, but in any case of something to do with God: the fact that God is here called al-Raḥmān comes across as accidental. That God and al-Raḥmān were interchangeable to both sides is also suggested by the fact that nothing is said about the latter which is not said about the former as well, whether by the Messenger or by the pagans.[17] This does not completely solve the problem, for elsewhere the Messenger is instructed to say, "Call upon Allāh or call upon al-Raḥmān: by whatever name you (sg.) call, His are the beautiful names" (17:110). This could be taken to suggest some doubt about the relationship between the two, but it is not clear whether it is the Messenger or the pagans who are in | doubt (all six verbs in this verse are in the singular); and the statement could be read as a concession, whether to the Messenger or to the pagans.

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17   Noted by Jomier, "Nom divin", p. 370.

11   *Idols*

The Qurʾān has many stories of idols, but they relate to the Biblical past, above all Abraham. The only reference to contemporary idols in a sura classified as Meccan comes in connection with the institution of the pilgrimage in 22:30: "Lawful to you are cattle, except those mentioned to you [as exceptions]; but shun the impurity of idols (*al-rijsa min al-awthāni*)". Here as so often, it is unclear precisely what the book has in mind, but the context suggests that what is being forbidden is a type of food, presumably meat sacrificed to idols. In the Medinese sura 5 cattle are also declared to be lawful to the believers, with a longer list of exceptions, and here the exceptions include *mā dhubiḥa ʿalā ʾl-nuṣubi*, that which has been sacrificed on sacrificial stones (5:3); later in the same sura, sacrificial stones (*al-anṣāb*) are mentioned along with wine, *maysir*, and divinatory arrows as "impurity of Satan's making" (*rijsun min ʿamali ʾl-shayṭāni*) (5:90). This suggests that the impurity of idols forbidden in 22:30 is meat slaughtered on sacrificial stones.[18] Sacrificial stones (*anṣāb*) were not idols, but altars, the equivalent of the Biblical *maṣṣebot*, to which they are etymologically related: things were sacrificed on them, not to them (5:3). But the things slaughtered on them could of course be dedicated to deities other than God, or along with God, and this made them idols in the broad sense of anything constituting a rival to God. The fact that they were not images of deities or objects inhabited by them was irrelevant to the tradition, which freely conflates sacrificial stones with idols in accounts relating to Mecca.[19]

Given that it is only in a Medinese sura that we hear of *anṣāb*, one could also see sura 22:30 as referring to one or more of the practices condemned in 6:136–145. Here, as seen already, we are told that the pagans would devote part of their cattle and their harvest to God and their lesser deities, that they had cattle which they held it forbidden to use in ploughing and/or as beasts of burden, and also cattle over which they would not mention the name of God when they slaughtered them, falsely crediting these rules to God (*iftirāʾan ʿalayhi*, 6:138), and that they would reserve the unborn young of some animals for the men of the community, forbidding their wives to eat of them unless they were stillborn (6:139). To all of this the Messenger answers | that they should render to God the proper dues of the olives, pomegranates and other produce when it was harvested and that they should eat of the cattle that God had provided, without following Satan (6:141 f.). Shortly thereafter he says that there is nothing

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18   Similarly Hawting, *Idolatry*, p. 60.

19   Cf. T. Fahd, "Nuṣub", *EI*².

in the revelation he has received forbidding the consumption of anything apart from carrion, blood and pork, which is *rijs or fisq*, and that anything hallowed to somebody other than God is also forbidden (6:145). Elsewhere he tells a warning parable culminating in the same message: "What He has forbidden to you is carrion, blood, pork, and that which has been hallowed to something other than God"; one should not say, "this is lawful and this is forbidden", thereby ascribing false things to God (*li-taftarū ʿalā ʾllāhi ʾl-kadhiba*) (16:115 f.). The *rijs min al-awthān* could refer to cattle involved in these rituals. If so, no idols in the literal sense would be involved, but the first interpretation is perhaps the more plausible.

In addition to the *nuṣub* the Qurʾān condemns what it calls *ṭāghūt*, or on one occasion *al-jibt waʾl-ṭāghūt*. The meaning of both words is uncertain.[20] In 16:36 God says that He has sent messengers to every nation telling them to worship God and avoid *al-ṭāghūt*. Since this is addressed to those who ascribe partners to God (*alladhīna ashrakū*, 16:35), and since past messengers are invariably depicted as preaching against the supposed partners, one takes the *ṭāghūt* to be the false deities here: if the word means idols, they are idols in the sense of recipients of devotion incompatible with God's unity. Sura 39:17 promises good news to those who avoid *al-ṭāghūt* and do not worship it/them (*an taʿbudūhā*); those who fight in the path of God are contrasted with the unbelievers "who fight in the path of *al-ṭāghūt*", condemned as the friends of Satan (*awliyāʾ al-shayṭān*) (4:76); and belief in God is contrasted with belief in *al-ṭāghūt* again in 2:256 f., where *al-ṭāghūt* are the friends (*awliyāʾ*) of the unbelievers. In these passages, too, *al-ṭāghūt* could be the lesser deities. The remaining passages, all Medinese, are more problematic because the believers in *al-ṭāghūt* are here recipients of scripture. The People of the Book are told, somewhat obscurely, of worship of *al-ṭāghūt* in connection with people who were transformed into monkeys and pigs; and we are told that they, presumably the People of the Book, are insincere members of the Messenger's community: they come to you (pl.), saying that they believe, but in fact enter in *kufr* (5:59–61). Those who have received part of the book (*naṣīban min al-kitāb*) believe in *al-jibt* and *al-ṭāghūt*, claiming to be better guided than the believers (4:51); and they, or others who believe in what God has sent down to the Messenger and his predecessors, want to take their disputes to *al-ṭāghūt* for adjudication (4:60); they are hypocrites (4:61). Some exegetes understand | the *ṭāghūt* to which the insincere believers want to take their disputes as idols delivering oracles or guardians of sanctuaries who functioned as diviners (*kāhin*s), but

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20   Cf. Hawting, *Idolatry*, pp. 55 ff.

all one can say on the basis of the Qurʾān itself is that they sound like rival religious authorities of some kind. Of all the passages in which the word *ṭāghūt* occurs it can be said that if the word means idol, it is being used metaphorically.

This is the sum total of references to idols in non-Biblical contexts in the Qurʾān. One would not guess from this that the Kaʿba is supposed to have housed a deity called Hubal, that three hundred and sixty idols are supposed to have surrounded it, that every house in Mecca reputedly had its own idol, that one of the Prophet's opponents was an idol-maker, and that no Meccan would go away without stroking his idol before leaving and doing so again on his return.[21] Even if we take the sole reference to *awthān* in Mecca to refer to idols rather than sacrificial stones (22:30) and for good measure understand all the *jibt* and *ṭāghūt* as idols too, there is something completely amiss. The Qurʾān never as much as hints at the existence of idols in the Abrahamic sanctuary; it never mentions Hubal; with the possible exception of 4:60, relating to Medina, it never mentions any pagan religious personnel; it never mentions pagan shrines or other pagan objects among the Messenger's contemporaries, nor does it threaten destruction of such things or tell of their destruction after the Messenger's victory.[22] What it does talk about at length, apart from the worship of the lesser gods/angels, is five or six rural practices of a fairly innocuous nature, except perhaps for the first: (1) the pagans would devote part of their cattle and harvest to God and their lesser deities, (2) they had cattle which they held it forbidden to use in ploughing and/or as beasts of burden, (3) they had cattle over which they would not mention the name of God when they slaughtered them, (4) they would reserve the unborn young of some animals for the men of the community, forbidding their wives to eat of them unless they were stillborn, (5) they would slit the ears of their cattle, and (6) they had something known as *baḥīra*, *sāʾiba* and *ḥām* which may have been identical with one or more of the above institutions (4:119; 5:103; 6:121, 136–145; 16:35, 56, 115 f.). Why should the Qurʾān devote so much attention to minor malpractices regarding the use of farm animals if | the Meccans, quite apart from not being agriculturalists at all according to the tra-

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21   Cf. Fahd, "Nuṣub", *EI²*.

22   It may be added that archaeology, too, has "so far contributed little to our knowledge of the specific *jāhiliyya* shrines known to the Islamic sources, and doubts must exist as to whether image destruction at other Arabian sites and shrines known to archaeology is really associated with the advent of Islam" (G.R.D. King, "The Prophet Muḥammad and the Breaking of the Jāhiliyyah Idols", in J.F. Healey and V. Porter (eds.), *Studies on Arabia in Honour of Professor G. Rex Smith*, Oxford, 2002, p. 91).

dition,[23] were sunk in idolatry of the grossest kind? Why should so little be said about Meccan idolatry that it is debatable whether it is mentioned at all?

It is only in the retelling of Biblical stories that idols are plentiful in the Meccan suras, above all in the story of Abraham. Abraham asks his father and his people what they are worshipping, to which they reply that they worship idols (*aṣnām*) (26:70 f.). "Do you take idols (*aṣnām*) as gods?" Abraham asks in another passage (6:74); "What are these images (*al-tamāthīl*) which you are clinging to?" (21:52). "You have taken idols (*awthān*) apart from God, out of love between yourselves in this life" (29:25), he declares, ordering them to serve God instead of worshipping idols (*awthān*) apart from God and inventing falsehood (*ifk*) (29:17; cf. 37:85 f.); and he smashes the idols and leaves, asking God to make the land to which he has emigrated safe and to keep him and his offspring free of idolatry (14:35; 21:57 f.). When the Israelites left Egypt, "they came upon a people devoted to some idols (*aṣnām*) of theirs and said, 'O Moses, fashion for us a god like the gods they have'" (7:138); and the story of the golden calf is narrated at length (20:85 ff.).

There can be no doubt that these stories are told with reference to the Messenger's own situation, but the fact that it is only in Biblical stories that physical idols are mentioned suggests that those of the Messenger's own time were conceptual. What he is targeting is a falsehood (*ifk*), something untrue fathered by the pagans on God: he sees himself as smashing idols in the sense of eradicating wrong *beliefs*. His pagan opponents worshiped the same God as he did, but they had views incompatible with the unity of God as he saw it. Their idols have no more to do with pagan idolatry in the literal sense than they do in the writings of Luther, or for that matter modern Iran.

12   *The Messenger's Response to the Minor Deities*

The Messenger's response to the pagan gods/angels is extremely varied. He copes easily enough with the idea of many gods, dismissing it on the grounds that if there were more than one, they would disagree and chaos would ensue (21:22; cf. 17:42; 23:91). But that still leaves him with the task of explain|ing how the alleged deities of the pagans are to be construed, and here he seems to

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23   For this question, see P. Crone, "How Did the Quranic Pagans Make a Living?", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 68 (2005), pp. 387–399 [Ed.: included as article 1 in the present volume]; contrast the very different place described in the tradition (id., "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 [Ed.: article 2 in the present volume]).

have four different answers: they are mere human beings falsely deified, or true angels misconstrued by the pagans, or mere names without any reality, or actual demons who have misled the pagans.[24]

That they were mere human beings, now dead, is perhaps what we are told in 16:20 f.: "Those whom they call upon apart from God do not create anything; they are created, dead, not alive, and they do not know when they will be raised up/they do not sense when they are being raised up (*mā yashʿurūna ayyāna yubʿathūna*)". At first, this sounds like a reference to idols, dismissed as dead manufactured objects. The same is true in 39:43, where we are told that the beings worshipped apart from God have "no power over anything and do not reason (*lā yamlikūna shayʾan wa-lā yaʿqilūna*)". But it is bit strange to say of manufactured objects that they do not know when they will be raised up, or that they will not sense when they are being raised up, which seems to be meant literally: the false gods are being resurrected for hellfire in 21:98 f. One can take "dead, not alive, and they do not know when they will be raised up" (16:21) as referring to the unbelievers themselves: if so, no reference to idols is intended; what is being asserted is that the unbelievers are dead in a metaphorical sense.[25] But it is not the most natural reading.

A better solution seems to lie in 7:194 f. Here the Messenger declares that "those whom you call upon apart from God are servants like you" and challenges his opponents to put these beings to the test by praying to them, rhetorically asking whether they have "feet to walk with, or hands to grasp with, or eyes to see with, or ears to hear with". Here the language is even more suggestive of idols, dismissed as manufactured objects: "They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands but do not feel, feet but do not walk; they make no sounds in their throats", as the Psalms say of idols made of silver and gold, the work of human hands.[26] There can hardly be much doubt that the Messenger has the Psalms in mind, both here and in 16:21. But just as he suddenly identifies the apparent objects as destined for resurrection in 16:21, so he here says that the false gods are "servants like you": clearly, it is no longer objects that he has in mind. Yet the Psalms are still lurking in the background, for they also speak of the similarity between the objects of worship and their devotees: "Those who make them are like them", Psalms 115 | asserts; "those who make

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24 Unlike Welch, "Allah and Other Supernatural Beings", I cannot see any gradual emergence of *tawḥīd* in this: all the responses are different ways of saying the same thing, namely that God is one and all other beings are His servants.

25 Cf. Paret, *Kommentar*, p. 284.

26 Psalms 115:4–8; 135:15–18, both drawn to my attention by Joseph Witztum.

them and all those who trust them shall become like them", as Psalms 135 puts it. But in spelling out the likeness, the Messenger replaces the objects with beings. In other words, he is using the old language of polemics against idolatry in a situation in which physical idols are no longer the issue. One could not say of the angels that they lack hands or feet or that they are dead, so perhaps the dead beings are humans: servants like you, but rotting in their graves, such as prophets for example. But it has to be said that the verses are anything but clear.

That the lesser deities are genuine angels misconstrued by the pagans is assumed in the statement, "They have made the angels, who are servants of al-Raḥmān, females" (43:19), as also in the above injunction to the People of the Book not to take the angels and prophets as lords (3:80). Elsewhere, we are told that the children credited by the opponents to al-Raḥmān are simply "servants raised to honour (*'ibādun mukramūna*)" (21:26), and here the servants are clearly angels rather than humans, for the continuation assures us that they do not speak before He does, that they act by His command, and that they offer no intercession except for those who have already found favour with Him (compare above, no. 4). The genuine angels have no desire to be deified, we are told, again in polemics against the People of the Book, for neither the Masīḥ nor "the angels who are drawn near (*al-malā'ikatu 'l-muqarrabūna*)" disdain being servants of God (4:172).[27] On the day of judgement the angels will deny that the pagans worshipped them, saying, "Rather, they worshipped the *jinn*" (34:40 f.). In other words, the pagans may have *thought* they were worshipping angels, but it fact they had been worshipping demons, perhaps in the sense that the demons were impersonating the angels or perhaps in that it was the demons who caused people to worship the angels.

That the pagan gods were empty concepts is what Joseph tells his inmates in prison (disseminating Islam to his captive audience much as prisoners do today): "Apart from Him you are not worshipping anything other than names that you have devised, you and your fathers, and for which God has not sent down any authority" (12:40). "Do you dispute with me over names which you have devised, you and your fathers, and for which God has not sent down

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27   It is tempting to read *muqarribūn*, "the angels who draw (people) near (to God)", given
      that this is what the pagans took their angels to do (cf. above, no. 4). But I do not wish
      to propose emendations for purposes of this article and have not pursued the question.
      Regarding the deification of angels, cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, tr. H. Chadwick, Cambridge,
      1953, VIII, 57: "But we certainly do not assign to them [the angels] the honour we owe to
      God. This is desired neither by God nor by the beings themselves …. In fact they approve of
      us more when we take care not to sacrifice to them." See also Augustine, *Contra Faustum*,
      20:21; *City of God*, X, 7.26; *True Religion*, 110.

any authority (*sulṭān*)?" (7:71), another sura asks. "They are nothing but names which you and your fathers have devised. God has not sent down any authority for them" (53:23). Four verses later we are nonetheless told | that those who do not believe in the afterlife "call the angels by female names". The angels are real, then; it is only as females and as object of false worship that they are lacking in reality: "they (*i.e.* the pagans) have no knowledge about it, they follow nothing but conjecture (*al-ẓann*)", as the passage continues (53:28). The fact that God has not *sent down* any authority for the (female) partners suggests that the missing authority is scriptural. This is also clear in sura 37, where the Messenger is instructed to ask his opponents whether God has daughters when they have sons, or whether they were present when He created the angels and saw Him make them female, or whether they have a clear authority (*sulṭān mubīn*) for their view: "If so, bring us your book" (37:149–157). Of course, the pagans are just speaking a lie (*ifk*), being mendacious (*la-kādhibūn*) (37:151f.). Those whom they chose apart from God in the hope of getting close to Him are a mere lie (*ifk*), something they have made up (46:28); and when they are dragged off to Hell, they will realise that what they called upon was nothing (40:74).

Whether they were dead human beings or freely invented names, the pagan gods could not help anyone, not even themselves (7:192, 197; 21:43). Like the idols destroyed by Abraham, they were unable to do either good or harm to those who worshipped them, or even to themselves (5:76; 10:18; 17:56; 25:3; 26:72–74), in any way at all in the heavens or on earth (34:22; cf. 35:13), or on the day of judgement (26:93; 34:42). Praying to them was like reaching out for water without getting it (13:14). As angels misconstrued as divine they were powerless, too, for it was only with God's permission that angels could act as intercessors (cf. above, no. 4). In short, the false deities were useless. God would, however, punish people for worshipping such beings, for He could forgive anything but partners being ascribed to him, as a Medinese sura says (4:48, 116); and from that point of view the false deities were not just useless, but also demonic beings.

Accordingly, the Messenger often identifies the false gods as *jinn* in the sense of demons: "They have made the *jinn* partners of God, though He created them, and they falsely credit Him with sons and daughters, without knowing anything about it" (6:100). "They have set up a genealogical relationship (*nasab*) between Him and the *jinn*", *i.e.* by casting the false deities as his offspring; but the *jinn* know very well that they are "summoned" (*muḥḍarūn*) (37:158). It is not clear whether the *jinn* know themselves or the worshippers to be summoned, but the former seems more likely. Another passage says that the pagans have established gods apart from God in order to be helped, but that these beings cannot help them: they are a troop that will be summoned for them (*hum lahum jundun muḥḍarūna*) (36:74f.). Again, the reference seems to be to the

jinn. The idea may be that they will be summoned on the day of judgement to be questioned about their role in the | promotion of falsehood. The angels will certainly be asked on that day whether the pagans worshipped them. They will deny it, saying, "Rather, they worshipped the *jinn*; most of them had faith in them" (34:40 f.). They pass the buck, so to speak, but some of the *jinn* would also be able to disown responsibility, for as they themselves tell us, some of them had heard the Qurʾān and realized that God has neither a wife (*ṣāḥiba*) nor a son (*walad*), with the result that they had denounced the foolish ones among them for the lies they told on the alleged authority of God (72:1–5). Here the *jinn* mislead people by prompting them to follow lies, not by actually being the partners credited to God. The same is true when the unbelievers rhetorically ask God to show them the *jinn* or humans who have supposedly misled them so that they can crush them underfoot (41:29, without specification of the alleged error).

Elsewhere, the *jinn* are replaced by straightforward Satanic beings. A Meccan sura informs us that God will ask those condemned to Hell whether He did not enjoin upon mankind "not to worship Satan" (*an lā taʿbudū ʾl-shayṭāna*) (36:60); and a passage in a Medinese sura already quoted identifies the female deities as Satan: "What they call upon apart from Him is nothing but females. What they call upon is nothing but the rebel Satan (*shayṭānan marīdan*)" (4:117; cf. above, no. 7). But again, all it may mean is that they are following Satanic misguidance rather than God in their devotion to these beings. Satan's authority is limited to those who take him as their friend and give partners to God, as we are told elsewhere (16:100). At all events, the Messenger frequently dwells on the disastrous effects of such misguidance. On the day of judgement the false gods will totally fail their devotees, leaving them to Hellfire. "Where are the things that you used to invoke beside God?", the polytheists will be asked, to reply, "they left us in the lurch" (*ḍallū ʿannā*), whereupon they will be thrown into the fire (7:37, cf. 6:22–24, 94; 7:53; 16:27, 87; 26:92–101; 40:73 f.; 41:47 f.; 46:28). The lesser deities will not respond on the day of judgement (18:52; 28:64; 35:14; 46:5 f.), or they will positively disown the partnership (35:14), or the polytheists themselves will do so (30:13). "It was not us that they worshipped", the beings will say when they are envisaged as genuine angels misunderstood by the pagans (34:40 f.; cf. 10:28 f., 16:86; 25:17 f.; 19:81 f.; unlike 34:40 f., these passages do not make their identification as angels explicit, but as Welch notes, the false gods are here envisaged as having real existence and being in a state of subservience to God).[28] Or the alleged partners will shift the blame to the

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28   Noted by Welch, "Allah and Other Supernatural Beings", p. 737 f.

pagans themselves: "We had no power over you", the religious leaders will | protest when the pagans start quarreling among themselves about apportioning the blame (37:30). "I had no power over you, except to call you and you responded: don't blame me, but rather yourselves", Satan himself will say (14:22; cf. 15:42; 16:98–100; 17:65; 34:21). Determinism notwithstanding, the responsibility lay with the erring individuals themselves.

Overall

If we base ourselves on the evidence of the Qurʾān alone, the *mushrikūn* were monotheists who worshipped the same God as the Messenger, but who also venerated lesser divine beings indiscriminately called gods and angels, including some identifiable as Arabian deities, and perhaps also in some cases the sun and the moon. The *mushrikūn* saw the lesser divine beings as mediators between themselves and God, sometimes apparently only venerating one mediator figure, at other times several, sometimes including female ones. They would address prayers, offerings, and thanks to the mediators along with God, but they are not accused of worshipping them instead of God, or even of engaging in practices often deemed perfectly compatible with monotheism when the lesser beings are called saints, such as venerating their images, establishing shrines for them, making pilgrimages to them, or deferring to the religious personnel looking after their shrines. Apart from giving Arabian names to some of these beings and denouncing them in terms derived from the Biblical polemics against idolatry, the Messenger says nothing to suggest that the *mushrikūn* were pagans. Indeed, as Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb quite correctly observed, they are accused of lighter sins against monotheism than those of which Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb deemed his own saint-addicted Muslim contemporaries in Arabia to be guilty.[29]

11 The Context

The High God Theory

Islamicists often refer to the God of the Qurʾānic *mushrikūn* as a "high god", often in a tone suggesting that this accounts for all the peculiarities of the |

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[29] Thus an epistle by Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb in ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-ʿĀṣimī, *al-Durar al-saniyya fī ʾl-ajwiba ʾl-najdiyya*, Beirut, 1982, II (ʟ. *al-tawḥīd*), pp. 19 ff., discussed along with other versions of the epistle in M. Cook, "Written and Oral Aspects of an Early Wahhābī Epistle," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 78 (2015), pp. 161–178. My thanks to Michael Cook for drawing it to my attention.

way in which they are described in the book. But just what is a "high god"? The term seems first to have been used in Islamicist circles by Watt, who initially identified a high god as a god superior to other deities.[30] This is too broad to be of use. Any deity in the pagan Near East could be described as superior to others by his devotees, even when he occupied a minor position in the preserved mythological works; the deity picked out for flattery might be said to have created the world, including the other gods, and to be the only true god or indeed the only god *tout court*, even when he was worshipped in close connection with other deities:[31] under the stress of emotion any deity could be promoted to supreme status, as Nock said with reference to the Greeks.[32] In short, whether a deity was high or low was in the eye of the beholder. Later Watt added that a high god is more remote than other gods and therefore seldom worshipped directly, a feature he related to the Qurʾānic passages on "temporary monotheism" (cf. part I, no. 7); at the same time, however, he sought support for his theory in a work by Teixidor, a Semiticist who had postulated a trend towards monotheism in the Near Eastern inscriptions of the Hellenistic and Roman periods,[33] and what Teixidor saw as emerging in the Near East was not a remote high god (a term he did not use), but rather an active supreme god who controlled all other gods, or indeed reduced them to mere angels, and who was certainly worshipped directly. Watt related Teixidor's findings to the fact that the Qurʾānic pagans saw their deities as angels, but did not explain how the two seemingly incompatible conceptions were to be combined.

The standard idea of a high god is that of a distant god who is not the object of regular worship (a *deus otiosus*), a deity found to have been present in the most diverse pagan societies, even very simple ones, as seems first to have been demonstrated by the anthropologist Andrew Lang in 1898.[34] The distant god was often regarded as the creator, but he was "utterly transcendent, removed

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30   Watt, "The 'High God' in Pre-Islamic Mecca", p. 499; id., "Belief in a 'High God' in Pre-Islamic Mecca", p. 35.

31   M. Smith, "The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 71 (1952), pp. 135–147, with ample documentation.

32   Nock cited in L. Koenen, "How Dualistic is Mani's Dualism?", in L. Cirillo (ed.), *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis*, Cosenza, 1990, p. 32, in connection with a similar problem in the Cologne Mani Codex.

33   Watt, "The Qurʾān and Belief in a 'High God'", esp. pp. 327 f., 332 f., with reference to J. Teixidor, *The Pagan God: Popular Religion in the Greco-Roman Near East*, Princeton, 1977, pp. 13 ff.

34   A. Lang, *The Making of Religion*, London, 1898, cf. esp. ch. 9, "High Gods of Low Races".

from the world that he originally created", as a dictionary def|inition says.[35] He was all-knowing, all-powerful, and the one who introduced order into the chaos of things, but he had no priests or shrines and was not usually worshipped directly, as an anthropologist explains with reference to West African religion.[36] He was "elevated above man and not to be reached by man", as Nilsson says in a classic article on the high god in Greek religion.[37] That the pagan Allāh was such a god was proposed already in 1887, without use of the term "high god", by Wellhausen, who was inspired by classical rather than anthropological literature.

Wellhausen based himself primarily on historical accounts relating to the Jāhiliyya (above all Ibn al-Kalbī) rather than the Qurʾān. His theory was that originally every tribe in Arabia had its own deity, but that trade, pilgrimage and tribal movement gradually undermined the close relationship between people and cult, leading to religious syncretism in the sense of a fusion between the different tribal religions. As a result, a new idea of a single god above the many local deities emerged along with a new sense of a common "nationality" above the many different tribes into which people were divided. This new god above the gods was Allāh. Here Wellhausen introduced a hypothesis to which the response has been uniformly negative, and which has caused his entire historical reconstruction to be unduly ignored. Originally, he said, "Allāh, the god", was a title like "the lord", which could be used of every tribal deity; but eventually the name came to be reserved for the anonymous deity above them. (Wellhausen saw Allāh as "a kind of abstraction from local deities", as Watt said.)[38] This new Allāh was encountered above all in inter-tribal affairs, and he was a *deus otiosus*, a god without a cult: for it was only the local gods that formed ties of solidarity with particular groups, and so it was only they who had to be cultivated for favours. No sanctuary in Arabia was named after Allāh or devoted to him in Wellhausen's view, though he noted some possible exceptions. The new Allāh was still approached indirectly, through the local (tribal or civic) deities out of which he had grown, but the latter had none the

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35 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, Chicago, *c.* 1987, v, *s.v.* "High God".

36 J. O'Connell, "The Withdrawal of the High God in West African Religion: an Essay in Interpretation", *Man*, 62/5 (1962), pp. 67–69.

37 M.P. Nilsson, "The High God and the Mediator", *Harvard Theological Review*, 56 (1963), p. 101. For the importance of the cult, see L.W. Hurtado, "What Do We Mean by 'First-Century Jewish Monotheism?'", *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*, 32 (1993), pp. 348–368.

38 Watt, "Belief in a 'High God' in Pre-Islamic Mecca", p. 35, with a list of others who have reacted adversely.

less lost importance. This was the deity that came to be worshipped directly, as the one and only God, with the rise of Islam.[39]

180   Brockelmann, who based himself primarily on pre-Islamic poetry, proposed a similar theory. He too saw the pagan Allāh as a *deus otiosus*. He did not accept Wellhausen's reconstruction of the development of this deity (which has not in fact found favour with anyone), but he was familiar with the anthropological literature, and on that basis he proposed that the pagan Allāh was a creator God who had always been too exalted to be approached directly, not, as Wellhausen saw it, a new deity too universal to have a house and a cult in one particular place.[40]

In fact, however, it is clear that the pagan God was not a *deus otiosus*. The Qurʾān gives us to understand that the pagans would pray to God along with the lesser deities, devote portions of the harvest to Him, invoke His name over their slaughter (some exceptions apart), and swear by Him. They also fought with the Messenger over a sanctuary which both sides clearly saw as His (a subject not examined here).[41] Even so, Wellhausen's hypothesis has two great merits: it anchors the emergence of the pagan God in a historical development, and it displays a strong awareness of the fact that the pagan deities were mere intermediaries. To take his theory further, however, we need to go to his source of inspiration, which he does not identify, beyond repeatedly contrasting it with ancient Israel, but which is clearly classical antiquity (which looms large in Teixidor's account as well).[42]

What Wellhausen discerned in pre-Islamic Arabia is a variation on the famous Greek idea according to which all the known gods were expressions of one common divine essence, or, in a different formulation, all the second-order gods were manifestations of a single, often unknowable, high God.[43] The idea seems to have been pioneered by the early Stoics. "God is one yet has many names, being called after all the various conditions which he himself inaugurates", as a famous hymn by Cleanthes (d. 232 BC) said.[44] "God is one and the same with Reason, Fate, and Zeus; he is also called by many other

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39   J. Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, Berlin, 1961 (first publ. 1887), pp. 215–224.

40   Brockelmann, "Allah und die Götzen", esp. pp. 104, 119 ff.

41   I hope to come back to this in a later article.

42   Teixidor reads his laconic Syro-Mesopotamian in the light of authors such as Plutarch and Celsus (cf. his *Pagan God*, pp. 15 f.).

43   Both formulations are in Hurtado, "First-Century Jewish Monotheism", pp. 356 f. Compare Wellhausen, *Reste*, p. 219, on the Arabs preferring the generic Allāh to a collective such as *hoi theoi* or *dii*.

44   Nilsson, "High God", p. 102.

names", as later Stoics put it.[45] It came to acquire great popularity. | "Apollo, 181
Helios and Dionysios are the same, and there are many who simply reduce all
the gods to a single power", as Dio Chrysostom (d. after 112 AD) declared. "It
makes no difference whether we call Zeus the Most High, or Zen, or Adonai,
or Sabaoth, or Amoun like the Egyptians, or Papaeus like the Scythians", the
Platonist Celsus (wr. *c.* 180 AD) wrote, now including non-Greek gods among
the many.[46] "O Queen of heaven, whether you are Ceres, ... Venus, ... Phoebus's
sister (Diana), ... or Proserpina ... by whatever name, with whatever rite, in
whatever image it is meet to invoke you, defend me now", as Lucius calls out
in *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius (2nd C AD).[47] The possibly North African (and
possibly Christian) Neoplatonist Macrobius (d. 423 AD) goes through the Greek
pantheon complete with its Egyptian additions to show that each deity was
only a partial representation of one great solar god.[48]

Unlike the high God of the anthropologists, the one we encounter in the
Greek literary texts was the outcome of philosophical attempts to impose order
on the divine world, but he too was mostly a *deus otiosus*. Though he was often
identified by name, usually as Zeus or Jupiter, he was more commonly left
nameless, and neither sacrifices nor prayers were or should be addressed to
him, or so at least according to the philosophers.[49] At a more popular level,
however, he was certainly invoked, not least by magicians; and he was also the
object of a cult in late antiquity under the label of Zeus Hypsistos or simply
Hypsistos, "the Most High". But even at that level it seems usually have been
through, or along with, the gods who were his manifestations or powers that he
was approached, very much as Wellhausen held Allāh to have been approached
through tribal gods in pre-Islamic Arabia.[50]

Despite the long period over which the idea can be observed, however, there
is no trend in the Graeco-Roman empire towards the emergence of the high
god as a deity separate from the second-order gods in which he manifested
himself, still less was he intolerant of them, except when Hypsistos is identi-
fied with the Jewish god. There can, of course, be no doubt that the widespread

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45   Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, ed. and tr. R.D. Hicks, Cambridge (Mass.)
        and London, 1925, VII, 135, on Zeno the Stoic.

46   Origen, *Contra Celsum*, V, 41; cf. I, 24.

47   Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, ed. and tr. J.A. Hanson, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, 1989,
        XI, 2.

48   Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, New York, 1969, book I; cf. E.R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the
        Graeco-Roman Period*, New York, 1953, II, p. 252.

49   Nilsson, "High God", pp. 110 f., 115.

50   Cf. the famous Oenoanda inscription below, note 72.

identification of local and foreign deities (a process formerly known as syncretism) and the increasing prominence of the One testify to a radical trans-

formation of paganism in the Mediterranean and Near East, for | the very reasons that Wellhausen imputes to Arabia: increased contact between hitherto separate and politically autonomous peoples. But to pagan monotheists, the one and the many coexisted instead of competing. The input of Biblically derived monotheism was required in order for the many to be seen as illegitimate.

Wellhausen envisaged the developments he postulated for Arabia as a parallel to those in the Graeco-Roman world, not as part of them, for to him, Arabia was a world apart, closer to ancient Israel than to the Near Eastern world on its doorstep. Besides, he undoubtedly envisaged the battle against Graeco-Roman paganism as long over by the time of the rise of Islam. His preconceptions were entirely reasonable in 1887, when his *Reste* was published. Since then, however, the huge expansion of scholarship on pagans, Christians, and late antiquity in general has turned these preconceptions upside down. Whatever happened in Arabia will have been part and parcel of the developments affecting the Near East at large.

Sons/Daughters of God and Angels

One development of relevance is the identification, from Hellenistic times onwards, of the celestial beings called sons and daughters of God with angels. In the ancient Near East a "son of God" was a celestial being who formed part of the entourage of a deity: a divine courtier so to speak. We meet such divine courtiers in the Old Testament, where God presides over an assembly of them in Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7, and elsewhere, and where some of them famously disobey him by mating with the daughters of men on earth (Gen 6:2, 4). They were not envisaged as God's sons in the literal sense of the word (which is not to deny that other deities could be thus conceived); their sonship merely expressed that they were of the same nature as God and also subordinate to Him. Even humans (often kings) were sometimes called sons of God in the Bible, and also in South Arabia, where the expression was also used of people worshipping the deity in question: the Sabaeans were the children of the god ʿAlqama, the Qatabanians the children of ʿAmm.[51]

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51   B. Lang, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority: an Essay in Biblical History and Sociology*, Sheffield, 1983, pp. 21, 58; C.J. Robin, "Les 'filles de dieu' de Sabaʾ à la Mecque: réflexions sur l'agencement des panthéons dans l'Arabie ancienne", *Semitica*, 50 (2001), p. 123; R. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, London and New York, 2001, p. 140.

By the Hellenistic period the Jews had come to understand the Biblical sons of God as angels, as seen among other things in their translation of the expression in the Septuagint. Angels to them were not (or no longer) deities, except when they were personifications of divine qualities such as God's | wisdom or *logos*: Philo (d. 50) famously spoke of the *logos* as God's archangel, son of God, and second God alike.[52] In pagan inscriptions too, according to Teixidor, the divine assemblies gave way to "holy angels" about the same time.[53] Teixidor sees this as revealing a trend towards monotheism, but it is not clear that pagans saw angels as more subordinated to God than the sons of God that they replaced; what the change of wording does seem to reflect is a new concept of the subordinate beings as messengers.

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The Jews and Christians eventually stopped expressing the relationship between God and the angels in terms of descent, but others continued to do so. Both deities and angels were known as "sons of God" in Manichaean Parthian and Sogdian;[54] other Gnostics would refer to the divine being who reveals the invisible God as His son;[55] the Zoroastrians spoke of fire as the son of Ohrmazd, and referred to both fire and the stars as His children.[56] Given that ancient Near Eastern culture lived on in Arabia without the break inflicted by Persian and Greek conquest on the rest of the Near East, Arabian pagans could well have continued to speak of subordinate deities as sons of God as well, but whether they did so is another question: the expression still has not turned up in the inscriptions, whether in South Arabia or further north.

What we do find in Arabia are "daughters of God" or more precisely "daughters of the god Īl" (*bnty ʾl*). They appear in ten South Arabian dedicatory inscriptions, two dating back to perhaps 600 BC, the rest to the first or second century

52 Philo, *Who Is the Heir of Divine Things*, p. 205; *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, II, 62 (second god); *On Husbandry*, 51 (firstborn son).

53 Teixidor, *Pagan God*, p. 14.

54 H. Humbach, "Herrscher, Gott und Gottessohn in Iran und in angrenzenden Ländern", in D. Zeller (ed.), *Menschwerdung Gottes–Vergöttlichung von Menschen*, Freiburg and Göttingen, 1988, pp. 105 f.; D. Durkin-Meisterernst, *Dictionary of Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian* (= *Dictionary of Manichaean Texts*, III, ed. N. Sims-Williams, part I), Turnhout, 2004, *s.v.* "bgpwhr".

55 G. Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God: Some Notes on Meṭaṭron and Christ", *Harvard Theological Review*, 76 (1983), pp. 275 f.

56 Yasna 1.12, 17.11, 25.7, 62 etc. (the expression is common); G. Hoffmann, *Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer*, Leipzig, 1880, p. 53 (here also water); Th. Nöldeke, "Syrische Polemik gegen die persische Religion", *Festgruss an Rudolph von Roth*, Stuttgart, 1893, p. 37, citing P. Bedjan (ed.), *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*, Paris and Leipzig, 1890–1897, II, p. 592.

AD,[57] where they have been explained as girls dedicated to temple service, as a synonym for *ṣlmt* (female statues), as a mistranslation of a term meaning "gift to God",[58] or as the deities to whom the offerings are | dedicated.[59] The current view is that the *bnty 'l* were minor deities of the same undifferentiated nature as angels and demons, very much as one would expect.[60]

Daughters of God also appear in a Nabataean spell of *c.* 100 BC. It invokes three daughters of El, one son or daughter of Shamash, and one daughter of a daughter of El, identifying them as *ṣlmyt'*, female statues or idols, presumably referring to the representations that the magician had made of them.[61] It also gives them strange names: Tinshar, Tipshar, Aʿasas, Ḥargol, and Shebaṭbaṭa. Normally, neither sons nor daughters of God had names, any more than angels did. There were exceptions among the angels, of course, at least in Judaism,[62] but the strange names that we encounter here sound as if they were made up by the magician for purposes of invocation (as is true of many angelic names in Jewish magic too).

The daughters of God are anonymous again in a Palmyrene inscription of 63 AD. It dedicates altars to Arṣu, Qismaya and the daughters of God (*bnt'l*), the good gods, for the lives of his father, children, brothers and himself: here the daughters of God are our familiar subordinate beings distinct from the named deities.[63] We also meet the expression as a divine name in Palmyra, in the form

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57   Robin, "Filles de dieu", pp. 119 f.

58   A. Jamme, "Some Qatabanian Inscriptions Dedicating 'Daughters of God'", *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 138 (1955), pp. 39–47; W.W. Müller, "Die angeblichen 'Töchter Gottes' im Licht einer neuen Qatabānischen Inschrift", in R. Degen, W.W. Müller, and W. Röllig (eds.), *Neue Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik*, 2 (1974), pp. 145–148; also discussed in J. Ryckmans, "'Uzzā and Lāt dans les inscriptions sudarabes: à propos de deux amulettes méconnues", *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 25 (1980), p. 197.

59   Robin, "Filles de dieu", pp. 117 ff., citing A.G. Lundin, "'Dočeri Boga' v južnoarabskih nadpisjah i v Korane", *Vestnik Drevnej Istorii*, 132/2 (1975), pp. 124–131.

60   Robin, "Filles de dieu", p. 138; cf. also id., "À propos des 'filles de dieu'", *Semitica*, 52–53 (2002–2007), pp. 139–148, esp. 141 (uncomfortably suggestive of the discarded view that they were girls dedicated to temple service).

61   J. Naveh, "A Nabataean Incantation Text", *Israel Exploration Journal*, 29 (1979), pp. 111–199.

62   The only pagan angel named by Teixidor is Malakbel, "angel of Bel" (*Pagan God*, pp. 14 f.), and he was actually a deity in his own right, cf. J.T. Milik in J. Dentzer-Feydy, J.-M. Dentzer and P.M. Blanc (eds.), *Hauran II*, I (Textes), Beirut, 2003, pp. 269, 272 f.

63   Kh. Asʿad and J. Teixidor, "Un culte arabe préislamique à Palmyre d'après une inscription inédite", *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 1985, pp. 286–293.

of "Daughter of Bel" (*brt Bl*);[64] there similarly was a goddess called Bēdukht, "Daughter of God", in Sasanian Mesopotamia.[65] In addition, Philo speaks of hypostatised wisdom (*sophia*) as a daughter of God, and the wise virgins—identified as faith, joy, peace and hope—are called daughters of God in the Ethiopic version of the second-century *Epistula Apostolorum*.[66] "Daughter | of God" was also the term used in Manichaean Sogdian for the light maiden, a divine emanation.[67] But no example of daughters of God being equated with angels seems to have come to light.

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The Qurʾān does not actually have the expression "daughter of God", but it certainly implies that the *mushrikūn* used it when it rhetorically asks them whether God should have daughters/females and they themselves sons (17:40; 37:149, 153; 43:16; 52:39), or when the Messenger accuses his opponents of giving daughters (*banāt*) to God (16:57). It clearly stood for a subordinate being of the same essence as God, but not a nameless one. In fact, "daughter of God" seems simply to be the feminine form of *ilāh*; there was no other way of saying "goddess". The expression certainly did not mean daughter in the literal sense, a point made several times before,[68] not least by al-Jāḥiẓ: God was angered when the Arabs called the angels daughters of God even though they did not mean that He had procreated them in a literal sense, he remarks.[69] He is surely right. The Messenger preferred to take the expression literally, in part presumably because the Christians understood Christ as God's offspring in a literal sense, but no doubt also because he wished to ridicule the conception.

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64   J. Starcky, "Inscriptions archaïques de Palmyre", *Studi Orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi della Vida*, Rome, 1956, II, pp. 512 f.

65   Hoffmann, *Auszüge*, pp. 128 ff.

66   Philo, *De Fuga et Inventione*, p. 52. Porphyry uses the expression as a metaphor for the soul (in P. Courcelle, "Anti-Christian Arguments and Christian Platonism: from Arnobius to St. Ambrose", in A. Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, Oxford, 1963, p. 156). For the wise virgins, see J.K. Elliott (tr.), *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Oxford and New York, 2005, p. 584 (§ 43).

67   Humbach, "Herrscher, Gott und Gottessohn", p. 106n.

68   See for example Eichler, *Dschinn, Teufel und Engel*, p. 98; Wellhausen, *Reste*, p. 24. Robin finds it impossible to be sure as regards the South Arabian material ("Filles de dieu", pp. 122 f.), but at p. 138 he himself speaks of the daughters as an emanation of Īl.

69   Al-Jāḥiẓ, "al-Radd ʿalā ʾl-naṣārā", in *Rasāʾil*, ed. ʿA.-S.M. Hārūn, Cairo, 1964–1979, III, p. 333 (*lam tajʿal al-malāʾika banātihi ʿalā ʾl-wilāda waʾttikhādh al-ṣāḥiba*).

The Monotheist Trend

As noted already, Teixidor discerned a monotheist trend in Near Eastern paganism already in Hellenistic times, but whether he is right or not, it did not involve demotion of previously autonomous deities. The sons of God and the angels who replaced them were equally subordinate and usually anonymous beings; the angels who rose to prominence never bore the names of beings previously worshipped as deities in their own right.[70] This is what changed in late antiquity.

The Greek unification of the Mediterranean and Near East was followed by that of the Romans, under whom a loose federation of city states was gradually replaced by a centralised empire. The more tightly the Roman empire was integrated, the more conscious people became of the diverse religious and cultural traditions by which they were surrounded, and the harder | they tried to make sense of them in terms of a single, overarching system. Pagan, Christian and other Bible-derived forms of monotheism all flourished as a result. The pagans of the Greco-Roman empire increasingly came to see their traditional gods as angels, by which they meant manifestations of a single monotheist deity along the lines pioneered by the Stoics. "The one doctrine upon which all the world is united is that one God is king of all and father, and that there are many gods, sons of God, who rule together with God", as the philosopher Maximus of Tyre (*c.* 150 AD) said: the sons of God are here all the deities worshipped at the time.[71] "Born of itself, untaught, without a mother, unshakable, not contained in a name, known by many names, dwelling in fire, this is God. We, his angels, are a small part of God", as a famous inscription from third-century Oenoanda proclaims.[72] The speaker is Apollo, a previously autonomous deity who here identifies himself as an angel and part of God. The pagan deities Nirig, Sin, Shamash and Bel and the goddess Nanai appear together as holy angels on an Aramaic incantation bowl, probably pagan, from Iraq,[73] while the formerly supreme god Baalshamin appears as the angel Balsamos in the Cologne Mani Codex.[74]

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70 The pagan angels Teixidor adduces are all anonymous "holy angels" or "holy brothers", except for Malakbel, who was actually a deity (cf. above, note 62).

71 *Orations*, 11, 5 (tr. M.B. Trapp, Oxford, 1997, but the translation given here is Chadwick's in Origen, *Contra Celsum*, xvii); similarly 39, 55. Cf. also R. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*, New Haven (Conn.) and London, 1981, p. 88.

72 S. Mitchell, "Cult of Theos Hypsistos between Pagans, Jews, and Christians", in M. Frede and P. Athanassiadi (eds.), *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, Oxford, 1999, p. 86.

73 J.A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, Philadelphia, 1913, no. 36.

74 CMC 49 in I. Gardner and S.N.C. Lieu (trs.), *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire*, Cambridge, 2004, p. 54.

Like the angels of the Jews and Christians, the subordinate deities of the pagans acted as intercessors between god and man. There is an Arabian example of this in a fragmentary Sabaic inscription of uncertain provenance in which a father and son dedicate a statue to their patron deity ᴛʾʟʙ for helping the father with the deity ʿAthtar, who cured him of an eye disease he had been suffering from for five years.[75] The higher deity is assumed to have received thanks in a separate dedication. Here we have a close parallel to the situation that the Messenger rails against in that we see pagans give thanks to a lesser deity along with a higher one, though only the latter has worked the cure. ᴛʾʟʙ, moreover, was the patron deity (*shym*) of a tribal group whereas ʿAthtar was worshipped by all South Arabians,[76] so that we are also close to Wellhausen's idea of Allāh as reducing the tribal deities to mere intermediaries. | Whether ᴛʾʟʙ had ceased to be a deity in his own right is impossible to say, however, for he is not identified as an angel or a son of either ʿAthtar or Īl and could well have acted as an autonomous deity as well, as he does in other inscriptions.[77] On the Greek side, Plutarch (d. after 120 ᴀᴅ), following Plato, distinguished between God, secondary gods, and demons, crediting the demons rather than the secondary gods with conveying the prayers and petitions of men.[78] In agreement with Plato, both he and Maximus of Tyre held that the one, supreme God, creator and ruler, and the source of all good, could not come into direct relation with the material and therefore evil world: "hence He needs the demons, immortal beings dwelling between heaven and earth, mediators between human weakness and divine omnipotence", as Maximus explained.[79] The Latin Christian Ambrosiaster (wr. *c*. 380) says that if one asked a pagan how he could worship a whole lot of gods, he would reply that they were like dignitaries interceding in his favour

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75 *Corpus des Inscriptions et Antiquités Sud-Arabes*, ɪɪ (*Musée d'Aden*), 1 (*Inscriptions*), Louvain, 1986, pp. 189–191, cited in Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, p. 140. My thanks to Michael Macdonald for help with this inscription.

76 Cf. Robin, "Filles de dieu", pp. 128, 130.

77 Beeston notes the parallel (in *Corpus*, ɪɪ/1, p. 190), adducing the Satanic verses, which seem often to be envisaged as the only passage in which the lesser deities appear as intercessors in the Qurʾān. But Greek gods would similarly intercede with Zeus for their protégés, as he also notes, though they were autonomous deities in their own right. For ᴛʾʟʙ in action as a tribal deity, see for example A.F.L. Beeston, "The 'Taʾlab Lord of the Pastures' Texts", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 17 (1955), pp. 154–156 (drawn to my attention by Michael Macdonald).

78 Plutarch, "Isis and Osiris", 26, with "On Fate", p. 9 (*Moralia*, ᴠ, p. 61ff.; ᴠɪɪ, pp. 343f., in the Loeb edition, tr. F.C. Babbitt, P.H. de Lacy and B. Einarson, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, 1936, 1959).

79 Maximus, *Dissertationes* (tr. T. Taylor, 1944), xɪᴠ, 8.

with the sovereign.[80] In polemics with Christians, Zoroastrians would similarly claim to worship one God, all the other deities being simply "the king's great men".[81]

By Ambrosiaster's time, the pagan monotheists had long been in competition with the Christians, who relentlessly attacked them for their attachment to their deities. Since the pagans were happy to call these deities angels and both sides saw the angels as intercessors, the pagans could not (or perhaps pretended not to) understand why the Christians made such a big issue of this. "Why do we dispute about a name?", a Neoplatonist philosopher, possibly Porphyry (d. *c.* 305), asked the Christians: whether one addressed divine beings as gods or angels made very little difference, for their nature was the same.[82] "That Moses calls the angels gods you may hear from his own words", | Julian the Apostate (d. 363) pointed out.[83] Some Christians agreed, if only up to a point: sometimes the angels were called gods in the scriptures, Origen (d. *c.* 255) admitted, "but not in the sense that we are commanded to reverence and worship (them) instead of God".[84] Augustine (d. 430) agreed that if the Platonists preferred to speak of gods, they were free to do so, for one should not engage with them in a controversy over words: the scripture also spoke about gods, and if the pagans saw their gods as created beings made immortal by adhesion to God rather than by themselves, then they were saying the same as the Christians.[85] But on the whole the Christians found it wiser to drive a wedge between the angels and the pagan deities of old, for however humble the old deities might have become, they stood for a religious outlook to which the Christians were opposed: a concept of the divine as a spectrum rather than a unique figure, as an impersonal being rather than a caring one intervening in history with a plan in mind, and as rationality built into the cosmos rather than a force standing above it. Most pagan deities also had the disadvantage of being local; the Christians might worship three deities in one and a host of angels, but they were the same three deities and angels everywhere, of the same Biblical roots and carrying the same cultural tradition with them. The pagan deities lacked these unifying features. The North African Christian, Lactantius (d. *c.* 320), was

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80   F. Cumont, "La polémique de l'Ambrosiaster contre les païens", *Revue d'Histoire et de Littérature Religieuses*, 8 (1903), pp. 426 f.

81   Hoffmann, *Auszüge*, p. 42.

82   Macarius Magnes (fl. 4th/5th c), *Apocriticus*, tr. T.W. Crafer, New York, 1919, IV, 21.

83   Julian, *Against the Galilees*, in W.C. Wright (ed. and tr.), *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, 1913–1923, III, 400.

84   Origen, *Contra Celsum*, V, 4.

85   Augustine, *City of God*, tr. J. Healey, London 1945, IX, 21.

adamant that the angels had no wish to be called gods, for their one and only duty was to serve the wishes of God: "No one would say that in governing the province a governor's staff are his equals".[86] This was exactly the Messenger's point of view.

The Mushrikūn

The pagan deities mentioned in the Qurʾān had all been autonomous gods, yet all appear to have been downgraded to intermediary status. Wadd, Suwāʾ, Yaghūth, Yaʿūq and Nasr are all identified as gods, with no indication whether they were also known as angels or sons of God, but al-Lāt, Manāt and al-ʿUzzā are implicitly characterised as both daughters of God and angels: after mentioning them the Qurʾān asks the unbelievers whether they should have males and God females (53:19–21), a question which obviously relates to sons and daughters. "They assign daughters to God, exalted is He, and that which they desire to themselves" (16:57), as another passage says, simi|larly highlighting the absurdity of God having daughters when the devotees themselves want sons (likewise 17:40; 37:149, 153; 43:16; 52:39). And shortly after hearing of al-Lāt, Manāt and al-ʿUzzā we are told that those who do not believe in the afterlife give the angels female names (53:27). In short, like Apollo, Nirig, Sin, Shamash, Bel, Nanai and Baalshamin, the three Arabian goddesses have been reduced to subordinate deities. Like the monotheist pagans of the Roman empire, moreover, the *mushrikūn* would identify their lesser deities/angels as intercessors through whom one could approach God. And like his Christian predecessors, the Messenger mostly responds by driving a wedge between the angels/gods and God Himself. He does sometimes accept them as genuine angels misunderstood by the pagans, but as has been seen, he is more given to dismissing them as false. To the Messenger, God was the sole creator and only power in the universe, and nothing could be part of Him, of His nature, or like Him in any way.

There is no reason to think that the *mushrikūn* had taken to identifying their gods as angels in response to the Messenger's preaching: they are much too assured in their reaction to him to have taken such defensive action; it is he who comes across as being in the weak position, even needing reassurance from God that no such children of al-Raḥmān existed.[87] The monotheist trend must predate him, as it does in Wellhausen too. What kind of trend was it, then: pagan, Bible-based, or some kind of mixture?

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86   Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, tr. A. Bowen and P. Garnsey, Liverpool, 2003, II, 16, 5.

87   Cf. 43:45 and other passages listed in Paret, *Kommentar*, p. 229, *ad* 10:94.

The Messenger treats his opponents as pagans, partly by casting them as idolaters of the type that Abraham had opposed and partly by listing Arabian deities by way of illustration of their lesser gods, as seen already. He also recycles familiar anti-pagan arguments in his polemics against them. The most striking example is the argument that the coexistence of many gods would lead to anarchy, an idea which seems to have been pioneered by Lactantius. According to him, those who claim that there are many gods do not consider the fact that the gods might "want different things, which leads to dispute and contest among them: hence Homer's fiction of gods at war with each other"; decisions about the world had to be made by one, or the whole would not stay together; it was with the world as with armies: "if there were not to be one and only one to whom the care or the whole could be referred, it would all break up and collapse together".[88] The idea was taken up by Eusebius (d. 340) in his praise of Constantine: "Monarchy excels all other kinds of constitution and government", he declared, "for rather do anarchy and civil war result from the alternative, a polyarchy based on equality. For which | reason there is One God, not two or three or even more".[89] Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 389) also liked this idea. "The oldest doctrines regarding God are three, anarchy, polyarchy, and monarchy", he said. "The first two have amused the children of the Greeks— let them continue! In effect, anarchy is disorder. Polyarchy is discord, and thus anarchy and thus disorder. The two lead to the same point: disorder, which leads to ruin; for disorder is the preparation for ruin".[90] Or, as he also put it, "We are not impressed by a crowd of gods, each ruling in his own way, for to me it is all the same to be ruled by none as to be ruled by many, all at sixes and sevens. Strife means division, and division means dissolution ... So I find nothing divine in the government of many".[91] At some point the argument went into the Syriac tradition, presumably before the rise of Islam (in Armenian it appears already in the sixth-century Elishē),[92] but it is only in Moses Bar Kepha (d. 903) that I have come across it: "If there were many Gods, there would be enmity between them as among the rulers and powers of this world", he

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88   Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, I, 3, 17–19.

89   Eusebius, *Laus Constantini*, III, 6, tr. H.A. Drake, *In Praise of Constantine. A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius' Tricennial Orations*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1976, p. 87.

90   Gregory Nazianzen, *Discours*, ed. and tr. P. Gallay, Paris, 1978, Oration 29, 2.

91   *Poemata dogmatica*, vs 80 (PG, xxxvii, col. 414), cited in F. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*, Washington, 1966, II, p. 689.

92   Elishē, *History of Vardan and the Armenian War*, tr. R.W. Thomson, London, 1982, pp. 86 f. (p. 33 of the original).

says, with further elaboration of the argument.[93] The same argument appears three times in the Qurʾān: "If there had been many gods in them [*i.e.* heaven and earth] apart from God, then both would have been corrupted. How far is God, lord of the throne, from that which they attribute to Him" (21:22). "If there had been other gods along with him, as they say, they would have sought a way to the owner of the throne" (17:42). "Are many discordant (*mutafarriqūn*) lords better or God the one, the all-powerful (*al-qahhār*)?" (12:39). The lack of elaboration suggests that this was an argument that everyone had heard before.

Another argument familiar from the earlier polemic against pagans is that the false deities were demons (cf. part I, no. 12). This idea is found already in the Pentateuch and the Psalms;[94] and in the *Book of Watchers*, probably dating from the third century BC, the fallen angels, *i.e.* the sons of God who mate with the daughters of men, generate evil spirits that seduce people into | making sacrifices to them in the mistaken belief that they are gods.[95] It lies behind the translation of "the gods of the nations are idols" (Psalms 96:5) as "the gods of the nations are demons" in the Septuagint (here Psalms 95:5); and it first appears as a Christian explanation of idolatry in Justin Martyr (d. 160s),[96] to become the standard explanation thereafter. The Christians envisaged the demons as inhabiting the physical idols worshipped by the pagans, and so they do in the Islamic tradition too, coming out in all their hideousness when the Muslims destroy idolatrous objects such as stones, trees and statues. But in the Qurʾān the polytheists seem only to worship *jinn* or *shayāṭīn* or Satan himself in the sense of being swayed by these powers and trusting the falsehoods they spread, so it seems to have reached it from different channels. The last argument is that the pagan deities were really long-dead human beings, if this is indeed being argued in the Qurʾān (cf. above I, no. 12). This idea goes all the way back to *c.* 300 BC, when Euhemerus proposed that they were simply human beings of great merit who had been deified by their grateful contemporaries. Since his thesis was meant to explain the gods worshipped by the Greeks themselves, it did not find much favour at the time, but it shot to fame when the Christians looked for ways of discrediting the pagan deities, and the Messenger seems to know it, and to direct it against the Christians themselves as well. In fact, the Christian deification of Jesus offered a perfect illustration of Euhemerus' thesis,

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93   Moses Bar Kepha (d. 903), *Der Hexaemeronkommentar des Moses bar Kepha*, tr. and comm. L. Schlimme, Wiesbaden, 1977, ch. 3, 9–11.

94   Deuteronomy 32:17 (drawn to my attention by G. Hawting); Psalms 106:37.

95   1 Enoch 19:1 (tr. G.W.E. Nickelsburg and J.C. VanderKam, Minneapolis, 2004, p. 39).

96   *Second Apology*, 5 (tr. L.W. Barnard, New York, 1997, p. 77).

though it was not one that the Christians had noticed themselves. Euhemerist explanations of the pagan deities appear in the later Islamic tradition as well.[97]

Though the Messenger does his best to cast his opponents as pagans, the *mushrikūn* cannot be straightforward pagan monotheists. Their God was not simply the One, the being above all other beings venerated by the Neoplatonists and other pagan monotheists on the Greek side of the border, but rather a concrete God with a record of intervention in human history under a name of His own, or rather two, Allāh and al-Raḥmān. Pagans though the *mushrikūn* seem to have been from one point of view, they come across as Bible-based monotheists from another. This does not necessarily mean that they were Jews or Christians of some kind, for we also have to factor in the possibility that they believed in *Allāh taʿalā* in the sense of *theos hypsistos*, God the Most High, identifying Him with the Biblical God. This presupposes neighbourhood with Jews, but not membership of their community. What it | does mean is that we must also look at the *mushrikūn* from the angle of the Biblical tradition.

Jewish Angel Worship

Angels enjoyed great prominence in post-exilic Judaism and eventually came to be venerated to such a degree that modern scholars debate how far there was an actual cult of angels among Jews on the eve of the rise of Christianity. Much of the evidence refers to a principal angel who was sometimes identified with God's word or wisdom, or as His son, or as a second God, or a lesser God (as seen above in connection with Philo),[98] and much of the research is driven by the question how far the concept of this principal angel can explain the emergence of the Gnostic demiurge on the one hand,[99] and the development of Christology, in particular the deification of Christ (who was widely regarded as an angel in early Christianity), on the other.[100] For this reason the centuries around the rise of Christianity have been studied with much greater intensity than those of immediate relevance to us, and all discussions of angel worship in a Christian context seem to be about Christ. Perhaps there was no angel

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97   See the exegetes (*e.g.* al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*), *ad* 71:23, on the Noachite gods; Fahd, *Panthéon*, p. 104, on Isāf and Nāʾila.

98   For a helpful survey, see L.W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*, Philadelphia, 1988, pp. 41–92; briefly summarised in his *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?*, Grand Rapids (Mich.) and Cambridge, 2005, pp. 46 ff.

99   Cf. A.F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*, Leiden, 1977.

100   Cf. J. Barbel, *Christos Angelos*, Bonn, 1941; C.A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christianity*, Leiden, 1998.

worship unrelated to Christ among Christians in the period before the rise of Islam—though chapels for angels are attested by Didymus (d. 398).[101] At all events, as things stand, Jewish (and Jewish Christian) angel veneration seems considerably more promising than that of the Christians.

Jewish veneration of a principal angel may be relevant to the Qur'ān in that the *mushrikūn* seem sometimes to have venerated "another god along with God" (*ilāhan ākhara maʿa 'llāhi*, 17:22, 39; 23:117; 25:68; 26:213; 28:88; 50:26; 51:51). One should not take two gods (*ilāhayni ithnayni*), as another passage puts it (16:51). This second god could be reflected in the accusation that the Jews worshipped a son of God called ʿUzayr (9:30), which both Newby and I have related to veneration of a principal angel, the difficulties posed by the name notwithstanding. One principal angel, Metatron, was actually known as "the lesser YHWH".[102] The accusation regarding ʿUzayr is | made in a Medinese sura, whereas the injunctions against veneration of another god, or of two deities, appear in Meccan suras, but it would not be the first example of groups identified as *mushrikūn* in Meccan suras turning up as Jews or People of the Book in those assigned to Medina.[103] Only some *mushrikūn* venerated two gods, however. Others, including those whose lesser angels or deities were female, are described as venerating a plurality of divine beings and so need to be considered separately.

In his letter to the Colossians (with a related passage in Galatians), Paul advises the Christians to resist anyone who would condemn them in matters of food, drink, festival observance, new moons and sabbaths, and also anyone "insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels".[104] The misguided people who would advocate such practices are widely assumed to have been Jews or Judaisers within the Jesus movement. A similar cluster of misguided practices is

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101   J. Leipoldt, *Didymus der Blinde*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchrist-lichen Literatur, n.s., 14/3, 1905, pp. 91 ff., cited in T. Andrae, *Mohammed: the Man and His Faith*, London and New York, 2008, pp. 21 f.

102   [101]For all this, see P. Crone, "The *Book of Watchers* in the Qur'ān", in H. Ben-Shammai, S. Shaked and S. Stroumsa (eds.), *Exchange and Transmission across Cultural Boundaries: Philosophy, Mysticism and Science in the Mediterranean*, Jerusalem, 2013, pp. 16–51 [Ed.: included as article 7 in the present volume], and the literature given there.

103   [102]Cf. Crone, "Angels versus Humans".

104   [103]Colossians 2:16, 18; compare Galatians 4:3, 9 f.: "We were enslaved to the elemental spir-its (*stoikheia*) of the world ... How can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits? ... You are observing special days, and months and seasons, and years". Both passages are discussed in L. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology*, Tübin-gen, 1995, pp. 104 ff., a study to which I am much indebted.

explicitly attributed to the Jews in the Syriac version of the *Apology of Aristides*, composed around 125 AD: here the Jews are declared to "suppose in their minds that they are serving God", whereas "in the nature of their actions their service is to angels and not to God" (which is curiously reminiscent of the Qurʾān on the *mushrikūn*), but here it is their clinging to Jewish practices which constitutes angel worship, so no actual cult of angels seems to be implied.[105] A different version of the same text appears in *Kērygma Petrou*, a Jewish Christian document of the late first/early second century AD quoted in Clement of Alexandria (d. 217), and here the Jews are guilty of "adoring angels and archangels, the month and the moon", and (consequently?) of *not* observing the festivals in question when the moon is not visible.[106] It is hard not to suspect that all three passages are rooted in an earlier, stereotypical charge regarding angels, the moon and the calendrical calculation.[107]

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Further evidence comes in the form of apocalypses dating from the pre-Christian period to the second century AD in which a human being responds to the appearance of an angel with gestures of worship, which the angel refuses to accept: the angel tells the human not to bow down to him or worship him, claiming that he is just a fellow-servant like him, or he shows in some other way that even supernatural beings who serve God's purposes may not be worshipped.[108] Stuckenbruck deems the material insufficient as evidence for an actual cult of angels, but grants that the intensity of the angel's refusal is hard to explain without positing "some form of venerative behavior" deemed incompatible with monotheism by some Jews and early Christians, though not necessarily by those who engaged in such behaviour themselves.[109]

There are several examples of Jews invoking the angels along with God for help or protection. An inscription from Asia Minor dating from the late second

105   [104]J.R. Harris (tr.), *The Apology of Aristides*, Cambridge, 1891, XIV, 2; Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, p. 140: their service to angels shows itself in the observance of the sabbath, new moons, the passover, the great fast, the feast, circumcision, and the purity of meat. The passage is not in the Greek version.

106   [105]Clement, *Stromateis*, VI, V, 41, 2; also reflected in Origen's commentary on John 13:17, cf. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, p. 141.

107   [106]That the passage in *Kērygma Petrou* is connected with Colossians 2:16 ff. and Galatians 4:3, 9 is stressed by H. Paulsen, "Das Kerygma Petrou und die urchristliche Apologetik", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 88 (1977), pp. 18 ff., but he does not say how. Stuckenbruck curiously underplays the connection.

108   [107]Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 75 ff.; cf. also L.T. Stuckenbruck, "The Angelic Refusal of Worship: the Tradition and Its Function in the Apocalypse of John", *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*, 1994.

109   [108]Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 102 ff.

or early first century BC includes the angels in an appeal to God to avenge the murder of two girls; the angels are anonymous.[110] In the Testament of Levi (preserved in a Christian form dating from the second century AD though its Jewish core is earlier) Levi says to the angel who has shown him heaven, "I beg you, Lord, teach me your name so that I may call upon you in the day of tribulation"; the angel responds by identifying himself as "the angel who makes intercession for the nation of Israel, that they might not be beaten", without giving his name (unless we assume it already to be common knowledge that the angel interceding for Israel was Michael).[111] Angels also refuse to give their name in the Bible, once explaining that the name is "too wonderful" to be revealed.[112] Here it would probably be too wonderful in the sense of conferring too much power on an individual. A Palestinian rabbi active in the fourth century AD contrasts the human patron, who keeps petitioners waiting by his door for admission, with God, who can be approached directly, to ram home the message that "when distress comes upon a man, he should not cry out to either Michael or Gabriel", but rather to God Himself, suggesting that individuals did in fact call upon | these angels to help and protect them.[113] 195 Calling upon Michael to intercede for the *community* rather than one's own private needs was not discouraged, at least not in later centuries: Eleazar Kallir, a rabbi who probably flourished at the end of the sixth century, but perhaps in the seventh or even as late as the tenth, probably in Palestine, composed a *piyyuṭ* calling on twenty-one angelic princes, including Michael, to intercede for Israel; and Michael is invoked for the delivery of the community in later synagogal poetry from the Near East as well.[114] But by then, of course, much had changed.

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110   [109]Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 182 ff.

111   [110]*Testament of Levi*, 5, 5 f., in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, tr. H.C. Kee in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, New York, 1983–1985, I, p. 790.

112   [111]Genesis 32:29 (without explanation); Judges 13:18. I owe both references to Joseph Witztum.

113   [112]Y. Berakhot 9, 13a, in P. Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen: Untersuchungen zur rabbinischen Engelvorstellung*, Berlin and New York, 1975, p. 70; Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 64 f., with parallel texts. Stuckenbruck oddly takes the comparison to be with the Persian monarch who can only be approached through his satraps (a common image in polemics against the lesser gods as intermediaries), but the patron was a feature of everyday life in all Roman provinces, and there is no hint of anything Persian in R. Yudan's comparison, which does not even mention a king.

114   [113]W. Lueken, *Michael*, Göttingen, 1898, pp. 11 f.; cf. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Jerusalem, 1971, *s.v.* "Kallir, Eleazar".

There are also several examples of the angels being invoked in expressions of thanksgiving. In the earliest examples the angels are anonymous.[115] They are likewise anonymous in a Jewish inscription from Asia Minor dating, perhaps, from the third century AD, which dedicates "works" (perhaps donations) to *theos hypsistos* and His holy angels.[116] In Joseph and Asenath, dating from between the first century BC and the second century AD, Asenath gives thanks to God and the angel who announces God's acceptance of her conversion, and then asks the angel, "What is your name, Lord; tell me in order that I may praise and glorify you for ever (and) ever". Here too the angel refuses: "Why do you seek this, my name, Asenath?", he asks, explaining that it is written in the heavens in the book written by the finger of God, and that man is not allowed to hear or pronounce it.[117] This is a strong wording. What the Biblical motif is being used to convey here could be disapproval of the use of angelic names in magic.

All religious communities had their magicians, but Jewish magic was a particularly prominent phenomenon in all the centuries of interest to us. It is attested in the Greek magical papyri from Egypt, dating from the second | century BC to the fifth century AD,[118] in Aramaic amulets mainly from Palestine, in incantation bowls from Sasanian Iraq,[119] in the Hekhalot literature, reflecting the period *c.* 200–800 AD,[120] in manuals for sorcerers from late antiquity,[121] and

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115   [114]The earliest is the Book of Tobit, possibly predating the second century BC: Tobit blesses God, His holy name and all His holy angels when his blindness is cured thanks to medical advice by the angel Raphael; Tobit explicitly credits his recovery of sight to God Himself in the next verse ("Though He afflicted me, He has had mercy upon me"), and Raphael is not singled out for praise in the thanksgiving (Tobit 11:14 f.). The second is the Qumran document 11Q Berakhot, 4 f. (see Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 161 ff.).

116   [115]Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 185 ff.

117   [116]Joseph and Asenath 15:12, in Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, II, p. 227; Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 168–170.

118   [117]H.D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, Chicago and London, 1986, pp. xli, xlv.

119   [118]See (for example) the introduction to J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations from Late Antiquity*, Leiden, 1985.

120   [119]Cf. P. Schäfer, "Merkavah Mysticism and Magic", in P. Schäfer and J. Dan (eds.), *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After*, Tübingen, 1993; id., "Jewish Magic in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages", *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 41 (1990), pp. 76–79.

121   [120]Cf. M. Gaster (ed. and tr.), *The Sword of Moses: an Ancient Book of Magic*, London, 1896; reprinted in his *Studies and Texts*, New York, 1928, I (translation) and III (text); M.A. Morgan (tr.), *Sepher Ha-Razim: the Book of Mysteries*, Chico (Calif.), 1983; P. Torijano, *Solomon the Esoteric King: from King to Magus*, Leiden, 2002, pp. 198 ff., with further references.

in the Geniza.[122] Several rabbinic passages prohibit the making of images of angels, the sun, moon, stars and planets; others prohibit sacrifices to the sun, moon, stars, planets, the archangel Michael or the smallest worm, sometimes adding sacrifices to the mountains, hills, rivers, and deserts,[123] and all of this could be associated with magic too.

The association of angel worship and magic is explicit in Origen's refutation of Celsus, a pagan who wrote about 180 AD. Celsus had claimed that the Jews "worship angels and are addicted to sorcery", which Origen characterises as a misrepresentation.[124] In another passage, Celsus finds fault with the Jews on the grounds that "although they worship the heaven and the angels in it", they do not worship the sun, moon and stars, as they ought to do in Celsus' view.[125] Origen rejects the charge again. Maybe Celsus had been misled by the spells used in trickery and sorcery which caused phantoms to appear, but if so, he did not realize that those who did such things were acting contrary to the law: either he should not have attributed such things to the Jews at all or else he should have made it clear that he was talking about lawbreakers; just as those who worship such beings because they are blinded by magic are breaking the law, so too are those who sacrifice to sun, moon, and stars.[126] One is surprised that Origen should mention sacrifices to the sun, moon, and stars here, since Celsus had complained of their absence, but it is clear that he freely admits the existence of wrongful practices because to him the issue is the norm. Celsus had wrongly presented worship of the heaven and the angels as normative Judaism; Origen's concern was to show that it | was wrong, and maybe he mentioned the sacrifices to heavenly bodies to be on the safe side: Celsus may not have known about them, but others did, and all should know that such people were lawbreakers. Jeremiah and Paul's Epistle to the Colossians are adduced as concrete examples of how Jews guilty of worshipping angels, the sun, moon, stars or images had been punished or reproved for such behaviour (Paul being a man with a "meticulous education in Jewish doctrines").[127]

Origen was irked by Celsus' claim because it obscured the fundamental difference between pagan and Biblical monotheism that he was trying to clarify. In the preceding passage Celsus had proposed that by angels the Christians

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122   [121]P. Schäfer and S. Shaked (eds. and trs.), *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, Tübingen, 1994.

123   [122]Schäfer, *Rivalität*, pp. 67 ff.

124   [123]Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I, 26.

125   [124]Origen, *Contra Celsum*, V, 6.

126   [125]Origen, *Contra Celsum*, V, 8, 9.

127   [126]Origen, *Contra Celsum*, V, 8.

probably meant demons, in the sense of intermediary divine beings.[128] It was
in response to this idea that Origen granted that the angels were sometimes
called gods in the scripture.[129] The difference that he wishes to highlight is that
where the pagans saw a continuum, the Christians drew a sharp line between
God and Christ on the one hand and angels, gods, and demons on the other:
only the former were to be worshipped. Angels ascended, bringing the prayers
of men to the highest regions, and descended to bring some benefit from God to
each individual in accordance with his merit, Origen said, but "we have to send
up every petition, prayer, intercession, and thanksgiving to the supreme God
through the high-priest of all angels, the living and divine Logos". One prayed
to God through Christ, or simply to Christ, "the very Logos himself", but not to
the angels.[130] Even if one had secret knowledge about the nature and function
of the angels (as magicians claimed to have), such knowledge would "forbid
us to pray to any other than the supreme God, who is sufficient for all things,
through our Saviour, the Son of God". Angels were in a different category, and
as for demons, Celsus did not realize that demons were always evil powers.[131]

Stuckenbruck concludes from his examination of all the material (including
the magical texts) that none of the evidence quite amounts to "cultic devotion"
and stresses that the angel veneration was not conceived as a substitute for the
worship of God by those who engaged in it.[132] The same could be said of angel
worship in the Qur'ān: the *mushrikūn* are monotheists who see themselves as
worshipping God alone, but who see Him as having | intermediaries too, on
whom they call along with God, and to whom they offer shares of their harvest
and cattle along with that to Him as well.

The *mushrikūn* differ from their Jewish counterparts, however, in that the
names of their angels, in so far as we know them, are those of former Arabian
deities, not Michael or the like, and also in that their angels, or some of them,
are female. These two features distinguish the *mushrikūn* from the Christians as
well, and also, as far as the second is concerned, from the Gnostics, for although
the latter did operate with female emanations of God, they are not known
to have incorporated Arabian deities in that role. The Manichaeans, who sys-
tematically adapted their pantheon to local religious traditions, could well
have done so, just as they accommodated the Mesopotamian Baalshamin. But
as things stand, the combination of Biblical God and Arabian deities/angels,

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128   [127]Origen, *Contra Celsum*, v, 2; cf. above, notes 78–79.

129   [128]Cf. above, note 84.

130   [129]Origen, *Contra Celsum*, v, 4.

131   [130]Origen, *Contra Celsum*, v, 5.

132   [131]See Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 200 ff.

sometimes female, is not only highly distinctive, it is also the *only* feature to set apart the Messenger's opponents from other believers worshipping the God of the Bible.

How is this combination to be explained? One solution would be to reject the Arabian names as polemical exaggeration designed to brand the intermediary beings as pagan abominations. But this is most implausible. Leaving aside that it would not dispose of the female nature of some of these beings, the Messenger was arguing with his opponents face to face, trying to convert them, not writing a polemical treatise in comfortable distance from his targets: everything he said had to be recognizable to them; obviously wrong claims about them would simply discredit him. He could have told them that venerating intermediary beings was *as bad as* worshipping al-Lāt, Manāt, al-ʿUzzā, and other pagan deities, but this is not what he said. It is possible that he picked out the Arabian names from among many others borne by their intermediaries because of their well-known pagan origin, but he cannot have foisted them on his opponents.

A more promising line to pursue is the link between "angel worship" and magic which is so prominent in the material relating to the Jews. Magicians called upon angels because they saw them as the dominant forces behind the natural and social events by which their lives were shaped, and wished to harness these forces to their own ends by any method, foul or fair. They did not so much worship angels as manipulate them. But they certainly saw them as powers in their own right, to the point that their outlook was one of "mitigated monotheism", as Shaked observes in connection with the incantation bowls.[133] The key way in which the magicians tried to manipulate the angels | was by calling on them, preferably by name. The magical texts abound in angelic names, some familiar and others made up to sound mysterious and impressive (the so-called *nomina barbara*). Tables were drawn up correlating the birth of angelic powers with the days of the moon, presumably with a view to determining the best days on which to invoke the powers in question,[134] giving us a clue to the association of angel worship and calendars. Since magicians preferred to err on the side of inclusiveness, and/or saw all known deities and angels as manifestations of a single god, the texts often call upon divine beings from religious communities other than their own, sometimes in an adapted form, to the point that it is frequently impossible to establish the confessional

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133   [132]S. Shaked, "Popular Religion in Sasanian Babylonia", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 21 (1997), p. 104.

134   [133]Cf. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, II, pp. 234f.

origin of a text. A Greek magical papyrus, probably pagan, invokes Apollo along with "the first angel of [God], great Zeus Iao" as well as "you who rule heaven's realm, Michael" and "you, archangel Gabriel", plus Abrasax, Adonai, and Pakerbeth.[135] Another, dating from the fourth century, promotes Jewish archangels to divine status: it calls on "the god Michael … the god Gabriel … the god Raphael" along with the gods Iao, Abaoth, Adonai, Souriel, Abrasax, Iaiol, and Chabra(ch).[136] Elsewhere, Raphael and Michael appear together with Helios, King Semea, and "Titan, flaming messenger (*angelos*) of Zeus, divine Iao".[137] Aphrodite figures in a spell in the Jewish magical work *Sepher ha-Razim* partly datable to the fourth century AD, which also includes a short prayer to Helios (*i.e.* the sun) transliterated from Greek into Hebrew.[138] The Near Eastern version of Helios, *i.e.* Shamash, is popular in the magic bowls, and Aphrodite appears here as well, as does Hermes.[139] The magic bowls, mostly made by Jews, if not always for Jewish clients, also mix in Iranian figures, and sometimes Christian ones as well.[140]

What we see in the magic texts is a milieu in which gods and angels blended: it is on a probably pagan magic bowl from Iraq that the formerly autonomous pagan deities Nirig, Sin, Shamash and Bel and the goddess | Nanai appear together as holy angels;[141] it is in a seemingly Jewish magic text from Egypt that the angels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael appear as gods. One text speaks of the same being as a spirit, an angel and a god alike.[142] Female deities called daughters of God figure in a Nabataean spell in *c.* 100 BC, as we have seen; and seven "sons of God" (*bny 'lhy*) who keep the universe together with seven powerful words appear in a magic bowl around 600 AD.[143] In short, magic shows us a milieu in which pagan Arabian deities could have come to be accepted as

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135   [134]Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, p. 194 (*PGM*, I, pp. 262–347); see also Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, II, esp. pp. 191 ff.

136   [135]Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 194 f. (*PGM*, III, pp. 129–161).

137   [136]Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, p. 195 (*PGM*, III, pp. 187–262).

138   [137]Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, p. 199.

139   [138]Shaked, "Jesus in the Magic Bowls", p. 315 and n. 17; id., "Jews, Christians and Pagans in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls of the Sasanian Period", in A. Destro and M. Pesce (eds.), *Religions and Cultures: First International Conference on the Mediterranean*, Binghamton, 2001, pp. 71 f. One bowl identifies Hermes and Metatron, the angelified Enoch later to be known as Idrīs (Montgomery, *Incantation Texts*, p. 207 (no. 25), cf. p. 99).

140   [139]D. Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls: Incantation Texts in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity*, London, 2003, no. M163.

141   [140]Above, note 73.

142   [141]*PGM*, I, pp. 54 ff., in M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, New York, 1978, pp. 98 f.

143   [142]Levene, *Magic Bowls*, no. M163, 9.

angels by Jewish and other monotheists of the "mitigated" kind and in which such angels could be identified as gods and sons/daughters of God as well. The Qur'ān polemicises against Jewish magic; it is in the context of magic that it mentions the fallen angels/sons of God of Genesis, under the Iranian names of Hārūt and Mārūt (2:102); and the prostrations to the sun and moon that it condemns could have a background in magic too (27:24; 41:37).

Were the *mushrikūn* Jews, then? The question is obviously premature. There is much more information about the polytheists in the Qur'ān which has to be taken into consideration first; and they also have to be examined in the light of what the Qur'ān says about the groups it labels Jews or Christians. It is hard to avoid the impression that both Jews and Judaising pagans are involved, but this is as far as one can go.

One point I do hope to have established in this article is that reading the Qur'ān in the light of the Qur'ān itself, without reference to the exegetical literature, makes sense; and relating the result to the earlier religious literature produced in the Near East is illuminating. It would of course have been more illuminating to relate the result to indisputably earlier literature from Arabia itself, but we do not have it. It is not always appreciated, however, that the debates in the Qur'ān are sufficiently closely related to religious developments in the regions from which we do have evidence for us to have some hope of being able to trace the threads behind its emergence. As mentioned already, it goes without saying that the Islamic tradition will eventually have to be brought to bear on the result as well; but as things stand, research on the Qur'ān has been so heavily shaped by later readers' reactions that we should start by separating them.

Angels versus Humans as Messengers of God: The View of the Qur'ānic Pagans[*]

The aim of this paper is to identify what the so-called polytheists (*mushrikūn*) in the Qur'ān took a messenger from God to be. The polytheists in question are the opponents with whom the Qur'ānic Messenger takes issue in the so-called Meccan suras, which reflect a time before he had a community of his own and which constitute the bulk of the book. The Messenger never uses denominational names for these opponents, only derisive terms such as polytheists, infidels, and wrongdoers. On one occasion the divine voice whose words he is reciting identifies them as "your (sg.) people (*qawmuka*)," suggesting that they formed his ancestral community. The same passage tells us that "when Jesus is held up as an example to them, they will start disputations with the question, 'Are our gods better or is he?'" (43:57 f.). This nicely captures their reaction to him in these suras: they do not take him seriously, but laugh at his claims, tease him with his doomsday predictions, and use his earnest preaching about Jesus to start intellectual games.

What kind of religious world did these opponents inhabit? This question still has not been much explored. The Qur'ān gives us to understand that the polytheists were actually monotheists, at least by cultural background. It is possible that some of them did not believe in God at all, but in so far as they did, they envisaged Him as a single, omnipotent God who was both the creator and the ruler of this world.[1] In addition, however, they worshipped lesser beings and thereby compromised their monotheism in the Messenger's view, though not in their own. They regarded the lesser beings, to whom the Qur'ān indiscriminately refers as gods, angels, and children of God, as intercessors between God

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[1] That they were monotheists much like the Messenger himself has in some sense been known for a long time, cf. Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran* (Tokyo: Keio, 1964; repr. Salem, N.H.: Ayer, 1987), 98, 101, on how their view of God was "surprisingly close to the Islamic concept." But it was Gerald R. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: from Polemic to History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), who first saw the far-reaching implications.

and themselves, and they identified | some of these beings as female, which the Messenger seems to have found particularly offensive. Polemics against these gods, angels, and children of God dominate the Meccan suras, which tell us time and time again that God has no offspring, least of all females, that nobody shares in His nature, and that everything apart from Him is His creation. The handful of names we are given for the lesser beings show them, or some of them, to have been pagan deities by origin. There is not a great deal in the Qurʾān to identify the polytheists as pagans in other respects, however. The key issues between them and the Messenger, apart from the lesser beings, are the resurrection and the day of judgement on the one hand and the Messenger's own claim to divine authority on the other. The polytheists did not believe in bodily resurrection, or in any afterlife at all, and in so far as they accepted the reality of the day of judgement, they did not think that it was close. The Messenger's claim to be in communication with God they rejected out of hand. What this paper is concerned with is one of the grounds on which they refused to accept him as a genuine messenger.

The Qurʾānic Messenger, whom I shall take the liberty of calling Muḥammad even though he is not named in any of the passages discussed in this paper, presented himself as a messenger (*rasūl*) of God and a warner (*nadhīr, mundhir*). A warner in his conception was a messenger sent to call upon a people to return to God by worshipping Him alone so as not to be destroyed by Him. In other words, a warner to him was what in popular parlance is called a doomsday prophet. The polytheists did not apparently have any problems with the concept of a warner. They "swore their strongest oaths by God that if a warner came to them they would surely be more rightly guided than any other nation" (35:42), meaning that they would hasten to follow him. They just did not think that the self-proclaimed Messenger was a warner. Why not?

The Unbelievers' Objections

The unbelievers' answer to this question is reflected partly in the Qurʾānic stories of warners sent to past nations, partly in statements credited to the polytheists themselves, and partly in the Messenger's responses to their criticism. We may start with the warner stories.

Past warners are a prominent theme in the Qurʾān, which frequently reminds the audience of how messengers were sent to call past nations to repentance before it was too late, and how, with one exception, they never did repent, with the result that God blotted them out after ensuring that the warner himself and his followers had escaped. The Qurʾān reduces history to a sequence of

317   such episodes. The warners do not include any of the | famous rebukers of Israel
and its kings, such as Jeremiah, Isaiah, or Amos. Rather, they are three Penta-
teuchal figures, Noah, Lot, and Moses, and three Arabian ones, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, and
Shuʿayb, as well as some anonymous messengers. Moses stands out from the
rest in that he is envisaged both as a warner to the Egyptians and as a recipient
of revelation to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. The stories about these warners
are highly formulaic. They tell the same story over and over again in different
settings, and the story is always Muḥammad's own: past warners were sent with
the same message as his and met rejection just as he has; past nations voiced
the same objections as Muḥammad's contemporaries and were destroyed for
their refusal to listen, just as his own people will be if they do not take heed.

The past nations consistently refuse to take heed on the grounds that the
messengers who preach to them are mere human beings. "You are just a human
(*bashar*) like us," they tell Shuʿayb (26:186). "You are just a human like ourselves,
bring us a sign," the Thamūd say to Ṣāliḥ (26:154). "You are just humans like
us; you want to turn us away from that which our fathers used to worship, so
bring us a clear authority (*sulṭān*)" (14:10), the unbelievers declare in an account
relating to past warners in general. The people of an unnamed town (*aṣḥāb al-
qarya*) say to the men sent to them (*mursalūn*) that "You are just humans like
us; al-Raḥmān has not sent down anything" (36:15). "He is just a human like
yourselves … If you obey a human like yourselves, you will be losers," the leaders
of an unknown people told their followers (23:33 f.). Noah asks his people, "Do
you wonder at the fact that there has come to you a reminder from your Lord at
(the hands of) a man from among you (*rajul minkum*), to warn you?" and Hūd
poses the same question to his people, ʿĀd (7:63, 69).

The objection of the unbelievers in these passages is not simply that the
messenger is one of them rather than an outsider, or that he is a commoner
rather than a socially distinguished person, or that he is an ordinary human
being rather than somebody endowed with the ability to work miracles, though
all these considerations play in as well. The Thamūd at one point object that
the would-be messenger has nothing to set him apart from everybody else
in the community, stressing that he is also a lone individual: "a human being
(*bashar*) from among ourselves, alone (*wāḥidan*), should we follow him? … Of
(all the people) among us, was the reminder cast to him?" (54:24 f.; cf. 38:4, 8).
Muḥammad's inability to work miracles was an important problem, as will be
seen; and lowly status figures as a further reason for rejection in a passage in
which Pharaoh and his council respond to Moses and Aaron with the question,
"Shall we believe in two humans like us (*basharayn mithlinā*), whose people are
our slaves?" (23:47). But as is clear from this passage, there was more to it, for
Moses and Aaron were "humans like us" even though they were slaves rather

than kings, Israelites | rather than Egyptians, and miracle-makers to boot. The 318
fundamental objection is that the messengers all too obviously belong to the
human species. "If our Lord had wanted, he would have sent down angels
(*malāʾika*)," as ʿĀd and Thamūd declare (41:14). Noah's people say of Noah that
"He is just a human being like you who wants to make himself superior to you
(pl.). If God had wanted, He would have sent down angels" (23:24).

The same objection is voiced in the statements attributed to Muḥammad's
contemporary opponents. "Is this (person) more than a human like your-
selves?" they are presented as asking, adding, "Will you go to magic (*siḥr*) with
your eyes open?" (21:3). "This is nothing but magic transmitted from of old; this
is nothing but the words of a human being" (74:24 f.), they say (here as elsewhere
without explaining where the element of magic lay). The divine voice asks the
Messenger, in words similar to Noah's and ʿĀd's, whether it is "a matter of won-
der to them that We have given revelation to a man from among themselves
(*rajul minhum*) in order that he should warn people?" (10:2); and the answer
is affirmative: "They marvel at the fact that a warner has come to them from
among themselves" (38:4). And again it is clear that the problem was human as
opposed to angelic status, for the polytheists ask: "What sort of a messenger is
it that eats food and walks about in the markets? Why hasn't an angel (*malak*)
been sent down to him so that he could be a warner with him?" (25:7).

In the last verse the polytheists seem to be prepared to accept two forms
of angelic intervention: God could have sent an angel (who would not eat
food or walk about in the markets) or He could have sent an angel to assist
the human messenger by acting as a warner along with him. But Muḥammad
fell short on both scores. He plainly was not an angel: "When they see you,
they make you an object of fun, saying, is *this* the one that God has sent as
a messenger?" (25:41). He was not assisted by an angel or angels either. "Why
don't you bring us the angels if you speak the truth?" they ask him (15:7), or, as
they say in another passage, "Why hasn't a treasure (*kanz*) been sent down to
him or why didn't an angel come with him?" (11:12). Pharaoh voices the same
objection to Moses: "Why haven't bracelets of gold been bestowed on him or
angels come with him conjoined?" (43:53). Since Muḥammad was not an angel
or the recipient of angelic help, it struck his unbelieving people as obvious that
his self-proclaimed status as messenger from God was false.

Recognizing an Angel

How then would the polytheists have recognized the presence of an angel?
One acceptable characteristic would presumably have been wings. Angels | 319

were messengers with wings (*al-malāʾika rusul ūlī ajniḥa*), as the Messenger said (35:1). But though the polytheists undoubtedly agreed, they never object to Muḥammad's lack of wings, so they seem to have accepted that angels could appear in human form, as the Messenger believed as well (cf. 6:9; 19:17, 19). Even an angel in human form would not eat food or walk about in the markets, however. Angels did not eat. When God sent messengers to Abraham and they did not touch the roasted calf they were offered, Abraham took fright, clearly because he realized that they were angels (11:69 f.; cf. also 23:33). Nor did angels walk about in the markets, engaged in the same daily routines as ordinary human beings; rather, they made brief, dramatic appearances, as Abraham's visitors had done, for example. Further, angels were immortal and did not engage in sexual activities to keep their species going, whereas Muḥammad was a married man with children (13:38; 21:7 f., cf. his responses below). Finally, angels had supernatural power whereas Muḥammad had none. The polytheists' complaints about his human status and his inability to raise miracles are intimately connected, but their objection does not strictly speaking seem to be that *Muḥammad* should have had supernatural power. Rather, God should have sent an angel with supernatural power *instead* of Muḥammad or alternatively an angel (or angels) to *assist* Muḥammad: the angelic presence would have been visible, if not directly, then at least in the form of miracles.[2] But Muḥammad did not belong to the angelic world nor did he have any power in it; he could not make the angels come, no angels were sent to him, no treasures or any other signs of influence in the realm above had come down to him either. It is his complete lack of access to the angelic realm filling the space between humanity and God that damns his claim to be a messenger in the eyes of the polytheists; he was a nobody to them, an ordinary human being, unable to tap into even the lowest rungs of the celestial world, as powerless as everyone else.

At some point Muḥammad did claim to have a link with the angelic world. In 16:2 the divine voice tells him that God "sends down angels with the spirit of His command upon whomsoever He wishes of His servants, that they may warn that there is no God except for Me." The spirit of the command was something

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2   Compare the response of the fifth-century Christian saint, Pethion, when the river into which he is cast divides, forming a high wall of water on the one side and drying up below, leaving him safe: God "sent His angel and parted the mighty river": Paul Bedjan, ed., *Acta Sanctorum et Martyrum* (Paris: Harrassowitz, 1890–1897), vol. 2, 613, 615 (my thanks to Emmanuel Papoutsakis for help with the Syriac); tr. Nicholas Sims-Williams, *The Christian Sogdian Manuscript C2* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985), 43 f. (22v, 23v), on the basis of the Sogdian text in conjunction with the Syriac.

that God cast on whomever He wanted of His servants, so that he might warn of the day of meeting (40:15), and a Medi|nese sura says that it is Gabriel who has "sent it down to your heart" (2:97). But if this was a response to the complaint of the polytheists, it did not satisfy them, for obvious reasons: Muḥammad's experience of contact with an angel was private; what the polytheists were asking for was an angel whose presence they too would be in a position to ascertain.

The Messenger's Responses

All Muḥammad's responses are based on acceptance of the fact that he was indeed a mere human being, not an angel. "I do not say that I am an angel," he declares (6:50; 11:31), stressing that he has no knowledge of what goes on in "the High Council" and that "it has simply been revealed to me that I am (to act as) a clear warner" (38:69 f.). "Am I more than a human messenger?" as he says in response to the demand for miracles (17:93; cf. 13:7; 29:50); "I am just a human being like you" (41:6).

But why had God chosen to send a human being rather than an angel as a messenger? There are several answers to this question, suggesting that it was a difficult one. On one occasion the divine voice observes that "Nothing has prevented people from believing when guidance came to them except that they said: has God sent a *human* as messenger?" Here the Messenger is instructed to say that "If the angels walked about in peace and quiet on earth, We would have sent down to them an angel from heaven as messenger" (17:94 f.), apparently meaning that God chooses His messengers from the species for which the message is intended.[3] In line with this the Qurʾān repeatedly makes the bold claim that *all* earlier messengers had been humans: "We did not send any messengers (*mursalīn*) before you but that they ate food and walked about in the markets" (25:20); "We did not send any before you but men (*rijāl*) to whom We gave revelations" (12:109; similarly 16:43; 21:7); "We did not give them bodies such that they did not eat food, nor were they immortal," as one verse adds (21:8).

But denying that God had ever sent angels as messengers to humans was radical, and the claim may be meant hyperbolically, for the messengers who came to Abraham and Mary seem to be envisaged as angels by the Messen-

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3   I owe this understanding of the passage to Michael Cook. It is roughly what al-Ṭabarī says (*Jāmiʿ al-bayān* [Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1988], ad loc.) in less general terms.

ger himself, though it is noteworthy that he does not explicitly identify them as such (6:9; 19:17). In another passage the divine voice simply says that "We have sent messengers before you and given them wives and children" (13:38), without laying down that all messengers were of this type. "God chooses mes-sengers from angels *and* from men," yet another verse | says (22:75); and when messengers to past nations are challenged, they respond that "We are indeed mere humans like you, but God bestows favour on whomsoever He wishes of His servants" (14:11). Elsewhere, as noted already, we are told that "He sends down angels with the spirit of His command to whomsoever He wishes of His servants to warn (them) that there is no god but God" (16:2). The more mod-erate answer, in other words, was that God sent angels or humans as He saw fit.

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A completely different answer appears in two other passages. In the first, Muḥammad's opponents ask why he is not bringing them the angels, to which the divine voice replies that "We do not send down the angels except rightfully (*biʾl-ḥaqq*); they (the infidels) would not have any respite (*mā kānū idhan munẓarīna*)" (15:8). The message is that the arrival of angels visible to everyone would have heralded the coming of doomsday, whether in the form of a local destruction or a global one, so that the unbelievers would not have had time to repent: the angels would have come as destroyers.[4] By contrast, a human warner came before the expiry of the term set for the destruction so that people would have a chance to "fear and maybe receive His mercy," as Noah puts it (7:63). In the second passage the divine voice reports that "They say, why hasn't an angel been sent down to him?" And here too the reply is that "If We did send down an angel, the matter would be settled (*la-quḍiya ʾl-amr*), and they would not be granted any respite (*thumma lā yunẓarūna*)" (6:8); in other words, the judgement would have come.[5] The continuation adds that "If We had made him an angel, We would have made him (in the shape of) a man, and confused for them that which they themselves are confusing" (6:9), apparently meaning that the unbelievers are confusing human warners and angelic destroyers: if God had tried to accommodate them by sending an angel to warn them, the fact that the angel would have come in a human shape would only have made things more confusing for them. Besides, as we are told elsewhere, they would not believe anyway: "Even if we did send down angels to them and the

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4   For such angelic destroyers, see 2 *Baruch* 6:4, where four of them holding torches in their hands stand ready to set fire to Jerusalem (in James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983–1985], vol. 1, 622 ff.).

5   For the eschatological meaning of *quḍiya ʾl-amr*, compare 19:39 ("Warn them of the day of distress when the matter will be settled"); cf. also 2:210; 6:58; 14:22.

dead would speak to them and We gathered/resurrected (*ḥasharnā*) everything before them, they would not believe unless God wants it" (6:111).

In sum, to the polytheists a messenger of God was an angel, at least when he was a warner (the object of discussion in all the passages considered so far whether the word *nadhīr* is used or not). The angel could serve as a warner on his own or he could work with a human being, but no human being could claim to carry a message from God without visible assistance | from the angelic realm. To Muḥammad, by contrast, the visible descent of angels would have heralded doomsday. God's messengers were always humans, or they were angels or humans as He saw fit, and he himself was certainly human.

Angel and Messenger

From all this it is clear that when Muḥammad claimed to be a messenger, he was using a different vocabulary from the polytheists. To them, *rasūl* seems always to have meant an angel in a religious context. (No doubt they also used the word to mean a messenger of a mundane kind.) Or at least, a *rasūl* sent as a warner was an angel in their view. There are some passages suggesting that they operated with the concept of human messengers of God as well. "We will never believe you unless we are brought the same as the messengers of God (*rusul allāh*) were brought," they tell Muḥammad (6:124), clearly with reference to human agents on behalf of God in the past; "Let him bring a sign like that/those which the ancients were sent (with) (*kamā ursila 'l-awwalūn*)" (21:5): the ancients were presumably also human beings. Both passages are slightly odd, for one would have expected the polytheists to demand the same as the *ancients* were brought and to ask Muḥammad to bring a sign like earlier *messengers* brought: the ancients and the messengers seem to have changed places. The first passage is also odd in that the Messenger responds that "God knows best where to place His message," i.e. he reiterates that God can send messengers from among humans and angels alike, though the polytheists have not complained about his lack of angelic status here. But however exactly this is to be explained, one wonders whether the polytheists really spoke of messengers (as opposed to prophets) here. Elsewhere Muḥammad speaks of the Jewish prophets as messengers (3:183), clearly thinking of prophets and messengers as much the same.

To the polytheists, *rasūl* seems to have been coterminous with Greek *angelos* or Hebrew *mal'āk*, both of which originally meant an angel and a messenger of the mundane kind. Since the polytheists are also envisaged as speaking of the angels as *malā'ika,* an Arabic version of the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Ethiopic

word for angels,[6] *rasūl* in the sense of angel is probably a translation of *angelos*. Muḥammad sometimes uses *rasūl* to mean angel too (35:1; 81:19; probably also 11:77). But he calls himself a *rasūl* as well, and this is what will have sounded absurd to the polytheists: he was calling himself an angel, and when they objected, he would explain that he was just a human angel!

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What he was saying, in fact, was that he was just a *shalīaḥ/shelīḥā*, an apostle. *Shalīaḥ/shelīḥā* was the Hebrew and Aramaic word for a human emissary sent by another human being or group. It was the standard term for the apostles in Christian usage. It was occasionally used of angels, too, in Jewish literature,[7] and the Jews and Samaritans sometimes applied it to Moses as well,[8] as did the Christians to Christ.[9] But it seems only to have been in Manichaean usage that "apostle" came to be the standard term for an emissary from God: *shalīḥā* and *apostolos* was what Mani had called himself and his predecessors.[10] How Muḥammad had come to see himself as an apostle is not the issue here: the point is that his terminology appears to have been new to his polytheist audience. We do not know what they called the Christian apostles. There is no Arabic word for the apostles in the Qurʾān, which uses the Ethiopian term *ḥawāriyyūn*. But to the polytheists, a *rasūl allāh* was messenger of God in the sense of an angel, not, as Muḥammad saw it, in the sense of an apostle.

The Response in 6:91

The disagreement was not simply verbal, however. This is clear from another response in which the polytheist objection to Muḥammad's claim is formulated differently. Here the divine voice declares that "They do not estimate God right

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6   Cf. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*², s.v. "*malāʾika*."

7   Cf. the example below, note 21; for a Samaritan example, see Jarl E. Fossum, "The Apostle Concept in the Qurʾān and Pre-Islamic Near Eastern Literature," in *Literary Heritage of Classical Islam: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of James A. Bellamy* (ed. M. Mir, in collaboration with J.E. Fossum; Princeton: Darwin Press, 1993), 154.

8   For the Jews, see Jan-Adolf Bühner, *Der Gesandte und sein Weg im 4. Evangelium* (WUNT 2/2; Tübingen: Mohr, 1977), 285 ff. For the Samaritans, see Jarl E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism* (WUNT 36; Tübingen: Mohr, 1985), 145 (where Moses is both apostle of God and seal of the prophets); cf. also id., "Apostle Concept," 151 ff.

9   E.g. Heb. 3:1; Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 12:5 (apostle of God); 63:5.

10   N.A. Pedersen, "Early Manichaean Christology, Primarily in Western Sources," in *Manichaean Studies. Proceedings of the First International Conference on Manichaeism* (ed. P. Bryder; Lund: Plus Ultra, 1988), 166 ff.; Fossum, "Apostle Concept," 151, 152 ff.

when they say, 'God never sent down anything to a human being.' Say: who sent down the book brought by Moses as guidance and light for people, which you (pl.) put on papyrus sheets, displaying them while hiding much? Therein were you (pl.) taught that which you did not know, neither you nor your fathers" (6:91). In other words, the polytheists accepted that Moses, a human being, had received revelation, which they themselves were in the habit of copying on papyrus sheets; how then could they deny that God sent down things to human beings, more particularly Muḥammad?

This verse is so surprising that one wonders if one has fallen into a textual trap: it casts the polytheists as some kind of Jews or Christians, most probably Jews, but can it really mean what it says? It seems that it does, for the exegetes, who would have found a way out if there had been one, had great trouble making it fit their understanding of the past. They tell us that Sura 6 was revealed as a unit in Mecca. Since all Qurʾānic exchanges with Jews were supposed to reflect Muḥammad's period in Medina, which had a Jewish population, most exegetes declared verse 91 an exception: though the sura was Meccan, this particular verse had been revealed in Medina. Some held that the verse was actually addressed to the Jews or rather, since it was well known that the Jews believed humans to have received revelation, to one particular Jew who had denied it on one particular occasion in Medina. Others proposed that the verse was addressed to the polytheists: they were being asked who had sent down the book brought by Moses which *they*, meaning the Jews, put on papyrus sheets; a variant reading could be adduced in support of this interpretation. But how could Moses have probative value to the polytheists? The third solution was that the polytheists did indeed accept Moses as a prophet: this, it was noted, also followed from the fact that they criticized Muḥammad for his failure to replicate Moses' miracles. According to this explanation, the polytheists had heard about these miracles from the Jews and Christians they mixed with and accepted them as something everybody knew; it was not they who put the book of Moses on papyrus sheets, but since the polytheists, the Jews, and the Christians were at one in their rejection of Muḥammad's prophethood, they could be addressed together, with special reference to now one and now the others in the same address. This interpretation also required the verse to have been revealed in Medina.[11] No significantly different solutions seem to have been proposed in modern scholarship.[12]

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11   Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (Tehran: Markaz al-Nashr, Maktab al-Iʿlām al-Is-
      lāmiyya, 1413/1992–1993), vol. 13, 74–76, an eminently lucid survey of the problems to which
      Joseph Witztum drew my attention; cf. also al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, vol. 5, 266 ff.

12   Richard Bell, *The Qurʾān Translated with a Critical Re-arrangement of the Sūrahs* (Edin-

The adherents of the third solution are quite right that the polytheists criticise Muḥammad for his inability to replicate the miracles of Moses: "Why isn't he given the same (signs) as were given to Moses?" they ask in one passage (28:48); "We shall never believe you unless you cause a spring to gush forth from the earth for us," they say in another, this time with implicit rather than explicit reference to Moses (17:90). This does indeed imply | that they accepted Moses as a prophet, and also that they regarded him as paradigmatic. The only way out is to claim that the polytheists are arguing on Muḥammad's premises here. The adherents of the third solution seem to have something like this in mind when they propose that the polytheists accepted Moses' miracles as general knowledge: it was not that they believed in Moses, it was simply that this was how a prophet was supposed to behave according to Moses' devotees. The same explanation would have to be invoked when they find fault with Muḥammad's revelation (*qurʾān*) on the grounds that it was sent down in bits and pieces rather than all at once: here too they are implicitly comparing him with Moses (25:32).

In some sense, of course, there can be no doubt that the polytheists were only invoking Moses' miracles for the sake of the argument: "They swear by God their most earnest oaths that if a sign is sent to them, they will believe," we are told (6:109), but we can be reasonably sure that they were not considering converting. It does not follow that they lacked belief in miracles, however, only that they lacked belief in the Messenger: they swore their oaths safe in the knowledge that no miracles would actually be produced. When they demand miracles like Moses' in 28:48, the Messenger responds, "Didn't they disbelieve (*a-wa-lam yakfurū*) in what Moses was brought in former times? They said, a pair of sorceries, and they said, we disbelieve in both." Yusuf Ali translates this in the present tense, making the polytheists of Muḥammad's time reject Moses' miracles, but Muḥammad is not commenting on their attitude to either Moses or miracles here, simply avoiding the test they are setting. The reference is to the Egyptians, of whom we have just been told that "when Moses came to them with Our clear sign, they said, 'this is nothing but faked magic, we never heard the like among our forefathers'" (28:36). Muḥammad's point is that the unbelievers would not be swayed by a miracle now any more than they had been in the past. When unbelievers in Medina ask for a sign, he similarly replies that "That's what people before you said too," meaning that it would not make any difference (2:118). "The signs are with God. What will make you (pl.) realize that

burgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1937), vol. 1, 124, proposed that the passage is "early Medinan(?); revised," meaning that the words "which they put on papyrus sheets, displaying them while hiding much" had been added later. Rudi Paret, *Der Koran. Kommentar und Konkordanz* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1980), 147, notes the problems, but offers no solution.

they (*sic*) will never believe?" (6:109), as he says on another occasion. The unbe-
lievers would not believe even if God sent down angels, made the dead speak,
and resurrected everything before them (6:111), or sent down a book on papyrus
that they could touch with their own hand (6:7), or opened a gate of heaven
for them so that they could ascend (15:14); in short, nothing would made the
polytheists believe even if it were incontrovertibly true by their own standards.
The same argument is used in a Medinese sura, now against the Jews: they had
told God that they would only believe a messenger if God caused a sacrifice to
be consumed by fire, but they nonetheless killed the messengers who came to
them with clear signs along with the miracle they had asked for (3:183).

Moses must have been one of the prophets or, in the Messenger's terminol-
ogy, messengers that the polytheists accept elsewhere in the Qurʾān. As has
been seen, they declared themselves unwilling to believe until "we are brought
the same as the messengers of God (*rusul allāh*) were brought" (6:124) and asked
Muḥammad to bring them a sign "like that/those which the ancients were sent
(with)" (*kamā ursila ʾl-awwalūn*) (21:5); they also complained that their mes-
senger was a mere man rather than an angel with the observation that "we
never heard such a thing among our forefathers" (*abāʾinā ʾl-awwalīn*) (23:24).[13]
In all three passages they are measuring him against their own record of past
bringers of revelation. Since the Qurʾān never suggests that they followed pagan
prophets, one would assume their past bringers of revelation to include Moses
and other figures from the Biblical tradition.

That this is so is confirmed by another set of passages. In 20:133 the poly-
theists ask for a miracle and the divine voice replies, "Has a proof (*bayyina*) not
come to them (already), (namely) that which is in the ancient scrolls/books (*al-
ṣuḥuf al-ūlā*)?" In other words, ancient books with probative value were already
in circulation, presumably among the polytheists themselves since the answer
would not otherwise be effective. These books are elsewhere identified as the
scrolls of Abraham and Moses (*ṣuḥuf Ibrāhīm wa-Mūsā*): they showed the here-
after to be better than this life (87:17–19). In line with this, a verse directed
against an uncharitable polytheist asks whether he has seen the unseen: does
he not know what is in the books of Moses and Abraham, which show that
man gets nothing but what he has striven for? (53:35–39). The contents of
these books must have been regarded as revealed, partly because they con-
tained information about the afterlife and more particularly because there was

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13   *Mā hādhā illā basharun mithlukum … mā samiʿnā bi-hādhā fī abāʾinā ʾl-awwalīn.* Both the
      use of *hādhā* and the fact that the unbelievers have not heard about such a thing *among*
      their ancestors make it unlikely that the reference is to the contents of the Messenger's
      revelation.

no point in attributing books to Abraham or Moses unless the contents were meant to be accepted as revealed. Apocalypses attributed to Abraham and Moses are in fact well known to have been in circulation in late antiquity.[14] Presumably, the polytheists put these books on papyrus sheets too. Indeed, it could be some apocalyptic book of Moses that the unbelievers are described as copying | in 6:91, displaying some of it while hiding much on the grounds that it was esoteric knowledge.

Given that both Abraham and Moses seem to have been authoritative figures to the polytheists in even very early suras (53 and 87), the attempt to redate or otherwise explain away other passages implying acceptance of Moses is unnecessary. In the case of the problematic 6:91, it is also impossible, for here Muḥammad is basing himself on his *opponents*' premises: they are being inconsistent with their *own* beliefs when they accept that Moses received revelation, yet deny that God sends down things to humans. In short, there can be no doubt that the polytheists were, or at least included, followers of Moses.

Moses in the Eyes of the *Mushrikūn*

How then did the polytheists square their acceptance of Moses with their denial of revelation to human beings? In the exegetical tradition, this problem is posed slightly differently from here, for the exegetes understood the polytheist denial that God sends down things to humans as a rejection of the very idea of prophethood: the polytheists were saying that there was no such thing as revelation. This cannot be right. It is certainly possible that there were unbelievers who denied the very existence of revelation, just as there may have been unbelievers who did not believe in God; but there would not have been any point in adducing Moses against them. The contradiction in which the polytheists have been caught in 6:91 lies in the fact that they do see Moses as a recipient of revelation, yet deny that God sends down revelation to human beings. How then did they explain Moses' case? We are not told, so at this point we have to start guessing.

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14   That the *ṣuḥuf* of Abraham and Moses were apocalypses has been suggested several times before, cf. Haggai Ben-Shammai, "*Ṣuḥuf* in the Qurʾān—a Loan Translation for 'Apocalypses,'" in *Exchange and Transmission across Cultural Boundaries: Philosophy, Mysticism and Science in the Mediterranean* (*Proceedings of a Workshop in Memory of Prof. Shlomo Pines, the Institute for Advanced Studies, Jerusalem; 28 February–2 March 2005*) (ed. H. Ben-Shammai, S. Shaked, and S. Stroumsa; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2013).

One possibility is that they held Moses himself to have been an angel, or more precisely a human being who had been transformed into an angel, as Enoch had been by common consent.[15] Moses, too, was widely perceived as having become an angel, or like an angel, or in some sense divine, by his encounter with God.[16] The polytheists could have meant that God did not reveal things to ordinary humans, only to such of them as had been raised to angelic status. If so, the Messenger is importing his own presuppositions into the argument: *he* knew Moses to be human, so how could the polytheists accept Moses as a prophet, yet deny that God gave revelation to hu|man beings? But it is not a compelling solution, for there are no polemics in the Qur'ān against the idea that Moses had been angelified.

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Another possibility is that the polytheists dismissed Muḥammad's argument as contrived on the grounds that it was not to Moses himself that God had revealed the book, but rather to an angel, who passed it to Moses. (*God* never sends down things to humans.) This was the normal conception in Hellenized Judaism and its diverse Christian offshoots, as is clear from *Jubilees* (2nd century B.C.E.),[17] Josephus (1st century C.E.),[18] the New Testament, and other works.[19] Moses "was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai," and the Jews had "received the law as ordained by

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15   Cf. George W.E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between Bible and Midrash* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 222, on 2 Enoch.

16   Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 48.

17   *Jubilees* 30:12, 21; 50:1f., 6, 13, where the Angel of the Presence says that it wrote the Pentateuch and gave it to Israel at Sinai, though the book opens with God telling Moses to "come up to me on the mountain and I shall give you two stone tablets of the law and the commandments which I have written" (in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, 53, 112, 142). See further James C. VanderKam, "The Angel of the Presence in the Book of Jubilees," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 7 (2000): 378–393, esp. 390ff. (I owe this reference to A.Y. Reed).

18   Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15, 5.3 (136): "We have learnt the most holy part of our law by angels or ambassadors."

19   Thus the lost Book of Baruch reportedly said that the angel Baruch was sent to deliver the revelation to Moses and that the evil angel Naas managed to obscure the precepts (Hippolytus, *Refutation of all Heresies*, tr. J.H. MacMahon [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1868; ANF vol. 6], 190 [here 5.21, but 5.26:24ff. in more recent editions]). Simon Magus, who was to go down as the ancestor of all Gnostic heresies, is depicted in the Pseudo-Clementines, both the Homilies and the Recognitions (c. 300), as holding that God commissioned angels to do the creation and to give the law (Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord*, 10).

angels," as we are told in the Acts of the Apostles (7:38, 53).[20] The rabbis would have none of it. Moses received the Torah at Sinai, "not at the hands of an angel and not at the hands of a messenger (here in the sense of angel)," as they said, or "not from the mouth of an angel and not from a seraph," as another formulation put it; God spoke to Moses "mouth to mouth."[21]

One would have expected the polytheists to share the view of the Hellenized Jews and Christians, partly because it goes well with their view of the angels as intermediaries and partly because it is usually angels who reveal the divine secrets in the Jewish and Christian apocalypses, which they seem | to have read. But once again, the suggestion is problematic. God speaks directly to Moses in the Qurʾān (7:143; cf. 2:253), and there does not seem to be any polemics against the idea that he received his revelation from an angel. On the contrary, the polytheists seem to have thought that all the Israelites both heard and saw God and the angels at Sinai. The Qurʾān tells us that those who do not fear meeting God, i.e. do not believe that the day of judgement is near (or that there is any such thing at all), say, "Why haven't angels been sent down to us or why don't we see God?" (25:21). In another passage the divine voice asks, "Are they waiting for the angels to come to them, or for your Lord to come to them, or for some sign of your Lord's to come to them?" (6:158; cf. 16:33); and the polytheists elsewhere declare that they will not believe until "you bring Allāh and the angels before us (*qabīlan*)" (17:92).[22] In the same vein, ignorant people in a Medinese sura ask, "Why doesn't God speak to us or (at least) bring us a sign?" (2:118).

The polytheists here seem to be alluding to accounts familiar from the Dead Sea Scrolls and several rabbinical works, in which the Israelites at Sinai hear or even see God directly. God "spoke to the people of Israel face to face as a man speaks to his friend," as a Moses Apocryphon declares; "He made us look at a consuming fire from under the heaven. And on the earth He stood on the mountain to make it known that there is no God beside Him and no rock like

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20   Cf. also Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2.

21   Peter Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), 48 ff.; cf. also Judah Goldin, "Not by Means of an Angel and Not by Means of a Messenger," in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of E.R. Goodenough* (ed. J. Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 1968). Some rabbis took both the *malʾāk* and the *shaliaḥ* here to be mundane messengers: God was telling Moses how *he* should convey God's message, namely in person. (Fossum, "Apostle Concept," 153 f., quotes the dictum in the context of the Passover Haggadah in the form "not by means of an angel, not by means of a seraph, but by means of the apostle" [differently Goldin, 414]. If this version exists, "the apostle" is surely Moses, not a heavenly figure, as Fossum claims.)

22   The meaning of *qabīlan* is disputed, cf. Paret, *Kommentar*, 306 f., ad loc.

Him"; the assembly trembled at the sight and the sounds and stood aside, but Moses was with God in the cloud, and when he came out, he was hallowed and "spoke like an angel."[23] Here the direct encounter with God by all the Israelites is combined with angelification of Moses, or something close to it. In the rabbinic literature the Israelites ask to see and hear God, or they hear Him speak and then ask to see Him too, citing the proverb that "hearing is not like seeing." They faint or die when God grants them their wish, usually on hearing His words, but sometimes at the sight, or both, whereupon God revives them with dew and/or by sending down ministering angels, who revive them by kissing them or by holding up their heads so that they can see God directly.[24]

There is nothing presumptuous about the Israelite demands in these accounts. On the contrary, it is stressed that every Israelite personally saw | and heard God and accepted the law, so that everybody would be able to withstand the temptation of false gods,[25] or so that they would not be able to say, "We did not know you, and so we did not serve you."[26] The event serves much the same purpose as the primordial covenant between God and Adam's seed in the Qur'ān (7:172), which is in effect a revelation at Sinai transposed from the history of a people to that of mankind at large. In third-century Palestine, the synagogue preachers on the festival of Shabuʿot would link the giving of the law at Sinai with Ezekiel's vision of the divine chariot (*merkabah*) by means of Psalms 68:18 f., understood as a description of Moses' ascent, and so conjure up the foundational event in visually spectacular terms: the heavens opened, with fire and angels everywhere; the *merkabah* came down; Moses ascended on high to receive the law; all Israel saw the divine throne then, and all now saw it

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23   Moses Apocryphon (4Q377) in Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (rev. ed.; London: Penguin, 2004), 542.

24   *Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath*, 88b; *Pesiqta Rabbati*, 20, in David Halperin, "Origen, Ezekiel's Merkabah, and the Ascension of Moses," *Church History* 50 (1981): 261–275, 269; also in Karl-Erich Grözinger, *Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott. Eine rabbinische Homilie zum ersten Gebot (PesR 20)* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1976), 46 ff., 201 ff.; cf. also David Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1988), 289 ff., 300 f., 307 ff., on the date of this homily; Heinrich Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran* (Gräfenhainichen: Schultze, n.d. [preface dated 1931]), 298 ff., citing later sources.

25   Thus *Pesiqta Rabbati*, 20, in Halperin, "Origen, Ezekiel's Merkabah, and the Ascension of Moses," 270; id., *Faces of the Chariot*, 352 ff. (understood as anti-Christian polemics); in Grözinger, *Ich bin der Herr*, 47.

26   Pseudo-Philo (Hebrew original c. 50–150 C.E.), *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* (ed. and tr. H. Jacobson; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 11:2. Compare the Moses Apocryphon (4Q377) in Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 542, where Jews who do not observe the law are cursed with reference to these events.

again as the sermon was read.[27] In the rabbinic accounts, too, the sheer glory of the event is overwhelming: God comes down to Sinai with 22,000 ministering angels forming His entourage, or there were sixty myriads of them, or so many that not even a sophist could count them, as one rabbi put it.[28]

This seems to be what the polytheists have in mind when they ask Muḥammad to bring God and the angels before them. Maybe they held that God would revive them, too, if the experience was too much for them, but more probably their demands should be read as sarcastic: they were challenging Muḥammad to emulate Moses because they knew that he could not.

The Messenger responds in two ways. First, he once more claims that what the polytheists are asking for amounts to the day of judgement. "There will not be any good news for the sinners on the day when they see the angels," he says, outlining their dire fate in contrast with that of people destined for Paradise on the day when "heaven will be split by the clouds and the angels will descend" (25:22–25). "Are they waiting for God to come to them in booths of clouds, and the angels, and the matter will be settled?" as a Medinese sura puts it (2:210; cf. 6:158).[29] In the Messenger's view it would | be doomsday when "your Lord comes, and the angel(s), in ranks upon ranks" (89:22; cf. 16:33).

Secondly, the Messenger formulates his own account of the events at Sinai as polemics against the Jewish version. Though he accepts that Moses spoke directly with God, he flatly denies that Moses and the Israelites saw him. "When Moses came to the place appointed by Us and his Lord addressed him, he said, Lord, let me see you. God said, you will never see Me" (7:143). Instead, God showed Moses how a mountain was blown to pieces when He manifested himself, whereupon Moses, not the Israelites, fell into a swoon (*kharra Mūsā ṣaʿiqan*).[30] Angels are conspicuously absent.

The opponents who ask, "Why doesn't God speak to us or why aren't we getting a sign?" in Medina (2:118) sound like the polytheists of the Meccan suras, but in this sura the polemics against the rabbinic account are explicitly addressed to the Children of Israel. Here the Israelite request to see God is recast as presumptuous and reformulated as a condition of belief in wording familiar from the unbelievers' demand for miracles: "Remember when you said,

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27   Halperin, "Origen, Ezekiel's Merkabah, and the Ascension of Moses"; id., *Faces of the Chariot*, 355, summarizing his longer coverage of the same subject in ch. 8.

28   *Babylonian Talmud*, *Shabbath*, 88a; Schäfer, *Rivalität*, 43.

29   For the expression *fī ẓulal min al-ghanām*, see A.S. Yahuda, "A Contribution to Qurʾān and Ḥadīth Interpretation," in *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume* (ed. S. Löwinger and J. Somogyi; Budapest: n.p., 1948–1958), vol. 1, 285.

30   In Exod. 19:18, the mountain merely shakes violently when God descends on it.

'O Moses, we shall never believe you unless we see God directly (*jahratan*).' But a thunderbolt (*ṣāʿiqa*) hit you as you were looking. Then We raised you up after your death so that you might give thanks" (2:55 f., cf. 47; similarly 4:153). The *ṣāʿiqa* which kills the Israelites and the collapse of the mountain that causes Moses to fall down *ṣaʿiqan* are clearly hostile versions of the consuming fire, lightning, and thunder mentioned in the Jewish accounts (ultimately from Exodus, 19:16, 18; 24:17). And in keeping with the Messenger's view that it would be doomsday when God and the angels came, all those in heaven and on earth would swoon (*ṣaʿiqa*) on doomsday too, except such as God wished, while the unbelievers would be hit by thunderbolts (*yuṣʿaqūna*) (39:68; 52:45).[31] Here as in the primordial covenant, the events at Sinai are transposed from the history of a people to that of mankind at large, this time to the end rather than the beginning.

Like the problematic 6:91, this obviously raises questions about the relationship between the Jews and the polytheists, but this is not the issue here. For the question at hand, what matters is that the second possibility can also be crossed off the list: the polytheists did not apparently envisage Moses as receiving revelation from an angel, but rather held God to have manifested Himself at Sinai in a retinue of angels for all of Israel to see and hear. This is the experience they are asking Muḥammad to replicate.

That brings us to the third possibility. What the polytheists were denying was not that God sent down revelation to *humans*, or that *God* sent it down to humans, but rather that that revelation was *sent down*: God sent down | angels; what humans did when they received revelation was to ascend to heaven. "Who sent down the book brought by Moses?" Muḥammad sarcastically asks in 6:91, but he is describing the revelation in his own language, just as he rewrites their prophets as messengers, for the circles whose views of the events at Sinai are reflected in the Qurʾān did not envisage the book as having been sent down. Rather, Moses had gone up to receive it. His ascent to Sinai had come to be understood as a journey into heaven from Hellenistic times onwards,[32] at first metaphorically, but eventually literally. A rabbinical work explained that the cloud which enveloped the mountain had transported Moses to heaven;[33]

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31   Cf. Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 483 ff.

32   Cf. Ezekiel the Tragedian (2nd century B.C.E.) in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseude-pigrapha*, vol. 2, 66–89, where Moses ascends from Sinai to God's throne in a dream; Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 124 f., on Philo.

33   *Pesiqta Rabbati* in Halperin, "Origen, Ezekiel's Merkabah, and the Ascension of Moses," 269; id., *Faces of the Chariot*, 292.

other rabbis simply took it for granted that he "went up to heaven to receive the Torah from God's hand";[34] and we learn that the angels protested at the presence of a human being "when Moses ascended on high," but God told him to hold on to the throne of glory.[35] It is also by ascending to heaven that prophets receive revelation in the apocalyptic literature which the polytheists may have put on papyrus scrolls.[36] The heroes of these works traverse the angelic realm with the assistance of an angel and reach the divine throne to learn the secrets of the universe, including knowledge of the past and the future; and the future is usually apocalyptic in the popular sense of the world, meaning that it takes the form of a violent reversal of fortunes: the wrongdoers who have oppressed the righteous for so long will be punished, the righteous will be rewarded for their patience. "Before the age of justice starts to grow, my judgement will come upon the heathen who have acted wickedly," as God explains to Abraham during a journey on which Abraham is told of "everything that will be in the last days."[37] Books narrating the heavenly journeys of Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Baruch, and others were in circulation; and instructions for traversing the heavens to reach the divine throne were also available in the *Hekhalot* literature, here with an emphasis on the satis|faction of private wishes (including worldly ones) rather than service to the community, and with a strong admixture of magic.[38]

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Since apocalyptic knowledge was what Muḥammad claimed to have, readers of the apocalyptic literature would obviously have found it absurd that such

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34   *Midrash on Psalms*, iv, ad Ps. 106:2, tr. G.W. Braude (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), vol. 2, 188. Cf. also Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 205 ff.

35   *Babylonian Talmud*, *Shabbath*, 88b; cf. Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 319 ff. See also Abraham J. Heschel, *Heavenly Torah: As Refracted through the Generations* (tr. G. Tucker; New York: Continuum, 2005), ch. 18, which covers both supporters and opponents of the view that Moses had ascended to heaven.

36   Cf. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*.

37   *Apocalypse of Abraham*, 24:2; 29:14 (in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, 701, 704).

38   Cf. Morton Smith, "Observations of Hekhalot Rabbati," in *Biblical and Other Studies* (ed. A. Altmann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), 142–160; David J. Halperin, "A New Edition of the Hekhalot Literature" (review of P. Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981]), *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104 (1984): 543–552, esp. 548 ff.; Martha Himmelfarb, "Heavenly Ascent and the Relationship of the Apocalypses and the *Hekhalot* Literature," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 9 (1988): 73–100; Michael D. Swartz, "Jewish Visionary Tradition in Rabbinic Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (ed. C.E. Fonrobert and M.S. Jaffee; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), ch. 9.

knowledge should have been *sent down* to him. God sent down *angels* to warn of the apocalypse, like the angel who is sent to Noah to warn him of the flood in the Book of Watchers[39] or those who are sent to warn Lot of the imminent destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha in the Qurʾān itself (11:81). It was probably such angels that the polytheists had in mind when they spoke of warners. But human beings had to *ascend* to heaven for such knowledge. "You are just humans like us; al-Raḥmān has not *sent down* anything," as the inhabitants of a vanished city tell their messengers (36:15). The polytheists declare that they will never believe in Muḥammad unless "you *ascend* into heaven," and then only if "you bring down to us a book for us to recite" (17:93). "Every one of them demands to be brought scrolls spread out," as another passage says (74:52). The demand that Muḥammad ascend into heaven to bring down a book for the polytheists to recite comes in a catalogue of miracles that he ought to perform, including causing a spring to gush forth and bringing God and the angels to them: all three seem to be demands for replications of Moses' feats. "The People of the Book ask you to bring a book down (*tunazzila*) to them from heaven," a Medinese sura observes in another startling example of similarity between the polytheist demands in Mecca and those of Israelite *ahl al-kitāb* in Medina (4:153). It is followed by the observation that the People of the Book asked Moses for something even more presumptuous, namely that he should make them see God directly, for which they were hit by the *ṣāʿiqa* (thunderbolt).

It must be in response to the unbelievers' demands for a book from heaven that the divine voice says, "Even if We sent down to you (Muḥammad) a book on papyrus (*kitāban fī qirṭās*) and they touched it with their hands, the unbelievers would say, 'This is nothing but plain magic'" (6:7). But here the polytheist demand is being rewritten in the new idiom, for what | the poly-   334
theists asked for was not that God should send down a book to him: what they said was that Muḥammad should ascend to receive one. In Muḥammad's conception, however, it is always God who sends down books, never humans who bring them from on high. The idea that they should be able to traverse the heavens to gain divine knowledge is discussed only as an obvious impossibility, and always in a sarcastic vein. Pharaoh, we are told, conceived the idea of building a platform so that he could reach the heavenly cords and ascend to check whether Moses' alleged God existed, but he was blocked on the way and it led to his perdition (40:36 f.):[40] the heavenly jour-

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39   1 Enoch 10:1–3, in George W. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: a New Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004); the angel is Sariel.

40   For the heavenly cords (*asbāb*), see Kevin van Bladel, "Heavenly Cords and Prophetic

ney has here become a presumptuous attempt to rise into heaven, fused with the story of Babel.[41] Of the polytheists the divine voice asks whether *they* created the heavens and the earth or are the ones in charge, "or do they have a ladder they can (climb up and) listen in with?" (52:36–38), meaning that they do not actually have any knowledge on the basis of which to sit in judgement of Muḥammad.[42] "Do they have power in heaven and earth and what is in between? Then let them ascend in the heavenly cords (*asbāb*)," as it also declares, assuring them that a whole army has been cut off there (38:10 f.): created beings simply could not obtain knowledge of the divine world by such means.[43] And if the Messenger himself could seek out a ladder into heaven and bring them a sign, what good would it do? (6:35).[44] "Even if We opened a gate of heaven for them and they could go on ascending (*yaʿrujūna*) through it, they would say, 'Our eyes have been dazzled; indeed, we have been bewitched'" (15:14 f.). In all these passages it is the unbelievers' view of how knowledge of the divine world was obtained that is being satirized and rejected.

335   The overall message is that the only way in which humans can gain divine knowledge is by God sending it down. The Qurʾān does seem to allude to a heavenly journey by Muḥammad in Sura 53, which records his encounter with a divine being in early polemics with the unbelievers; the tradition generally, and probably correctly, read the encounter as having taken place during a heavenly

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Authority in the Qurʾān and Its Late Antique Context," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 70 (2007): 223–246, with Pharaoh at p. 228.

41   For the transformation of the tower of Babel into Pharaoh's platform, via Aḥiqar, see Adam Silverstein, "Hāmān's Transition from the Jāhiliyya to Islām," in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 38 (2008): 285–308; id., "The Qurʾānic Pharaoh," in *New Perspectives on the Qurʾān: The Qurʾān in Its Historical Context 2* (ed. G.S. Reynolds; London: Routledge, 2011), 467–477, dealing with the stage from Aḥiqar to the Qurʾān only.

42   Compare the view of the Jews who would recite spells in order to ascend to heaven and see the divine throne (*merkava*): knowing the secrets of the *merkava* was like "having a ladder in one's house and being able to go up and down at will" (Smith, "Observations on Hekhalot Rabbati," 144; also cited in P.S. Alexander, "The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 28 [1977]: 156–180, 179). The ladder to heaven also figures in poetry by Aʿshā and Zuhayr, but in the same counterfactual vein as in the Qurʾān (van Bladel, "Heavenly Cords," 231 f.).

43   The *junūd* that have been cut off are presumably the *jinn/shayāṭīn* who tried to listen in (Q. 15:17 f.; 37:7 ff.; 72:8 f.). Cf. also 22:15, which carries the same message in a more obscure form (discussed in van Bladel, "Heavenly Cords," 229).

44   This verse is hard to translate. I follow the understanding of Paret and Yusuf Ali in their Qurʾān translations; cf. also Paret, *Kommentar*, ad loc.

journey,[45] but it is striking that this is not explicitly stated. Nowhere else is it said or implied that the Messenger ascended to heaven. Modern Islamicists usually read "Praise be to Him who made His servant go by night (*asrā bi-ʿabdihi laylan*) from the holy mosque to the further mosque" (17:1) as another allusion to a heavenly journey, but it is hard to agree. Heavenly journeys did not go from one place on earth to another; *asrā bihi*, to make somebody go by night, has no connotation of upward movement (the proper word for ascent is *miʿrāj*); and in the parallel passages the verb is used of prophets leaving at night, warned by God before He destroys the sinners.[46] The Qurʾān does tell us that God raised Enoch (Idrīs) to a high station (19:56 f.); but not that He raised him to *heaven*, and we hear nothing of Enoch's journey there, nor is there any mention of the books recording it, though there are echoes of at least one of them in the Qurʾān.[47] Here, as in the polemics against the angelic deities worshipped by the polytheists, the Qurʾān is out to separate the realm of God and that of created beings.

Conclusion

If this is accepted, we can answer the question with which the paper began: what was the polytheist conception of a messenger (*rasūl*)? The answer seems to be that a messenger to them was an angel sent down by God with revealed knowledge, including warning of an imminent disaster such as the flood or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha. It was probably as an angel bringing such warning that they envisaged a *nadhīr*. By contrast, a prophet (*nabī*) was a human being who ascended to heaven in order to | receive revelation, as Moses and many other heroes of the apocalyptic literature had done. The polytheists convey a strong sense of being fascinated by the idea of heavenly journeys.

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45   Cf. Jane D. McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), s.v. "Ascension."

46   The closest parallel is "We revealed to Moses, 'Go with my servants at night (*an asri bi-ʿibādī*); strike for them a dry path in the sea …'" (20:77; similarly 26:52; 44:23); but see also the passages on Lot: "Go with your family (*fa-asri bi-ahlika*) in a watch of the night" (11:81); "So go, you and your family (*fa-asri bi-ahlika*), in a watch of the night" (15:65). 17:1 is not necessarily addressed to Muḥammad. Compare Uri Rubin, "Muḥammad's Night Journey (*isrāʾ*) to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā. Aspects of the Earliest Origins of the Islamic Sanctity of Jerusalem," *al-Qanṭara* 29 (2008): 147–164.

47   Cf. Patricia Crone, "The *Book of Watchers* in the Qurʾān," in *Exchange and Transmission across Cultural Boundaries* (ed. Ben-Shammai et al.) [Ed.: included as article 7 in the present volume].

Whether an angel came down or a human succeeded in traversing the heavens, the connection with the divine world was expected to show itself in miracles. Moses is the prophet that both the polytheists and the Qurʾānic Messenger consistently invoke in their disagreement over the nature of a messenger and the mechanics involved in the revelation of books, but it is clear that the polytheists accepted other prophets too. Their list of past bearers of revelation is likely to have been as long as Muḥammad's, but the only one who is named by name apart from Moses is Abraham.

Who then were the people that the Qurʾān calls polytheists? This is more than can be answered on the basis of the material considered here, but it seems likely that more than one group is involved. Some of them appear to turn into People of the Book in the sense of Jews in Medina; others seem to occupy a place somewhere on the confluence between Biblical monotheism and paganism, as has often been noted before. But precisely how are we to envisage that confluence? Should we think of them as God-fearers? If so, God-fearers under the umbrella of what sort of Jews? Or were they, or some of them, under the umbrella of Christians, and again what sort of Christians? And where do those who reject the very idea of afterlife fit in? We do not know, and it is going to be a while before we do, for every Qurʾānic statement is open to many interpretations, and how one understands one verse depends on how one understands a multitude of others. The Muslim commentators traditionally laid out a wide range of possible interpretations in their exegetical works. We need something similar, but as historians we need to lay out the diverse possibilities with reference to the pre-Qurʾānic literature of the Near East, not, or not just, with reference to the later exegetical literature. Differently put, we need to map the theological landscape of the Near East at the time of the rise of Islam and test the various ways in which the Qurʾān could be placed on it. This is the enterprise to which I have tried to contribute in this paper.

CHAPTER 5

The Quranic *Mushrikūn* and the Resurrection (Part I)*

I

One of the issues between the Messenger and the unbelievers in the Quran is the Messenger's claim that the dead will be resurrected and judged, thereafter to live for ever in paradise or hell. This issue looms large in the Meccan suras. The unbelievers are depicted as reacting to this claim with a mixture of unconcern, doubt and outright denial. What follows is an examination of these reactions, especially those of the doubters and deniers. The first part of the paper examines the Quranic evidence in the light of pre-Islamic Near Eastern traditions with a view to determining the religious background of these unbelievers. The second part tries to relate them to intellectual currents inside and outside Arabia.

(a)   *Unconcern*

Though the unbelievers in the Quran are often depicted as doubting or denying the resurrection, it is important to note that sometimes they are described simply as not worried by it. In sura 70:6 f. God says of the punishment ahead that the infidels "see it as far away (*baʿīd*) and We see it as close (*qarīb*)". Apparently, these infidels believed in the resurrection without regarding it as imminent. The passage could of course mean that they saw it as *baʿīd* in the sense of | implausible (as in 50:3); this is the position favoured by the exegetes. But God could hardly have replied that the punishment was *qarīb* in the sense of plausible, unless He was being sarcastic.[1] Arberry, Paret and Yusuf Ali all understand

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1   The exegetes usually construe *qarīb* as meaning *kāʾin* here: thus Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, ed. ʿA.M. Shiḥāta (Beirut, 2002), iv, 436; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Beirut, 1988), *juzʾ* xxix, 73; al-Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*, ed. B. Topaloğlu et al. (Istanbul, 2005–2010), xvi, 95 (claiming that everything *kāʾin* is *qarīb*). According to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *qarīb* here means easy or not impossible (*al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, Tehran, 1413, xxx, 125).

qarīb and *baʿīd* in a temporal sense in their translations, and this is also what the context suggests. The first five verses of the sura tell us that someone has asked about the punishment and that it cannot be averted, [but] that the angels and the spirit ascend to Him in a day, the measure of which is 50,000 years, so one should be patient (70:1–5). If 50,000 years are a mere day to God, it is not surprising that things may appear distant to humans even though they are actually close in terms of God's intentions. The message is that we should not lose sight of the judgement ahead even though it does not seem to be imminent. It is also with a view to explaining why God seems to be slow about His promise that 2 Peter 3:8 informs us that one day with the Lord is like a thousand years.

We may take it, then, that there were infidels who believed in the day of judgement without paying much attention to it. Other passages of the Quran are compatible with this interpretation. Those who break God's covenant in 13:25 f. are charged with simply liking this world better than the next; and those who are pleased with the present life rather than hoping to meet God are just heedless of His signs (10:7); indeed, we are told, most people only know "an outward portion of the present life and are heedless of the hereafter" (30:6 f.). That is what doomsday preachers normally find to be the case even when belief in the punishment ahead is universal.

Some unbelievers seem to be heedless for a somewhat unusual reason, however: they are sure that they will be saved. Thus a parable has a wealthy man go into his garden, where he first expresses disbelief in the day of judgement and then adds that "if I am [really] to be returned to my Lord, I will surely find something better there in exchange" (18:35 f.). This man is wavering between two positions, and in so far as he believes in the day of judgement, he is convinced that paradise awaits him. This conviction is also condemned in 41:50, on the ungrateful person in general, and again in connection with the Jews: an evil generation of Israelites were convinced that they would be forgiven (7:169), and the Jews in the Medinese sura 2:80 were convinced that they would only be punished for "a limited number of days".[2] Presumably they saw themselves as saved by the merits of their forefathers Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac: the Quran explicitly mentions these patriarchs (and also Jacob) in its condemnation of the doctrine that their merit can help later generations (2:133 f., 140 f.).

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2 For the Rabbinic view that Gehenna is of limited duration, see S.P. Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD, 2009), 144 f.

(b)   *Doubts and Denials*

More commonly, however, the *mushrikūn* are depicted as doubting or denying the reality of the day of judgement, or even of the afterlife altogether. They are quoted as asking in a tone of disbelief whether they would really be raised up again (*mabʿūthūn*) or become a new creation (*khalq jadīd*) when their bodies had disintegrated: "when we are dead and dust and bones, shall we be raised up again, and our forefathers too (*wa-abāʾunā ʾl-awwalūn*)?" (37:16 f.; similarly 13:5; 17:49, 98; cf. also 50:3); "when we die and become dust and bones, will we be judged?" (37:53); "who can give life to decomposed bones?" (36:78); "who will cause us to return?" When the Messenger replies, "He who first created you", they shake their heads and ask when that might be (17:51). "Does man think that We cannot assemble his bones?" (75:3), God retorts, telling them that "if you are in doubt (*fī raybin*) about the resurrection (*al-baʿth*), [remember that] We created you from dust ..." (22:5). It was thanks to Iblīs that those who were in doubt (*fī shakkin*) about the afterlife were distinguished from those who believed in it (34:21). The wealthy man who goes into his garden says that "I do not think that this will ever perish, nor do I think that the hour is coming (*qāʾima*)", before expressing his conviction that he would do well if the hour really came (18:35 f.; similarly 41:50).

It is not always clear whether those who ask the doubting questions are doubters or deniers, but many other passages present the opponents as categorically denying the resurrection and judgement, and the afterlife altogether. "The unbelievers say, 'the hour will not come to us'" (34:3). "They deny the hour" (25:11). They "do not believe in the hereafter" (*lā yuʾminūna biʾl-ākhira*) (34:8; cf. 6:150; 7:45; 16:60; 17:45; 23:74; 27:4; 53:27). They would ridicule the idea of the second creation (34:7) and declare outright that "there is nothing but our life down here, we will not be resurrected" (*in hiya illā ḥayātunā ʾl-dunyā wa-mā naḥnu bi-mabʿūthīn*) (6:29). Unbelievers in past nations are credited with the same stance: Pharaoh and his hosts conjectured (*ẓannū*) that they would not return to God (28:39). ʿĀd told Hūd that they would not be punished (26:138). An unnamed past nation, perhaps also ʿĀd, "denied the encounter of the hereafter (*liqāʾ al-ākhira*)", declaring that they would not be resurrected (lit. brought out) after having been turned into dust and bones and that "there is nothing but our present life (*in hiya illā ḥayātunā ʾl-dunyā*), we die and we live, and we shall not be raised up again" (23:33–37). The Messenger's contemporaries similarly said, "there is nothing apart from our present life. We die and we live, and nothing but time (*al-dahr*) destroys us" (45:24). The Quran repeatedly assigns the deniers of the afterlife to hell, on one occasion remarking that "this is the hell that the sinners deny (*yukadhdhibu bihā ʾl-mujrimūn*)" (55:43). Those who are sent to hell will explain that they were sent there because they did not pray

or feed the indigent, but "waded in along with the waders" (*kunnā nakhūḍu ma'a 'l-khā'iḍīn*, on which more below), and "used to deny the day of judgement (*kunnā nukadhdhibu bi-yawm al-dīn*)" (74:43–46). "How can you still deny the judgement?" (*mā yukadhdhibuka ba'du bi'l-dīn*), another passage asks (95:7; cf. 82:9). The Quran also shows us a scene, set in the future, of people in paradise chatting as they pass the cup around. One of the blessed tells of how he had a friend who did not believe in the resurrection, or at least had doubts about it: "when we die and become dust and bones, will we [really] be judged

448   (*madīnūn*)?", | this friend would ask. Looking down, the speaker now sees his friend in hell and marvels at the fact that but for the grace of God he would have gone the same way. "So will we [really] not die more than our first death and will we [really] not be punished?" (*a-fa-mā naḥnu bi-mayyitīna illā mawtatanā 'l-ūlā wa-mā naḥnu bi-mu'adhdhabīna*?), someone asks in the next line, perhaps the speaker or the people he has been talking to, but it sounds like the Messenger's own sarcastic question (37:45, 51–59).

In short, the unbelievers in the Meccan suras are depicted now as believing in the resurrection without paying much attention to it, now as doubting it, and now as denying it outright, rejecting the very idea of life after death. Their emphasis on the impossibility of restoring decomposed bodies could be taken to mean that some of them believed in a spiritual afterlife, but there are no polemics against this idea, nor against other forms of afterlife such as reincarnation. In so far as one can tell, the disagreement is never over the form that life after death will take, only about its reality. The choice is between bodily resurrection and no afterlife at all.

(c)   *Polemical Exaggeration?*

If we accept that some *mushrikūn* were simply unconcerned about the resurrection, could the doubters and deniers be mere caricatures with which the Messenger hoped to shake his audience out of its indifference? The answer surely has to be no. For one thing, doomsday preachers do not normally accuse their audience of doubting or denying the reality of the day of judgement, let alone the afterlife altogether, when all they are guilty of is ignoring it in their daily lives. For another, the Messenger devotes a great deal of attention to proving that a "new creation" is within God's ability, and indeed bound to come about, showing that disbelief in this tenet was a serious problem to him. One might perhaps wonder whether polemical exaggeration is at work when the audience is presented as denying the afterlife in categorical terms rather than simply doubting it, for in sura 45 the deniers seemingly turn into mere doubters as we go along. After introducing the hardliners who categorically rule out the existence of any form of afterlife and classifying their view as mere conjec-

ture (*in hum illā yaẓunnūna*) (45:24), the sura tells of how every community (*umma*) will be judged and how the unbelievers will be reminded of their past behaviour: "When it was said that the promise/threat of God is true and that there is no doubt about the hour, you would say 'We do not know what the hour is, we are just conjecturing and we are not convinced'" (*in naẓunnu illa ẓannan wa-mā naḥnu bi-mustayqnīna*) (45:32). At first sight the categorical deniers are now depicted as mere doubters. But we are not to take it that they actually declared themselves to be engaging in conjecture back in their days on earth; rather, the Messenger is making them voice his own evaluation of their doctrine as mere conjecture, by which he means fallible human reasoning rather than divine revelation. "They conjectured (*ẓannū*) that they would not return to Us", as God says of Pharaoh and his troops (28:39). "They have no knowledge about it, they are just following conjecture (*al-ẓann*)" (53:28), as another sura says of believers in female angels who deny the resurrection. When the wealthy man in the parable says, "I do not think (*mā aẓunnu*) that this will ever perish, nor do I think (*wa-mā aẓunnu*) | that the Hour is coming" (18:35 f.; cf. 41:50), the choice of verb is doubtless also meant to convey the arbitrary and uncertain basis of his convictions. But this man is in fact presented as a doubter, too, for he is willing to contemplate the possibility of a return to God; the same is true of his double in 41:50. He and his double are probably exemplifying the two main attitudes to the day of judgement current among the Messenger's opponents: either they denied it or else they were sure they would be saved. At all events, we may take it that the deniers were real. We need not, of course, assume that they formed a separate group from the doubters, or for that matter from those who were simply heedless; many may have wavered between acceptance, doubt and denial. But the whole spectrum of attitudes must in fact have been represented.

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Religious Background

What kind of religious community or world view did the doubters and deniers represent? They are repeatedly identified as polytheists (*mushrikūn*). Thus sura 41:6 f. refers to the *mushrikūn* who do not give alms or believe in the afterlife. Sura 6, a sustained attack on *shirk*, speaks of "those who do not believe in the afterlife, holding others to be equal to their lord" (*lā yu'minūna bi'l-ākhira wa-hum bi-rabbihim yaʿdilūna*) (6:150). When mockers ask the Messenger whether they and their fathers will be raised up again, the response is yes indeed, and the narrative proceeds to illustrate how the wrongdoers, their spouses and "that which they worshipped" will be gathered (37:16, 22). "Shall we give up our gods for a mad poet?", the unbelievers ask later in the same sura (37:36), to be

reminded of the reality of paradise and told of the man in paradise who saw
his friend suffer in hell for his inability to believe that he would be judged after
death (37:51 ff.). In sura 45 it is the people who have chosen protectors apart
from God (45:10) who are later said to elevate their own fancy into gods (45:23)
and to hold that all we have is this life, time being all that kills us (45:24), later
to be reminded of how they used to reject the resurrection in favour of mere
conjecture (45:32). Sura 53 explicitly tells us that "those who do not believe
in the hereafter (*lā yuʾminūna biʾl-ākhira*) name the angels by female names"
(53:27), presumably with reference to al-Lāt, Manāt and al-ʿUzzā, mentioned
earlier in the same sura. In line with this, when Joseph, here typifying the
Messenger,[3] tells his companions in prison that "I have forsaken the religion
of a people who do not believe in God and who deny the hereafter" (12:37),
this is immediately followed by a (much longer) denunciation of the evils of
attributing partners to God (12:38–40).

The Islamic tradition identifies the devotees of al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzā and Manāt
as the polytheist Quraysh, and modern scholars usually agree. But the Quranic
mushrikūn were not really polytheists, except from the Messenger's point of
view. It is clear from his own description of them that they were monotheists of
the inclusive type (also called monists), that is to say they believed in one God
and saw the lesser gods, also called angels, as manifestations of Him rather |
than as false deities who had to be renounced in His favour.[4] They may still
have been pagans in the sense of not being Jews or Christians, but there were
too many gradations between Bible-based monotheism and gentile paganism
in Late Antiquity for this to tell us very much.

For a more nuanced picture we may begin by noting that the Messenger's
opponents use an argument of pagan, more precisely Greek and Roman, ori-
gin against the doctrine of the resurrection. "Shall we point you to a man who
will tell you that when you have been completely torn apart (*muzziqtum kulla
mumazzaqin*), you will [be raised] in a new creation?", the deniers would mock-
ingly ask, adding, "Has he mendaciously ascribed a falsehood to God or are
there demons (*jinnatun*) in him?" (34:7 f.). The problem of bodies torn apart,
i.e. by wild animals, was first raised by Greek and Roman pagans against the
Christians; later it was also used by Christian believers in a spiritual resurrec-

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3 Cf. J. Witztum, "The Syriac milieu of the Qurʾān: the recasting of Biblical narratives", PhD
   dissertation, Princeton University, 2011, 248 ff.

4 Thus P. Crone, "The Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans: God and the Lesser Deities", *Arabica* 57,
   2010, 151–200 [Ed.: included as article 3 in the present volume], in agreement with G.R. Hawt-
   ing, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam* (Cambridge, 1999), esp. ch. 2, but taking
   the veneration of gods/angels more literally than he is inclined to do.

tion body against adherents of the view that we would get our very own fleshy bodies back. Apparently, the sheer dispersal of the body was seen as a problem, but a body torn up by wild animals posed the further difficulty that it had been eaten and so passed into other bodies. Athenagoras (d. 190) responded that God had the ability "to separate that which has been broken up and distributed among a multitude of animals of all kinds".[5] God could restore dead bodies because He had created them in the first place, he said, formulating an argument which came to be widely repeated: the creation guaranteed the resurrection.[6] Tatian the Assyrian (d. 180) held that whether he was obliterated by burning, dispersed through rivers and seas, or "torn in pieces by wild beasts", he would be laid up in God's storehouse.[7] Theodoret, writing in Syria around 460, assured sceptics that God could reassemble the body even after it had become decomposed, turned into dust and been scattered in all directions, in rivers, in seas, among birds of prey, or wild beasts, in fire or in water; it was easier to renovate something that already existed than to create it out of nothing.[8] When the Zoroastrians began to stress that the renovation would give us our own bodies back, they too had to explain how it was possible to reassemble bodies which had been torn apart by dogs, birds, wolves and vultures, a particularly pressing problem to them in view of their funerary customs; like the Christians, they appealed to the fact that God had created the bodies in the first place: it was easier to repair | something than to build it anew, as they often said.[9] Presumably they had picked up the argument from the Christians. "If you do not believe what I say, consider that man is first created from a drop …", the Christian catholicus Babai reportedly told the Sasanian king Jāmāsp (496–498), here

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5   Athenagoras, *De resurrectione*, 3, 3; cf. L.W. Barnard, "Athenagoras: De Resurrectione. The background and theology of a second century treatise on the resurrection", *Studia Theologica* 30, 1976, 1–42, esp. 10; H. Chadwick, "Origen, Celsus, and the resurrection of the body", *Harvard Theological Review* 41, 1948, 89. For the problem of wild animals and chain consumption, see also C.W. Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body* (New York, 1995), 32 f., 42 f., 55 f., 61, 63, 75, 80.

6   Athenagoras, *De resurrectione*, 3, 1; cf. Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 19; Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolycum*, i, 8. For the Jews, see *Babylonian Talmud* (hereafter *BT*), Sanhedrin 91a: "if He can fashion [man] from water [i.e. sperm], surely he can do so from clay".

7   *Oratio* 6, cited in Barnard, "Athenagoras", 21.

8   Theodoret, *On Providence*, tr. T. Halton (New York, 1988), 9:35, 37.

9   *Anthologie de Zādspram*, ed. and tr. Ph. Gignoux and A. Tafazzoli (Paris, 1993), 34, 3 ff.; cf. M. Molé, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie dans l'Iran ancien* (Paris, 1963), 113 ff. (with text and translation of numerous passages); S. Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation* (London, 1994), 33, with further references. For the context, see P. Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge, 2012), ch. 15.

assumed not to believe in bodily resurrection.[10] To the Messenger, too, the creation proved the resurrection (cf. 17:51; 36:77; 86:5 f.). "O people, if you are in doubt about the resurrection, [consider that] We created you of dust, then of a sperm-drop, then of a blood-clot" (22:5), as God says in the Quran.

Two points are clear from this. First, pagans though the Messenger's opponents may have been, they were not pagans of a hitherto isolated kind now being exposed to the doctrine of the resurrection for the first time. The nonexistence of the afterlife is a fully articulated doctrine to them, not simply an inherited assumption that had never previously been in need of defence; and this shift cannot be due to the Messenger himself, since he is still having a hard time gaining a hearing for himself in these suras. Like the Messenger, his opponents are drawing on a polemical armoury built up by participants in the debate about the resurrection outside the peninsula. Both sides, in other words, are contributing to a debate that had by then been going on for a long time in the Near East. Most Islamicists probably envisage the debate in question as closed by the victory of Christianity so that the Quranic deniers of the afterlife must have been marginal people cut off from developments in the wider world. But deniers of the resurrection, and of the afterlife altogether, never disappeared from the Near East, though their numbers certainly shrank. Indeed, as pagans they came to be rare outside Arabia. As will be seen, however, they lived on as doubters and deniers within the ranks of the Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians.

Secondly, the Messenger's opponents were not just monotheists, but also believers in the same God as the Messenger, the God of the Biblical tradition.[11] For having highlighted the problem posed by bodies torn apart, they proceed to ask whether the Messenger is mendaciously (or, as we would say, deliberately) ascribing false claims to God or just suffering from demonic possession (*aftarā ʿalā ʾllāhi kadhiban am bihi jinnatun*, 34:8; similarly the hardliners in the past nation in 23:38; cf. also 42:24): they could not have found the Messenger's claims about the resurrection offensive to *their* God, let alone accused the Messenger of fathering falsehoods on this deity, if he had not been talking about the same God.

The Messenger frequently accuses his opponents in their turn of *iftirāʾ ʿalā ʾllāh*: the implication is that he too recognized their God as his own.[12] | Against this it may be argued that in 20:61 Moses accuses Pharaoh and his sorcerers

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10   A. Scher (ed. and tr.), "Histoire Nestorienne", part 2/1, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, ed. R. Graffin and F. Nau, vii (Paris, 1911), 130.

11   Cf. Crone, "God and the lesser deities".

12   Cf. Crone, "God and the lesser deities", 153 f., with attestations.

of *iftirā' 'alā 'llāh*, even though Pharaoh elsewhere makes it quite clear that he does not believe in Moses' God: he identifies himself as the one and only deity (26:23–29; 28:38; 79:24; cf. 20:49). But the presentation of Pharaoh as a self-deifier (rooted in the rabbinic tradition)[13] coexists with Pharaoh as a polytheist ascribing partners to God: thus a believer from among Pharaoh's household or people (*āl*) asks his people whether they "call upon me to be ungrateful to God and associate with Him that of which I have no knowledge?" (40:38, 42, 45); and Pharaoh's counsellors ask Pharaoh whether he will "allow Moses and his people to spread corruption in the earth and abandon you and your gods" (7:127). There is in fact no contradiction between the two presentations from a Quranic point of view, for Pharaoh's self-deification lay in the elevation of his own all too human reasoning and desires to a more authoritative status than God's words; the Messenger's own opponents are similarly accused of deifying their own arbitrary inclinations (25:43; 45:23); and a Medinese passage accuses the Jews and Christians of deifying their rabbis and monks (9:31; cf. 3:64). In short, anything allowed to override God's words (as understood by the Messenger) was a false deity.[14] This is why Pharaoh was both a self-deifier and a polytheist.

The Messenger's opponents never react with accusations of *iftirā'* or other signs of disbelief when the Messenger identifies Allāh as the God of Abraham, Moses or Jesus, or tells Biblical or para-Biblical stories about Him; nor does the Messenger attack or distance himself from the God of the *mushrikūn*, only from the partners they ascribe to Him. Sura 109 could be read as an exception. Here he declares that "I do not worship what you (pl.) worship, and you do not worship what I worship; I will not worship what you worship, nor will you worship what I worship. You have your religion and I mine". But the disputed objects of worship are presumably the lesser beings. "Have you come to tell us that we should worship God alone (*Allāha waḥdahu*) and leave off that which our fathers worshipped?", as 'Ād asked Hūd (7:70), confirming that there was no disagreement about God, only about the partners.

Like the Messenger, then, the *mushrikūn* believed in the God of Abraham, Moses and Jesus. However we are to envisage them, they must have been exposed to some kind of Judaism and/or Christianity for a long time before their disagreement with the Messenger, for they could hardly have come to associate the Biblical God with lesser deities/angels of local origin such as al-Lāt, Manāt and al-'Uzzā within a single generation. Like the Muslims, too, they were

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13   Cf. H. Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran* (Gräfenhainichen, n.d. [preface dated 1931]), 268 f.

14   V. Comerro, "Esdras est-il le fils de Dieu?", *Arabica* 52, 2005, 170; cf. also Hawting, *Idolatry*, 51.

perhaps in the habit of praying for forgiveness for their sins (*allāhumma igh-fir li-* ..., as a profusion of early Arabic inscriptions and graffiti say),[15] for the Quran explains that "God would not punish them as long as you were among them (*wa-anta fīhim*), nor would he punish them while they | were praying for forgiveness (*wa-hum yastaghfirūna*)" (8:33). Apparently, it was the Messenger's presence among them, coupled with their own prayers for forgiveness, that had protected them for so long. This interpretation runs into trouble with the fact that the Messenger elsewhere tells his audience to ask for forgiveness and repent (11:3), and that he presents his predecessors sent to the vanished nations as doing the same (11:52, 61, 90; 27:46), suggesting that he did not envisage prayers for forgiveness as part of the religious repertoire of his opponents. If so, the only solution is to take *wa-hum yastaghfirūnā* to indicate a future possibility: God would not destroy the unbelievers as long as they *might* pray for forgiveness.[16] But it has to be said that this is not what a *ḥāl*-clause normally suggests. It is noteworthy that the believers' own prayers for forgiveness seem to have included the so-called polytheists, for Abraham is envisaged as praying for forgiveness for himself, his idolatrous parents and the believers (14:41; 26:86), while a Medinese sura prohibits the Prophet and the believers from praying for forgiveness for the *mushrikūn* even when they are close kin: the fact that Abraham had prayed for forgiveness for his father was now a problem, and we are assured that once God's promise had become clear to him, he dissociated himself from him (9:113 f.). The Quran identifies the *mushrikūn* as the Messenger's own people (43:57). One would infer that he and they alike had grown up as members of a religious community characterized by beliefs drawn from the Biblical or para-Biblical tradition: it was only when God's promise became clear to the Messenger that he too dissociated from his kinsfolk.

(a)   *Upright Ancestors*

Other passages, too, suggest that the Messenger and his unbelieving people both hailed from a monotheist community. In a review of the reasons the unbelievers might have for rejecting the Messenger's message, God asks whether the unbelievers have not pondered the *qawl* (the Quranic statement, God's words) or whether "anything has come to them which did not come to their ancient fathers?" (*am jāʾahum mā lam yaʾti abāʾahum al-awwalīna*) (23:68). God's point

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15   Cf. R. Hoyland, "The content and context of early Arabic inscriptions", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 21, 1997, 79 f.

16   Some exegetes think that God may be referring to the Muslims among the infidels (cf. 48:25), but the passage says "while they are praying for forgiveness", not "while there are people among them who are praying for forgiveness".

is that nothing the unbelievers were hearing from the Messenger departed from what their ancestors had heard. Some exegetes found this difficult to accept. According to them, *am* ("or") could be understood as *bal*, making God affirm that what had come to unbelievers was indeed new.[17] But the list continues the questions with the same *am*: "or don't they know the Messenger … or do they say there is a *jinn* in him? … or are you (sg.) asking them for tribute?" (23:69–72). All the questions are about the unbelievers' bad excuses; the list is meant to incriminate them, not to explain why it might indeed be difficult for them to believe: those who do not believe in the hereafter have deviated from the path, as it concludes (23:74). The meaning is that the Messenger did not bring them anything that had not already been brought to | their ancestors. As Muqātil explains, the warning had come to the fathers and ancient forefathers of the Meccans.[18] The point of significance here is that the ancestors are envisaged as having believed in this warning: for if they too had rejected it, there would not have been much point in invoking them in legitimation of the Messenger's message here. The "ancient fathers" could be Abraham and his descendants,[19] or they could be ancestors envisaged as followers of Abraham's religion. Either way, the Messenger's opponents must have recognized them as their own, since there would not otherwise have been much point in adducing them. The passage establishes that what the Messenger preached was ancestral religion and that accordingly the opponents were in error when they rejected it. It does not, of course, follow that what the Messenger preached was actually what the ancestors had believed. Presenting oneself as upholding the ancestral truth from which the opponents have departed is a well-known polemical ploy, but one can only use that ploy when there is a genuine overlap between the ancestral tradition and the new preaching, as for example when both sides are laying claim to the same ancestral heritage. The Christians could claim that the pagan Greeks had themselves believed in life after death on the basis of Plato and Pythagoras,[20] but they could not present their teaching as such as the true meaning of the philosophical tradition, only as the true meaning of what the Jewish prophets had preached. If the Messenger could claim that nothing he said departed from what the ancestors had believed, the ancestral tradition

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17   Ṭabarī, ad loc. (*juzʾ* xviii, 41), attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* (Beirut, n.d.), iii, 196.

18   Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, iii, 161; similarly Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, x, 47. Both Ṭabarī and Zamakhsharī have this interpretation too.

19   Cf. Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, iii, 196 f., identifying the ancestors as Ismail, ʿAdnān and Qaḥṭān and citing a *ḥadīth* on Muḍar, Rabīʿa and others as Muslims.

20   Cf. Nemesius and Theodoret in part II of this article.

must have contained significant elements that allowed him to manipulate it to his advantage. The most obvious reading of the passage is that it affords us a brief glimpse of the religious community that the Messenger and his opponents had shared.

The same is true of two passages in which the Messenger accepts the existence of upright believers in the generation(s) immediately before him. In the one he promises paradise to those who fulfil the covenant of God, fear the reckoning, and otherwise do as they should, along with the righteous ones from among their *fathers* (*man ṣalaḥa min abāʾihim*), and their spouses and offspring (13:23). In the other he prays that God will admit the believers and their righteous *fathers*, spouses and offspring to paradise (40:8). The passages are formulaic and no fathers appear in the accounts of paradise, only spouses and offspring (36:56; 43:70; 52:21), and there were clearly fathers who could not be admitted. Those who counted as righteous, however, must have formed part of the shared monotheist community.

(b)   *Ancient Fables*

If the *mushrikūn* had grown up as devotees of the Biblical God, the chances are that they had also grown up as believers in the resurrection. In fact, as we have seen, some of them do seem to have believed in it, and even to have considered themselves assured of salvation; and others merely doubted it; doubt may well | have been more prevalent than outright denial. But even of those who denied it outright we are given to understand that they had long been familiar with this doctrine. God says that, "When our signs are recited (*tutlā*) to them, they say, 'We have heard (it before); if we wanted, we could say the like of this; it is nothing but fables of the ancients'" (*asāṭīr al-awwalīn*) (8:31; cf. 68:15). The familiar message they rejected in this manner was, or included, the resurrection: "What, when we have become dust, we and our fathers, shall we be raised from the dead (*a-innā la-mukhrajūna*)? We and our fathers were promised/threatened (*wuʿidnā*) this before, it is nothing but fables of the ancients" (27:67 f.; cf. 23:82 f.). Both the early exegetes and modern scholars have wondered what kind of body of material the unbelievers could have had in mind when they spoke of ancient fables (Biblical stories, legendary history, stories about Persian heroes picked up in al-Ḥīra?),[21] but it is not obvious that the expression meant anything more specific than "old

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21   Cf. R. Paret, *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz* (Stuttgart, 1977), 6:25; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, ed. M. al-Saqqā and others, 2nd printing (Cairo, 1955), i, 300 (*aḥādīth Rustum wa-Isfandiyār*); Ṭabarī, *juzʾ* ix, 231; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, xv, 156.

wives' tales" or old nonsense:[22] they are dismissing the Messenger's message as "an old lie" (*ifk qadīm*), as another sura says (46:11).[23] What is so interesting about these passages is that the Messenger's opponents rejected his message as old nonsense, not as a new kind of delusion. The Messenger is evidently not envisaging that they are hearing about the resurrection for the first time. Rather, he casts them as reacting along the lines of those early Christians of whom we are told in 1 and 2 Clement (*c.* 100) that they are "double-minded" and "doubt in their soul, saying, 'We have heard these things even in the days of our fathers, and behold we have grown old and none of these things have happened to us'".[24]

In the Clement passages the double-minded people have lost faith in the things they heard in the days of their fathers, but the fathers themselves were not apparently doubters. When the *mushrikūn* are quoted as saying, "We and our fathers were promised/threatened this before", it is unclear whether both generations or just the sons lacked faith in the resurrection. The simplest reading is that both fathers and sons were doubters, but there is not a single explicit statement to this effect. The Quran frequently says of the *mushrikūn* that the sons are following in the footsteps of their erring fathers, but the reference is to *shirk* (6:148; 7:70 f., 172 f.; 11:62, 87, 109; 12:40; 14:10; 16:35; 18:5; 25:17 f.; 34:43; 37:69 f.; 43:22–24; 53:23: cf. also 10:78; 18:4 f.; 21:53; 26:70–76) and to wrong custom (2:168–170; 5:103 f.; 7:28). The unbelievers also invoke their fathers when they reject the messengers sent to them (23:24; cf. 10:78; 28:36 | on the Egyptians) and refuse to follow God's revelation (31:21). But only one passage on the sons following in the footsteps of their fathers could conceivably be understood as a reference to denial of the resurrection on the basis of the context (37:69 f.); and given the number of times that *shirk* is identified as an ancestral error, there is a notable asymmetry here. The simplest explanation would be that the devotees of the lesser beings had generally believed in the resurrection, judgement and afterlife before the Messenger's time; perhaps

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22   *Lughat al-khurāfāt wa'l-turrahāt*, as Abū ʿUbayda explains it (Ṭabarī, *juzʾ* vii, 171, *ad* 6:25); cf. Ṭabarī himself *ad* 23:83 (*juzʾ* xviii, 47), though he does think it refers to things written in books.

23   *Khuluq al-awwalīn* in 26:137 surely means the same, as many exegetes say, though others suggest "habit of the ancients" (cf. Ṭabarī ad loc). Compare Ignatius, "Letter to the Magnesians", in M.W. Holmes (ed. and tr.), *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids, 1999), 8, 1, where he warns the Magnesians against Judaizing, telling them not to be deceived by "the myths of the ancients" (*mytheumasin toi palaoiois*).

24   1 Clement 23, 3; 11 Clement 11, 2 (in Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*), both citing an unidentified prophetic writing condemning such people.

they had even expected the lesser beings to plead for them on the day of judgement, since the Messenger goes out of his way to deny that they could or would.[25] If so, denial of the resurrection and afterlife was a new error.

There is some corroboration of this hypothesis in the vignette depicting "the one who says to his parents, 'Ugh, are you promising/threatening me that I will be resurrected [lit. got out][26] even though generations have passed away before me?' And they [the parents] ask God's help [saying to the son], 'Woe to you, believe! God's promise/threat is true!' But he says, 'It is nothing but fables of the ancients'" (46:17). What is so striking about this passage is that it is the parents who play the role of believers and the son who is cast as an arrogant denier of the resurrection. If the Messenger had introduced the doctrine of the resurrection to pagans who had been holding out against this doctrine in opposition to outsiders trying to introduce it, it should obviously have been the older generation that typified denial of this doctrine while the son should have stood for the young who were willing to break with their parents for the sake of the truth. Again, this is how things are presented in connection with *shirk*: "We have enjoined kindness to parents on man, but if they strive with you (*jāhadaka*) to associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them" (29:8; 31:15). In connection with the resurrection, by contrast, it is the parents who are believers and the son who is an infidel. The denial of the resurrection is described as a new doctrine that was leading the young astray. In line with this, it is a young man that Moses' mysterious companion kills in sura 18, explaining that his parents were believers who would have been grieved by his rebellious unbelief if he had lived (18:74, 80). It is also a son of Noah's who refuses to board the ark when Noah tells him not to be with the unbelievers: he has excessive confidence in his own ability to manage and is duly drowned, causing Noah grief (11:42 f., 45).[27] Believing parents who had unbelieving sons appear to have been a well-known phenomenon in the Messenger's city.

Shortly after listing the reasons the unbelievers may have had for rejecting their Messenger in sura 23:68–70, God declares that those who do not believe in the hereafter are deviating from the path (23:74), and reiterates that

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25   Cf. Hawting, *Idolatry*, 52.

26   For *mukhraj* in the sense of resurrected, compare 7:25; 23:35; 27:67.

27   Discussed in G. Newby, "The drowned son: Midrash and Midrash making in the Qurʾān and Tafsīr", in W.M. Brinner and S.D. Ricks (eds), *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Traditions* (Atlanta, 1986), 29; followed by D. Marshall, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers* (Richmond, Surrey, 1999), 98 f. Both see the episode as expressive of Muḥammad's concern for those who would not heed his message, but the latter are amply represented by Noah's people.

they | would say, "What, when we die and become dust, we and our fathers, shall we be raised from the dead (*a-innā la-mabʿūthūn*)? We and our fathers before us were promised/threatened this before, it is nothing but fables of the ancients" (23:82 f.; cf. 27:67 f.). The Messenger remarks that this was also how the ancients (*al-awwalūn*) responded (23:81), probably with reference to the vanished nations, who are cast as deniers of the resurrection elsewhere in the book (23:33, 37; 26:138), and none of this tells us anything new. But the sequel is interesting. The passage continues by asking a series of questions designed to bring out the absurdity of the unbelievers' position. "Say, To whom does the earth and those in it belong? ... They will say, To God ... Who is the lord of the seven heavens and the lord of the mighty throne? They will say, God ... In whose hands is dominion (*malakūt*) over all things?" Again, their answer will be "God's". "Then how can you be so bewitched?", the concluding line asks in exasperation (23:84–89). The absurdity of the unbelievers' position from the Messenger's point of view lies in the fact that they believe in an omnipotent God, yet deny the resurrection: to the Messenger, the one implied the other. Once again it is clear that the unbelievers believed in the same God as the Messenger. Like him, they think in terms of seven heavens, envisage God as having a throne, and are familiar with the term *malakūt*, and it is in the name of this deity that they deny the resurrection: they will "swear their strongest oath by God that God will never resurrect those who die" (16:38). In short, their denial is made from inside the Biblical or para-Biblical tradition.

(c)   *"The First Death"*

This is confirmed by two unusual expressions used by the *mushrikūn*. We encounter one of them in the claim that "there is nothing apart from our first death (*mawtatunā ʾl-ūlā*)—we shall not be raised up again" (44:35). One would have expected them to say that there was nothing apart from their first life. The problem does not seem to have worried the old exegetes. Al-Zamakhsharī, however, explains that life follows death (in the sense of nonexistence) twice, first when we are born and next when we are resurrected: the unbelievers are saying that only the first death is followed by life, not the second.[28] It sounds far-fetched, and it rests on an interpretation of 2:28 that the unbelievers are unlikely to have shared.[29] Verse 2:28 says, "How can you reject/be ungrateful

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28   Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, iv, 279.

29   This explanation of 2:28 is found already in Muqātil (*Tafsīr*, i, 95 f.), who does not invoke it *ad* 44:35, however.

to (*takfurūna bi-*) God, seeing that you were dead and He then brought you to life, then He will kill you, and then He will bring you to life again, and then you will return to Him?" Here people do indeed start dead, then live, die and undergo resurrection, but the verse is hardly describing the normal life-cycle. More probably, the reference is to God's resurrection of the Israelites who had died when they heard and/or saw Him at Sinai (Q. 2:55 f.; cf. 4:153).[30] Al-Zamakhsharī's explanation of the first death in 44:35 also | fails to account for the fact that twenty verses later the Messenger himself says that the people in paradise "will not taste death there, except the first death" (44:56). The reference must be to the death that they have already died, and this is also how al-Zamakhsharī and others understand it.[31] In other words, our death here on earth is the first death, not the second.

What then is the second death? The expression is not actually used in the Quran, and this is why "the first death" puzzled the exegetes: they understood very well what the unbelievers meant, but not how they were saying it. The idea of a second death appears in pre-Islamic literature in two quite different senses, both referring to the fate of the soul after death. In Plutarch's "On the face of the moon", there is a death which separates the soul from the body and another which separates the mind from the soul. In the second death (again the expression is not actually used) the soul is left behind on the moon, where it eventually dissolves, while its nobler part, the mind, travels on to the sun: the second death is ultimate liberation.[32] In Jewish, Christian, Mandaean and Manichaean writings, by contrast, the second death is ultimate damnation. The expression occurs four times in the Book of Revelation, where we are told, among other things, that "he who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death", and that the lot of sinners "shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death".[33] The expression is quite common in the targums. Here it sometimes means exclusion from the world to come ("they shall die the second death and shall not live in the world to come"), a

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30　　Speyer, *Biblischen Erzählungen*, 298 f.; P. Crone, "Angels versus Humans as Messengers of God", in P. Townsend and M. Vidas (eds), *Revelation, Literature, and Community in Late Antiquity* (Tübingen, 2011) [Ed.: included as article 4 in the present volume], 329, with further references.

31　　Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, iv, 283; Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, xxvii, 254. Similarly, earlier exegetes such as Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, iii, 826; Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, xiii, 315 f.

32　　Plutarch, "On the face which appears in the face of the moon" (*Moralia*, ed. and tr. H. Cherniss and W.C. Hembold, xii, Cambridge, MA, and London, 1957), 943A, 944E ff.

33　　Apocalypse of John 2:11; 21:18; cf. 20:6, 14. My thanks to Caroline Bynum for directing me to this source.

meaning it also has in the post-Quranic *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer*.[34] But at other times it is in the world to come that the wicked will die their second death, and the Targum to Isaiah identifies the second death as Gehenna "where the fire burns all the day", much as does the Book of Revelation.[35] It also means eternal damnation in two Pseudo-Clementine works originally composed in Greek, but preserved only in Ethiopic: in one of them foolish men deny that they will have a second death, not because they deny that there is life after death, but rather because they believe they are destined for immortality.[36] In the other Peter speaks much of his fear of | "the second death".[37] The expression passed into Syriac too, probably via the targums, as it is attested well before the Book of Revelation had been made available in that language. A Christian martyr who died in *c.* 306 told the governor conducting his case that "We are dying for the name of Jesus our Saviour, so that we may be delivered from the second death, which lasts for ever". Aphrahat and Ephrem identify the

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34   *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer*, tr. G. Friedlander (London and New York, 1916), 252 (ch. 34).

35   M. McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (Rome, 1966), 117–125, with full details; P.M. Bogaert, "La 'seconde mort' à l'époque des Tannaim", in A. Théodorides, P. Naster and J. Ries (eds), *Vie et survie dans les civilisations orientales* (Leuven, 1983), 199–207.

36   "Le mystère du jugement des pécheurs", tr. S. Grébaut in "Littérature éthiopienne pseudo-Clémentine", *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 12 (NS 2), 1907, 391; also cited in T. O'Shaughnessy, *Muhammad's Thoughts on Death: A Thematic Study of the Qurʾanic Data* (Leiden, 1969), 25. (My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for calling my attention to O'Shaughnessy's work.)

37   "La seconde venue du Christ et la résurrection des morts", tr. S. Grébaut, "Littérature éthiopienne pseudo-Clémentine", *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 15 (NS 5), 1910, 320 f., 433; partly cited in O'Shaughnessy, *Muhammad's Thoughts on Death*, 25. This Pseudo-Clementine work is the text that contains the complete Apocalypse of Peter, composed before 150 and incompletely preserved in Greek; but the passages on the second death come after the Apocalypse. The Pseudo-Clementine work is not known from elsewhere; its date of composition is uncertain, and so is the date of its translation into Ethiopic; it is not even known whether the translation was made directly from Greek or via intermediaries (thus M. Pesthy, "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy righteousness reacheth unto the clouds", in J.N. Bremmer and I. Czachesz (eds), *The Apocalypse of Peter* (Leuven, 2003), 42; differently O'Shaughnessy, *Muhammad's Thoughts on Death*, 24n, where both Pseudo-Clementines are held to be eighth-century Ethiopian translations of an Arabic work based on the third-century Greek original of the Apocalypse of Peter). One manuscript may date from the 15th or 16th century, the other from the 18th (D.D. Buchholz (ed. and tr.), *Your Eyes Will Be Opened: a Study of the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter* (Atlanta, 1988), 129, 134). For the fate of the sinners in this work, see Pesthy, "Thy mercy", and I.L.E. Ramelli, "Origen, Bardaiṣan, and the origin of universal salvation", *Harvard Theological Review* 102, 2009, 140, 143 f.

second death as condemnation to Gehenna in the final judgement,[38] and this is also what it means in Mandaean and Manichaean usage.[39] The expression "the first death" does not seem to be attested in either Syriac or Aramaic, but it appears in St Augustine,[40] in the sixth-century Oikomenios, who observes in his commentary on the revelation that the first death is physical whereas the second is spiritual, and in the Ethiopian Pseudo-Clementines: sinners die, "that is their first death", we are told; they will die the second death after the resurrection.[41] The Manichaean *Kephalaia* (*c.* 400 AD) similarly explains that there are two deaths and that the first is temporary, whereas the second, "the death in which the souls of sinful men shall die", is eternal.[42] The Quranic unbelievers understood the first and the second death in the same way. What they mean when they say that "there is nothing apart from our first death" is that they will not go to hell because | they will not be resurrected: there is no such thing as a second death or hell and eternal damnation.[43]

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This is confirmed by 40:11, where the unbelievers in hell tell God that now they realize that "twice you have made us die (*amattanā*) and twice you have made us live (*aḥyaytanā*)": they are now suffering the second death in the form

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38   S.P. Brock, "Jewish traditions in Syriac sources", *Journal of Jewish Studies* 30, 1979, 220 f.; Aphrahat, *Demonstrations*, ed. and tr. (Latin) J. Parisot in *Patrologia Syriaca*, ed. R. Graffin, I/1 (Paris, 1894); tr. (English) K. Valavanolickal, Kerala, 2005, nos. VII, 25; VIII, 19; cf. XXII, 15.

39   K. Rudolph, *Gnosis: the Nature and History of Gnosticism* (Edinburgh, 1983), 359; below, note 41.

40   Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 21.3.1, cited in T. O'Shaughnessy, *Muhammad's Thoughts on Death*, 16.

41   Oecumenius [= Oikomenios], *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, tr. J.N. Suggit (Washington, 2006), 11:14, 174; Grébaut (tr.), "La seconde venue du Christ", 320. Regarding the first and second death, both expressions are also used several times in the *Liber Requiei*, an account of Mary's death dating from the fifth century and preserved in full only in Ethiopic, though Georgian and Syriac fragments are also extant. The expressions are only found in the Ethiopic version, where Peter is as central as in the Ethiopian Pseudo-Clementines. See the translation in S. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford, 2002), 321 (pars 56, 57).

42   I. Gardner and S.N.C. Lieu (trs), *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 2004), 202 ff.; cf. W. Sundermann in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Eschatology", 572.

43   The meaning of the first and second death was clear to W. Rudolph, *Die Abhängigkeit des Qorans von Judentum und Christentum* (Stuttgart, 1922), 14; K. Ahrens, "Christliches im Qoran", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 84, 1930, 53; K. Ahrens, "Christliches im Qoran. Eine Nachlese", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 84, 1930, 171; and O'Shaughnessy, *Muhammad's Thoughts on Death*, 14 f.; but none of them pays attention to the fact that the speakers are *mushrikūn*.

of the eternal damnation that they used to deny. Here some exegetes hold the second death to be the punishment of the grave, while others fall back on the interpretation of the Medinese 2:28 that we have already encountered.[44] But in the story of the believer in paradise who saw his friend suffering in hell for doubting or denying the resurrection, the believer and/or other inhabitants of paradise or the Messenger comments: "so will we (really) not die more than our first death and will we (really) not be punished?" (*a-fa-mā naḥnu bi-mayyitīna illa mawtatanā ʾl-ūlā wa-mā naḥnu bi-muʿadhdhabīna?*) (37:58 f.). Once again, the first death is clearly the death we suffer at the end of our lives, and the hapless friend is suffering the second death in hell that the unbelievers denied. In short, the concept of eternal damnation as the second death makes effortless sense of all the passages in which the expression "the first death" occurs.

One would assume that the *mushrikūn* were familiar with the expressions "first death" and "second death" because they had learned them as part of the religious vocabulary of the community in which they had grown up. They are denying the resurrection and eternal damnation in the language in which these doctrines have been taught to them, and in which those close to them presumably continued to speak about them. They are certainly not likely to owe their familiarity with these expressions to the Messenger, for the Messenger barely speaks of the "first death" himself and he never uses the expression "the second death". Of the four passages in which the expression "the first death" occurs, two are put in the unbelievers' mouths (40:11; 44:53), while one appears to turn their own words against them (37:58 f.). In the fourth passage the Messenger himself says that the people of paradise shall not taste death, except for the first death (44:56). But in other accounts he says of the one who enters the fire/Gehenna that "he will neither die there nor live" (87:13; 20:74), or that he will never die there (35:36), or that death will come to him from everywhere, yet he will not die (14:17); rather, he will cry out for death and annihilation (25:13; 43:77; 69:27; 84:11).[45] The Messenger seems to have preferred this image of hell because it emphasized the eternity of the suffering ahead, whereas "the second death" was suggestive of extinction. In short, it is overwhelmingly | his opponents who are presented as using the traditional terminology. One would infer that those who did not believe in eternal damnation continued to deny it in the formulation in which they had learned this doctrine, whereas the Messenger was developing new imagery to express his own view of it.

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44   Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, iii, 707; Ṭabarī, *juzʾ* xiv, 47 f.; Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, xiii, 201; Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, xxvii, 39, the latter with a variant version of death before life and also the simpler solution preferred by some: *hādhā kalām al-kuffār fa-lā yakūnu fīhi ḥujja*.

45   For these and other passages, see O'Shaughnessy, *Muhammad's Thoughts on Death*, 17 ff.

(d)   *"We Die and We Live"*

The second unusual expression used by the *mushrikūn* is "we die and we live" (where one would expect them to reverse the word order). In the guise of an ancient nation they say that "we die and we live, we shall not be raised up again" (23:37); as themselves, they say that "we die and we live, and nothing but time destroys us" (*namūtu wa-naḥyā wa-mā yuhlikunā illā 'l-dahru*) (45:24). Why don't they say "we live and we die"? The word order is not to be understood as an affirmation of belief in reincarnation (though al-Bayḍāwī considers this possibility),[46] for as noted already, this doctrine is not mentioned or combatted in the book.

Some exegetes fall back on the by now familiar idea of death as non-existence before we are born: the unbelievers are saying that they start dead, then they live—and that, they say, is all there is to it.[47] But more commonly the unbelievers are taken to mean that "some of us die and some of us live", or "we die and our children live on"; one generation follows the other.[48] This more popular explanation has the disadvantage of failing to account for the fact that the Quran uses the same word order in the passage in which the unbelievers in hell will admit to God that "twice You have made us die (*amattanā*) and twice You have made us live (*aḥyaytanā*)" (40:11). Again some exegetes fall back on the idea of death as non-existence before birth: the unbelievers are saying that God made them dead before they were born and again when they died, and that He brought them into life after the first "death" and resurrected them after the second. Alternatively, He made them dead when they died and again by subjecting them to the punishment of the grave. But as we have seen, the second death is eternal damnation. In other passages, moreover, God says that the false gods have no power over "death, life and the resurrection" (25:3); "It is He who brings death and gives life" (*wa-annahu huwa amāta wa-aḥyā*) (53:44); and "Blessed be … He who created death and life" (67:1 f.). Here no invocation of either death before life or the punishment of the grave can explain the word order. We seem to have to do with a fixed expression.

As O'Shaughnessy observes, the source of the expression is Deuteronomy 32:39: "I, even I, am He; there is no god besides me. I kill (*'myt*) and I make

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46   al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl* (Beirut, n.d. [originally Cairo 1330]), v, 70, *ad* 45:24, on the grounds that reincarnation is what most idolaters believe in.

47   Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, xiii, 336, with both explanations.

48   Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, iii, 707; Ṭabarī, *juzʾ* xviii, 21; xxv, 151 f.; Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, xxii, 98; xxviii, 268, *ad* 23:37, 45:24; Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, x, 28, *ad* 23:47, holds the former to be the meaning if it was said by dualists and Dahrīs, and the latter to be the meaning if it was said by others. See also G. Tamer, *Zeit und Gott* (Berlin, 2008), 195 ff.

alive (*ʾḥyh*) …".[49] In 1 Samuel 2:6 Hannah echoes that "The Lord kills (*mmyt*) and brings to life" (*mḥyh*); and an Israelite king asks in 2 Kings 5:7, "am I God to kill and to make alive (*lhmyt wlhḥywt*)?" Speaking of God's lifegiving | and life-destroying powers in inverted order had apparently become standard. Why God should have used this word order in His first book is a question we can leave aside, but it proved useful to the Jews when they began to look for proof of the resurrection in their scripture. It now seemed self-evident that God was talking about death and the resurrection, and the Deutero-nomic verse was adduced in support of this doctrine in the Palestinian tar-gums to the Pentateuch: "I am He who causes the living to die in this world and who brings the dead to life in the world to come", as Targum Neophiti paraphrases Deut. 32:39.[50] *Sifre Deuteronomy* marshals the same verse first against those (Jews) who say that there is no authority in heaven, or that there are two authorities in heaven, and next against those who say that God has no power to kill and give life; and it carefully rules out the idea that "I kill and make alive" could be taken to mean that God killed one person and gave life to another.[51] A baraita in the Babylonian Talmud similarly asks, "Could death be for one and life for another, as is customary in the world?", to reply with *Sifre* that the next line of Deuteronomy 32:39, "I wound and I heal", proves that God is talking about one and the same person; "from here there is refutation of those who say, the resurrection of the dead is not from the Bible", it declares. Just as God healed whomever He had wounded, so he would resurrect those He had killed, as the Babylonian rabbi Raba (d. 352) explained.[52]

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49   O'Shaughnessy, *Muhammad's Thoughts on Death*, 26 ff.

50   P.V.M. Flesher, "The theology of the afterlife in the Palestinian Targums to the Pentateuch", in J. Neusner (ed.), *Approaches to Ancient Judaism* 16, 1999, 26 f.; cf. also Wisdom of Solomon 16:13–15, where the odd word order is corrected; cited in Y. Monnickendam, "'I bring death and give life, I wound and heal' (Deut. 32:39): two versions of the polemic on the resurrection of the dead", Hebrew original in *Tarbiz* 76, 2007, 329–351, English translation in *Henoch* 35, 2013, 90–118, note 14 (my thanks to Menahem Kister for drawing my attention to this study and to Dr Monnickendam for allowing me to see the English version before publication).

51   *Sifre Deuteronomy*, tr. R. Hammer (New Haven and London, 1986), 340 (piska 329); also translated in A.F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven* (Boston and Leiden, 2002) (first pub. 1977), 84.

52   Monnickendam, "I bring death and give life", with reference to *Babylonian Talmud*, Pesa-him 68a; Sanhedrin 91b. Cf. also *Ecclesiastes Rabba* 1.4, §2, and parallels, cited in her note 32, where it is accepted that those whom God killed are not those he will bring to life, but only in the sense that those who died lame or blind will return healthy. Mon-

Like the Jewish dissidents confronted by the rabbis, the *mushrikūn* are denying that God kills and makes alive in the word order used by God Himself: they die and they live, and time, not God, is what kills them, they claim in 45:24. The commentators on the Quran may well be right when they take the *mushrikūn* to mean that "some of us die and some of us live", or "we die and our children live on", but one needs to know the Biblical passage to understand why they expressed themselves as they did. One would infer that they had grown up in a community in which proof of the resurrection had been offered in the form of the inverted word order derived from the Bible. Once again we can be reasonably sure that they are not simply using the Messenger's formulations, for although he does occasionally use the Biblical word order, as we have seen, more commonly he corrects it. God instructs him to say that "it is God who gives you life and then kills | you (*yuḥyīkum thumma yumītukum*)" (45:26), and that "it is We who give life and We who bring death (*innā la-naḥnu nuḥyī wa-numītu*)" (15:23); and when Abraham professes that "My Lord is the one who gives life and death", a self-deifying infidel responds that "I am the one who gives life and brings death (*qāla anā uḥyī wa-umītu*)" (2:258). There are many other examples (7:158; 9:116; 10:56; 22:6; 23:80; 40:68; 44:8; 57:2).[53] In short, like the expression "the first death", the inverted word order shows the polytheists to be closer to the Biblical or para-Biblical literature than the Messenger.

It was probably from the para-Biblical literature that the *mushrikūn* knew the Deuteronomic expression. On one occasion they ask for a miracle, to which God responds, "Has a proof (*bayyina*) not come to them (already), (namely) that which is in the ancient scrolls/books (*al-ṣuḥuf al-ūlā*)?" (20:133). In other words, ancient books with probative value were already in circulation, presumably among the polytheists themselves since the response would not otherwise be effective. These books are elsewhere identified as the scrolls of Abraham and Moses (*ṣuḥuf Ibrāhīm wa-Mūsā*) (87:18 f.), and a verse directed against an uncharitable polytheist asks whether he does not know what is in the scrolls of Moses and Abraham: the scrolls showed, among other things, that "it is He who brings death and gives life (*wa-annahu huwa amāta wa-aḥyā*)" (53:44). This does not, of course, suffice to prove that the Deuteronomic phrase was actually used in the scrolls, but it does at least point to them as

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nickendam relates this to the pagan argument, also refuted in one of the two versions of Raba's statement, that the dead and the resurrected person could not be identical.

53   They are discussed, along with related passages, in O'Shaughnessy, *Muhammad's Thoughts on Death*, 27 ff., again without attention to the fact that many of the statements were made by Muḥammad's opponents.

a possible source. They certainly dealt with the resurrection (53:38–42, 47; 87:17–19), which rules out the possibility that the scrolls of Moses were the Pentateuch. They are also quoted as speaking of the resurrection as "the other creation" (*al-nashʾa al-ukhrā*, 53:47), and they, or one of them (the scrolls of Abraham?), apparently also dealt with the vanished nations (53:50–54). Most probably, they were apocalypses.[54]

The concept of damnation as the second death was common to Jews, Christians, Mandaeans and Manichaeans, but Deuteronomy 32:39 points in a Jewish direction. It was the Jews who had to find their proof texts of the resurrection in the Pentateuch.[55] The Mandaeans and Manichaeans (who believed in spiritual immortality) did not accept the Pentateuch as authoritative, and the Christians had splendid proof texts in the Gospels and the Apostles, most obviously the passage in which Jesus confronts the Sadducees who denied the resurrection (Matthew | 23–32; Mark 12:18–27; Luke 20:27–38), but also Paul's long account of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 35–49). Nonetheless, there were Christians who shared the Rabbinic understanding of the passage. Tertullian (d. *c.* 220) uses it to prove that the resurrection would be physical.[56] Origen (d. 254) adduced the fact that the verse was about the resurrection against those to whom it proved that the Old Testament God was cruel.[57] The Pseudo-Clementine Homilies, probably composed in Antioch or Edessa around 300–320, tell us that God kills and makes alive: He kills with His left hand, the evil one, and saves with His

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54   This has been suggested several times before, cf. H. Ben-Shammai, "*Ṣuḥuf* in the Qurʾān—a loan translation for 'Apocalypses'", in H. Ben-Shammai, S. Shaked and S. Stroumsa (eds), *Exchange and Transmission across Cultural Boundaries: Philosophy, Mysticism and Science in the Mediterranean* (*Proceedings of a Workshop in Memory of Prof. Shlomo Pines, the Institute for Advanced Studies, Jerusalem; 28 February–2 March 2005*) (Jerusalem, 2013), 1–15.

55   For what they used, see *Sifre Deuteronomy*, 340 (piska 329), adducing "four sure allusions" to the resurrection, translated in Segal, *Two Powers*, 84 (from the edition of Finkelstein, 379); in Monnickendam, "I bring death and give life" (from the edition of Kahana, 329); cf. also P.V.M. Flesher, "The resurrection of the dead and the sources of the Palestinian Targums to the Pentateuch", in A.J. Avery-Peck and J. Neusner (eds), *Judaism in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 2000), 311–331; McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum*, 4.

56   Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* (Ante-Nicene Christian Library, xv, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson) (Edinburgh, 1870), xxviii, attributing the verse to Isaiah.

57   Origen, *Homilies on Jeremiah*, 1:16 (tr. J.C. Smith, Washington, 1998), 20 f. On Christian and Jewish use of the verse in an anti-dualist vein see also the attestations in Monnickendam, "I bring death and give life", notes 20–21.

right hand, which rejoices in the good deeds of the righteous.[58] Syriac authors also liked the phrase. Ephrem uses it to praise "Him who makes to die and also makes to live", and Babai says of Christ that he makes all things to live "as it is said: I make to die, even I, and I too make alive".[59] None of the above authors, however, use the passage as scriptural proof of the resurrection itself, which is not an issue in these statements. By contrast, Aphrahat (d. *c.* 345), a Christian from the Sasanian side of the border, tells us that it is right for us to fear the second death and that terrible suffering awaits the wicked who do not believe in the resurrection, to conclude (after diverse other points) that the living mouth testifies, "I kill and I make alive".[60] Elsewhere he interprets Paul's statement that "death reigned from Adam to Moses" (Romans 5:14) to mean that Moses proclaimed the resurrection, and cites Deuteronomy 32:39, Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:6, and another Pentateuchal passage used by the rabbis as proof text.[61] Aphrahat represents a Christianity that is both close to the traditions of the rabbis and deeply hostile to Judaism, a combination which has been construed as evidence that the local Jewish and Christian communities were not fully distinct in his time.[62] The deep hostility of the Messenger to the Jews and the fact that he consistently uses arguments with which the Christians had dissociated themselves from Judaism could be taken to suggest that he found himself in a comparable situation.[63]

To this one may add that there does not seem to be a Christian precedent for calling the resurrection the "other creation" (*nash'a ukhrā*), the expression perhaps used in | the scrolls (and often in the Quran), or the "new creation" (*khalq jadīd*), as the unbelievers often call it when they doubt or deny it (13:5; 17:49, 98; 32:10; 34:7; 50:14). The parallel between the creation and the resurrec-

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58   *The Clementine Homilies* (Ante-Nicene Christian Library, xvii, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson) (Edinburgh, 1870), xx, 3.

59   Both cited in O'Shaughnessy, *Muhammad's Thoughts on Death*, 29, cf. also Ephrem's modification of the statement at p. 32.

60   Aphrahat, *Demonstrations*, viii, 19–25. My thanks to Joseph Witztum for alerting me to Aphrahat's use of the passage.

61   Aphrahat, *Demonstrations*, viii, 10; xxii, 1–3. The other passage is Deut. 33:6 ("Let Reuben live, and not die …"), on which see McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum*, 120 f.

62   A.H. Becker, "Beyond the spatial and temporal *Limes*: questioning the 'parting of the ways' outside the Roman Empire", in A.H. Becker and A.Y. Reed (eds), *The Ways that Never Parted* (Tübingen, 2003), 376 f.

63   For the Christian origin of the Messenger's polemics against the Jews, see Ahrens, "Nachlese", 156 ff.; for their Syriac provenance, see Witztum, "Syriac milieu", 271 ff.; cf. also G. Reynolds, *The Qur'ān and Its Biblical Subtext* (London, 2010), 251.

tion was a commonplace in the Christian tradition, of course, as it was to all believers in bodily resurrection;[64] but to the Christians the "second" or "new creation" was Christ's resurrection, which renewed and restored the world.[65] Where we do find the future resurrection as the "new creation" is in 1 Enoch, a Jewish apocalypse read by Jews and Christians alike (and by others too), though both rabbis and churchmen had distanced themselves from it by the sixth century.[66] There can be no doubt, of course, that the Messenger himself is drawing heavily on the Christian tradition as available in Syriac. This appears to be true when he modifies God's statement in Deuteronomy 32:39 or speaks of the sinner in hell as never dying rather than as suffering a second death.[67] But his opponents come across as closer to Judaism than he is, and his consistent recourse to the Syriac tradition should probably be seen as part and parcel of his attempt to reform the community in which he had grown up.

Disputations

According to the Messenger, the deniers of the resurrection were basing themselves on mere conjecture (*in hum illā yaẓunnūna*, 45:24, 32; 53:28; cf. Pharaoh in 28:39); they were elevating their own arbitrary inclination (*hawāʾ*) to divine status (45:23); and they were following their own reason rather than revelation. The Christians had said much the same against the pagans: Plato admitted that he was speaking conjecturally and guessing, there was no truth to his claims,

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64   Cf. Aphrahat in T. O'Shaughnessy, *Creation and the Teaching of the Qurʾān* (Rome, 1985), 73, and part II of this article.

65   They also speak of the first and second creation in the quite different context of the order in which God created the different parts of the world. For Christ's resurrection as the new creation, see 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Athanasius of Alexandria, "De sabbatis et circumcisione", PG XXVIII, 138; Gregory of Nazianzus, "In novam Dominicam", PG XXXVI, 612. The difference is noted in Ahrens, "Christliches im Qoran", 48, where it is nonetheless deemed possible that the Quranic expression is rooted in Paul's. No Syriac precedent is adduced by O'Shaughnessy (*Creation*, ch. 5), who does not note that the "new creation" stands for different things in Christian and Quranic usage.

66   *1 Enoch*, tr. G.W.E. Nickelsburg and J.C. VanderKam (Minneapolis, 2004), 72:1; noted by O'Shaughnessy, *Creation*, 85. For other echoes of this work in the Quran, see P. Crone, "The *Book of Watchers* in the Qurʾān", in Ben-Shammai, Shaked and Stroumsa (eds), *Exchange and Transmission across Cultural Boundaries*, 16–51 [Ed.: included as article 7 in the present volume].

67   O'Shaughnessy, *Muhammad's Thoughts on Death*, chs 3–4.

Theophilus of Antioch declared;[68] the true religion received its proof from prophecy, while philosophy presented its proofs from conjecture, as we read in the Pseudo-Clementines.[69] But what kind of "conjecture" did the Messenger have in mind? Deniers of the resurrection have often been men and women with little or | no education who based themselves on their own common sense. "I swear to God that hell and paradise are nothing more than a way of frightening us, like people saying to children, 'the bogeyman will get you'", as a certain Diego de Barrionuevo told the inquisition in Spain in 1494.[70] "All good and bad is in this world … Well, has anybody ever been taken to that world and then come back?", as a Muslim peasant from a village in the Zagros mountains told an anthropologist in the 1970s. "Maybe they are lying when they say that heaven and hell exist. Nobody has come to life again to tell us how things are there", another villager said. "After death the soul leaves and the body decomposes. Beyond this we don't know", as yet another put it.[71] The Iranian villagers were doubters rather than deniers, but Diego was a hardliner, and his counterparts in the Quran could have denied the resurrection on the basis of the same commonsense thinking. There are suggestions, however, that they moved in a more developed intellectual environment.

It is clear from the Quran that the Messenger was living in a highly disputatious society.[72] Those who did not believe would dispute (*yujādilūna*) with falsehood to weaken the truth and treat God's signs and warnings as a jest (18:56). They would dispute not only about God's signs (40:4; 40:35, 56, 69; cf. also 42:35), but also about God Himself (13:13; 22:3, 8, cf. 19; 31:20) and "the names you have devised, you and your fathers", i.e. the false deities/angels (7:71, of ʿĀd; cf. also 43:58), about ritual (22:67 f.; probably also 6:121), about the truth of something unspecified (8:6), and apparently also about the resurrection (22:3, 5). They would come to listen to the Messenger in order to dispute with

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68   Theophilus of Antioch (d. *c.* 185), *Ad Autolycum*, iii, 16, here with reference to the age of the world. Cf. also I.L.E. Ramelli, *Bardaisan of Edessa* (Piscataway, 2009), 63n.

69   *Clementine Homilies*, xv, 5; cf. *The Clementine Recognitions*, tr. T. Smith (Ante-Nicene Christian Library, iii, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson) (Edinburgh, 1867), viii, 62; N. Kelley, "Problems of knowledge and authority in the Pseudo-Clementine romance of recognitions", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13, 2005, 320, 338 f.

70   J. Edwards, "Religious faith and doubt in late medieval Spain", *Past and Present* 120, 1988, 25.

71   R. Loeffler, *Islam in Practice: Religious Belief in a Persian Village* (Albany, 1988), 192, 198, 222, with others expressing themselves similarly at 68, 82, 206 f., 209; cf. also 276 f.

72   Cf. *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. J.D. McAuliffe (Leiden, 2001–2006), s.v. "Debate and disputation" (McAuliffe).

him (*yujādilūnaka*) and say, "This is nothing but fables of the ancients" (6:25). They would engage the believers in disputation too: the demons (*shayāṭīn*) were always communicating (*yūḥūna*) to their friends that they should dispute with you (pl.), and the believers are warned that if they comply, they will be *mushrikūn* (6:121), though they are also told to dispute with the People of the Book "with that which is better" (*biʾllatī hiya aḥsan*) (16:125; 29:46). Noah's people disputed with Noah (40:4f.), and Noah frequently disputed with them (11:32). Man is declared to be disputatious (18:54), an open disputer (*khaṣīm*) (16:4; 36:77); and a Medinese verse declares that there is to be no *jidāl* during the months [*sic*] of the pilgrimage (2:197).

How technically should we understand the term *jidāl*? The Quran uses the same roots *jdl* and *khṣm* in connection with forensic pleading,[73] advocacy[74] | and legal disputing,[75] so both roots could be used in a technical sense rather than simply for ordinary wrangling, arguing and debating. One wonders whether the *jidāl* in which the *mushrikūn* would engage the believers should be understood as formal disputation.

That the unbelievers were engaging in formal disputations is suggested above all by 43:58: "And they say, Are our gods better or he [Jesus]? But they only mention him to you for the sake of disputation (*jadalan*); indeed, they are a contentious people (*qawmun khaṣimūn*)". Apart from the verse in which the unbelievers come to the Messenger to dispute and dismiss his preaching as fables of the ancients, this is the only time we hear what they actually said when they disputed, and what is so striking is that they are quoted as asking a dilemmatic question. Formal disputations, an extremely popular pastime in the Near East before the rise of Islam, typically began with one person giving another a choice between two positions ("is the sun God or not?"). The opponent would answer, thereby eliciting further questions, often also dilemmatic, and always designed to drive the opponent into a corner from which he could not escape ("If they say x, then we ask ... and if they say y, the absurdity is patent"); victory was achieved when the opponent was reduced to silence.[76]

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73   God has heard the statement of the one who pleads with you (*tujādiluka*) about her husband (58:1), followed by legislation about divorce by *ẓihār*.

74   Abraham pleads with God (*yujādilunā*) for Lot's people (11:74); every soul will plead for itself (*tujādilu ʿan nafsihā*) on the day of judgement (16:111); "you" (sg.), perhaps the Messenger, should not plead on behalf of those who betray their own souls; "you" (now pl.) have pleaded on behalf of such people in this world, but who will plead for them with God or be their *wakīl* (advocate?) on the day of judgement? (4:107, 109).

75   Thus 2:204; 3:44; 4:105; 38:21f., 64; 43:48; 50:28; perhaps also 43:18.

76   Cf. M. Cook, "The origins of *kalām*", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43,

Not all disputations were about theology, and a good disputer could argue for and against anything. People disputed in private and in public, at courts and in the streets, in the Byzantine and in the Sasanian empire, sometimes spontaneously, sometimes by arrangement, and disputations in public drew crowds. Conversely, crowds could draw disputations: when a crowd gathered around the Syrian philosopher Iamblichus (d. 325) and his Alexandrian colleague Alypus, the latter postponed all questioning about philosophy and switched to dialectics, asking, "Tell me, philosopher, is a rich man either unjust or the heir of the unjust, yes or no? For there is no middle way".[77] Skilled participants in such verbal contests would rise to fame, and disputation had a special appeal to the young because it was a game which rewarded cleverness and speed rather than experience and learning. People continued to engage in disputation after the rise of Islam, and the Muslims continued to use the Quranic word *jidāl*, though they also adopted the new word *kalām* for this way of examining a problem, and for the subject matter debated in this manner.

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    Serious thinkers in the pre-Islamic Near East deplored this reduction of complicated questions to simplistic verbal games ("theological noughts and crosses", | as Cook calls them).[78] Basil the Great (d. 379), for example, says that heretics would use dialectical syllogisms such as "Do you worship what you know or what you do not know?" and that each answer would elicit such and such further questions: "the question, therefore, is only put for the sake of dispute".[79] The reaction of the Messenger is similar: "They only mention him [Jesus] to you for the sake of disputation (*jadalan*)" (43:58). Attack being the best form of defence, Basil also informs his readers what opening questions they could use themselves: "The following counter-question may also be put to them: what of the Father did the Only-begotten Son declare, His essence or His power? If His power, then ... If His essence, tell me ...". In the Quran God similarly instructs the Messenger, "Now ask them (*fa ʾstaftihim*) if your lord has daughters while they have sons or did We create the angels female while they

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        1980, 32–43, with further Syriac evidence in J. Tannous, "Between Christology and Kalām? The life and letters of George, Bishop of the Arab Tribes", in G.A. Kiraz (ed.), *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone: Studies in Honor of Sebastian P. Brock* (Piscataway, 2008), 680 ff. For the entire phenomenon, see R. Lim, *Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1995).

77   Lim, *Disputation, Power, and Social Order*, 49.

78   Cook, "Origins of *kalām*", 40.

79   Basil, letter 234 (*PG* 32, 868–872A) in C.G. Bonis, "The problem concerning faith and knowledge, or reason and revelation, as expounded in the letters of St. Basil the Great to Amphilochius of Iconium", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 5, 2004, 38.

were watching?" (37:149 f.). This is not a proper dilemmatic question, however, and there is no further "if they say yes, then say" in this pericope. But as Van Ess notes, there are other passages in which the Quran uses *kalām* structures and assumes "the character of a manual for argumentation".[80] It could have been through participation in disputations that the young had come to dismiss their ancestral doctrines as ancient fables.

The Quran sometimes refers to the unbelievers as engaging in an activity contemptuously dismissed as "wading into" things, explained by the lexicographers as meaning "to enter into false or vain discourse". It was something done in groups, for the Messenger and/or the believer in general is cautioned to refrain from participation when the subject matter is the signs of God: "When you (sg.) see those who wade into our signs (*yakhūḍūna fī āyātinā*), turn away from them until they wade into a different subject (*ḥadīth*). If *al-shayṭān* makes you forget, then do not sit with the wrongdoing people after remembering/being reminded" (6:68). A Medinese sura reminds the believers that "He has sent down to you (pl.) in the book that when you hear the signs of God being disbelieved and ridiculed, you should not sit with them until they wade into a different subject (*ḥadīth*)" (4:140), apparently referring back to 6:68 and glossing "wading" as disbelieving and ridiculing: so far, wading into things could simply mean poking fun at the Messenger's preaching. (One is surprised that his opponents still felt free to mock him by the time of sura 4, but that is another problem.) "To wade into" is not an obvious expression for poking fun, however. The metaphor implies that the participants were venturing into subjects they would have been better advised to leave alone, and one takes it that it was in the course of so doing that they would mock the Messenger's claims, not by the very act of wading into them: the believers were after all permitted to participate when the opponents waded into different subjects. Other passages imply that wading | was a kind of game: "Leave them to wade and play until they meet the day which they have been promised/threatened with" (43:83; 70:42; cf. also 6:91), one passage counsels. "Leave alone those who take their religion to be play and amusement" (6:70), as another passage says shortly after mentioning wading. If one asked the hypocrites (about things they had said), they would say "we were only wading and playing" (thus the Medinese sura, 9:65; cf. 69). The unbelievers would "play in doubt" (*fī shakk yalʿabūna*)" (44:9); the sinful

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80   J. van Ess, "Early development of *kalām*", in G.H.A. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1982), 112 and note 12, citing 2:111, 135, 142; 3:20, 30; 10:15, 20, 38, 50 f. My thanks to Michael Cook for reminding me of this paper.

liar (*affāk athīm*) would treat what he learned of God's signs as a jest (*ittakhad-hahā huzuwan*, 45:9), as other passages say. Though all the references could be to mere joking, irreverent banter and outright teasing, "wading into" things sounds like a contemptuous term for disputing (this is in fact how tradition-alist exegetes understood it, taking the Quran to forbid *kalām*).[81] It was in the course of disputing that the unbelievers would dismiss God's signs as ancient fables (6:25), and also that they would treat God's signs and warnings as a jest (*huzuwan*) (18:56): as in the case of Jesus, they turned deeply serious questions into mere games.

The Subdivisions of the Mushrikūn

So far we have seen that all the *mushrikūn* seem to have grown up as believers in the Biblical God in a community that drew its beliefs from either Judaism or a form of Christianity closer to its Jewish roots than was normally the case, and that some of them had lost their faith in the resurrection, perhaps by participation in disputations of the type popular all over the Near East at the time. It seems that we can classify them in terms of three groups.

The first group is constituted by *mushrikūn* of what we may call the tradi-tional type, probably the vast majority. They believed in God and the lesser beings, saw God as the creator and ruler of this world, and fully accepted that He would resurrect them for judgement. They also believed in messengers, just not in the Messenger of the Quran.[82] Their error from the Messenger's point of view, apart from their rejection of him, lay partly in their ascription of partners to God and partly in their lack of concern with the day of judgement, which they regarded as remote and/or as nothing to be feared because they were bound to be saved.

The second group differed from the first only in that they doubted or denied the resurrection. We may call them the traditional deniers. They too believed in God, the lesser beings, God's creation and government of this world, and also in messengers, but they were not sure that God would resurrect them, and some were adamant that He would not, apparently without believing in any alternative forms of life after death.

The Messenger reacts to both groups with utter incomprehension. He simply cannot understand how they can ascribe partners to God or deny the resurrec-tion even while affirming that God has created them, the heavens and the earth

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81 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, xiii, 25, *ad* 6:68; cf. the title of al-Ashʿarī's *Risālat istiḥsān al-khawḍ fī ʿilm al-kalām*.

82 Cf. Crone, "Angels versus humans".

(29:61; 31:25; 43:9, 87), that He sends down rain (29:63), and that He is the lord of the earth and everything in it, the lord of the seven heavens, the governor | of all things (23:82–89). The bulk of the Quranic polemic against the *mushrikūn* is directed against these two groups. 470

The third group we may call the radical deniers. The Messenger does not usually distinguish them from their traditional counterparts, so that it is hard to draw up their profile, but two passages suggest that they denied God's role as creator and ruler of this world, which the other two groups accepted. The first is the vignette of the rich man who goes into his garden, saying, "I don't think this will ever perish (*mā aẓunnu an tabīda hādhihi abadan*), I don't think that the hour will be coming (*wa-mā aẓunnu 'l-sāʿa qāʾimatan*)" (18:35 f.). Why does he say he does not think that this will *ever* perish? Maybe he is simply speaking hyperbolically: all he means is that it will not perish in his lifetime, as al-Māturīdī suggests.[83] There are in fact numerous passages in the Quran in which "ever" (*abadan*) refers to people's lifetimes, but only because it refers to mortals ("They will not ever be guided", as we read in the same sura, 18:57). The word is meant quite literally in the numerous assurances that people will dwell as immortals in paradise or hell for ever (*khālidīnā fīhā abadan*), and also when Abraham and those with him declare themselves quit of their people, saying that enmity and hatred has appeared between them *abadan*, i.e. it will last for ever (60:4). One would expect the "ever" to be meant in an equally literal vein in the parable of the rich man. In short, one wonders if he is being cast as an eternalist: he does not believe in the resurrection because he does not think that the world will ever end.

If the rich man held that the world would never end, one would expect him also to deny that it had a beginning, meaning that he explained it and everything in it without recourse to the postulate of divine creation. That this is his position is perhaps implied by his friend's response: "Do you deny Him who (*a-kafarta bi'lladhī*) created you of dust, then of a sperm-drop, and who then fashioned you as a man?" (18:37). We are not given the rich man's answer, perhaps because there was no need to spell out the options here: either he would say that God had indeed created him, in which case the creation amounted to proof of the resurrection; or else he would deny that God had created him, in which case he was beyond the pale. That there were some who did indeed take the position beyond the pale is clear from the second piece of evidence, 45:24: "There is nothing but our life down here ... nothing but time destroys us". If these unbelievers held time rather than God to kill

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83   Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, ix, 56.

them, they can hardly have believed that it was God who had created them. To this may be added a third piece of evidence, namely the fact that both they and other deniers of the afterlife are presented as expressing themselves in a reductionist vein. "There is nothing but our life down here", they say; "nothing but time destroys us"; the resurrection is "nothing but fables of the ancients". Reductionism is characteristic of positivists who hold human reasoning to rule out the claims of revelation. What the Messenger brands as mere conjecture and arrogant self-deification was in their view the road to genuine knowledge.

If the radical deniers were eternalists, did they believe in God at all and what could they have made of the lesser beings? As regards God, it is impossible to establish that they denied His existence, and it also seems unlikely. But they do seem to have denied the monotheist conception of Him as the creator, regulator | and judge of this world. Their view of the lesser beings is more difficult to discern, for the Meccan suras practically equate wrongheadedness about the resurrection with *shirk*. It was those who gave the angels female names who denied the afterlife (53:27); and "when God is mentioned on His own (*waḥdahu*), the hearts of those who do not believe in the hereafter contract in disgust (*ishma'azzat*), and when those apart from Him are mentioned, they rejoice" (39:45). These and other passages of the same nature could be directed against the traditional deniers, of course, but there is *shirk* even in the account of the probably eternalist rich man. Here, though, a literalist understanding of *shirk* may strain the evidence. As we have seen, the rich man's friend responds by asking whether the rich man denies the one who had created him. Thereafter he moves on to a statement of his own convictions: "He is God, my Lord, and I do not associate anyone with my Lord (*lā ushriku bi-rabbī aḥadan*)" (18:38). The rich man has not said a word about lesser beings: what or whom has he associated with God? It is hard to see what the answer could be other than his own wilful inclination (*hawā*). The radical deniers of sura 45, who held time to destroy them, are explicitly said to have deified their inclinations: "Have you not seen the one who adopts his own inclination as a god?" (45:23 f.; also 25:43). "*Hawā* is a deified object of worship" (*al-hawā ilāh ma'būd*), as a later scholar remarked.[84] It could be that these radicals were polytheists only in the sense of holding their own reasoning to be as authoritative as God's revelation, or worse, to overrule it, making them self-deifiers after the fashion of Pharaoh. Maybe this is also what is meant in the verse on "those who do not believe in

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84   Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-zīna*, section on *aṣḥāb al-ahwāʾ waʾl-madhāhib*, in ʿA.S. al-Sāmarrāʾī, *al-Ghuluww waʾl-firaq al-ghāliya fī ʾl-ḥaḍāra al-islāmiyya* (Baghdad, 1972), 247, citing an anonymous scholar *ad* 25:43.

the afterlife, making [themselves?] equal with their Lord" (*wa-hum bi-rabbihim ya'dilūn*, 6:150; cf. 27:60, in the form *bal hum qawmun ya'dilūn*). This would make good sense, for if the radical deniers regarded God as irrelevant to this world, it is hard to see what role they could have retained for the lesser beings. But the Quran does not give us a lot of evidence to go by.

The Medinese Suras

The Medinese suras often refer to belief and disbelief in God and the last day, using a phrase which does not appear in the Meccan suras. People are exhorted to believe in God and the last day (2:162; cf. 4:162); the mosques are declared to be for those who believe in God and the last day, and who observe prayer, pay alms and fear God, not for the *mushrikūn* (9:17 ff.); piety is to believe in God and the last day, the angels, books and messengers, as well as to spend (2:177), and anyone who denies (*yukaffiru bi-*) God, his angels, messengers and the last day has gone astray (4:136; cf. 2:285). Those who did not believe in all these things could be taken to be radical deniers, once again in the sense that they rejected the monotheist conception of God. This interpretation suggests itself with particular force in a passage in sura 2 in which we encounter intellectually arrogant people who pretend to believe in God and the last day, but who will not believe "as the fools believe". The Messenger responds that they themselves are fools, perhaps alluding to Psalms 14:1 ("The fool says in his heart: there is no | God"), and adds that "When they meet those who believe, they say, 'We believe'. But when they are alone with their demons (*shayāṭīn*), they say, 'We are with you, we were only joking'" (2:8, 13 f.).[85] We hear of similarly double-minded people identified as People of the Book (5:61, cf. 59), as a group (*ṭāʾifa*) of the People of the Book (3:72), and as a group (*farīq*) of Jews with gentiles (*ummiyyūn*) among them (2:75 f., 78).[86] Once again we seem to be encountering a radical minority, this time consisting of Jews and Arabs alike. In the last three

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85   For their *shayāṭīn*, compare "The *shayāṭīn* are the friends of those who do not believe" (7:27, in the context of Adam and Eve's expulsion from paradise). Such *shayāṭīn* are apparently assumed to lie behind all wrongful acts, cf. 6:68, 121; 22:3 f.

86   Unlike S. Günther (in McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, s.v. "*ummī*"), I cannot see that *ummī* means anything other than "gentile" in the Qurʾān: Arabic *umma* corresponds to Latin *gens*/Greek *ethnos*, and "gentile" fits all the contexts in which *ummī* occurs. Naturally, the term would be largely synomymous with an Arab in Arabia, but what it meant was simply non-Jew. The meaning "illiterate" is doctrinally inspired, assisted by 2:78, where the *ummiyyūn* do not know *al-kitāb*: the continuation that they are just conjecturing (*wa-in hum illā yaẓunnūn*) shows that the sense in which they do not know it is that of ignoring it, not in that of being uneducated or unable to read it.

passages nothing is said about the last day, but 9:29 famously tells us that those People of the Book who do not believe in God and the last day should be fought until they pay *jizya*.

The passage on the intellectually arrogant people apart, the Medinese suras are problematic in that belief in God and the last day is often used as a frozen expression for little more than doing as the Messenger says. "Obey God and the Messenger and the holders of authority and refer matters to God and the Messenger if you believe in God and the last day" (4:59), as a well-known passage commands. Divorced women should not hide what God has created in their wombs "if they believe in God and the last day" (2:228); those guilty of unlawful sexual relations should be flogged without compassion "if you believe in God and the last day" (24:2); and if you asked for exemption from fighting, you would be deemed not to believe in God and the last day (9:44 f.; cf. also 2:232, 264; 4:38, 162). Belief in "God and His messengers" often comes across as similarly frozen.[87] However we are to account for the fact that belief in God and the last day (rather than, say, belief in the prophets and scripture) became a shibboleth for obedience, we have here a case where it is impossible to discern the reality behind the polemics. How literally are we to understand 9:29 on the People of the Book who are to be fought for not believing in God and the last day? Did they deny God or the last day in any sense other than that of refusing to join or properly support the Messenger's party? Without the voice of the opponents themselves one simply cannot tell.

In sum, all we can say about the Medinese suras is that radical deniers seem to be reflected in them too, now apparently represented among both Jews and Arabs. But it is only in the Meccan suras that the resurrection and afterlife are debated in sufficient detail to allow us a glimpse of the diverse positions of the *mushrikūn* on the issue.

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87   Cf. 4:150, 152, where those who "do not believe in (*yukaffiru bi-*) God and His messengers" are at fault for believing in some of them and not in others; 4:171, where People of the Book are told to believe in God and His messengers and not to say "three". Compare also 3:179; 57:19, 21.

The Quranic *Mushrikūn* and the Resurrection (Part II)

II

How are we to explain the resistance to the doctrine of the resurrection and the afterlife described in the Quran? The usual answer is that it reflects Arabian paganism, which does not seem to have included belief in any meaningful form of life after death.[1] The pagan roots of the resistance are universally held to stand revealed in 45:24, where the radical deniers single out time (*al-dahr*) as their killer.[2] This cannot be entirely true. It does indeed seem likely that Arabian paganism played a role in the resistance, but its contribution is not as simple or direct as normally assumed.

Arabian *Dahr*

The radical deniers of 45:24 are assumed to voice the traditional view of Arabian pagans because pre-Islamic poetry speaks a great deal about time (*al-dahr, al-zamān*), often equating it with fate, as the source of human misfortune, including death. As Goodman observes, the emotive thrust of this material is not usually metaphysical, but rather elegiac or grieving.[3] Time is described as a killer, a thief and a destroyer; it bites, strikes and gnaws at its victims, and it

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1 Cf. M.M. Bravmann, "'Life after death' in early Arab conception", in *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam* (Leiden, 1972), ch. 10; J.I. Smith and Y.Y. Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (Albany, 1981), appendix A; R.E. Homerin, "Echoes of a thirsty owl: death and afterlife in pre-Islamic poetry", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44, 1985, 165–184, esp. 167; *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. J.D. McAuliffe (Leiden, 2001–2006), s.v. "Death and the dead" (507 f.).

2 E.g. H. Ringgren, *Studies in Arabian Fatalism* (Uppsala and Wiesbaden, 1955), 59; L.E. Goodman, "Time in Islam", in A.N. Balslev and J. Mohanty (eds), *Religion and Time* (Leiden, 1993), 139; D.E. Madigan, "Themes and Topics", in J.D. McAuliffe (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Qurʾān* (Cambridge, 2006), 89; G. Tamer, *Zeit und Gott* (Berlin, 2008), 193 ff.

3 Goodman, "Time in Islam", 138.

consumes them without ever getting fat, despite its rich pasture.[4] There is no sense that time, as opposed to God, does all this, however. On the contrary, in so far as God is mentioned at all, He and time appear on the same side. Zuhayr, for example, has a line on how he sees nothing enduring or eternal "except the rooted mountains, and the sky, and the countries, and our Lord, and the days that are counted, and the nights".[5] Zuhayr is here identifying himself as an eternalist, but his mountains, sky, countries (the world) and his days and nights (time) appear together with "our Lord" as the three enduring aspects of the cosmos; they constitute the eternal stage on which humans play out their ephemeral lives, flitting across it for their brief performance. There is also poetry which seems to identify God and time, or which casts God as its source, or claims that fate only bites if God permits it or does not protect the victims.[6] Whether this is truly pre-Islamic or not, there is no sense here of time as an alternative to God.

Conversely, 45:24 has none of the vivid imagery in which time is described as a killer, nor are the speakers in that verse expressing a complaint about time or lamenting its power, and there is nothing to suggest that they are equating it with fate. Time to them is simply the passing of time, the onset of old age (*murūr al-ayyām wa'l-layālī, ṭūl ikhtilāf al-layl wa'l-nahār, ṭūl al-ʿumr*, as the exegetes explain).[7] The exegetes nonetheless often use the opportunity to cite a *ḥadīth* telling people not to malign *al-dahr* on the grounds that God is *al-dahr*, as indeed He sometimes is in the poetry; but though al-Ṭabarī reports that an unbeliever had complained about time, occasioning the revelation of this verse, there is nothing in the verse itself to suggest it.[8] Both the poets and the Quranic deniers use the distinctive word *al-dahr*, but it is not the poets' position that the Quran is condemning.[9]

Al-Dahr is an alternative to God in 45:24 because the Messenger's God is a transcendental deity credited with the creation, operation and judgement

4   Ringgren, *Fatalism*, 30 ff.

5   Ringgren, *Fatalism*, 33 f.

6   Ringgren, *Fatalism*, 46 ff.

7   Thus Muqātil, Ṭabarī and Zamakhsharī, for example.

8   Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Beirut, 1988), *juzʾ* xxv, 152, *ad* 45:24 (*wa-dhukira*). The *ḥadīth* is discussed in I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* (Halle, 1889–1890), i, 254; Tamer, *Zeit und Gott*, 199 ff.

9   For passages in which there is better intersection between the poetry and the Quran, see T. Bauer, "The relevance of early Arabic poetry for Qurʾānic studies including observations on *kull* and on Q 22:27, 26:225, and 52:31", in A. Neuwirth, N. Sinai and M. Marx (eds), *The Qurʾān in Context* (Leiden and Boston, 2011), 699–732.

of the cosmos that Zuhayr saw as simply co-existing with Him. The wedge between the | two can be attributed to monotheism, which radically sub-ordinates the one to the other; it was once the likes of Zuhayr were inside the monotheist universe that they had to choose between acceptance of the supremacy of God at the expense of the self-regulating cosmos, and reten-tion of this cosmos at the expense of God. Most of the *mushrikūn* in the Quran would appear to have accepted God's supremacy, but those of 45:24 have opted to retain their self-regulating cosmos. They are straining against a monotheist framework in which the Quran once again suggests that they had grown up: for if the Messenger had appeared as the first monotheist preacher in a pagan environment, the obvious response to him would have been that he had misunderstood the nature of God (as Greek pagans often told the Christians). But there is no debate about the nature of God in the Quran, only about the lesser beings. The Messenger and most of his oppo-nents think of God as the creator of the world and the governor of all things, and it is as such that He is rejected by a few. This fits the fact that the Mes-senger's opponents reject the resurrection as an ancient fable familiar to their fathers, formulating themselves in reductionist terms suggestive of contempt for the believers' position. But above all, as we have seen, their truculent claim that "we die and we live, nothing but time destroys us" is a denial of Deuteronomy 39:32, in which God claims to be the bringer of death and life. Like the rest of the *mushrikūn*, the radical deniers may well have been pagans in the sense that they were not formally Jews or Christians; even if they were or included formal converts, it is reasonable to link their dislike of the doctrine of the resurrection with their pagan heritage. But they were pagans rebelling against a Biblical doctrine from within a community dom-inated by the Biblical tradition, not as outsiders resisting entry into such a community.

They were by no means the only pagans or ex-pagans in the Near East at the time who were trying to hang on to their ancestral understanding of the cosmos. We find them among Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians too. Denial of the resurrection and the afterlife is one of their best attested features, but like their peers in the Quran they sometimes deny God as well, and they too were often contemptuous of religious claims. In short, what we see in the Quran is not the monotheist conquest of an archaic Arabian outpost of paganism, but rather a struggle within a monotheist community over the relationship between God and the natural world. This is not to deny that Arabia at large was an outpost of paganism: it may very well have been, for all that parts of it had been converted to Judaism or Christianity. But the Quran does not give us a window on to Arabia at large, only to one particular locality in it, or two if

we accept the traditional association of the Meccan and Medinese suras with different places; and what we see in that locality (or two) is a conflict attested all over the pre-Islamic Near East. What follows is an attempt to document this claim.

Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrian sources frequently take issue with deniers of the existence of heaven and hell and the resurrection. The earliest evidence is probably the Avestan *Sūdgar Nask*, which only survives in a Pahlavi summary: it deals, among other things, with "the idea of the wicked that there is no heaven, that the renovation does not occur, that the dead are not raised, and that the transformation | cannot occur".[10] It was presumably against such wicked people that the third-century Zoroastrian priest Kirdīr set up monumental inscriptions in which he tells passers-by not to be incredulous of the things beyond, "for they should know for certain that there is a heaven and there is a hell, and he who is virtuous goes forth to heaven and he who is sinful is cast into hell".[11] This Kirdīr could say with certainty because he had been on a heavenly voyage and seen these things for himself. The wicked people were probably eternalists who believed in reincarnation, a doctrine which appears to have been widely accepted in Iran.[12] By the sixth century, however, all kinds of life after death are doubted or denied, and sometimes the gods or God (Ohrmazd) as well. The physician Burzoē, active under Khusraw I (531–570), tells us in his preface to *Kalīla wa-Dimna* that he lost his faith in his ancestral religion, but *tried* not to "deny the awakening and resurrection, reward and punishment".[13] The courtier Vuzurjmihr is credited with a Pahlavi treatise dedicated to the same Khusraw I in which he proclaims himself free of doubts concerning the existence of the

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10 *Dēnkard*, IX, 11:19, ed. and tr. P.B. Sanjana (Bombay, 1874–1928), xvii, 26 f. = 22.

11 D.N. MacKenzie (ed. and tr.), "Kerdir's inscription", in G. Herrmann, *The Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Naqsh-i Rustam* (Iranische Denkmäler, Iranische Felsreliefs, I; Berlin, 1989), 61; P. Gignoux (ed. and tr.), *Les quatre inscriptions du mage Kirdīr* (Paris, 1991), 99.

12 For this type of Zoroastrianism (or, in the view of some, Iranian paganism), see Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge, 2012), part II. Most of the evidence for denial of the resurrection cited here is cited there in ch. 16.

13 Th. Nöldeke (tr.), "Burzōes Einleitung zu dem Buche Kalīla waDimna", *Schriften der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Strassburg* 12, 1912, 18 f. This preface cannot be by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, whose real or alleged scepticism was of a different nature.

gods, paradise, hell and the resurrection, lamenting the fact that the evil spirit had caused the rewards for good deeds and the punishment for sins at the end of times to be hidden from people's thoughts.[14] A Pahlavi advice book says that a man becomes wicked on account of five things, one of which is lack of belief in (the imperishability of) the soul, and assures us in its closing statement that all will be well if we are without doubt about Ohrmazd's creation of the spiritual and terrestrial worlds, the resurrection and the future body.[15] According to a famous account with a long redaction history, the priest Ardā Virāf went on a tour of heaven and hell much like Kirdīr, and saw people in hell who were there because they had repudiated the gods and the religion; they "did not believe in the unseen and did not recognize the religion or the creator Ohrmazd; they doubted the happiness of heaven, the misery of hell and the coming of the resurrection and the final body".[16] The high priest Veh-Shāpuhr, also active under Khusraw I, spoke of *anast-gōwišnīh*, "saying non-existence", which could perhaps be translated as atheism.[17] We do not know what had caused this | loss of faith, but the co-existence of rival belief systems and the popularity of disputations are likely to have played a role in it.

　　However this may be, the doubts and denials continued after the Arab conquest. The *Adab al-ṣaghīr* attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ declares the person who believes in something, even a sorcerer, to be better than the one who believes in nothing and does not hope for an afterlife (*wa-lā yarjū maʿādan*); he also refers to people who had doubts about God and denied Him.[18] A Zoroastrian creed in Pahlavi or Persian reproduced by al-Maqdisī declares that "I am free of doubt concerning the existence of Ohrmazd and of the Amahraspands; I am

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14　M. Nawwābī (ed. and tr.), *Yādgār-i Buzurgmihr* (Tabriz, n.d.; offprint from the Publications of the Faculty of Letters, Tabriz, autumn, year 11 [1960]), nos. 4, 42; also in J.C. Tarapore (ed. and tr.), *Pahlavi Andarz-Nāmak* (Bombay, 1933), 39 f., 43.

15　B.N. Dhabhar (ed. and tr.), *Andarj ī Aōshnari Dānak* (Bombay, 1930), 18 (no. 38), 23.

16　Ph. Gignoux (ed. and tr.), *Le livre d'Ardā Vīrāz* (Paris, 1984), chs. 56, 61.

17　*Mādagdān ī hazār dādastān*, A 34:12, ed. and tr. A. Perikhanian, *The Book of a Thousand Judgements* (*a Sasanian Law-Book*), tr. from Russian by N. Garsoian (Costa Mesa, 1997), 311 f.; ed. and tr. M. Macuch, *Das sasanidische Rechtsbuch "Mātakdān ī Hazār Dātistān"* (*Teil II*) (Wiesbaden, 1981), 216 f., rendered "slander" by Perikhanian (in English translation), and as "utterance of untruth" in Macuch. For the translation as atheism, see *EIr.*, s.v. "Dahrī" (Shaki).

18　Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Āthār*, Beirut 1989, 297 and 295 respectively. For the authorship, see I. Kristó Nagy, "On the authenticity of *al-Adab al-ṣaghīr* attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and problems concerning some of his titles", *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 62, 2009, 199–218, and the literature cited there.

free from doubt concerning the Resurrection".[19] The *Dēnkard* mentions the sin
of performing worship while thinking that the gods do not exist[20] and repeat-
edly refers to the evil of not believing in, or positively inducing doubt about, the
existence of God (Ohrmazd);[21] it also speaks of leading people to the faith by
first persuading them that the creator does exist.[22] Zoroastrian atheists appear
under the name of *nēst-yazat gōwān*, "'there is no god' sayers", in the ninth-
century *Škand Gumānīk Vičār*.[23] In view of how little evidence we have for
Zoroastrianism in the relevant period, this is an extraordinary number of attes-
tations.

Judaism

On the Jewish side, lack of belief in life after death is the norm if one goes suf-
ficiently far back in time, but by the second century AD it was belief in the
resurrection which had come to be dominant. Even so, there is much Rabbinic
material countering disbelief in it. A well-known story has it that a *matrona*
confronted the second-century Palestinian rabbi Jose with the Biblical verse
on how Jacob refused to be comforted when he believed Joseph to be dead
(Gen. 37:35): she was using the Hebrew Bible to prove that there was no res-
urrection.[24] Several third-century Palestinian rabbis are reported to have cast
Esau as a denier | of the resurrection and indeed of God himself;[25] according
to one of these rabbis, Esau was the person mentioned in Psalm 14:1, "the fool
says in his heart, there is no God". The Mishna (*c.* 200) denies a portion of the
world to come to a list of sinners, including those who deny the heavenly ori-
gin of the Torah, Epicureans and those who say that "there is no resurrection of
the dead [to be derived from the Torah]". Here the words in parentheses, which
were probably interpolated in the course of transmission, make it clear that the

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19   al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-badʾ waʾl-taʾrīkh*, ed. and tr. C. Huart (Paris, 1899–1919), i, 62 f.; tr.
       S. Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation: Varieties of Religion in Sasanian Iran* (London, 1994),
       32 f.

20   M. Stausberg, "Hell in Zoroastrian history", *Numen* 56, 2000, 231, citing *Dk* VI D1b.

21   J. de Ménasce (tr.), *Le troisième livre du Dēnkart* (Paris, 1973), nos. 189, 338, 410.

22   M. Molé, "Le problème des sectes zoroastriennes", *Oriens* 13–14, 1961, 10, citing the summary
       of the *Varshtmānsr Nask* in *Dk* IX, 42:2 in the numeration of West.

23   J. de Ménasce (ed. and tr.), *Škand-Gumānīk Vičār* (Fribourg en Suisse, 1945), ch. 5, 64 ff.

24   *Bereshit Rabba*, 84:21.

25   *Bereshit Rabba*, 63:11, 13, 14 (anon., Resh Laqish and R. Levi); *Babylonian Talmud* (hereafter
       BT), Baba Bathra 16a, b (R. Jonathan).

deniers were, or had come to be understood as, Jews.[26] Similar lists are found in the Tosefta (late third/early fourth century) and elsewhere,[27] and they are discussed in both Talmuds, usually held to have been redacted by *c*. 400 and *c*. 500 respectively.

Most of this material clearly originated in a period too early to be of interest here. The *matrona*, for example, stands for a highborn Roman lady of the type who would attend synagogue service, perhaps becoming a God-fearer or even a proselyte; there are many stories in which she asks tricky questions of Rabbi Jose, who responds in a friendly manner.[28] But the material was included in much later compilations, raising the question of how far the problems it confronted had continued to be relevant. The *matrona*'s question regarding the resurrection reappears in a different version in a compilation made perhaps as late as the eighth century (probably in Italy); here it is a heretic (*min*) who confronts "our rabbi" with the verse on Jacob's refusal to be comforted, and both the heretical claim and the rabbi's response are spelled out in clearer terms than in the first version.[29] When Babylonian rabbis such as Hisda (d. 309) or Raba (d. 352) try to prove that the doctrine of the resurrection was in the Torah, it is hard to believe that their interest was purely academic.[30] Commenting on a list in which deniers of the resurrection are included—along with scoffers, deniers of the Torah and others—among those who will go to Gehinnom for ever, Raba even remarks, in one version, that "among them are the most handsome of the inhabitants of Mahuza" (Ctesiphon/Madā'in).[31] That the Jews (and/or Samaritans) held Esau to have denied God was known to Epiphanius (d. 402 or 403).[32]

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26   *Jerusalem Talmud*, Sanhedrin 27b–c; Pe'ah 16b; Hagigah 77b; *BT*, Sanhedrin 90a; cf. C. Setzer, "'Talking their way into empire': Jews, Christians, and Pagans debate resurrection of the body", in C. Bakhos (ed.), *Ancient Judaism in Its Hellenistic Context* (Leiden, 2005), 159, cf. 163; H.-J. Becker, "'Epikureer' im Talmud Yerushalmi", in P. Schäfer (ed.), *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Greco-Roman Culture* (Tübingen, 1998), 400 ff.

27   Setzer, "Talking their way", 162.

28   For all this, see R. Gershenzon and E. Slomovic, "A second-century Jewish-Gnostic debate: Rabbi Jose ben Halafta and the Matrona", *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 16, 1985, 1–14, esp. 3, 9 f., 33.

29   T. Townsend (tr.), *Midrash Tanḥuma* (*S. Buber Recension*) (Hoboken, 1989), i, 236; also cited in Gershenzon and Slomovic, "Rabbi Jose ben Halafta and the Matrona", 33n (Vayeshev, 8; ed. Buber, 181).

30   *BT*, Sanhedrin 91b.

31   *BT*, Rosh Hashana 17a, with a version in the note construing the statement differently.

32   Epiphanius, *On Weights and Measures* (Syriac text tr. J. Elmer Dean, Chicago, 1935), par. 17. He is speaking of Symmachus, the Bible translator, claiming that he was a Samaritan who became a Jewish proselyte.

7   The targums offer several slightly different accounts of the dispute between Cain and Abel that culminated in the latter's death. Cain appears as the bearer of a heretical position in all of them, but his heresy is not the same in the early and the later recensions, and only the later recensions are of interest here.[33] In these recensions he says that "I know that the world was not created with mercy, and that it is not governed according to the fruit of good deeds, and that there is favour (i.e. partiality) in judgement. There is no judgement and no judge, and there is no other world; there is no granting of recompense for the just; and there is no reckoning for the wicked".[34] In short, Cain denies that there is any form of reward for virtue in either this world or the next. His heresy has been identified as Sadducee or Epicurean.[35] But on the one hand we find the same outlook in the much earlier *Ecclesiastes* (*Qohelet*), in which God is neither just nor merciful from a human perspective, and in which deep pessimism about the ways of this world is also coupled with disbelief in life after death; and on the other hand we encounter it again later, in the fourth and fifth centuries, now among pagans and Christians of the type addressed in the Pseudo-Clementines, and by Nemesius of Emesa and Theodoret of Cyrrhus (discussed below). These pagans and Christians also found it impossible to believe in a God who took a providential interest in this world, or in any God at all, since the world evidently was not governed by either law or reason: the good were not rewarded, but rather treated badly, whereas the wicked and violent grew in power and wealth. These pessimists also found it impossible to believe in life after death. It stands to reason that there should have been fourth- and fifth-century Jews who shared this outlook and that this is what the two targums reflect. It is Cain's position that the sinful King Manasseh renounces when he is subjected to punishment and repents in *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* (5th c?): "Where there is judgement, there is a Judge", he exclaims, now realizing that "the Lord was God" (2 Chron. 33:13).[36]

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33   All the versions are translated in G. Vermes, "The Targumic versions of Genesis IV 3–16", *The Annual of Leeds University Oriental Society* 3, 1961–1962, 81–114; the most helpful discussion from the present point of view is J.M. Bassler, "Cain and Abel in the Palestinian Targums: a brief note on an old controversy", *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 17, 1986, 56–64, with reference to earlier literature at 58n.

34   Thus Targum Neofiti (and its marginal variants) and the Fragmentary Targum.

35   Cf. S. Isenberg, "An anti-Sadducee polemic in the Palestinian Targum tradition", *Harvard Theological Review* 63, 1970, 433–444, and the literature in Bassler, "Cain and Abel", 63n.

36   *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana*, tr. W.G. Braude and I.J. Kapstein (Philadelphia, 1975), piska 24, p. 376; cited in Isenberg, "Anti-Sadducee polemic", 443, with reference to Buber's edition, 181a.

For hard and fast evidence, however, we have to await Justinian. In 553 he issued a famous novella in which he took it upon himself to legislate about the language to be used in the synagogue service, and in which he added the following warning on a completely different subject:

> And if there are some people among them who shall attempt to introduce ungodly nonsense, denying either the resurrection or the last judgement or that the angels exist as God's work and creation, we want these people | expelled from all places, and that no word of blasphemy of this kind and absolutely no erring from that knowledge of God shall be spoken. We impose the harshest punishments on those attempting to utter such nonsense, completely purifying in this way the nation of the Hebrews from the error introduced into it.[37]

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Here there are two heresies, both formulated as denials: there was no resurrection or last judgement and the angels did not exist as God's creation. Whether the first heresy amounted to a complete rejection of the afterlife one cannot tell. The second heresy has been understood as a denial that the angels existed,[38] but what is being denied seems rather to be "that the angels are the work and creation of God", as other translations and paraphrases have it.[39] In positive terms, then, the claim was that the angels were uncreated and shared in God's divinity. As the main topic of the novella makes clear, the Jews addressed were in the Greek-speaking part of the empire, and the only evidence for its reception to have been proposed is a mosaic inscription in the Ein Gedi synagogue by the Dead Sea. But this rests on a reading of the inscription that has been rejected by some, and in any case it relates to the language issue rather than the resurrection.[40]

In this novella, as in the Quran, belief in the uncreated nature of the angels is concatenated with denial of the resurrection, and here as there one wonders

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37 Novella 146 (*peri Hebraiōn*), cap. ii, ed. and tr. A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit and Jerusalem, 1987), 406 f. = 409.

38 Thus M. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews under Roman and Byzantine Rule* (New York, 1976; Hebrew original 1946), 250.

39 P. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1959), 316; K.L. Noethlichs, *Die Juden im christlichen Imperium Romanum (4.–6. Jahrhundert)* (Berlin, 2001), 160; E. Klingenberg, "Justinians Novellen zur Judengesetzgebung", in D. Medicus, H.J. Mertens and others (eds), *Festschrift für Hermann Lange zum 70. Geburtstag* (Stuttgart, Berlin and Cologne, 1992), 160.

40 Linder, *Jews*, 404, cf. the bibliography at p. 411.

what, if any, the connection between the two positions could be: were they simply current within the same community, as probably in the Quran, or were they linked in some way? The Judaists have surprisingly little to say about it. They have written a great deal about this novella, but their interest is almost always in its regulation of the language of the synagogue; that the novella also prohibits two startling heresies is rarely even mentioned.[41] The fullest discussion is by Juster, who wrote a century ago and interpreted the entire novella as a decision by Justinian in favour of Pharisee doctrines at the expense of their Sadducee counterparts, without claiming that the Sadducees had actually survived as a sect.[42] That the Sadducees denied the resurrection is well attested; that their heresy extended to the angels is known only from Acts 23:8, according | to which "the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, or angel or spirit", a much disputed passage.[43] The heretics in Justinian's novella are not denying the existence of angels (or spirits), and Juster would have made a better case for himself if he had argued that the Sadducees did not do so either (as now seems to be the general view).[44] But he did not, and though he has the merit of having identified a real or alleged set of heresies relating to the disparate topics of the resurrection and angels, his suggestion has not found favour with later authors. Avi-Yonah, in the 1940s, proposed that the heretics in Justinian's novella were "the Samaritans and those Jews who shared their views".[45] That the Samaritans denied the resurrection is well known from Origen,[46] Epiphanius,[47] a rabbinic tractate,[48] the Pseudo-

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41   For literature on the novella apart from that cited here, see M. Meier, *Das andere Zeitalter Justinians: Kontingenzerfahrung und Kontingenzbewältigung im 6. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* (Göttingen, 2003), 289, note 295. Meier does not discuss the heresies.

42   J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'Empire* (Paris, 1914), i, 374–377.

43   See F. Parker, "The terms 'angel' and 'spirit' in Acts 23,8", *Biblica* 84, 2003, 344–365, and the literature cited there.

44   Juster identifies the heresy in Justinian's novella as a claim that the angels were not divine creatures, a formulation which implies, perhaps unintentionally, that the heretics saw the angels as mere humans. The Sadducees certainly cannot have explained the angels in the Hebrew Bible along those lines, but they could perhaps have explained them as shortlived appearances of God rather than created beings in their own right.

45   Avi-Yonah, *Jews under Roman and Byzantine Rule*, 250.

46   Origen, *In Matthiam*, 23:22 (*MPG* 13, col. 1564); Homily 25 *ad Numeri* (*MPG* 12, 763).

47   Epiphanius, *Panarion*, tr. F. Williams (Leiden, 1987–1994), i, 30 (sect no. 9. 2. 3).

48   *Masseket Kutim*, par. 28, in J.A. Montgomery, *The Samaritans, the Earliest Jewish Sect* (Philadelphia, 1907), 203: Samaritans will be received into the community if they deny Mt Gerizim and accept the resurrection.

Clementine *Recognitions*,[49] and later authors.[50] But why should Justinian have condemned a Samaritan belief in a novella on Jews? He knew the Samaritans very well, inter alia because they had rebelled against him, and he is not likely to have confused their doctrines with those of the Jews.[51] This is why Avi-Yonah adds "those Jews who shared their beliefs". But if there were Jews who denied the resurrection, why should they owe their conviction to the Samaritans? And why should their denial be associated with denial of the created nature of the angels?

Since then the Judaists seem to have lost interest in the question. A recent scholar, for example, dismisses all the information in the novella as a mere reflection of Christian *topoi*, merely noting that it also mentions "certain doctrines" that the Jews should not believe in.[52] But Justinian's description of | these two heresies is not based on *topoi*. Early Christian sources do indeed accuse the Jews of angel worship, but they never describe it as a denial of the angels as the work of God;[53] and though they also accuse the Sadducees of not believing in the resurrection, angels or spirits, as noted already, it is not the existence of the angels that Justinian's heretics are denying, nor is the term Sadducee used. One would infer that real heresies had in fact come to Justinian's attention, presumably because outraged Jews had denounced their erring coreligionists to the authorities, or alternatively because they had attracted the attention of the authorities by taking violent action against them on their own.

The identity of the heretics is still unknown, but we need not invoke the Sadducees to explain them. A Jew such as the physician Domnus, who taught

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49   Clement (attrib.), *Recognitions* (Ante-Nicene Christian Library, iii, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, Edinburgh, 1867), 1.5.4; cf. i, 57.

50   E.g. Theodore Bar Koni, *Livre des scolies* (*recension de Séert*), ed. A. Scher (Paris, 1910), 1912; tr. R. Hespel and R. Draguet (Louvain, 1981–1982), mimrā v, 25; Abū Qurra, *Mīmar fī wujūd al-khāliq waʾl-dīn al-qawīm*, ed. I. Dick (Rome, 1982), 203, where the seeker after truth encounters the Samaritans, whose description of their own faith includes this: "And when we leave this world, it is perdition forever [*al-halāk ilā ʾl-abad*]. There is no resurrection". Cf. also M. Levy-Rubin (ed. and tr.), *The Continuatio of the Samaritan Chronicle of Abū ʾl-Fatḥ al-Sāmirī al-Danafī* (Princeton, 2002), 236 = 87, for the presence of Dositheans in 3rd/9th-century Palestine.

51   Mere confusion of the two is assumed by Klingenberg, "Justinians Novellen", 160n, following A. Sharf, "Justinian", in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, x, 478.

52   L.V. Rutgers, "Justinian's novella 146 between Jews and Christians", in R. Kalmin and S. Schwartz (eds), *Jewish Culture and Society under the Christian Roman Empire* (Leuven, 2003), 387.

53   Cf. L. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology* (Tübingen, 1995).

in Alexandria at the time of Zeno (r. 474–491),[54] for example, is likely to have been a Neoplatonist; if so, he will have denied the resurrection of the body and cast the angels as emanations, a position which cannot be documented for the Quran, but which could be what Justinian's novella condemns. Unfortunately Domnus' views on the question are not recorded. Among his pupils was the iatrosophist Gessius, a pagan hailing from Petra who taught in Alexandria in the 520s and who exemplified the arrogant pagan to the Christian Zacharias Scholasticus. His views on the angels and the hereafter are not recorded either. He is reported to have been forcibly baptized, without changing his beliefs, and to have ridiculed the healing miracles allegedly worked by the saints.[55] Gessius, a scoffing pagan from Petra trained by a Jew in an environment dominated by Christians, may not give us precisely the radical denier we meet among the *mushrikūn*, but he is taking us close in terms of place of birth, religious environment and contemptuous attitude alike.

Christianity

If we go sufficiently far back in time on the Greco-Roman side, disbelief in life after death becomes commonplace there too. Some pagans, notably the Platonists, did believe in the immortality of the soul (or more precisely its most noble part, the rational soul or mind), but the physician Galen (d. 199), a great admirer of Plato who came to be the most widely read medical authority in the Near East, had trouble agreeing with him: "Plato seems persuaded that the rational part of the soul is immortal, but as for me I think it could also be otherwise", as he said. He left the question open since it had no bearing on medical practice.[56] The triumphant progress of Christianity notwithstanding, many continued to share his doubts. In the Pseudo-Clementines, mentioned several times | already, one of the heroes is a well-born Roman pagan who

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54   Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopädie*, ix, s.v. "Domnus".

55   R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques* (Paris, 1994–2000), s.v. "Ges(s)ios" (R. Goulet); cf. H.J. Magoulias, "The lives of the saints as sources of data for the history of Byzantine medicine in the sixth and seventh centuries", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 56, 1964, 130, 132 f.; E. Watts, "The enduring legacy of the Iatrosophist Gessius", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 49, 2009, 113–133.

56   Galen, "That the faculties of the soul follow the mixtures of the substances of the body", in his *Scripta Minora*, ii, 36:12–16; Galen, "About that which he considers an opinion", in his *Scripta Minora* iv, 761, both cited in M.M. Bar Asher, "Quelques aspects de l'éthique d'Abū Bakr al-Rāzī et ses origines dans l'oeuvre de Galien" (part 2), *Studia Islamica* 70, 1989, 123 f.

believes in astrology and denies the existence of both God and providence on the grounds that everything is governed by chance and fate, meaning the conjunctions under which one happens to have been born; he resists conversion because he cannot accept that souls are immortal and subject to punishment for sins. It is not suggested that he is attached to his ancestral deities, or for that matter to any philosophical school; he simply cannot bring himself to believe in the Christian god because everything he knows about the world runs counter to what this deity stands for: a world supposedly created with human welfare in mind, a moral purpose to human life, and a happy ending when all will receive their just rewards. In the Pseudo-Clementines he nonetheless converts in the end under the influence of his son, a Christian who teaches him the difference between faith based on prophecy (i.e. revelation) and philosophy, which is conjectural.[57] In later works we meet the likes of this man as nominal and doubting Christians.

Aphrahat (d. *c.* 345), taking us back to the Sasanian side of the border, was also confronted with people who denied the resurrection, and perhaps the afterlife altogether. They would ask, "which is the place in which the righteous receive a good reward? And which is the place in which there are torments?", clearly meaning to deny their existence. They were people of inferior understanding who disputed the afterlife about which Aphrahat had written in his Demonstration on death and the hereafter.[58]

A generation or two thereafter, Gregory of Nyssa (d. after 394) in Anatolia composed a dialogue in which he takes the role of the Christian doubter who suspects that the soul dies with the body and assigns the part of firm believer to his sister, Macrina. In his role as sceptic he explains that the divine words command belief in the immortality of the soul, so one accepts it "by a kind of interior slavery", not by voluntary assent. The role he is assuming is that of a Christian who really wants to believe in life after death, but who simply cannot, though he submits to authority. The difficulty lay in the fact that when the body died, it was dissolved into the elements of which it was composed. If the soul was composite, it would be dissolved as well and so cease to exist; if it was in the elements, it was identical with them. On the other hand, if its nature was different from the elements, it could not be in them, but there was nowhere else it could be. That everything was composed of four elements (earth, air, fire, water), or four elementary qualities (hot, cold, wet, dry), was the

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57   *Clementine Homilies*, xiv, 3; xv, 1, 5; N. Kelley, "Problems of knowledge and authority in the Pseudo-Clementine romance of recognitions", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13, 2005, 320, 338 f.

58   Aphrahat, *Demonstrations*, VIII, 19; XXII, 24.

axiom on which all Late Antique science was based. Macrina fully accepts it, but she dismisses Gregory's objections as the kind that Stoics and Epicureans might make: for small-souled people, perceptible things were a kind of wall that shut off their vision of things which could only be perceived by the mind, so that they had to remove from their teaching even the very divinity which maintains the universe. | But whoever says that "there is no God" is a fool, she observes, quoting Psalm 14:1, for the very creation openly proclaims its Maker. Gregory agrees, and thereafter the concept of man as a microcosm together with the idea of the soul as the image of God helps to take care of the rest.[59] The problems pertaining to bodily resurrection are also covered, and there are hostile references to clever dialecticians who use syllogistic and analytical methods to overturn the truth in connection with both sets of problems.[60]

12

Nemesius of Emesa, who wrote in Syria around 390, has a chapter in which he mentions people who deny that God's providence extends to particulars on the grounds that God cannot be the supervisor of a realm in which murders, injustices and wrongdoing of all kinds are endemic and in which neither law nor reason rule: the good are mostly treated unjustly, while the wicked and violent grow in power, wealth, positions of command and other worldly goods. Nemesius responds that these people seem to him to be ignorant of many things, especially the immortality of the soul: "For they suppose it to be mortal and circumscribe man's lot by this life", believing that "the soul suffered dissolution together with the body".[61] Nemesius is here presenting a popular view, perhaps inspired (at least in his presentation) by Alexander of Aphrodisias,[62] and its bearers could be pagans of the type encountered in the Pseudo-Clementines, for Nemesius explicitly says that he is writing for pagans, Christians and Jews alike, adding that he would try to persuade the pagans on the basis of things that they themselves believed.[63] His audience should keep in mind that "the wisest of the (pagan) Greeks" believed in transmigration, even though this tenet was "defective in some other ways".

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59   Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection* (ed. and tr. I. Ramelli, Milan, 2007, preserving the column numbers; MPG 46, cols. 11–160), cols. 17 ff.; tr. C.P. Roth (Crestwood, NY, 1993), 29 ff.

60   Gregory, *On the Soul*, cols. 53, 129 ff., 152 f.; tr. Roth, 51, 103 ff., 117.

61   Nemesius of Emesa, *On the Nature of Man* (tr. R.W. Sharpless and P.J. van der Eijk, Liverpool, 2008), 213 f., 217.

62   Cf. Nemesius, *Nature of Man*, notes 1030, 1032; cf. B. Sharpless, "Nemesius of Emesa and some theories of divine providence", *Vigiliae Christianae* 37, 1983, 148 ff.

63   Nemesius, *Nature of Man*, 204 f., 218, cf. 73 f.

Thereafter Theodoret of Cyrrhus (d. *c.* 460) wrote an entire book against deniers of providence, delivered as lectures, perhaps in Antioch. The errors he lists include inability to believe in anything beyond the senses; deification of the elements; outright denial of divinity; and belief in a God who did not concern Himself with this world (the Epicurean position) or who did not concern Himself with anything below the moon (a view commonly attributed to Aristotle). The list moves on to those "who have the formal title of Christians", suggesting that the bearers of the previous beliefs were pagans. But the errors listed for the formal Christians do not have anything to do with providence, and at one point he addresses the deniers of providence directly, telling them that "you who have been delivered from the error of polytheism and agree that all visible things are created, you who adore their creator, (you) banish Him from His creatures, set Him completely outside His creation, assert that such an ordered universe is without a pilot and is borne about | aimlessly like a ship without ballast".[64] Apparently, then, the upholders of the errors he has listed were Christians, too, at least in formal terms. They believed in God, or most of them did, just not in providence. But as Nemesius had noted in his treatise, if God is not provident, He does not protect, punish or reward, nor is there any prophecy, so "who would then worship a god who helped us in no way about anything?"[65] Without providence, the world was ruled by fate or chance combinations of natural processes, and the existence of God was irrelevant, or alternatively God was simply another word for those processes. We are close to the position of the radical *mushrikūn* here.

13

As one would expect, Theodoret's opponents also included people who denied the afterlife. He comes to this question in connection with the problem that virtue so often goes unrewarded whereas the wicked flourish, the problem that was also bothering the targumic Cain and Nemesius' audience. This would indeed be unjust, he says, if there were no life after death, but "there does exist another life in which those who here escape punishment will pay the due penalty, and those who enjoyed no return for their efforts at virtue in the present life will obtain the reward of their striving". He cautiously adds that "perhaps you find yourself in agreement with me?" But he knows that some do not, for he proceeds to try to persuade them: the (pagan) Greeks did not receive any prophet, apostle or evangelist, but even so, he claims, they were convinced of these things, directed by nature alone; their poets and philosophers alike

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64   Theodoret, *On Providence*, tr. T. Halton (New York, 1988), 1:13 (with the editorial notes), 2:21.

65   Nemesius, *Nature of Man*, 206.

believed and taught that the wicked would be punished and the just rewarded in a future life, leaving a record of their teaching in writing. "Perhaps you, too, persuaded by nature (*tē physei*), instructed by these truths, and convinced by what has just been said, will join your voice to theirs and agree that these things are so".[66] Like the pagan Greeks, those who denied both providence and the afterlife had to be persuaded by arguments based on nature, i.e. reasoning based on what you can see, hear and otherwise perceive with the senses of the world around you.

Thereafter Theodoret moves on to consider the claim that the afterlife is purely spiritual, eventually reaching the problem of bodily resurrection, which his opponents evidently also denied: they judged things by the standards of their own weakness, he says, for they thought that what was impossible for them was impossible for God as well; but God could reassemble the body even after it had decomposed, turned into dust and scattered in all directions, in rivers, in seas, among birds of prey, or wild beasts, in fire or in water: "I am bringing forward all your grounds of disbelief", he remarks.[67] They are the grounds we meet again in the Quran. God had made the heavens at His merest wish, Theodoret responds, and created the earth adorned with meadows, groves and all kinds of crop land; He simply spoke the word, whereupon | countless living creatures appeared on land, in the water and in the air: surely He could resurrect the body too. It was easier to renovate something that already existed than to create it out of nothing. Why were the opponents unwilling to accept the resurrection when they were constantly seeing it being reproduced in their own lives? God sent rain from the heavens, causing the seeds to sprout and plants to shoot up; the deniers should look at the twigs of the vines and other trees, or at their own bodies; the nature of embryos and the initial formation of human beings were sufficient proof of the resurrection.[68] Theodoret's arguments in favour of the resurrection are largely identical with those of the Quran. He uses them in proof of providence, too, and they show his opponents to be ungrateful;[69] they refused to see the wonderful ways in which everything in the world, be it the heavens, the earth, animals or human society, was arranged for their own good. Here as in the Quran, the appeal is to God as seen in nature.

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66   Theodoret, *Providence*, 9:23f. The English translator has "persuaded by natural reason" for *tē physei peithomenous* (*MPG* 83, 729), an embroidery started by the Latin translator and reproduced in the French translation by Y. Azéma as well (my thanks to Heinrich von Staden for confirming that nothing additional is implied).

67   Theodoret, *Providence*, 9:34f.

68   Theodoret, *Providence*, 9:36–42.

69   Theodoret, *Providence*, e.g. 1:37; 3:21, 23; 4:34; 5:6.

In the time of Theodosius II (r. 408–450), we are told, a heresy arose which confused the church. It was led by two bishops, presumably men thoroughly educated in Greek philosophy. "Some of the heretics said there was no resurrection of the dead, and others said that the disintegrated, decayed and decomposed body could not be resurrected and that only the soul received the promise of life".[70] There seem to be two different doctrines here, one that there was no resurrection of the dead in the sense of no afterlife at all, and another to the effect that only the soul would live for ever. Theodoret wrote against the same two positions about this very time, but this could be a coincidence. However this may be, it was against the "Sadducee" doctrines of the two bishops that the story of the Seven Sleepers was composed, to become a bestseller: Syrian merchants took it all the way to Gaul, Mesopotamian Christians took it all the way to Sogdia.[71] The story was also known in the Messenger's locality. He tells it as a story in proof of God's threat/promise, with the stress on the threat, and he knew "them", presumably the Christians, to have disputed the question of whether a monument should be erected over the Sleepers: the winners wanted a *masjid* to be built over them (18:21). Some people, apparently including the locals, disagreed about how many Sleepers there had been, with the numbers ranging from three to seven, or four to eight including the dog, but one should neither commit oneself on this question nor consult anyone about it (18:22). There had also been disagreement over the number of years that the Sleepers had slept, for in the Messenger's view God had resurrected them (*ba'athnāhum*) for the very purpose of knowing which of the two parties was better at calculating the term | (18:12). One takes it that the story had been the object of much debate in the locality well before the Messenger told it.

15

Theodoret's efforts notwithstanding, Saint Simeon the younger (d. 592), a contemporary of Muhammad, still found Antioch to be infected by impious mockers whose errors included denial of the resurrection; astrological beliefs such as that the cause of earthquakes, plagues, adultery and homicide was the position of the stars; "automatism" (presumably meaning the view that the world had arisen on its own); and the belief, here characterized as Manichaean,

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70   Legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus in the older Syriac prose version, tr. V. Ryssel in *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 93, 1894, 263f.; cf. S. Griffith, "Christian lore and the Arabic Qurʾān: the 'Companions of the Cave' in *Sūrat al-kahf* and in Syriac Christian tradition", in G.S. Reynolds (ed.), *The Qurʾān in Its Historical Context* (London, 2008), 109–137.

71   For the account of Gregory of Tours (d. 593 or 594), which was translated for him from Syriac, see E. Peters, *Monks, Bishops and Pagans* (Philadelphia, 1975), 202; for the Sogdian version, see N. Sims-Williams, *The Christian Sogdian Manuscript C2* (Berlin, 1985), 154–157.

that the creation was due to fate or chance. When Amantios, who had suppressed the Samaritan revolt in 555, came to Antioch, he rounded up, jailed and killed large numbers of such people, burnt all their books and suspended their "idols" in the streets. As Simeon saw it, Amantios was acting as God's instrument.[72]

Again the attestations continue after the Arab conquests. Towards the end of the seventh century there were Syrians who wished to know how it was apparent that the soul did not die with the body, for some believed this to be the case. Some "foolish people" thought "that the human being does not differ from animals in anything. The death of a human being is just like that of an animal, since (humans) don't have an immortal soul. For, it is said, humans and animals have the same death once their blood has been spilt".[73] Some fifty years later the Iconoclast Council of 754 anathemized anyone who "does not confess the resurrection of the dead, the judgment, and the reward to each according to his deserts by the righteous scales of God".[74] But we hear more of such people in the former Sasanian empire. John of Phenek, writing in the 690s, tells us that the demons are responsible for a number of errors. Some of them have persuaded men "that there is no God at all, and others that there is a God but that he is not providential .... They have persuaded others to call the mute elements God".[75] Shortly thereafter the Muslims begin to tell us about such people under the label of Dahrīs.

"Dahrī" is a blanket term for anyone who denied creation out of nothing and who thus postulated something pre-eternal along with God, in so far

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72   P. van den Ven (ed. and tr.), *La vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune (521–592)* (Brussels, 1962), pars. 157, 161. For the efforts of Timothy of Antioch to counter the view "that only the present life is real, filled with light and pleasure, and that there is no other better rebirth, more admirable than the present life" (a remarkable parallel of the Qurʾānic *in hiya illā ḥayātunā ʾl-dunyā wa-mā naḥnu bi-mabʿūthīn*, 6:29, cf. 23:37, 45:24), see D. Krausmüller, "Timothy of Antioch: Byzantine concepts of the Resurrection, part 2", *Gouden Hoorn* 5, 1997–1998, http://goudenhoorn.com/2011/11/28/timothy-of-antioch-byzantine-concepts -of-the-resurrection-part-2/, quoting *Patrologia Graeca* 86, 257C16–19.

73   Ps. Athanasios, "Quaestiones ad ducem Antiochum", MPG 28, cols. 608, 681 (questions 17, 134); cf. G. Dagron, "L'Ombre d'un doute: l'hagiographie en question, VIe–XIe siècle", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46, 1992, 62f. (My thanks to Yannis Papadoyannakis for these references.)

74   M.V. Anastos, "The argument for iconoclasm as presented by the Iconoclastic Council of 754", in K. Weitzmann (ed.), *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honor of A.M. Friend, Jr.* (Princeton, 1955), 186.

75   John of Phenek, *Book of the Main Points of the History of the Temporal World*, MS Mingana Syr. 179, mimrā 9, kindly supplied to me by Richard Payne.

as he credited the world to God at all. In that broad sense Dahrīs included Manichaeans and other dualists. More commonly, they were *aṣḥāb al-hayūlā* or *aṣḥāb al-ṭabāʾiʿ*. The former believed God to have created the world out of pre-eternal prime matter (Greek *hylē*), or held the world to have arisen on its own out of this matter. The latter usually believed the ultimate constituents of the world to be the four elementary qualities (*ṭabāʾiʿ*, "natures"), hot, cold, dry and wet, | which had always existed in combination and which were constantly recombined and dissolved, accounting for everything we see around us. The world, not just its ultimate constituents, had always existed and always would. Some held there to be a fifth "nature" which regulated the action of the other four, usually in the form of spirit (*rūḥ*) or the heavenly spheres, and some believed God to have created the world out of the pre-eternal natures; but the "pure Dahrī" insisted that there was no creator or providential ruler (*mudabbir*), and no angels, spirits, messengers, prophets, revealed books, holy laws, requital after death or afterlife of any kind at all.[76]

16

In short, wherever we look, adherents of the once self-evident view that we die when we die are holding out against a new consensus that actually we will live on and even have our bodies back, a view officially backed by both the Roman and the Sasanian establishments, often by force, and also by the rabbis. Those holding out against the consensus are sometimes recent and/or reluctant converts to Christian, Zoroastrian or Rabbinic orthodoxy, or even undisguised pagans, but they also include people who have moved from ancestral orthodoxy to the doubts and denials that were now held to be a characteristic of paganism:[77] thus Burzoē and, one assumes, the Jews behind the targumic Cain, and the targets of Justinian's novella. The doubts are often connected with Greek philosophy and other science, as the accounts of Nemesius and Theodoret make clear and as also suggested by the fact that, like Burzoē, many Dahrīs were doctors, astrologers and others taking an interest in the workings of the natural world. It would seem to be the Arabian form of this general Near Eastern phenomenon that the Messenger is battling with in the Quran.

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76   *EI²*, s.v. "Dahriyya" (Goldziher and Goichon); *EIr.*, s.v. "Dahrī"; *EI³*, s.v. "Dahrīs" (Crone); P. Crone, "The Dahrīs according to al-Jāḥiẓ", *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 63, 2010–2011, 63–82 [Ed.: reprinted in P. Crone, *Islam, the Ancient Near East and Varieties of Godlessness*, vol. 3 of *Collected Studies in Three Volumes*, ed. H. Siurua (Leiden, 2016), art. 5]; P. Crone, "Ungodly cosmologies", in S. Schmidtke (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology* (Oxford, 2016) [Ed.: reprinted in Crone, *Islam, the Ancient Near East and Varieties of Godlessness*, art. 6].

77   For atheism as a pagan characteristic, see John of Phenek above, note 75. Theodore Bar Koni, *Scolies*, mimrā I, 29.

The Dahrīs and the Exegetes

The Muslims probably coined the term "Dahrī" with reference to Q. 45:24, recognizing that the book was talking about radical unbelievers of the same kind as those they were now confronting for themselves in the conquered lands.[78] The earliest exegetes, all traditionalists, never hint at this, however. Their eyes were as firmly fixed on Arabia as were those of the Babylonian Rabbis on Palestine, and all they tell us about the Quranic deniers of the hereafter is that the *mushrikūn* of Mecca, or the Arabs in the Jāhiliyya, did not believe in the resurrection or afterlife. One would have liked to know what the early *mutakallim*s among the exegetes said on the subject, but the first *mutakallim* whose views have been preserved seems to be Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq (fl. later 3rd/9th century). Abū ʿĪsā wrote on religious doctrines, not on the Quran, but he included the pre-Islamic Arabs in his work, and he reconstructed | their beliefs on the basis of the Quran; in other words, he engaged in the same enterprise as that attempted in this article, except that he tacitly equated the Messenger's audience with the pre-Islamic Arabs in general. According to him, some Arabs believed in God, the creation and the resurrection, but worshipped "idols" (i.e. the lesser beings) in order to draw near to Him (cf. 39:3) and engaged in various ritual practices to this end; others believed in God and the creation, but not in the resurrection; and still others denied the creator and inclined to *taʿṭīl* (stripping God of his attributes or eliminating him altogether) and Dahrism (*al-qawl biʾl-dahr*); they were the ones who said, "there is nothing but our life down here; we die and we live, and nothing but time (*al-dahr*) destroys us" (45:24).[79] In short, Abū ʿĪsā arrived at the same three groups of unbelievers as those proposed in this article: traditional *mushrikūn*, traditional deniers and radical deniers.

How did Abū ʿĪsā infer that there were *mushrikūn* who believed in the resurrection? Unfortunately he does not tell us, and ʿAbd al-Jabbār, who cites him, only adduces information from the tradition.[80] We get no explanation from al-Māturīdī either. He too informs us that some *mushrikūn* believed in the resurrection while others denied it with the Dahriyya.[81] He also says that the

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78   Thus *EI*², s.v. "Dahriyya"; *EIr*, s.v. "Dahrī"; M.J. McDermott, "Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq on the *Dahriyya*", *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 2, 1984, 387 (but not everyone agrees).

79   Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq in ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, v, ed. M.M. al-Khuḍayrī (Cairo, 1965), 156.

80   He tells us that there were *akhbār* about ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, Zayd b. ʿAmr and Quss b. Sāʾida indicating that they believed in the creator and the resurrection; whether he envisages them as *mushrikūn* is not clear, however (ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, v, 156).

81   Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*, ed. B. Topaloğlu et al. (Istanbul, 2005–2010), xv, 44, *ad* 58:9.

Meccans fell into different groups: some were monotheists who denied the resurrection; others were polytheists [divided over the resurrection?], and some adhered to *madhhab al-dahr*.[82] This would seem to be the same three groups, except that the first are now monotheists even by al-Māturīdī's standards. In another passage he says that one group believed that the world had originated in time and would be destroyed, but not that it would become a new creation, while another adhered to the Dahrī doctrine that the world would never perish.[83] This gives us two different doctrines upheld by the deniers, presumably in his own time, though one would have liked to know how he read them into the Quran. All the groups are adduced as givens to elucidate unclear passages but are often left unmentioned in his comments on verses most obviously suggestive of them. Thus al-Māturīdī considers the possibility that the deniers of the afterlife in the vanished nation of 23:37 were dualists or Dahrīs[84] and notes that there were Dahrīs in Mecca in his comments on 75:36 ("Does man think he will be left on his own?"),[85] but makes no mention of Dahrīs in his comments on the unbelievers who held *al-dahr* to destroy them.[86] He further tells us that the hypocrites of Medina were partly Dahriyya and partly People of the Book, but he tells us this in elucidation of 59:13, on people "who have no insight" | (*lā yafqahūna*) and who could be anything,[87] not in connection with the verses actually suggestive of Dahrīs. In his comments on 4:150, on "those who do not believe in God and His messengers" (*alladhīna yukaffirūna bi'llāhi wa-rusulihi*), he does identify the non-believers in God as Dahrīs and understands the continuation "and his messengers" as a reference to others who believed in God, yet denied all the messengers; but this is a forced interpretation given that the culprits proceed to declare their belief in some (messengers) rather than others; al-Māturīdī takes this to be said by a third set of people.[88] One gets the sense that he is squeezing in the Dahrīs in his interpretation of passages which had not been authoritatively settled by the early exegetes, and it is possible that he had the three basic groups of *mushrikūn* from Abū ʿĪsā, padded out with knowledge based on his own experience. However this may be, it is striking that both Abū ʿĪsā and al-Māturīdī accept as a matter of course that there were

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82   Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, xiv, 339, *ad* 57:8.

83   Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, xi, 405, *ad* 34:7.

84   Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, x, 28.

85   Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, xvi, 309, *ad* 75:36.

86   Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, xiii, 336, *ad* 45:24.

87   Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, xv, 81, *ad* 59:13.

88   Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, iv, 94 *ad* 4:150.

mushrikūn who believed in the resurrection, a position which probably sounds like extreme revisionism to most Islamicists.

Abū ʿĪsā's account, cited above from ʿAbd al-Jabbār, was also used by al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), and he cites more verses in illustration of the three groups, perhaps still reproducing Abū ʿĪsā or perhaps adding them himself. Once again, however, we are left without illustrative material for the first group, the *mushrikūn* who believed in the resurrection, for the verses he adduces concern other positions of theirs. As regards the second group, al-Shahrastānī's choice of verses is surprising. He does not adduce any of those presented in this article, but rather singles out passages in which God argues from the creation to the resurrection, such as for example 36:78, on the one who "forgets his own creation when he says, 'who can give life to bones that have turned into dust?'", or 50:15, in which God denies being exhausted by the first creation, declaring the opponents to be confused about the new creation (50:15). According to al-Shahrastānī, God is arguing on the unbelievers' own premises here: the opponents believed in the first creation, so they ought to believe in the resurrection too. As far as I can see, there is nothing in these verses to show that the unbelievers shared the Messenger's premise, but there are of course other verses showing that they believed in the first creation, so al-Shahrastānī may be right. In connection with the third group he merely cites the familiar 45:24 already adduced by Abū ʿĪsā himself, but he adds that these unbelievers held nature (*al-ṭabʿ*) to be the giver of life, and time (*al-dahr*) to be its destroyer; when they said that there is nothing but our life down here, they were alluding to the elementary qualities (*al-ṭabāʾiʿ*) which are perceptible in this lower world, and reducing life and death to the composition and dissolution of these qualities.[89] In short, he describes these unbelievers as Dahrīs and *aṣḥāb al-ṭabāʾiʿ*.

19   This had in fact become a common view already by the fourth/tenth century. The Imāmī al-Qummī takes both 23:82 and 45:24 to have been revealed about the Dahriyya, familiar to him as insincere Muslims who had converted out of fear for their lives or property.[90] The philosopher al-ʿĀmirī (d. 381/992) rails against the Dahriyya, also holding 45:24 to have been revealed about them.[91] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) explains that those who held *al-*

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89   al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-milal waʾl-niḥal*, ed. W. Cureton (London, 1842–1846), 432; ed. M.S. Kaylānī (Cairo, 1961), ii, 235; tr. D. Gimaret and G. Monnot, *Livre des religions et des sectes* (UNESCO, 1986), tr. ii, 497. Unfortunately, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, the best source for Abū ʿĪsā, does not have a section on the pre-Islamic Arabs.

90   al-Qummī, *Tafsīr* (Beirut, 1991), ii, 68, 270.

91   al-ʿĀmirī, *Kitāb al-amad ʿalā ʾl-abad*, ed. and tr. E. Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and Its Fate* (New Haven, 1988), ix, 1 (160 = 161).

dahr to destroy them subscribed to the view that people were born thanks to the movements of the heavenly spheres, which affected the mixtures of the elementary qualities and sometimes resulted in life, sometimes in death, so that there was no need to presume the involvement of decisions by a creator.[92] Ibn Kathīr explains that the verse reports "the doctrine of the Dahriyya and those pagan Arabs who agreed with their denial of the resurrection",[93] and so on: even traditionalist exegetes were happy with the identification now.

All of these commentators are probably guilty of anachronism, for it is not clear that they had independent evidence for Dahrīs or *aṣḥāb al-ṭabāʾiʿ* in either Arabia or anywhere else before the rise of Islam. The litterateur al-Maʿarrī (d. 449/1058) does say that the Persian emperors would persecute Zindīqs of the type called Dahrīs, which could conceivably reflect a historical tradition, but he may simply be updating the well-known fact that the Sasanians persecuted Manichaeans.[94] The chances are that the exegetes are simply inferring from the wording of 45:24 that the verse must be speaking of deniers of the afterlife of the kind that they knew from their own place and time.[95] Many centuries later we still do not have any independent evidence for Dahrīs in Arabia, but we do at least know that they were well represented in the Near East in general at the time of the rise of Islam. On that basis one would be inclined to infer that the anachronistic commentators were right. The hardline deniers of the afterlife in the Quran do indeed seem to represent an Arabian version of the wider trend that the Muslims were to call Dahrism after their conquest of the Near East.

Recapitulation

This article has argued that the Quranic *mushrikūn* were monotheists in the Biblical tradition who drew their beliefs from either Judaism or a form of Christianity closer to its Jewish roots than was normally the case. Most probably it was a local type of Jewish Christianity for which our only source is the Quran,[96]

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92   Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, xxvii, 269 f., ad loc.

93   Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr* (Cairo, n.d.), iv, 150, with a swipe at the "theist philosophers".

94   al-Maʿarrī, *Risāla fī ʾl-ghufrān* (Beirut, n.d.), 294 (*radd ʿalā Ibn al-Qāriḥ, al-Mutanabbī, shakwā ʾl-dahr*).

95   Similarly Tamer, *Zeit und Gott*, 194, on al-Shahrastānī. The same applies to al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Amālī*, ed. M.A.-F. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1954), i, 127.10.

96   Cf. C.E. Fonrobert, "Jewish Christians, Judaizers, and Christian anti-Judaism", in V. Burrus (ed.), *A People's History of Christianity*, ii (*Late Ancient Christianity*) (Minneapolis, 2005), 235: we must abandon the presumption of a cohererent, more or less uniform movement

20   but this is more than can be inferred from the evidence presented | here. For-
     mally, they seem still to have been pagans rather than converts, but monothe-
     ism of the type rooted in the Bible was nonetheless the dominant form of reli-
     gion in their settlement. The key evidence for this is that they think in terms of
     "the first death" and "the second death", and that they deny the second death in
     the inverted order rooted in Deuteronomy 32:39. An obvious possibility is that
     they were God-fearers forming a gentile penumbra around a Jewish Christian
     community.[97] All or most seem to have grown up as believers in the resurrec-
     tion. Some believed in the resurrection too, without paying much attention to
     it in their daily lives, or even feeling sure that they would be saved, perhaps
     because they had imbibed this view from their Jewish mentors. Even those who
     believed in God and the lesser beings were prone to disbelief in the resurrec-
     tion, however, and some rejected it altogether, ruling out any form of afterlife
     in an eternalist vein that left no room for God, or at least not for a God who
     had created the world, ruled over it, and would sit in judgement on it. All the
     doubters and deniers seem to have disseminated their views in disputations of
     the type popular all over the Near East at the time; the entire environment was
     highly disputatious; and their doubts and denials were well known outside the
     peninsula too, being attested among Zoroastrians, Jews, pagans and Christians
     over several centuries before the rise of Islam. In short, the Quranic polemics
     form part of a wider Near Eastern struggle between affirmers and deniers of the
     resurrection and the afterlife.

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          of Jewish Christianity and instead assume "a number of locally determined struggles over
          legitimate versions of Christianity that may not be directly connected with each other at
          all".

97   Cf. J. Reynolds and R. Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-fearers at Aphrodisias: Greek Inscriptions
          with Commentary* (Cambridge, 1987), 48–77, which supersedes all earlier treatments. Cyril
          of Alexandria reports on God-fearers in Phoenicia and Palestine in the fifth century; the
          last evidence is an inscription from sixth-century Italy (pp. 53, 63, 65 f.).

The *Book of Watchers* in the Qur'ān*

Sura 2:102 informs us that the Jews follow the magic taught by demons (*shayā-ṭīn*) and 'such things as were sent down to the two angels at Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt,' but that the latter two will not teach anyone without prior warning: 'We are just a temptation [*fitna*], do not disbelieve,' they will say. In explanation of this passage, the exegetes tell a gripping story about a woman named Anāhīd or Zuhra (i.e., Venus) or Bēdukht (daughter of God) who tricked two amorous angels into telling her the great name of God, or some other magic formula, which the angels had used to ascend to heaven. She then rose to heaven herself, where she became the star Venus. The two angels were left behind on earth and punished by being hung upside down in a well in Babylon where people would come to them for knowledge of magic. The exegetes add that the angels had descended to earth with God's permission to act as judges, because they were upset by the terrible behaviour of human beings and believed that they could do better even if they had to contend with passions. God decided to put them to the test and provided them with passions for purposes of the experiment. The woman proved them wrong by inducing them to drink wine, kill and practise idolatry before making them reveal their secret formula to her.[1]

It is well known that both the Qur'ānic passage and the gripping story | are developed from the account of the fallen angels in the so-called *Book of Watchers*, a work attributed to the antediluvian figure Enoch (great-grandfather of Noah). It is perhaps not so well known that this book is reflected more

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1 Numerous accounts are given in al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, I, Beirut 1988, pp. 452 ff., *ad* 2:102, translated, along with other versions, in E. Littmann, 'Hārūt und Mārūt,' in *Festschrift Friedrich Carl Andreas*, Leipzig 1916, pp. 70–87; cf. also L. Jung, *Fallen Angels in Jewish, Christian and Mohammedan Literature*, Philadelphia 1926, pp. 126 ff.; and A.Sh. Shahbazi, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, London/Boston 1982–, s.v. 'Hārūt and Mārūt'; add al-Kalbī, cited in early Persian *tafsīr* (Abū Bakr ʿAtīq Nīshābūrī, *Tafsir-i Sūrābādī*, I, ed. S. Sīrjānī, Tehran 1381 [2002], pp. 105 f.; Lahore Tafsīr, facsimile edition and Russian translation by F.I. Abdullaeva, *Tolkovanije korana* [*Lakhorskhij tafsir*], Moscow 2001, pp. 42 f. = pp. 79 ff.); cf. also the long version attributed to Abū Jaʿfar, i.e., Muḥammad al-Bāqir, in al-Qummī, *Tafsīr*, I, Beirut 1991, pp. 65–67. Some versions omit the motif regarding God's name or other magic formulas.

than once in the Qur'ān. A further example has recently been identified by John Reeves.[2] In what follows, I propose another two examples and discuss the identity of 'Uzayr, who should perhaps be seen as a fifth. The interest of all four or five examples lies in the light they throw on the religious milieu in which the Qur'ān arose and the relationship of the Qur'ān (and indeed the exegetical tradition) with an old debate in the Near East about how sin came into the world.

The Fallen Angels

Genesis 6:2–4 informs us that in the antediluvian past there were giants (*nephilim*) on earth and that at that time 'sons of God' consorted with 'daughters of men,' siring mighty heroes (*gibborim*); thereafter the wickedness of man led to the flood. This passage has its roots in an ancient Near Eastern myth about rebellion in the pantheon, and it was to generate a vast number of narratives itself. In fact, it is one of those cases where we can follow the history of a couple of motifs and their endless transmogrifications from the dawn of history until today, seeing them meander like a huge river with a mass of constantly shifting arms and canals over the literary landscape of western Eurasia. It is quite an awe-inspiring sight.[3] Here, however, we need to zoom in on the rivulet constituted by the *Book of Watchers*.

The *Book of Watchers* is the first of five or more separate works which together make up the Ethiopic Book of Enoch (known as 1 Enoch).[4] It is based on the assumption that the biblical 'sons of God' are angels, the | normal understanding of the term in antiquity,[5] and it casts the angels as sinners. They are guilty of transgressing both sexual and epistemic boundaries, for not only

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2 See J.C. Reeves, 'Some Explorations of the Intertwining of Bible and Qur'ān,' in idem (ed.), *Bible and Qur'ān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*, Atlanta 2003, pp. 43–60, especially pp. 52 ff.

3 Nobody has tried to draw a picture of the entire river, but for a fine account of the already much-ramified section from the ancient Near East to Augustine, see N. Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth*, Princeton 1987. For the ancient Near Eastern roots, see also P.D. Hanson, 'Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel, and Euhemeristic Heroes in 1 Enoch 6–11,' *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 96 (1977), pp. 195–233.

4 1 Enoch stands for the Enoch book in Ethiopic, 2 Enoch for that in Old Church Slavonic, 3 Enoch for that in Hebrew (more properly called *Sefer Hekhalot*). Watchers are a certain category of angels. For editions and translations, see below, notes 7–9.

5 Cf. P.S. Alexander, 'The Targumim and Early Exegesis of "Sons of God" in Genesis 6,' *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 23 (1972), pp. 60 f.

do they take human wives, as Genesis says, but they also teach them sorcery and other illicit sciences, and the outcome is disastrous. They have giant offspring (the *gibborim* and *nephilim*, identified), and it is these giants who wreak all the havoc on earth that causes God to send the flood, without the damage ever being fully repaired; for though the rebellious angels are bound and jailed, while their giant offspring are killed by obedient angels sent against them, their wicked activities continue due to evil spirits that have issued from them. The message of the book is that superhuman forces rather than human beings are responsible for the existence of evil on earth; God sent the flood to rid the earth of the dreadful giants, not to punish humans, who suffer as innocent victims of superior powers.[6]

Aramaic fragments of this book, apparently dating from the second century BCE and suggesting that the book itself goes back to the third century BCE, have been found at Qumran, along with fragments of related works, such as the *Book of Giants*.[7] Substantial Greek portions are also extant, partly in an Egyptian papyrus dating from perhaps the fifth or sixth century CE, and partly in extracts by the ninth-century Byzantine author George Syncellus.[8] The Ethiopic version, which preserves the book in full, is a translation made on the basis of a Greek original between the fourth and sixth centuries CE.[9] There are also numerous references to and retellings | of the book in Jewish, Christian, pagan, Manichaean and other Gnostic literature.[10]

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6   See Forsyth, *Satan and the Combat Myth* (above, note 3), pp. 167, 169 f.; cf. also J.J. Collins, 'The Origin of Evil in Apocalyptic Literature,' in his *Seers, Sibyls and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism*, Leiden 1997, pp. 292–299; M. Delcor, 'Le mythe de la chute des anges et de l'origine des géants comme explication du mal dans le monde dans l'apocalyptique juive,' *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 190 (1976), pp. 3–53; and the interesting discussion in S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, Princeton 2001, pp. 77 ff.

7   *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4*, ed. and transl. J.T. Milik, Oxford 1976; *The Book of Giants from Qumran*, ed. and transl. L. Stuckenbruck, Tübingen 1997.

8   M. Black (ed.), *Apocalypsis Henochi Graece*, Leiden 1970. The Egyptian manuscript (Codex Panopolitanus) is sometimes dated to the eighth century or later.

9   *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch in the Light of the Aramaic Dead Sea Fragments*, ed. and transl. M.A. Knipp, Oxford 1978. There are later editions and translations, too. The *Book of Watchers* covers chaps. 1–36 and has been used in this article in the translations of E. Isaac in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, I: *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, New York 1983, pp. 5–89; and of G.W.E. Nickelsburg and J.C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation*, Minneapolis 2004.

10   See Jung, *Fallen Angels* (above, note 1); B.J. Bamberger, *Fallen Angels*, Philadelphia 1952; F. Dexinger, *Sturz der Göttersöhne oder Engel vor der Sintflut?* Vienna 1966; J.C. VanderKam, '1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs and Enoch in Early Christian Literature,' in J.C. VanderKam and

It used to be thought that the Enoch literature and other pseudepigraphic works originated in sectarian or socially marginal circles, but this is no longer the prevailing view; the *Book of Watchers* seems to have been regarded as authoritative by many Jews down to the second century CE. Then the rabbis turned against it, however. The second-century rabbi Simeon b. Yohai cursed all those who explained the 'sons of God' as angels: in his view, they were sons of judges. Some said they were called 'sons of God' because they lived long and easy lives.[11] The Aramaic targums duly translated 'sons of God' as 'sons of judges' (Neophyti) or 'sons of nobles' (Onqelos and Pseudo-Jonathan; similarly the Samaritan targum), while Symmachus, a Jewish or Jewish Christian translator of the Bible into Greek active in the late second or early third century, opted for 'sons of the powerful.'[12] Thereafter they were explained as human beings of one kind or another by all the main commentators on the Bible, Qaraites included.[13] The protagonists of | the story appear here and there in rabbinic literature, but with little trace, before the rise of Islam, of their angelic descent or sexual misconduct, let alone their illicit teaching.[14]

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W. Adler (eds.), *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity*, Minneapolis 1996; A.Y. Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature*, Cambridge 2005; G.A.G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology*, Leiden 1984, especially chaps. 2 and 8; J.C. Reeves, *Heralds of That Good Realm: Syro-Mesopotamian Gnosis and Jewish Traditions*, Leiden 1996, pp. 183–206; idem, *Jewish Lore in Manichaean Cosmogony: Studies in the Book of the Giants Traditions*, Cincinnati 1992; and idem, 'Jewish Pseudepigrapha in Manichaean Literature: The Influence of the Enochic Library,' in idem (ed.), *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha*, Atlanta 1994. For what appear to be reflections of the Watchers story among the Mandaeans, see J.J. Buckley, *The Mandaeans*, Oxford 2002, p. 8. For the pagans, see below, notes 34, 38, 40 f.

11   *Genesis Rabba*, 26:5, discussed, inter alia, by Bamberger, *Fallen Angels* (above, note 10), p. 91; Alexander, 'Targumim and Early Exegesis' (above, note 5), pp. 61 f.; Reed, *Fallen Angels* (above, note 10), pp. 208 ff. The idea that they were sons of judges has a long and fascinating history of its own, rooted in Psalms 82.

12   Alexander, 'Targumim and Early Exegesis' (above, note 5), pp. 64, 70 f.; Reed, *Fallen Angels* (above, note 10), pp. 213 ff.; J. Fossum, 'The Angel of the Lord in Samaritanism,' *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 46 (2001), p. 53, note. Ps.-Jonathan also has a passage in which they are angels; see below, note 14.

13   Bamberger, *Fallen Angels* (above, note 10), pp. 149 ff. Sa'adya Gaon duly has *banū ʾl-ashrāf* (Saadiyah Ben Joseph al-Fayyūmī, *Version arabe du pentateuque*, Paris 1893, p. 12) and elsewhere dismisses the idea of angels fornicating as a monstrous invention; see idem, *The Book of Theodicy*, I (English transl. by L.E. Goodman), New Haven/London 1988, p. 6 and especially p. 28 in the original pagination.

14   Cf. BT *Niddah* 61a and *Yoma* 67b, and *Deuteronomy rabba* 11:10, where they are guilty

The Christians stuck to the story of the fallen angels for another century or two, impressed by its capacity to account for the prevalence of pagan cults and all the sins with which idolatry was held to go in tandem. The angels and their demonic offspring had enslaved mankind by teaching men murder, war, adultery, magic and other terrible things, not least worship of themselves in the guise of pagan deities, Justin Martyr (d. 165) explained, developing 1 Enoch 15, 8 and 19. The angels had taught humans astrology, magic, metallurgy, cosmetics and idolatry, as Clement of Alexandria (d. ca. 215), Tertullian (d. after 220) and Lactantius (d. ca. 320) said.[15] Philosophically inclined Christians such as Origen (d. ca. 255) interpreted the story allegorically,[16] but even he held the angels to have taught humans astrology.[17] That they and their demonic offspring were responsible for idolatry and diverse forms of illicit knowledge came to be a generally accepted Christian view. It was also as false gods and demons that the angels passed into Manichaean literature.[18]

By the third century, however, the Christians, too, had begun to turn | against the story, and the Enoch literature in general.[19] The 'sons of God' were not angels, it was now said, but rather righteous men, more precisely descendants of Seth who had been seduced by lascivious women descended from Cain in the

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of sexual misconduct, but there is no mention of their illicit teaching. According to Targum Ps.-Jonathan, the *nephilim* were 'Šemḥazai and Azael, these fell from heaven,' a reading taken by Alexander in 'Targumim and Early Exegesis' (above, note 5), pp. 70 f., to antedate the suppression of the angelic interpretation; in this he is followed by A.Y. Reed in 'From Asael and Šemiḥazah to Uzzah, Azzah, and Azael: 3 Enoch 5 (§§ 7–8) and Jewish Reception-History of 1 Enoch,' *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, 8 (2001), p. 123, note; but according to Reed in *Fallen Angels* (above, note 10), pp. 213 f., this is a later insertion. They reappear as angels in *Sefer Hekhalot* (3 Enoch) 5, also assigned to a late date by Reed, 'From Asael and Šemiḥazah,' pp. 132 ff.; *Fallen Angels*, pp. 256 f.

15   VanderKam, '1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs' (above, note 10), pp. 44–54, 68–70, 85.

16   Origen, *Contra Celsum* (English transl. by H. Chadwick), Cambridge 1953, pp. 5, 55, based on Philo, *On the Giants*, 11; cf. L.R. Wickham, 'The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men: Genesis VI 2 in Early Christian Exegesis,' in J. Barr et al., *Language and Meaning: Studies in Hebrew Language and Biblical Exegesis*, Leiden 1974, pp. 142 ff.; VanderKam, '1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs' (above, note 10), pp. 54–59, 81 f.

17   Origen, *Philocalia* (English transl. by G. Lewis), Edinburgh 1911, 23:6.

18   Cf. Psalms of Thomas IV (210:1 and 210:10), in T. Säve-Söderbergh, *Studies in the Coptic Manichaean Psalm-Book*, Uppsala 1949, p. 127.

19   Bamberger, *Fallen Angels* (above, note 10), pp. 74 ff.; Forsyth, *Satan and the Combat Myth* (above, note 3), pp. 349 ff.; Wickham, 'Sons of God and Daughters of Men' (above, note 16), pp. 135–147; VanderKam, '1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs' (above, note 10), pp. 59 f., 100 f.; Reed, *Fallen Angels* (above, note 10), pp. 194 ff.

period between the expulsion from Paradise and the flood. First encountered in Julius Africanus (fl. ca. 200, a Syrian despite his name), this version of the story was to prevail in Greek and Syriac literature, and indeed in Catholic and Protestant interpretation up to modern times.[20] In short, the responsibility for evil was shifted from superior powers to humans themselves. In line with this, the origin of evil increasingly came to be located at the beginning of human history, in the disobedience and expulsion of the devil and his hosts from heaven on the one hand, and the sin and expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise on the other, rather than in the voluntary descent of the angels from heaven in the period before the flood. For all that, the *Book of Watchers* continued to be read by Greek and Syriac Christians. Jacob of Edessa (d. 708) even defended the Enoch book of which it formed a part, convinced of its antediluvian origins, and, unlike their Byzantine counterparts, Syriac chroniclers rarely used disclaimers about the reliability of the Jewish pseudepigrapha when they cited them.[21]

One reason why the Jews turned against the story is that angels, both pure and fallen, were getting out of control. There is a fair amount of evidence for veneration or actual worship of angels among the Jews of the first centuries CE,[22] sometimes involving the angels in general and sometimes | a principal angel cast as mediator between God and mankind; speculation about such an intermediary had probably contributed to the rise of Christianity, and devotion to angels and/or an angelic vice-regent (notably in the form of Metatron) continued in Judaism after the first two centuries, too.[23] Gnostics also oper-

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20   Bamberger, *Fallen Angels* (above, note 10), pp. 78 ff.; Dexinger, *Sturz* (above, note 10), pp. 106 ff.; A.F.J. Klijn, *Seth in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Literature*, Leiden 1977, pp. 61 ff.; Africanus in VanderKam, '1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs' (above, note 10), pp. 80 f.; and S. Brock, *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise*, Crestwood, NY, 1990, hymn I, 11 (p. 81) and the note thereto (p. 189).

21   Cf. W. Adler, 'Jacob of Edessa and the Jewish Pseudepigrapha in Syriac Chronography,' in Reeves, *Tracing the Threads* (above, note 10), p. 145; and S. Brock, 'A Fragment of Enoch in Syriac,' *Journal of Theological Studies*, 19 (1968), pp. 626–631.

22   How far the angels were actually worshipped is controversial. See L.T. Stuckenbruck, 'The Angelic Refusal of Worship: The Tradition and Its Function in the Apocalypse of John,' *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*, 1994, pp. 695 f.; idem, *Angel Veneration and Christology*, Tübingen 1995; differently M. Simon, 'Remarques sur l'angélolâtrie juive au début de l'ère chrétienne,' *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions & Belles-Lettres*, 115 (1971), pp. 120–134. It is with reference to excessive regard for angels that Alexander explains the change in Judaism, in idem, 'Targumim and Early Exegesis' (above, note 5), pp. 68 f.

23   A. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, Leiden 1977; N. Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate: Angelic Vice*

ated with the notion of an intermediary, but they postulated that he was evil, and they filled the void between the all-too-distant God and mankind with demonic beings, convinced, like Pseudo-Enoch, that human beings were victims of superior forces of evil beyond their control. Gnostic myths abound in sexual union by seduction or rape between evil archons and primordial humans, in direct retellings of the Watcher story[24] or in distant echoes of it (or independently); the result is sometimes called 'abortions' (Hebrew *nephalim*, an alternative understanding of the *nephilim* of Gen. 6:1).[25] A similar filling up of divine space was underway in the 'underworld' of Platonism, as Dillon calls the confluence of Gnostic, Hermetic and Chaldaean thought characteristic of late antique paganism.[26] That humanity is at the mercy of unfathomable forces of the universe is also the key conviction behind late antique magic, devoted to the control of such forces by manipulation of the angels in charge of them.[27]

The rabbis reacted to these developments by both rejecting the story of the fallen angels *and* belittling the angels as a class.[28] (A similar reaction can be seen among the Samaritans.)[29] The rabbis did not have an answer to the problem of evil, which was acute, thanks to the political disasters of the first and second centuries and the Christianisation of the Roman empire | that had followed them. Rather, they coped with it by closing the door on the world outside and attributing evil, like everything else, to God, while at the same time making Him so intimate and familiar a figure that everything He did seemed bearable. It was not the case that there were 'two powers in heaven,' let alone 'many ruling powers in heaven'; rather, God and Israel formed a tight-knit family, whatever the ups and downs. Personal morality was what mattered, not

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        Regency in Late Antiquity, Leiden 1999; D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, Philadelphia 2004, chaps. 5–6; for Metatron, see below, notes 96 f.

24   Stroumsa, *Another Seed* (above, note 10), p. 32, note 54, and pp. 33, 35–37; Reeves, *Jewish Lore in Manichaean Cosmogony* (above, note 10), pp. 75 f., 81.

25   Stroumsa, *Another Seed* (above, note 10), chaps. 2, 8 (casting the Watcher story as the key to Gnosticism altogether); Reeves, *Jewish Lore in Manichaean Cosmogony* (above, note 10), pp. 71 f.

26   R. Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Leiden 1989, pp. 8 f.; cf. J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, London 1977, p. 384.

27   H.D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, Chicago/London 1986, p. xlvii; cf. also S. Shaked, 'Popular Religion in Sasanian Babylonia,' *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 21 (1997), p. 104.

28   Noted by Bamberger, *Fallen Angels* (above, note 10), p. 92.

29   Fossum, 'Angel of the Lord' (above, note 12), pp. 52 f.

the uncontrollable developments in the world of gentiles: evil was now dealt with primarily as an 'evil inclination' (*yetzer hara*) in the human heart.[30]

The Christians, meanwhile, had split the godhead into three and allowed for an almost autonomous realm of evil, setting them well on the way to the Gnostic direction. However, they saved their biblical concept of the deity by casting God as the ultimate creator of the evil realm, while at the same time absolving Him of responsibility for it by recourse to the concept of free will. The devil they placed in charge of the evil realm had a long history entwined with that of the fallen angels, who accompanied him in the transfer of the decisive fall from the period before the flood to the beginning of human history.[31] Pseudo-Enoch's explanation of the flood was discarded.

To both Jews and Christians, eliminating Enoch's fallen angels was all the more desirable in that the idea of angels copulating with women had come to feel offensive.[32] Angels were superior beings. Besides, they had no passions, and even if they did, they had no bodies. How could they desire the corporeal, let alone cause human reproduction? The whole story was perverse and absurd, Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) insisted, stressing that the 'sons of God' mentioned in Genesis were *not* to be understood as angels. 'Is it not probable that many will be discouraged by this and choose sensuality ... if we believe that even the very angels fell subject to passion?' he asked.[33]

Meanwhile, the story of the 'sons of God' had been taken up by pagans. Some adduced it in polemics against Christianity, arguing, like Celsus (ca. | 170), that it showed Jesus not to have been the only angel to have come; or, like Julian the Apostate (d. 363), that it proved Moses to have believed in many gods without knowing anything about Jesus.[34] (To late antique pagans, gods and angels were interchangeable, and Christ was commonly envisaged as an angel in early Christianity.)[35] Others read the story as an account of the origins

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30   Bamberger, *Fallen Angels* (above, note 10), especially pp. 49, 57, 95, 101 f.; E.E. Urbach, *The Sages*, Jerusalem 1975, chap. 15.

31   For all this, see Forsyth, *Satan and the Combat Myth* (above, note 3), pp. 222 ff. and *passim*. The Watcher story began to be connected with the story of Adam and Eve as early as the first century BCE.

32   That they cannot sin is already affirmed by the Jew in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*, 79, 1.

33   Wickham, 'Sons of God and Daughters of Men' (above, note 16), pp. 135–138. Wickham's further argument regarding the role of Christology is opaque to me.

34   Celsus in Origen, *Contra Celsum* (above, note 16), pp. 5, 52; Julian, *Against the Galilees*, 290B–E, in *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, ed. and transl. W.C. Wright, III, Cambridge, MA/London 1913–1923, pp. 400–403.

35   For a classic work, see J. Barbel, *Christos Angelos*, Bonn 1941; for a more recent one,

of the occult sciences. It was, after all, to the fallen angels that astrologers, alchemists, soothsayers, diviners, magicians and their like were believed to owe their knowledge, as they themselves were well aware. A Syriac—i.e., pagan or Christian—incantation bowl against 'all the evil magical arts' (presumably written by someone who saw his own magic as beneficent) refers to 'angels that reveal the mysteries of their lord.'[36] Zosimus (ca. 300), a Hermetic alchemist from Panopolis, where the book of Enoch was still read in the fifth or sixth century,[37] says that the holy scriptures mention angels who descended from heaven and mated with women, teaching them 'all the arts of nature,' and that they were punished for this, since these arts were bad arts 'of no benefit for the soul.' He adds that Hermes, too, talked about these events in his *Physika*, and that, indeed, they are mentioned in almost every exoteric or esoteric treatise. He is clearly pleased by the biblical and Hermetic agreement on the angelic origin of the arts of nature, however lacking in benefit for the soul they might be.[38]

The claim by Zosimus that the story had gone into esoteric works ac|cords with a remark by Jacob of Edessa (d. 708), according to which Athanasius of Alexandria (d. 373) proscribed the Enoch literature because heretics had incorporated it into their secret books.[39] There are, in fact, traces of 1 Enoch in the Hermetic literature,[40] and among the Hermetic works that Zosimus may have had in mind is a small treatise known as *Isis the Prophetess to Her Son Horus*. In this work, Isis tells of how one of the angels (or, according to one

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see C.A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christianity*, Leiden 1998. Like Jewish angel veneration/worship, it is best attested in the first two centuries CE, but surfaces thereafter, too; cf. S.J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption*, Oxford 2002, chap. 3 and appendix A, translating an Ethiopic work preserving a fifth-century Syrian narrative.

36　J. Teixidor, 'The Syriac Incantation Bowls in the Iraq Museum,' *Sumer*, 18 (1962), p. 53.

37　On the date of Codex Panopolitanus see above, note 8, and the text thereto.

38　Zosimus, quoted by Syncellus in R.P. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, I, Paris 1944, p. 256; in J. Lindsay, *The Origins of Alchemy in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, London 1970, p. 179; in Stroumsa, *Another Seed* (above, note 10), pp. 139 f. (whose translation I have followed); and in VanderKam, '1 Enoch, Enoch Motifs' (above, note 10), pp. 83 f. For Zosimus's position, see D. Stolzenberg, 'Unpropitious Tinctures: Alchemy, Astrology & Gnosis according to Zosimus of Panopolis,' *Archives Internationales d'Histoire des Sciences*, 49 (1999), p. 28 (I owe this reference to Albert de Jong).

39　Adler, 'Jacob of Edessa' (above, note 21), p. 145.

40　Cf. M. Philonenko, 'Une Allusion de l'Asclepius au livre d'Hénoch,' in J. Neusner (ed.), *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, II, Leiden 1975, pp. 11–63.

version, a prophet or angel) caught sight of her and wanted to make love with her. She refused unless he would tell her about the preparation of gold and silver first; he said that this was beyond his ability, and he sent another angel, Amnael, who also wanted to make love with her and was eventually persuaded to part with his secrets. (Whether he got his payment is not stated.)[41]

As de Ménasce observes, in Isis's account the Watcher story seems to have fused with an Indian myth regarding two *ashvin*s, twin Vedic gods who roam about in the world of mortals and try to seduce a married woman but merely succeed in rejuvenating her old husband.[42] In this story, as in Enoch, the events lead to the appearance of temptations on earth, here through intoxicating substances in drinks, as well as through women, gambling and sports; and this story, too, would have appealed to the practitioners of the arts of nature, for the *ashvin*s were physicians to the celestials and practitioners of the healing arts. The hypothesis that their adventures had fused with those of the fallen angels would account for three otherwise puzzling features of Isis's version: there are only two angels in it, as opposed to the two hundred in the *Book of Watchers*;[43] it only features one particular woman, as opposed to women in general; and the woman now obtains her secret knowledge by *not* mating with the celestial beings. It is presumably the same quasi-Indian version which is reflected in rabbinic | allusions to the story in which the angels form a pair.[44] It is in any case this version which lies behind the Gnostic story of a woman called Norea, Noria, Noraia, Horea, Orea, Nuraita or the like, who resisted the attempts of the wicked archons to seduce her, to be rescued by Eleleth, a holy

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41   Festugière, *Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, I (above, note 38), pp. 256–260 (two versions); Lindsay, *Origins of Alchemy* (above, note 38), pp. 194f. (amalgamated); cf. also M. Idel, 'The Origin of Alchemy According to Zosimos and a Hebrew Parallel,' *Revue des Études Juives*, 145 (1986), pp. 117–124.

42   P.J. de Ménasce, 'Une légende indo-iranienne dans l'angélologie judéo-musulmane: À propos de Hārūt et Mārūt,' *Études Asiatiques*, 1 (1947), p. 10; *Mahābhārata*, III (Vana Parva), pp. 123–125.

43   1 Enoch 6. There are only sixty or seventy of them in Celsus; see *Contra Celsum* (above, note 16), pp. 5, 52.

44   BT *Yoma* 67b (Azael and Uzza), *Deuteronomy rabba* 11:10 (Azah and Azael), and a probably late insertion in Targum Ps.-Jonathan (Azael and Šemḥazai; see above, note 14); similarly, the much later 'Midrash on Šemḥazai and Azael' (edited, translated, and discussed on the basis of four versions in Milik, *Books of Enoch* [above, note 7], pp. 321–339; also discussed in Reed, *Fallen Angels* [above, note 10], pp. 258 ff.), and a late midrash on the virgin Istahar, who is turned into a star as a reward for her resistance to sin (S. Liebermann, 'After Life in Early Rabbinic Literature,' *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume*, II, English section, Jerusalem 1965, p. 497).

angel who revealed the truth to her.[45] (This seems to be the only form in which the Gnostics took a positive interest in the teaching of the Watchers, which they normally condemned, insofar as they mentioned it at all.)[46] It is also in this form that it was familiar to Muslim exegetes: two angels court one woman, who tricks them into parting with their secrets without mating with them. Though the rabbis and the churchmen had not succeeded in killing the story, they had clearly managed to relegate it to the fringes of respectable society. It was now mainly among pagans, Gnostics and devotees of the occult that it flourished, outside the mainstream communities or, if within them, in the somewhat marginal circles of alchemists, diviners and magicians.[47] It must have been from such circles that it passed to the Qur'ān.

The Fallen Angels in the Qur'ān   27

In the Qur'ānic passage on Hārūt and Mārūt, as in the Isis story, the angels form a pair, but they are not guilty of any sexual sins; they merely teach people magic. So, too, do the demons (indeed, the passage can be read as

45   B.A. Pearson, 'The Figure of Norea in Gnostic Literature,' *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism, Stockholm 1973*, Stockholm/Leiden 1977, pp. 143–152; Stroumsa, *Another Seed* (above, note 10), pp. 53–55, 140 f.

46   The Watchers revealed the arts in the world and the mysteries of heaven to men, teaching them all they had seen in heaven, in hell and on earth, according to Mani, *Kephalaia*, 92:24–31, in Reeves, *Jewish Lore in Manichaean Cosmogony* (above, note 10), p. 81; they taught magic, idolatry and bloodshed, according to 'On the Origins of the World,' in J.M. Robinson (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, Leiden 1988, II, 5, 123. Most Gnostic works retell the story of the Watchers in recognizable form without saying anything about their teaching; see, in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, the 'Valentinian Exposition' (XI, 2, 38) and the 'Apocryphon of John' (II, 1, 29); see also Agapius's summary of Awdi's doctrine in Agapius, *Kitāb al-ʿunwān*, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, ed. and transl. A. Vasiliev, VII (1911), p. 564; cf. H.-C. Puech, *En quête de la Gnose*, Paris 1972, pp. 275 f.; and the survey in VanderKam, '1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs' (above, note 10), pp. 70–76.

47   Just how marginal (or disreputable) these circles were, from the point of view of churchmen and rabbis, I do not know. But recourse to magicians and soothsayers was condemned at a synod of 576 (A.V. Williams, 'Zoroastrians and Christians in Sasanian Iran,' *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 78 [1996], p. 43; cf. p. 45 for similar condemnations on the Zoroastrian side), and though the rabbis made some concessions, their attitude comes across as basically hostile, too (cf. Urbach, *The Sages* [above, note 30], pp. 97 ff.; B. Kern-Ulmer, 'The Depiction of Magic in Rabbinic Texts: The Rabbinic and the Greek Concept of Magic,' *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, 27 [1996], pp. 289–303).

saying that the demons teach magic which they have learnt from the angels), but it is only the demons who render themselves guilty of *kufr* thereby. The angels are cast as agents of God: they warn their customers not to render themselves guilty of *kufr*, explaining that their own function is to test people's faith (*innamā naḥnu fitna*), and what they teach is something sent down to them. Why angels should be teachers of magic, and how they came to be in Babylon, we are not told; nor are we told how, if at all, they relate to the demons. There is no suggestion that the latter are their giant sons, and though the false angels/gods of the *mushrikūn* are sometimes explained as demons (*jinn*) in the Qurʾān,[48] it is nowhere suggested there, either, that they are the offspring of angels.

The problem that preoccupies the Qurʾān in the passage on Hārūt and Mārūt is that some People of the Book (i.e., Jews or Christians) prefer magic to the truth. In the preceding verse it complains that a party of the People of the Book react to the fact that a messenger has come to them from God by throwing the book behind their backs (2:101); they prefer to follow that which the demons related to Solomon, i.e., magic.[49] Solomon was not an unbeliever (i.e., even though he used magic),[50] but the People of the Book are clearly unbelievers, for they disregard the advice of Hārūt and Mārūt not to become infidels by using their services. From the two angels they learn 'that with which to split up a man and his wife' (just as in the *Book | of Watchers* the angels teach the daughters of men 'to make hate-inducing charms,' 1 Enoch 9:7), and thereby they forfeit their share in the hereafter (2:102). We clearly find ourselves right in the middle of Jewish magic, a well-attested phenomenon, and one in which speculation about Solomon is well known to have played a role.[51] Famed in antiquity, it is represented in the Greek magical papyri from Egypt dating from the second century BCE to the fifth century CE (though these

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48   Q. 6:100; 34:40 f.; 37:158.

49   According to many exegetes, the demons did not relate things to Solomon, but rather against him. *Talā ʿalayhi* normally means 'he related/recited to somebody,' but the verse is problematic because it has them relate things *ʿalā mulk Sulaymān* rather than *ʿalā ʾl-malik Sulaymān*. Some exegetes tried to solve the problem by understanding the *ʿalā* as adversarial (against the kingship of Solomon); others read it as chronological (at the time of Solomon's kingdom). Since none of these constructions really click, it seems more likely that *mulk* is in need of emendation.

50   Or, in the understanding of the exegetes, even though the demons maligned him by calling him a magician rather than a prophet.

51   Cf. P. Torijano, *Solomon the Esoteric King: From King to Magus*, Leiden 2002, especially pp. 119 ff., 192 ff.

texts are generally pagan);[52] in Aramaic amulets, mainly from Palestine; in incantation bowls from Sasanian Iraq;[53] in the Hekhalot literature, reflecting the period from ca. 200 to 800 CE;[54] in manuals for sorcerers, reflecting the period from late antiquity to Sasanian times;[55] and in the Geniza.[56] In Mesopotamia and Iran the great majority of incantation bowls were made by Jews, often for clients bearing Iranian names, suggesting that magic was regarded as something of a Jewish speciality there,[57] and it must have been from a region within the Iranian sphere of influence that the story passed to the Qur'ān, for Hārūt and Mārūt are Haurvatāt and Ameretāt, two of the Zoroastrian divine beings known as *amesha spentas*,[58] and it is in Bābil that the Qur'ān places them.

De Ménasce conjectured that it was via the Manichaeans that the angels passed into the Qur'ān, on the grounds that it was probably Mani who gave them Iranian names, just as he (or his disciples) renamed the giants.[59] But such evidence as we have does not support him. In Genesis the angels and giants are anonymous; in the *Book of Watchers* they have acquired names, | and here the leading angel is called Shemiḥazah, while the one who reveals the divine secrets is called Asael ('s'l), also rendered Azael ('z'l) and Azazel ('z'zl)—a name which conflates him with the devil.[60] But while the fragments

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52   Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri* (above, note 27), pp. xli, xlv.

53   See, e.g., the introduction to J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations from Late Antiquity*, Leiden 1985.

54   Cf. P. Schäfer, 'Merkavah Mysticism and Magic,' in idem and J. Dan (eds.), *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After*, Tübingen 1993; idem, 'Jewish Magic Literature in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages,' *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 41 (1990), pp. 76–79.

55   Cf. *The Sword of Moses: An Ancient Book of Magic*, ed. and transl. M. Gaster, London 1896; reprinted in his *Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Mediaeval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha and Samaritan Archaeology*, vols. I (translation) and III (text), New York 1928; *Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of Mysteries*, transl. M.A. Morgan, Chico, CA, 1983; Torijano, *Solomon* (above, note 51), pp. 198 ff., with further references.

56   *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, ed. and transl. P. Schäfer and S. Shaked, Tübingen 1994.

57   Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls* (above, note 53), p. 18.

58   De Ménasce, 'Une légende indo-iranienne' (above, note 42), pp. 10 f.

59   Ibid., pp. 16 f.

60   Cf. the useful survey in *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch*, transl. M. Black, Leiden 1985, p. 121; and see below, notes 128–132. The form Azazel arose by identification of the fallen angel with the demonic figure to whom a sin-laden scapegoat was sent on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16).

of Mani's *Book of Giants* do indeed iranianize the names of two giants as Sām and Narīmān, they just adapt Šemḥazai as Šahmīzād,[61] and though we do not know how Azael's name was rendered, the fragments operate with two hundred Watchers (now demons) rather than two.[62] It is more likely to have been via magic that the angels were renamed, given that it is in the context of magic that the Qurʾān mentions them. Artat Amurtat (presumably from Haurvatāt and Ameretāt) figures among the *nomina barbara* in magical texts from Iraq.[63]

Tafsīr

It is a striking fact that although the Qurʾān gives the angels Iranian names and says very little about them, the exegetes effortlessly recognized them as the fallen angels from the Watcher story. The Iraqi exegete al-Kalbī (d. 763) even knew their pre-Iranian names. In his version there are three angels, as also in *Sefer Hekhalot* (3 Enoch), perhaps a development from the three (or four) angels who observe the misbehaviour of the giants from heaven in the *Book of Watchers*.[64] *Sefer Hekhalot* called them Uza, Aza and Azael (ʿwzʾ, ʿzʾ and ʿzʾl) and the like, with Azael as the stablest element.[65] | An Aramaic incantation bowl which also operates with three angels on the theme of ʿz (and which invokes pagan, Jewish and Christian divinities alike) calls them Azael, Azael and Az(a)ziel (ʿzʾl, ʿzʾl, ʿzzyʾl), where the second Azael should perhaps be understood as Azzael, Uzael or the like.[66] Other bowls, which have only two ʿz

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61   W.B. Henning, 'The Book of Giants,' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 9 (1943–1946), p. 60; W. Sundermann, 'Ein weiteres Fragment aus Manis Gigantenbuch,' in his *Manichaica Iranica*, II, ed. C. Reck et al., Rome 2001, p. 496 (of the original pagination).

62   Henning, 'Book of Giants' (above, note 61), pp. 68 f., 71; W. Sundermann, 'Mani's "Book of the Giants" and the Jewish Books of Enoch: A Case of Terminological Difference and What It Implies,' in his *Manichaica Iranica*, II (above, note 61), p. 42 (of the original pagination).

63   Shaked, 'Popular Religion in Sasanian Babylonia' (above, note 27), pp. 110, 113.

64   1 Enoch 9; cf. O.S. Wintermute, 'Jubilees,' 7:21–26, in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, II: *Expansions of the Old Testament and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works*, New York 1985; cf. below, note 83 and the text there.

65   Reed, 'From Asael and Šemiḥazah' (above, note 14), p. 122 and note 64. P. Alexander transliterates the names as ʿUzzah, ʿAzzah, and ʿAzaʾel in his translation of 3 Enoch 4 and 5, in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, I (above, note 9), pp. 258, 260.

66   D. Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls: Incantation Texts in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity*, London 2003, no. M163:18 (§ 5). The clients want their opponent punished in the same

names, call them Aza and Azael ('z', 'z'l).[67] Al-Kalbī calls them 'Azā, 'Azāyā and 'Azazīl ('z', 'z'y', 'zzyl). One of them failed to make the descent, he says, while the other two bore the additional names of Hārūt and Mārūt.[68] Al-Kalbī and other exegetes also knew the events to be associated with Enoch (now called Idrīs).[69]

As the exegetes tell the story, however, it is not about angelic revolt or the origin of sin. Rather, it is about how tough it is to be a human being: even the angels lost control of themselves when they experienced the enormous surge of sexual passion. Cyril of Alexandria's warnings notwithstanding, this plainly did not serve to encourage immorality, but on the contrary to warn against smug self-confidence; and if the angels came out badly in the story, it only went to show that they had no reason to feel superior. The exegetes thus linked the story with the theme, familiar from rabbinic literature, of rivalry between angels and human beings: the story put the angels in their place.[70] Though the exegetes went out of their way to stress that angels were not *normally* endowed with passions, some continued to find the story offensive, and construed Hārūt and Mārūt as human beings by reading *malikayn* ('two kings') for *malakayn* ('two angels') at Q. 2:102, or they read the verse as saying that magic was *not* sent down to | the two angels.[71] (The story of the sons of Seth seduced by the daughters of Cain was well known, but not as an alternative to the Watcher story, which had changed too much by now for the two to be interchangeable.)[72] Rationalists

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way that 'z'l w-'z'l w-'zzy'l, who transgressed the command of their lord, were pressed under the mountain with their faces downwards by angels sent against them.

67   See below, notes 116 f. There are also manuscripts of *Sefer Hekhalot* that have only two 'z names, again 'z'/'zh and 'z'l; see Reed, 'From Asael and Šemiḥazah' (above, note 14), p. 122.

68   Abū Bakr 'Atīq, *Tafsir-i Sūrābādī*, I (above, note 1), p. 105; Abdullaeva, *Lakhorskhij tafsir* (above, note 1), pp. 42 f. = pp. 79 ff.

69   The angels descend to earth in the time of Idrīs (Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, I [above, note 1], p. 458, citing al-Rabī'; al-Māwardī, *Tafsīr*, I, ed. Kh.M. Khiḍr, Kuwait 1982, p. 142; Qazwīnī in Jung, *Fallen Angels* [above, note 1], p. 130); as in the *Book of Watchers* (13:4), they ask him to intercede for them (Kalbī in Abdullaeva, *Lakhorskhij tafsir* [above, note 1], p. 44 = p. 81).

70   See P. Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen*, Berlin 1975; Reeves, 'Some Explorations' (above, note 2), pp. 52 ff.

71   See Jung, *Fallen Angels* (above, note 1), pp. 126 f., 128 f., 135, 139. The reading *malikayn* is reported for al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī and Ibn 'Abbās (Ibn Khālawayh, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī shawādhdh al-Qur'ān*, ed. G. Bergsträsser, Paris 2005 [first published Leipzig 1934], p. 8), al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim (*Tafsīr al-Ḍaḥḥāk*, assembled and edited by M.Sh.A. al-Zāwaytī, Cairo 1999, p. 161, no. 68), Sa'īd b. Jubayr, al-Zuhrī, and others ('A.-L. al-Khaṭīb, *Mu'jam al-qirā'āt*, I, Damascus 2000, p. 164, drawn to my attention by Joseph Witztum).

72   Cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, I, ed. M.J. de Goeje et al., Leiden 1879–1901, pp. 168 ff. (English transl. by F. Rosenthal, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, I, Albany 1989); al-

such as the Muʿtazilite Muṭahhar al-Maqdisī (wr. ca. 355/966) objected to it in much the same terms as Cyril of Alexandria: how could spirits without bodies have passions or make love?[73] For all that, the story retained its popularity. Indeed, it returned to the world of high culture, and not only for Muslims, but also for Jews, who liked the Muslim version of the story, even though their own exegetes continued to identify the biblical sons of God as human beings.[74] The story proved extremely long-lived, too. In 1915, an Indian Muslim in Germany wrote a summary of the story of Hārūt and Mārūt in Persian for the Orientalist Littmann: it now involved two women to match the two angels; the women had become singers and dancers, and both ended up as planets. That apart, the story was much as it had been told by al-Kalbī and his likes over a thousand years earlier.[75]

Other Echoes

32   As Reeves notes, however, there seems to be a second reflection of the | *Book of Watchers* in Q. 2:30, on God's creation of Adam.[76] In the Qurʾān, as in the Jewish and Christian literature of the time, it is at the dawn of human history that sin comes into the world, thanks to an arrogant angel (related to the same ancient Near Eastern myth of rebellion in the pantheon as that behind Genesis 6:2–4) who is expelled from heaven and proceeds to seduce Eve, representing the daughters of men. There had been much interaction between the biblical story of Adam and Eve and that about the sons of God and the daughters of men, as developed by later authors, and motifs originally associated with the flood

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      Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, ed. M.Th. Houtsma, Leiden 1883, pp. 5 ff.; Jung, *Fallen Angels* (above, note 1), pp. 124 ff.

73   Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-Badʾ waʾl-taʾrīkh*, III (ed. and French transl. by C. Huart), Paris 1899–1919, p. 15 (Jung, *Fallen Angels* [above, note 1], p. 128). Similarly Saʿadya Gaon, *Version arabe du pentateuque* (above, note 13).

74   Cf. Bamberger, *Fallen Angels* (above, note 10), pp. 113 ff. and pp. 119 ff.; Reed, *Fallen Angels* (above, note 10), chap. 7; E.G. Hirsch, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York [1964], s.v. 'Fall of Angels.'

75   Littmann, 'Hārūt und Mārūt' (above, note 1), pp. 70 ff. Hārūt and Mārūt also passed into English literature, both serious and lighthearted; in Sir Rider Haggard's *Ivory Child*, published in 1916, they are African magicians who are announced by the butler as 'Mr. Hare-root and Mr. Mare-root.' See Shahbazi, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. 'Hārūt and Mārūt' (above, note 1); I owe this reference to Mohsen Ashtiany.

76   Reeves, 'Some Explorations' (above, note 2), pp. 52 ff.

had been transferred to the time of the creation.[77] In the Qurʾānic account of the arrogant figure, here known as Iblīs, the fact that he is envisaged now as an angel (Q. 7:11; 15:28–31, 17:61, 38:73) and now as a demon (*min al-jinn*, Q. 18:50) is presumably an Enochic legacy. But it is in the account of God's creation of Adam that we encounter a more direct reflection of the *Book of Watchers*.

In Q. 2:30, God tells the angels that he intends to create Adam, which is also what he does in rabbinic accounts (but not in Christian ones);[78] and here as there the angels object to God's plan. Both versions, in other words, pick up the theme of rivalry between angels and humans. In the rabbinic accounts, the angels sometimes object to God's plan on the grounds that mortals are useless and weak (cf. Ps. 8:5, 144:3–4);[79] at other times, they object that he is all falsehood and discord,[80] or they enquire what his deeds will be like,[81] or God tells them that man will be righteous without telling them that he will be wicked, too.[82] In the Qurʾān, the angels object to the creation of a being who 'will do corruption in the earth and shed blood,' and God overrules them, saying that He knows what they do not. Here, as there, God knows something that He is not telling the angels, but here it is the angels who know about the wicked men of the future, and there is a new stress on bloodshed. As Reeves says, this would appear to reflect Gen. 6:11–13, on the generation of the flood, which 'corrupted the earth' and 'engaged in violence.' In the retelling of that passage in the *Book of Watch|ers*, three or four angels observing the earth from heaven see 'much blood being shed upon the earth, and all the oppression being wrought upon the earth.'[83] The events leading to the flood having been transferred to the beginning of human history, the angelic objections are now made not on

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77   See the references in note 31 above.

78   Origen is exceptional in holding the same opinion on the Christian side; see R. McL. Wilson, 'The Early History of the Exegesis of Gen. 1.26,' *Studia Patristica*, 1 (1957), p. 420. The Christians typically see God as addressing Christ, the Logos.

79   Thus Reeves, 'Some Explorations' (above, note 2), p. 53.

80   *Genesis rabba* 8:5, where the angels are divided over the question.

81   BT *Sanhedrin* 38b, where God responds by destroying them until He gets the answer He wants.

82   *Genesis rabba*, 8:4.

83   1Enoch 9; cf. *Jubilees*, 7:21–26, both adduced by Reeves, 'Some Explorations' (above, note 2), pp. 53 f. There are three angels in Isaac's translation (Michael, Surafel and Gabriel), four in that of Nickelsburg and VanderKam (Michael, Sariel, Raphael and Gabriel). Reeves's alternative suggestion that Q. 2:30 alludes to Cain's murder of Abel is less persuasive. Cf. also his 'Sefer ʿUzza wa-ʿAza(z)el: Exploring Early Jewish Mythologies of Evil,' an account of a monograph in process, at https://clas-pages.uncc.edu/john-reeves/research-projects/sefer-uzza-wa-azazel-exploring-early-jewish-mythologies-of-evil/.

the basis of observation of the earth in the time of Enoch, but rather by way of foresight at the time of Adam's creation. The angels no longer comment on the terrible behaviour of giants in the pre-flood generation, but rather on that of all-too-fallible humans in general. ('Corruption in the earth' is denounced in many other passages, too.) In the Qurʾān, as in the rabbinic literature, however, God overrules the angels, putting them in their place: for all their faults, humans have a special place with Him.

In the exegetical literature, the transfer of the events from the flood generation to human prehistory had other repercussions. The *Book of Watchers* presents the righteous angels as descending to earth to fight the giant offspring of their fallen colleagues. In the exegetical and historical literature of the Muslims, the giants have become an angelic tribe of spirits (*jinn*) who lived on earth, to which the angel and/or spirit Iblīs, the future devil, was sent to serve as their judge; or he was the ruler of heaven and earth at the time, until he grew arrogant and disobeyed; or the *jinn* became infidels and caused corruption on the earth, whereupon Iblīs was sent against them with an army of angels, which caused him to become arrogant and rebel.[84] These events are sometimes used to explain Adam's status as *khalīfa* (deputy or successor): Adam succeeded or replaced those angels or spirits on earth, we are told. The implicit message is that Adam's title did *not* mean 'deputy of God on earth'; in other words, the caliphs could not invoke Qurʾānic support when they styled themselves deputies of God, as they did from ʿUthmān onwards. One part of the story thus came to be associated | with a wholly new set of burning problems, once again in connection with political changes.[85]

There could be a third reflection, or more precisely development, of a theme from the Watcher story in the Qurʾānic stress on the fact that the angels only descend at the command of God, or with His permission. In Q. 19:64, unnamed speakers, generally assumed to be the angels, declare: 'We do not descend [*natanazzalu*] except at the command of your (sg.) Lord'; they add that every-

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84   For an accessible survey, see Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* (above, note 72), pp. 79–85; for many others, in which the fallen angels (complete with the name ʿAzāzīl) are easily recognized, see M.J. Kister, 'Legends in *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth* Literature: The Creation of Ādam and Related Stories,' in A. Rippin, *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān*, Oxford 1988, pp. 88 ff.

85   Cf. Kister, 'Legends in *tafsīr*' (above, note 84), pp. 85 f.; W. al-Qāḍī, 'The Term "*khalīfa*" in Early Exegetical Literature,' *Die Welt des Islams*, 28 (1988), especially pp. 399 f., 410 f.; P. Crone and M. Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, Cambridge 1986, pp. 6–19; cf. also P. Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (American title: *God's Rule*), Edinburgh 2004, pp. 40 f.

thing belongs to Him and that He does not forget. The next verse spells out the implications: 'So worship (sg.) Him, the Lord of heaven and earth and everything between them.' In 97:4, the night of *qadr* is identified as the night during which the angels and the spirit descend (*tanazzalu*) with God's permission.[86] Neither passage has anything to do with the Enoch story (19:64 f. comes not long after the mention of Enoch's elevation to an exalted place, 19:56 f., but it does not seem to be connected with it, or indeed, with anything that precedes or follows it). The insistence that the angels descend only with God's permission, or at His command, is nonetheless striking, especially in 97:4, where there does not seem to be any reason to stress this. (The exegetes claim that the obscure 19:64 was a response to Muḥammad's impatience at a time when Gabriel had long stayed away.) In 65:12, it is simply God's command that descends (*yatanazzalu*), without reference to the angels or the spirit serving as its bearers: in all three passages, we are reminded that the only power in the universe is God. The same point is also made in polemics against the alleged angels of the polytheists: whether they are genuine angels falsely worshipped, demons or empty names, they have no power (e.g., 7:191–193, 21:42 f., 36:23, 74 f.); it is only with God's permission that they can act (53:26).

Rebellious angels who descended from heaven of their own accord were problematic from this point of view. In fact, attempts to cast the Watchers as obedient until their encounter with human females had been made well before the rise of Islam. In the *Jubilees* (ca. 150 BCE) they come down 'to teach the sons of man, and perform judgement and righteousness on | earth.'[87] In the Jewish Christian Pseudo-Clementine homilies (ca. 300 CE), we are expressly told that they asked for permission to descend, as in *tafsīr*, because they were upset by human ingratitude to God and wished to convict and punish the guilty, that is, to act as judges.[88] And in *Sefer Hekhalot*, the angels who descend no longer seem to include the wicked ones at all: it is the ministering angels who come down from heaven. They do so to execute God's will on earth, and their descent is placed in the quasi-paradisical period after the fall, familiar from the Christian story of the sons of Seth and the daughters of Cain. That

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86   My thanks to Joseph Witztum for drawing this passage to my attention.

87   *Jubilees*, 4:15.

88   Clement of Alexandria (attrib.), *The Homilies* (English transl. by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson; Ante-Nicene Christian Library, 17), Edinburgh 1870, VIII, p. 12; the entire passage on the angels is also translated in VanderKam, '1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs' (above, note 10), pp. 76–78. On the *Homilies*, see A.Y. Reed, '"Jewish Christianity" after the "Parting of the Ways,"' in A.H. Becker and A.Y. Reed (eds.), *The Ways That Never Parted*, Tübingen 2003.

those who taught mankind sorcery were also angels by origin is left unstated.[89] In line with this, the Qurʾān nowhere says that Hārūt and Mārūt defied God. Since their status as angels is accepted, they are presented as obedient, even as teachers of sorcery (2:102). What is stressed here is that they cannot harm anyone 'except with God's permission.' How they came down to Babylon we are not told. But the repeated reminders in other contexts that angels do not descend without being ordered or permitted to by God are likely to have been inspired by familiarity with claims to the contrary.

Finally, in Q. 33:33, the following words are addressed to the wives of the Prophet: 'Stay in your houses and do not make a display, like that of the first Jahiliyya [al-jāhiliyya al-ūlā].' The reference here would seem to be to the women who had been taught to beautify themselves by the angels (1 Enoch 8:1), an innovation which was singled out for particular reprehension by Tertullian in a number of writings. The angels were responsible for the means of 'womanly ostentation' such as jewellery and eye makeup; it was on account of the angels that women had to be veiled, he claimed.[90] The *Book of Watchers*, like the *Jubilees* and Christian works, sees the flood as the first global disaster to overtake mankind, prefiguring the last judgement.[91] In the Epistle of Enoch, another part of 1 Enoch, the flood is | explicitly called 'the first end.'[92] That the first end should have been preceded by the first period of ignorance/barbarism is a natural inference, and the Christians seem to have made it too, though the one example I have come across lacks the eschatological perspective.[93] Some exegetes duly assign the first Jahiliyya mentioned in the Qurʾān to the period before the flood, either between Adam and Noah or between Idrīs and Noah, explaining it with reference to a story about the people of the mountain versus those of the plains (i.e., a version of the Christian story in which the sons of God and the daughters of men are replaced with Sethians and Cainites).[94]

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89   *Sefer Hekhalot*, 5.

90   VanderKam, '1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs' (above, note 10), pp. 51, 68; cf. also p. 66, on Clement of Alexandria.

91   J.C. VanderKam, 'The Righteousness of Noah,' in G.W.E. Nickelsburg (ed.), *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism*, Chicago 1980, pp. 25 f.

92   1 Enoch 93:4.

93   Epiphanius identifies the 'first sect' as Barbarism (*barbarismos*), which lasted from Adam to Noah, marked by Adam's fall, Cain's fratricide and the introduction of sorcery, witchcraft, licentiousness, adultery and iniquity in the time of Jared, Enoch's father; see Epiphanius, *Panarion*, Book I, ed. H. Kroll, Leipzig 1915 (English transl. by F. Williams, Leiden 1987), Proem I, 3, 1 f.; Anacephalaeosis 1, 1, section 1.

94   Cf. Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān* (above, note 1), VII, pp. 4 f. For the Sethians and Cainites, see the references in note 20, above.

The overall impression conveyed by these references is that the Watcher story formed part of the general background against which the Qurʾān was revealed. The story clearly did not come directly from the *Book of Watchers*. The fact that there are only two fallen angels in the Qurʾān, that they bear Iranian names and are located in Bābil, that the angelic comments on human misbehaviour are set in the time of Adam rather than that of Enoch, that they are associated with the theme of rivalry between angels and humans, and that Enoch's own time had apparently come to be known as the first Jahiliyya—all this goes to show that the material had long circulated, in written and/or oral form, in circles which continued to revere the Enoch tradition, but which also participated in developments among mainstream Jews and Christians. Three of the four Qurʾānic allusions come in Medinese suras (2:30, 102, 33:33); the fourth, which is not so much an allusion as a further thought about angelic descent, comes in Meccan ones (19:64, 97:4).

ʿUzayr

The possible fifth example appears in Q. 9:30, another Medinese sura, in which the Jews are famously accused of regarding a certain ʿUzayr as the son of God: 'The Jews say, ʿUzayr is the son of God; the Christians say, the | Masīḥ is the son of God. That is what they say with their mouths, imitating the unbelievers before them. God curse them, how deluded they are.' 37

In the Qurʾān, a son or daughter of God is always an allegedly divine being, usually Christ or the gods/angels worshipped by the pagans, so the charge that is being levelled against the offending parties here is deification of created beings. Even when the Jews and Christians are accused of calling themselves sons of God, the implicit charge is of deification: the retort includes the point that the Jews and Christians are just human beings created by Him (*bashar mimman khalaqa*, 5:18). Of course, the Jews and Christians did not deify themselves, nor is the author of the accusation likely to have thought that they did: he is simply being polemical. But here, at least, we know where he got his polemical ammunition from (ultimately Deut. 14:1, Ps. 82:6, John 1:12). The same cannot be said in the case of ʿUzayr.

The exegetes almost unanimously identify ʿUzayr as Ezra,[95] and modern commentators usually follow suit; but the Jews did not call Ezra the son of God, let alone deify him, as they themselves repeatedly pointed out. This was

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95   For two exceptions, see below, note 108.

well known to the exegetes. They responded by postulating that a *small* group of Jews had worshipped Ezra as the son of God in Medina in the Prophet's time; or that just *one* man had done so; or, alternatively, that all of them had done so *in the past*, when Ezra restored the Torah to them, but that they had since stopped; or that they were still doing it *somewhere else*. The Jewish denial of the charges could thus be discounted.[96] Similar suggestions have been made by modern scholars, too.[97] But the Jews were surely right to remain unpersuaded.

Polemics is not, of course, a genre conducive to accuracy, but polemical charges do need a sting in order to hurt, and it is hard to see where it was in this particular case. The passage proved more of a liability to the Muslims themselves than it did to the Jews. It thus seems unlikely that Ezra was meant, but what is the alternative?

One of the more interesting suggestions is by Newby. According to him, 'Uzayr is indeed Ezra, but only in name; in substance he is Enoch, | with whom, in Newby's view, he had come to be identified, because both of them were scribes who had been translated directly to heaven instead of dying. Enoch in his turn was identified with the angel Metatron, who was regarded as 'the lesser YHWH' in circles cultivating *merkaba* mysticism; and as Metatron he was chief of the angels who were known as 'sons of God' (and whose appellation might somehow have rubbed off on him?). The term 'son of God' could in any case be applied to any righteous man. 'It is easy, then, to imagine that among the Jews of the Ḥijâz who were apparently involved in the mystical speculations associated with the *merkâbâh*, Ezra, because of the traditions of his translation, because of his piety, and particularly because he was equated with Enoch as the Scribe of God, could be termed one of the *Bene Elohîm*.'[98]

This is a bit complicated. If I have understood Newby correctly, he sees the Qur'ān as taking issue with Jewish speculation that 'perhaps—God forbid— there are two powers in heaven,' as disapproving rabbis put it.[99] The second power was a principal angel, envisaged in some circles as Metatron, the angel

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96   Cf. M. Ayoub, "Uzayr in the Qur'an and Muslim Tradition,' in W.M. Brinner and S.D. Ricks (eds.), *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Traditions*, Atlanta 1986, pp. 11 ff.; H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, Princeton 1992, pp. 51 ff.; I.M. Abu-Rabiʿ, *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, Leiden 2001–2006, s.v. 'Ezra.'

97   Cf. below, notes 102 f. Cf. also V. Comerro, 'Esdras est-il le fils de Dieu?,' *Arabica*, 52 (2005), pp. 166 f., 170–172, where other modern suggestions are noted.

98   G.D. Newby, *The History of the Jews of Arabia from Ancient Times to Their Eclipse under Islam*, Columbia, SC, 1988, pp. 59–61.

99   See the references given above, note 23.

who is a transfigured version of Enoch in *Sefer Hekhalot*,[100] and the relevant part of this work may be pre-Islamic.[101] So far, so good, but as the complications suggest, the evidence does not quite fit. The Qur'ān does not speak of Metatron or Enoch or even Idrīs (the name under which Enoch usually figures in the Islamic tradition), but rather of 'Uzayr—and getting Ezra into position as the second power in heaven is hard work. One can try with reference to 4 Ezra (= 2 Esd., 3–14, in the Apocrypha) 14:9, where God promises Ezra that 'you shall be taken up from among men, and henceforth you shall live with my Son and with those who are like you, until the times are ended.'[102] It sounds as if Ezra is being promised angelifica|tion similar to Enoch's here, and the work probably did originally end with his assumption to heaven.[103] For this reason, 4 Ezra figures in the attempts of several scholars to solve the problem of 'Uzayr, sometimes along with the Greek Apocalypse of Ezra.[104] But it is the messiah, not Ezra, who is here called the son of God.[105] Scholars who focus on the Ezra literature accordingly have to postulate either that there was a hitherto unknown Jewish sect which elevated Ezra to divine sonship,[106] or else that Muḥammad simply

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100   3 Enoch 3–16; cf. Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate* (above, note 23), pp. 35 f., 53.

101   In an early article, P.S. Alexander placed the material about Enoch and Metatron in *Sefer Hekhalot* (chaps. 3–16) in the period of ca. 450–850, but he has since dated the entire work in its present form to probably the sixth/seventh century; see idem, 'The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch,' *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 28 (1977), pp. 159, 164, and 'From Son of Adam to Second God: Transformations of the Biblical Enoch,' in M.E. Stone and T.A. Bergren (eds.), *Biblical Figures outside the Bible*, Harrisburg, PA, 1997, pp. 104 f. Cf. also J. Dan, *The Ancient Jewish Mysticism*, Tel Aviv 1975, pp. 122, 124 (ca. sixth century CE). For further references, see Reed, 'From Asael and Šemiḥazah' (above, note 14), p. 108, note 10.

102   Cf. B.M. Metzger, 'The Fourth Book of Ezra: A New Translation and Introduction,' in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, I (above, note 9), pp. 516–519.

103   Cf. R.A. Kraft, '"Ezra" Materials in Judaism and Christianity,' in H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, Part II: *Principat*, 19.1: *Religion*, Berlin 1979, p. 129. The text refers casually to 'before he was taken up' (8:19); Ezra is told to divest himself of his human nature (14:14); and the work, in eastern versions (including the Syriac, given in the margin in the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible), concludes with his assumption.

104   Cf. M.E. Stone, 'Greek Apocalypse of Ezra,' in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, I (above, note 9), pp. 561–579. Here Ezra actually gets to heaven, but apparently only on a temporary basis, since the text ends with his death and burial (7:14 f.).

105   The son also appears in 4 Ezra 7:29, on 'my son the Messiah.'

106   J. Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, Berlin/Leipzig 1926, pp. 127 f.; H. Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*, Gräfenhainischen n.d. (preface dated 1931), p. 413. Even if such a sect had existed, it is hard to believe that it should have come to Muḥammad's attention without being known to the Jews themselves. For comparable suggestions with-

got his information wrong.[107] That Muḥammad got something wrong is also
required by the hypothesis that in substance ʿUzayr is Malachi.[108] Newby wisely
refrains from going down that road.

40   Metatron and Enoch were not called sons of God either, however. This | is
why Newby claims both that Metatron was chief of the fallen angels known as
'sons of God,' and that any righteous man could be thus called. But the first
claim appears to be a straightforward mistake. To the extent that Metatron
was Enoch, he was indeed associated with the fallen angels known as sons of
God, but he was not their chief; moreover, Metatron per se did not have any
connection with the fallen angels, nor is there any evidence that the label 'son
of God' was ever transferred to him. As for the second claim, back in Graeco-
Roman times, any righteous man could be known as a son of God.[109] The rabbis
are said at some point to have extended the sonship to every Israelite, or indeed,
every human being. This does not actually solve the problem, however, for what
the Jews are being accused of in Q. 9:30 is not calling all Israelites or human

out reference to the Ezra literature, see D. Marcus, H.Z. Hirschberg and A. Ben-Yaacob, in
Encyclopaedia Judaica[2], Detroit 2007, s.v. 'Ezra' (a Yemeni sect postulated by Ibn Ḥazm);
J. Walker, 'Who is ʿUzair?' *The Moslem World*, 19 (1929), pp. 303–306 (the Samaritans made
up the charge).

107   Cf. D. Künstlinger, "Uzair ist der Sohn Allāhs,' *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, 35 (1932),
pp. 381–383, suggesting that Muḥammad mistook the name of the book for the name of the
son of God mentioned in it. For another hypothesis requiring him to mistake something,
cf. Ginzberg in the following note.

108   This theory was already being advocated in medieval times. Al-Biqāʿī (d. 885/1480), in
Naẓm al-durar fī tanāsub al-āyāt wa ʾl-suwar, VIII, Hyderabad 1969–1984, p. 439, cites
the Jewish convert al-Samawʾal al-Maghribī for the view that ʿUzayr is not Ezra in the
sense of the restorer of the Hebrew Bible. Al-Maghribī's own view was that ʿUzayr, whom
he calls 'al-ʿUzayr,' is Eleazar (cf. his *Ifḥām al-yahūd*, ed. M.ʿA. al-Sharqāwī, Cairo 1986,
p. 152), but al-Biqāʿī says that ʿUzayr is the prophet Malachi (who is identified with Ezra
in the Talmud [Megilla 15a] and elsewhere). The same suggestion was made, apparently
independently, by L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, VI, Philadelphia 1909–1938, p. 432. Since
Malachi (which means 'my angel') is nowhere called a son of God, Ginzberg asks whether
Muḥammad confused 'messenger [i.e., angel] of God' with 'son of God.' (I owe almost all
of this to Joseph Witztum.)

109   E.G. Hirsch, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York [1964], s.v. 'Son of God,' with reference to
Wisdom of Solomon 2:13, 16, 18; Ecclesiasticus 4:10; cf. also Philo, *On the Confusion of
Tongues*, 145; idem, *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, I, 92; and Justin Martyr, *Apology*,
I, 22, 2, where Jesus would deserve to be called son of God for his wisdom alone even if he
were wholly human. Cf. also G. Delling, 'Die Bezeichnung "Söhne Gottes" in der jüdischen
Literatur der hellenistisch-römischen Zeit,' in J. Jervell and W.A. Meeks (eds.), *God's Christ
and His People: Studies in Honour of Nils Alstrup Dahl*, Oslo 1977, pp. 18–28.

beings sons of God (à la Q. 5:18), but, rather, using the expression of one specific figure. And if it had been possible to speak of Enoch/Ezra as a son of God in circles cultivating *merkaba* mysticism, why were the Jews so unanimously puzzled by the Qur'ānic charge?

Given that the Jews simply did not recognize the sin they were accused of, it seems more likely that the identification of 'Uzayr as Ezra is mistaken. This possibility was rejected by both Horovitz and Künstlinger, but their own suggestions work no better than Newby's.[110] Where do we go from there?

Newby must be right that we are up against something to do with angel worship. This could admittedly be questioned on the grounds that Q. 9:30 presents the Jewish view of 'Uzayr and the Christian view of Christ as parallel errors, suggesting that both parties were guilty of deifying human beings. But the parallelism lies in the fact that both are deifying *created* beings. Worship of Christ and angels is also put on a par in 4:172: 'The Mes|siah, Jesus son of Mary does not disdain being a servant of God, nor do the angels who are drawn near [*al-malā'ika al-muqarrabūn*].' Like Christ, the angels wrongly deified by the pagans were actually 'righteous servants,' or this is one view of them in the Qur'ān (Q. 21:26, 43:19; elsewhere they are demons or empty names). That the one was a human being and the others angels was immaterial, and so it would have been in the case of the Jews.

If we persist in the search for a human being called 'son of God' by the Jews, we are unlikely to get beyond the conclusion that Muḥammad simply got something wrong. If we are prepared to consider the possibility that he knew what he was talking about, the only way in which Jews could plausibly be accused of polytheism was with reference to their 'logos theology,' as Boyarin calls it, or in other words, their veneration of a divine power, personified as an angel, as an intermediary between God and mankind.[111] 'To this *logos*, His archangel, the Father of all has given the special prerogative to stand on the border and separate the creature from the creator,' as Philo (d. 50 CE) expressed it, happily referring to the *logos* as 'the second God' and 'son of God.'[112] The Christians duly took Philo to have been a Christian *avant la lettre*, but it is now recognized that such ideas were widespread in Judaism, especially in the first two centuries CE, but apparently much later, too. In *Sefer Hekhalot*, a composite work which may

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110   Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen* (above, note 106), p. 167, note to p. 127; Künstlinger, "Uzair ist der Sohn Allāhs' (above, note 107), p. 382; cf. above, notes 106 f., for their suggestions.

111   See the reference given in note 23 above.

112   Philo, *Who Is the Heir of Divine Things*, 205; idem, *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, II, 62 (second God); idem, *On Husbandry*, 51 (firstborn son).

date in its present form to the sixth/seventh century,[113] it is Enoch-Metatron who is the second God, or more precisely 'the lesser God,' as Newby observes. The trouble is that no form of the intermediary is known ever to have been called anything like Ezra.

Some eighty years ago, however, Casanova proposed that 'Uzayr is a misreading of Azael.[114] He made this suggestion in a brief communication without developing the thesis, and perhaps for this reason it fell flat: in effect, he simply substituted one strange name for another, with perfunctory reference to rabbinic sources. Even in our present state of knowledge, it has to be said that the thesis has its problems. But as Wasserstrom says, it deserves to be revived,[115] if only for a proper hearing.

If 'Uzayr is a misreading (or mishearing) of Azael, the force of the passage would be that the angelic intermediary venerated by the Jews was actually an evil figure, a demon trying to mislead them. This works well in that it is also one of the reactions to the pagan worship of angels/deities in the Qur'ān: On the day of judgement God will ask the genuine angels, 'Was it these who worshipped you?' and the angels will reply, 'Glory be to you. You are our friend [*walī*], not these. Rather, they worshipped the demons [*jinn*]' (34:40 f.). Or again, 'they have made the demons [*jinn*] partners of God, though He created them, and falsely credit Him with sons and daughters, without knowing anything about it' (6:100).[116] The charge is all the more plausible in that Azael was an ambivalent figure. Though he was widely known as a fallen angel, a Greek amethyst lists Ichtys, identified as Christ by the *chi-ro* sign, with Raphael, Renel and Uriel on one side and Michael, Gabriel and Azael on the other.[117] In the Aramaic magical texts he is sometimes a fallen angel,[118] sometimes an anti-demonic power along with the archangels Michael and Raphael. One amulet goes so far

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113   See note 101 above.

114   P. Casanova, 'Idrîs et 'Ouzaïr,' *Journal Asiatique*, 205 (1924), pp. 356–360 (opting for the form 'Uzi'el).

115   S.M. Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam*, Princeton 1995, p. 183.

116   Compare also 37:158: 'They have set up a genealogical relationship (*nasab*) between Him and the *jinn*.' Contrast 21:26 and 43:19: 'They say, "al-Raḥmān has produced children," but they are servants raised to honour (*'ibād mukramūn*)'; 'they have made the angels, who are servants of the Raḥmān, females.'

117   J. Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, I, London 1964, p. 122, citing F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, I, Paris 1924, cols. 2088 f., s.v. 'Anges' (where no date is offered).

118   Thus in the reference given above, note 66.

as to include him among 'the holy angels who stand in front of the throne of the Great God';[119] one bowl text invokes Aza and Azael (ʿz̄ʾ w-ʿz̄ʾl) as well as Metatron against the demons;[120] and another, directed against Jewish, Arab, Persian, Indian, Greek and Roman sorceries, and of disputed date, invokes God, 'who sent Aza, Azael and Metatron [ʿz̄ʾ w-ʿz̄ʾl w-myṭṭrwn], the great prince of His throne.'[121] Here Metatron takes the place of the third member | of the ʿz̄ trio, normally Azael or Azazel. One would dearly like to know what the Qur'ān has in mind when it holds the Jews and Christians who credit God with a son to be imitating 'the unbelievers before you [alladhīna kafarū min qablu]': is this another reference to the 'first Jahiliyya,' now singled out for polytheism rather than the female immodesty that prevailed at the time? There does not seem to be any way of telling.

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If Casanova's emendation is accepted, sura 9:30 would reflect much the same environment as the passage on Hārut and Mārut and carry much the same message: 'the Jews say that Azael is a son of God,' i.e., the Jews prefer a figure associated with magic to the messenger who has been sent to them. The next verse tells us why: they, i.e., the Jews and the Christians, 'have taken their learned men [aḥbār] and monks [ruhbān] as their lords [arbāban] apart from God, and al-Masīḥ son of Mary' (9:31). This can hardly be a restatement of the claim that they deify ʿUzayr and Christ, for Christ does not belong in the category of ruhbān, and he is mentioned again as a separate object of deification. It is equally implausible that the Jews should be accused of deifying an ʿUzayr from among their aḥbār and ruhbān, while the Christians deify Christ, for ruhbān are always Christian figures in the Qur'ān. Most probably, then, this verse attacks the authorities to which the Jews and Christians owe their horrendous beliefs: they elevate their own authorities to the position of God

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119 Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls* (above, note 53), pp. 68f., amulet 7:3–7:5; compare 1:1–3; eidem, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations from Late Antiquity*, Jerusalem 1993, pp. 62f., amulet 19:17–19:23; cf. also Milik, *Books of Enoch* (above 7), p. 131.

120 C.H. Gordon, 'Aramaic Incantation Bowls,' *Orientalia*, 10 (1941), pp. 279f. (Ashmolean, no. 1932, 620), transliterated as ʿAzza and ʿAzzaʾel.

121 C.H. Gordon, 'Aramaic Magical Bowls in the Istanbul and Baghdad Museums,' *Archiv Orientální*, 6 (1934), pp. 328–330 (Baghdad Museum bowl no. 6519:11), transliterated as ʿAzzā and ʿAzzâêl. Gordon dates this bowl to after the Arab conquests on the grounds that it mentions 'Shīʿite' sorceries in line 9, but Shaked reads 'Arab' sorceries and regards it as probably pre-Islamic; see S. Shaked, 'Jews, Christians and Pagans in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls of the Sasanian Period,' in A. Destro and M. Pesce (eds.), *Religions and Cultures*, Binghamton 2001, pp. 72f.

by following them in defiance of God, as represented by the Messenger. That they deify al-Masīḥ appears to be mere repetition, possibly because it was the only genuine charge, and one that the Messenger often took issue with. 'They were commanded only to worship one God,' the verse continues, presumably meaning in the past, and now also through the Messenger whom they ignore. Both groups hope to extinguish the light of God with the enormities they utter with their mouths, the Messenger says (9:32), using a phrase elsewhere associated with those who dismissed Jesus as a magician (61:6, 8). In short, here, as in 2:102, the key issue seems to be the Messenger's own authority.

On this reading, the charge against the Jews would not reflect ignorance or misunderstanding of a Jewish belief, but rather anger and the polemical exaggerations that this tends to induce. The observer knew very well that the Jews did not really worship an angel, righteous or fallen, as the son of God; had he genuinely believed that they did, he would have argued against it as frequently as he did against the sonship of Jesus, not just on a | single occasion. He is claiming that idolatry is what the beliefs of his stubborn opponents really amount to. How literally did he intend the charge? It could be argued that all he resented was the expression 'son of God,' having heard Azael described as such on some occasion: metaphorically meant or otherwise, it was wrong to say such things.[122] If this is all he meant, his reaction would be comparable to that of the third/fourth-century Palestinian rabbi who was offended by the passage in Daniel in which Nebuchadnezzar observes in amazement that the three youths in the fiery furnace are unharmed, and that they have been joined by a fourth 'like the son of God,' i.e., an angel (Dan. 3:25). The rabbi claimed that an angel came down and slapped Nebuchadnezzar on the mouth for presuming that God had a son.[123] What he meant was presumably no more than that one should not say anything conducive to the blurring of the boundaries between Jews and Christians (though he, too, could have been worried by Jewish 'logos theology').

That the Qur'ānic observer was only bothered by words is at first sight suggested by his dismissal of claims regarding 'Uzayr and Christ as '[just] something they say with their mouths [*dhālika qawluhum bi-afwāhihim*]' (9:30), a phrase elsewhere used in comparing a man's wife to his mother for purposes of repudiation, and in calling someone else's son one's own by way of adop-

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122   This possibility was suggested to me by Behnam Sadeghi.
123   Alexander, 'Targumim and Early Exegesis' (above, note 5), pp. 61f., with reference to JT *Shabbat* 6:9, 39b, *ad fin.*

tion (33:4). But the latter passage is not, in fact, about words alone. What 33:4 rejects is the opponents' belief that the words create or reflect something real, whereas the *truth* is that they are only words (similarly 18:4f., 24:15, 61:1–8). Similarly, the truth about the angels/gods deified by the pagans is that they are just names (when they are not angels falsely worshipped or mere demons, 7:70f., 53:23). It is only when opponents are held to say with their mouths what is not in their hearts, or to have even worse thoughts in their hearts than in their mouths, that a distinction between mere words and actual beliefs is postulated (3:118, 3:167, 5:41, 9:8, 48:11f.). In the passage on 'Uzayr and al-Masīḥ the opponents do not simply use an offensive expression; they go so far as to reject the Messenger for the sake of the belief expressed by it. This is why they are accused of deifying their leaders, too, and also why they are told that God has sent the Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to make it prevail, even though the *mushrikūn* may dislike it (9:33). The intertextual reference | to the Jews who dismissed Jesus as a magician (in its turn conjuring 45 up the polytheists who dismissed the Messenger as a magician) also shows the issue to be divine authority, this time along lines similar to the passage on Hārūt and Mārūt: the Jews go for the wrong leaders, preferring the very magic that they wrongly impute to the genuine Messenger. In 5:17–18, where only the Christian belief in a son of God is mentioned, both the Jews and the Christians are once more accused of deification, not of their leaders, but rather of themselves: as Comerro observes, the concept of *shirk* extends to any form of authority other than that of God represented by Muḥammad.[124] Here, too, the passage culminates in the claim that 'our messenger has come to you' (5:19).

In short, 9:30 is directed not just against the offensive expression 'son of God,' but also against actual beliefs held by Jews and Christians and the leaders under whom they upheld those beliefs. As far as the Jews are concerned, it has to be said that the charge was a brilliant polemical move, for it was one to which they could only reply, 'yes, but ...': Yes, the fallen angels were described as sons of God in the Bible and the *Book of Watchers*; yes, Azael was one of them; and yes, it was to him that humans owed their knowledge of magic, in which he was often called upon. *But* the implication that he was worshipped in the same way that the Christians worshipped Christ was not true at all. With so complicated a defence, the audience will have inferred that there was something to the charge. It just so happened that a scribe was a bit too fast in copying the name of the demonic figure, or, alternatively, that the name had come to sound too

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124   Comerro, 'Esdras' (above, note 97), p. 170.

much like Ezra's. Consequently, far from persuading later readers that the Jews had sold their souls to the devil, the verse persuaded Jews and Christians that Muḥammad was an ignoramus: his scripture was full of errors; the Jews did not regard ʿUzayr as the son of God, as the Christians said in polemics of their own.[125]

There are no problems with Casanova's theory on the linguistic front. In Arabic, Azael (ʿAzāʾēl) would be written ʿAz(ā)ʾīl. The main difference between that (ʿzyl) and ʿUzayr (ʿzyr) in early Arabic script would be the size of the final letter.[126] If the change took place in written transmission and the copyist was transcribing from Arabic to Arabic, all we would need to put things right would be to postulate a minor scribal mistake. But the change could also have been effected orally, given that the shift from *l* to *r* is com|mon in Semitic languages.[127] In that case all we need to postulate is that Azael was pronounced as something like Ozael/Ozaer. We do, in fact, find Uzael (ʿwzʾl), Uziel (ʿwzyʾl) and related forms, both on undatable magic amulets from the Syria region and in texts on incantation bowls from Iraq.[128]

But one could also suggest other ways of achieving the same result. For example, an angel by the name of ʿAzriel (ʿzryʾl) figures on amulets and magic bowls.[129] He has no independent existence and is nowhere identified as the son of God. However, as yet another bearer of a name on the theme of ʿz, he could easily have been treated as another manifestation or associate of Azael,

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125   Al-Jāḥiẓ, 'Al-Radd ʿalā ʾl-naṣārā,' in his *Rasāʾil*, III, ed. ʿA.-S.M. Hārūn, Cairo 1979, pp. 303 f., 333 f., 343; cf. also pp. 346 f.

126   See B. Gruendler, *The Development of the Arabic Scripts*, Atlanta 1993, pp. 59, 95.

127   See E. Lipiński, *Semitic Languages: Outline of a Comparative Grammar*, Leuven 1997, p. 135 (my thanks to Adam Raziel for arguing the case for oral transmission and mentioning this work).

128   C.H. Gordon, 'Aramaic Incantation Bowls' (above, note 120), p. 123 (no. 5:7); J.B. Segal (ed. and transl.), with a contribution by E.C.D. Hunter, *Catalogue of the Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls in the British Museum*, London 2000, nos. 040A:6, 048A:36, 109M:10 (my thanks to Dr. Hunter for drawing this work to my attention); Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls* (above, note 53), pp. 40 f. (amulet 1:1); cf. pp. 218 f. (magic book from Islamic times, 2, 5); eidem, *Magic Spells and Formulae* (above, note 119), pp. 62 f., 66 (Palestinian amulet 19:23).

129   J.A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, Philadelphia 1913, p. 154 = p. 156, no. 8:14; Gordon, 'Aramaic Incantation Bowls' (above, note 120), p. 123 (no. 5:7); Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls* (above, note 53), pp. 40 f. (amulet 1:13). Cf. also E.A.W. Budge, *Amulets and Superstitions*, London/New York 1930, pp. 277 f. My thanks to Shaul Shaked for noting the possible relevance of this angel.

as in fact he seems to be in the trio Azael, Azriel and Ariel (all righteous).[130] The diminutive would presumably be 'Uzayr'īl, but the *'īl* would have been rejected on the grounds that God had nothing to do with him, leaving the contemptuous 'Uzayr. Or, as Comerro suggests, the name Azariah (*'zryh*) could be lurking in the background. It was borne by one of the three youths who were thrown into the fiery furnace and saved by the angel described by the awed Nebuchadnezzar as 'like the son of God.'[131] As it happens, it was also the pseudonym adopted by the archangel Raphael in Tobit, in which Raphael teaches Tobias to make medicine and drive away a demon, which Raphael then binds (Tobit 8:11). Curing by binding demons is what most of the magic bowls of Iraq were designed to achieve. They often invoke Raphael. Given the premium on invoking as many powers as possible, the chances are that they invoked him under the name of Azariah too, thereby causing him to join the list of angels/sons of | God whose names are variants on the theme of *'z*. In fact, it could have been Azariah-Raphael who generated the above-mentioned Azriel.

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Very few of the angels and demons invoked in magic texts had stable personalities, and strange-sounding names proliferated, but to disapproving observers such as the rabbis, the names on the theme of *'z* invariably conjured up fallen angels or even the devil himself. The chances are that the same was true for the Messenger. In whatever form he may have heard the name of the offending son of God, he will have understood him as a rebellious angel and used him to unmask the wayward beliefs of the Jews: what they so stubbornly rejected him for was a demon.

If this is accepted, one would assume the transmission to have taken place via Iraq, as in the case of Hārūt and Mārūt. Of course, 'Uzayr could have entered via a different channel, but the Ethiopic *Book of Watchers* uses the forms Asael and, more commonly, Azazel,[132] making Ethiopia unlikely as a source for our verse. The form Azael is attested in both Syria and Iraq. In Greek it is attested in the fifth/sixth-century Codex Panopolitanus and the ninth-century Syncellus, in both of which it is the only form used (*Azaēl*); in the Christian(-Jewish?) amethyst, and in two magical texts from Egypt, the one dating from the fourth century, the other from the sixth or seventh century.[133]

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130 Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls* (above, note 53), pp. 68f. (amulet 7:3).

131 Daniel 1:6f.; 3:20–3:25; Comerro, 'Esdras' (above, note 97), pp. 172f., with exegetical traditions that actually identify 'Uzayr as one of Daniel's companions.

132 Black, *Book of Enoch* (above, note 60), p. 121.

133 Above, notes 8, 118; *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, ed. and transl. K. Preisendanz, II, Leipzig 1928–1931, nos. xxxvi, 174 (also Aziel); xlv, 3.

In Aramaic it appears on a Palestinian amulet,[134] in rabbinic sources[135] and on incantation bowls.[136] The related forms Uzael, Uziel and Azriel also appear in both Syria and Iraq.[137] We know from Justinian that there were Jews on the Byzantine side who denied that 'the angels exist as God's work and creation,' i.e., they held the angels to be uncreated (and thus divine), but whether they venerated a principal angel is not said.[138] It is in the Babylonian *Sefer Hekhalot* that the identification of Enoch/Metatron as the lesser God is attested, in circles associated with magic, just as it is | here that the magical texts associate Azael with Metatron.[139] It is also on an Iraqi bowl text that we encounter the actual expression 'sons of God' in conjunction with (but not clearly identified as) Azael, Azael and Azaziel.[140] One would thus assume Iraq to have been the source.

Problem

So far, Casanova's hypothesis seems to work wonders, but it raises one intractable problem: why did the exegetes not recognize Azael behind his new name? The nearest we get to it is Muqātil's claim that ʿUzayr was described in the Pentateuch (*tawrāt*), by which, of course, he could simply have meant

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134   Above, note 119.

135   Cf. above, note 44.

136   Cf. above, notes 66, 120, 121.

137   Cf. above, notes 128–130.

138   Justinian (legislating in 553), Novella 146, *Peri Hebraiōn*, in A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*, Detroit/Jerusalem 1987, pp. 406f. = p. 409. Practically all the voluminous literature on this novella is about Justinian's regulation of the language to be used in the synagogue. That he also legislates against Jews who deny the resurrection and the last judgement, as well as the createdness of the angels, seems to have passed virtually unnoticed.

139   See the references given in notes 100, 120, and 121 above.

140   Thus the curse text mentioned above, note 66. In this text (which mixes Jewish, Christian and pagan elements), the 'lower foundation' of the universe is occupied by seven 'sons of God' (*bny ʾlhy*), who keep the universe together with seven powerful words; see Levene, *Corpus* (above, note 66), M163:9 and commentary). By origin, they are presumably a new version of the fallen angels, but whether the magician sees them as such is not clear. He proceeds to speak of the 'sons of glory' (line 13) and thereafter about the trio Azael, Azael and Azaziel, pressed under a mountain with their faces downwards (line 18). Levene thinks that the 'sons of glory' may be identical to the 'sons of God' (commentary to line 13), but he does not say whether he thinks the same could be true of the trio.

somewhere in the Hebrew Bible.[141] It is all the odder in that the exegetes effortlessly recognized the fallen angels behind their Iranian names of Hārūt and Mārūt.

It has to be stressed that the exegetical reaction to ʿUzayr is peculiar even if we discard Casanova's hypothesis, for given that the early exegetes knew very well that Jews did not deify Ezra, one would have expected them at the very least to have discussed the person intended before settling on the identification of Ezra and ʿUzayr. Maybe they did. In the fragments of a Greek translation of the Qurʾān made before 870, possibly in Umayyad Syria, the Jews are accused of saying that *Israel* is the son of God.[142] In this formulation the charge makes perfect sense. In the so-called prayer of Joseph, Jacob declares himself to be 'Israel, an angel of God and a ruling spirit ... the firstborn of every living thing' (compare Colossians 1:15, | 17, on Christ), as well as 'the archangel of the power of the Lord and the chief captain among the sons of God.'[143] This angel is also familiar from Christian, Manichaean and other Gnostic writings as well as from rabbinic texts.[144] But the Muslim exegetes do not seem to preserve any memory of this reading, and it is hard to see how Isrāʾīl could have been misheard or misread as ʿUzayr. Maybe the Syrians had improved on the Qurʾānic text because it did not make sense to them. However this may be, all exegetes on record accepted that the Qurʾān spoke of ʿUzayr and unhesitatingly identified this figure as Ezra. As early as 170/786, in an inscription, a certain Saʿd pronounces Muḥammad, Jesus and ʿUzayr, along with all created beings, to be *marbūbūn*, servants of God.[145] Apparently, the exegetes had grown up with the idea that Ezra was intended. If so, one wonders if Muḥammad did as well. 'God does not command you to take the angels and prophets as lords,' we are told in Q. 3:80: did ʿUzayr belong in the category of prophets rather than that of angels

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141 Comerro, 'Esdras' (above, note 97), p. 168, citing Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr, ad* 112:1.

142 C. Høgel, 'An Early Anonymous Greek Translation of the Qurʾān: The Fragments from Niketas Byzantios' *Refutatio* and the Anonymous *Abjuratio*,' *Collectanea Christiana Orientalia*, 7 (2010), p. 71.

143 Prayer of Joseph, fragment A, translated by J.Z. Smith in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, II (above, note 64), p. 713; cf. the editorial introduction; and cf. Philo, *On the Confusion of Tongues*, 146, where the *logos* is God's firstborn and Israel.

144 For a succinct overview, see E.R. Wolfson, *Along the Path: Studies in Kabbalistic Myth, Symbolism and Hermeneutics*, Albany 1995, p. 4 ff., where the (pre-Islamic) rabbinic material is discussed.

145 *Ancient Arabic Inscriptions from the Negev*, ed. and transl. Y.D. Nevo, Z. Cohen and D. Heftman, I, Sede Boqer 1993, p. 54, no. ST 640(34); cf. plate 34. My thanks to Haggai Ben Shammai for this reference.

to the speaker of those words? If he did, we are back where we started: how could the author of the Qurʾān claim that the Jews called Ezra the son of God?

Either the Messenger's understanding is peculiar, or else that of the exegetes is: in effect, Casanova's hypothesis merely shifts the problem from the one to the other. It has to be said, however, that this is not the only occasion on which the exegetes settled, without discussion or disagreement, on what to a modern scholar looks like an obvious mistake; and in the other example, Q. 24:33, there can be no doubt that they did so in a departure from authorial intentions.[146] Of course, exegetes are everywhere in the habit of disregarding authorial intentions: they make of the revelation what they need. But they do not usually do so with complete lack of | hesitation or disagreement, least of all when they know their interpretation to be problematic. This suggests that the problem of ʿUzayr lies in the early history of Muslim exegesis rather than in the understanding of the Prophet, or in other words, that Casanova had the better hunch. Until that can be shown, however, the verdict on his theory must be 'not proven.' That the accusation in 9:30 refers to Jewish veneration of an angelic vice-regent remains the most plausible solution; how this being acquired the name of ʿUzayr remains unclear.

Conclusion

Though Azael's presence in 9:30 remains conjectural, the four other echoes of the *Book of Watchers* have at least done something to relate the Qurʾān to a well-documented context on the fringes of the Arab world in late antiquity. Relating the Qurʾānic material to earlier traditions could be said to be one of the most pressing needs for historians of the rise of Islam.[147] This is now coming to be generally recognized, after a long hiatus in which origin-tracing acquired a bad name. One can see why it was rejected. Back in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a tendency for Western scholars to envisage Muḥammad as picking up bits and pieces of religious lore from his Jewish, Christian and diverse other neighbours without much understanding

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146   Cf. P. Crone, 'Two Legal Problems Bearing on the Date of the Qurʾān,' *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 18 (1994), pp. 3 ff. (reprinted in eadem, *From Kavād to al-Ghazālī: Religion, Law and Political Thought in the Near East, c. 600–c. 1100*, Aldershot 2005), on the *kitāb* understood as a manumission document, though the context dictates that it is a marriage document.

147   See F.E. Peters, 'The Quest of the Historical Muhammad,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 23 (1991), pp. 292 f.

of what they meant, in order to mix them all up and then use them in altogether different contexts in Mecca and Medina. Much work was done on where he had picked up his bits and pieces, but given the magpie model, it did not seem illuminating: what did it matter whether this came from Christianity and that from Judaism or somewhere else, if it had all been denatured in the process of transmission? More recent scholars, not unnaturally, found the interest of the ideas to lie less in their origin than in their meaning in the new contexts to which Muḥammad applied them. Origin-tracing never seemed to further our understanding of anything, but only to harp on the theme of the 'parasitic dependence' of Islam on earlier religions, as Reeves says.[148]

But religious (and all other) ideas do grow out of earlier ideas, by tiny incremental changes. Even revolutionary changes are achieved by very | small steps, and though the older literature never showed these steps—merely a haphazard collection of information and mistakes, as if Islam had arisen by misunderstanding—there was more than prejudice to the picture it presented. The Orientalists were reacting to the fact that it was, and remains, extremely difficult to overcome the sense that Islam arose in a world apart. The tribal societies evoked in pre-Islamic poetry—the *ayyām*, Ibn Hishām or al-Wāqidī— are so utterly different from the Near East described in Greek, Syriac, Aramaic, Coptic or Iranian works that one automatically classifies ideas which can be shown to have originated in the non-Arabian Near East as 'foreign elements,' or in other words, as features appearing out of their normal context, so that they have to be explained by mechanisms such as traders accidentally picking up this and that on their journeys.

What we see in the Qurʾānic treatment of the fallen angels in the four (possibly five) passages examined here, however, is not the impressions of a passerby who had picked up some ancient story without much sense of what it meant to his informants. What we see is the story in the context to which it had come to belong by late antique times, complete with the magic practices it was held to explain and the angry sense of being outflanked by disreputable people that the situation induced in the observer. Wherever or whenever the encounter(s) took place, the observer is *engaging* with the tradition as it looked in his time, not simply plundering it, let alone getting things wrong. Looking back, we can follow the tradition he grappled with until it disappears in the dawn of history; looking forward, we can see what it came to mean to his many followers thereafter down until today. Islam here grows by imperceptible steps,

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148   Reeves, *Bible and Qurʾān* (above, note 2), Introduction, p. ix.

however drastic the observer's reaction, out of the environment that came
before it, creating a new one as it does so. It would be enormously illuminating
if we could see the entire Qur'ān in this way.

War

A state of open, armed and often prolonged conflict between states, tribes or parties is frequently mentioned in the Qurʾān. It is usually referred to by derivatives of the third form of *q-t-l*, "fighting," sometimes with the qualification *fī sabīl Allāh*, "in the path of God"; but we also hear of *ḥarb*, "war," both against God and the messenger (e.g. 5:33; 9:107; cf. 5:64) and by or for them (2:279; 8:57; cf. 47:4). Derivatives of *j-h-d* are used for efforts which include fighting without being reducible to it.

Wars Mentioned

Past wars are rarely mentioned in the Qurʾān. The vanished nations are de-stroyed by brimstone, fire and other natural disasters, not by conquest, though the messenger expects to punish his own opponents by military means (9:14, 52). Of the Israelite conquest of the holy land we are only told that when Moses ordered the Israelites to enter this land, all except two refused on the grounds that it was inhabited by mighty men (*jabbārūn*); the Israelites thus had to wander in the desert for another forty years (5:21–26; cf. Num. 13:31–14:34). But elsewhere we learn that many prophets were accompanied in battle by large numbers, who never lost heart when they met disasters (3:146). There is also an obscure reference to thousands who went out from their homes: God told them to die (so they did), whereupon he revived them. This is told in encouragement of fighting in God's path (2:243 f.), followed by an account of the Israelite demand for a king (2:246–251): they wanted a king so that they could fight in the path of God (cf. 1 Sam. 8:5, 19; Judg. 8:22), having been expelled from their homes and their families; but when fighting was prescribed for them, they turned back, except for a small band. Worse still, when their prophet announced that God had appointed Ṭālūt, i.e. Saul, as their king, they disputed his authority; and when Saul set out to fight Goliath, most of them failed the test he set for them (cf. Judg. 7:4–7); but the steadfast uttered the famous words, "How many a small band has vanquished a mighty army by leave of God," and David slew Goliath. No further Israelite wars are mentioned down to Nebuchadnezzar, whose destruction of Jerusalem is briefly alluded to, as is the Roman destruction of the Temple, in both cases without any names being named; the two disasters are presented as punishment for Israelite sins, | with a

period of wealth and power in between and a possibility of better times ahead (17:4–8). Another sūra (30:2–4) notes that the Byzantines have been defeated, predicting that they will soon win (over the Persians) or, alternatively, that the Byzantines have been victorious, predicting that they will soon be defeated (by the believers).

Most warfare in the Qurʾān is conducted by the believers in the present. One verse regulates fighting among the believers themselves: one should make peace between the two parties or fight the wrongdoers (49:9). Another threatens war against the believers when they take usury (2:278 f.). But most encourage the believers to fight others, variously identified as "those who fight you" (2:190), unbelievers (e.g. 4:84; 9:123; 47:4), the polytheists altogether (9:36), People of the Book who do not believe in God and the last day (9:29), hypocrites (9:73), friends of Satan (4:76), and imāms of unbelief (9:12), without it being clear how far these groups are identical or distinct. The hypocrites side with the believers when the latter win but not when they lose (4:141) and once appear in alliance with unbelieving People of the Book (59:11). All war is assumed to involve religious issues.

The Moral Status of War

Fighting is declared legitimate in self-defense, by way of preemption (9:8; cf. 60:2), for the rescue of fellow believers (4:75) and for the righting of wrongs, including the punishment of the wrongdoers (9:13–14). The basic principle is that one should treat other communities as they treat one's own. "As for the person who defends himself after having been wronged, there is no way of blaming them" (42:41); God would help those who had always met like with like, only to be wronged (22:60), for a bad deed called for another like it (42:39–42). "Fight in the path of God those who fight against you, but do not transgress" (2:190); "a sacred month for a sacred month … whoever aggresses against you, aggress against him in a like manner" (2:194); "fight the polytheists all together as they fight you all together" (9:36). Where the principle of like for like is abandoned, the claim is that bloodshed is the lesser evil ("kill them wherever you come upon them, expel them from where they expelled you, for *fitna* is worse than killing," 2:191; cf. 2:217). The famous "sword verse" ("kill the polytheists wherever you find them, take them, seize them, besiege them, and lie in wait for them," 9:5) seems to be based on the same rules, given that it is directed against a particular group accused of oath-breaking and aggression (9:1–23; cf. 8:56–60) and that polytheists who remain faithful to their treaties are explicitly excepted (9:4). Here as elsewhere, it is

stressed that one must stop when they do (2:193; 4:90; 8:39 f., 61; 9:3, 5, 11), and, though the language is often extremely militant, the principle of forgiveness is reiterated in between the assertions of the right to defend oneself (42:37–43).

Justifying war appears to have been hard work. The exhortations are addressed to a people who were not warlike ("prescribed for you is fighting, though you dislike it," 2:216), who assumed warfare to be forbidden ("permission has been granted to those who fight/are fought, because they have been wronged," 22:39), | and who had to be persuaded that it could be morally right ("if God did not drive back some people by means of others, cloisters, churches/synagogues [*biyaʿ*], oratories [*ṣalawāt*], and mosques in which God's name is much mentioned would be destroyed," 22:40; "the earth would be ruined," 2:251). Only the *jizya* verse (9:29) seems to endorse war of aggression. If read as a continuation of 9:1–23, however, it would be concerned with the same oath-breaking "polytheists" (cf. 9:30 f.) as the sword verse.

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Mobilization

Orders to fight came down in sūras, apparently on an ad hoc basis (9:86; 47:20) and always in what appears to be a mobilizing rather than a legislative vein (for 2:216, an apparent exception, compare 2:246; 4:77). Exhortations to fight abound (2:244; 4:71, 84; 8:65; 9:36, 41, 123; 61:4, etc). Those who emigrate and strive for the cause with their wealth and their lives are promised rich rewards, not least when they fall in God's path (e.g. 2:154; 9:20; 22:58 f.). They rank higher than those who sit at home (4:95), just as those who joined the fighting before the victory rank higher than those who joined after it (57:10; cf. 9:20). Fighting and/or striving in God's path is described as selling the present life to God for the hereafter (4:74; 9:111), a loan that will be repaid many times over (2:245; 57:11; cf. 57:18; 73:20) and a commerce that will deliver from painful chastisement (61:10 f.). Whatever one spends, God will repay in full (8:60).

The response to these appeals is frequently deemed inadequate. "How is it with you that you do not fight in God's path?" (4:75; cf. 4:72); "What is the matter with you, that when you are told to go forth in the path of God you sink heavily into the ground?" (9:38). Some people are apparently happy to pray and pay alms but protest when fighting is prescribed for them, asking for postponement (4:77). Some hope for a sūra but would look faint if one were to come down mentioning fighting (47:20; cf. 9:86). Some plead ignorance of fighting or turn back, wishing that their brethren who have fallen in battle had done the same

(3:155 f., 167 f.). Others ask for permission to leave before a battle, pleading that their own homes are exposed (33:13), or ask not to be put in temptation (by being asked to fight against kinsmen? 9:49; cf. sūra 60). Bedouin shirkers plead preoccupation with their flocks (*amwāl*) and families (48:11). Some turn their backs in actual battle (3:155; 8:15 f.; 33:15 f.).

All lack of martial zeal is debited to base motives. The blind, sick, weak and destitute are of course exempted (9:91; 48:17), but shirkers are sick of heart (47:20), unwilling to be inconvenienced by long journeys (9:42) or heat (9:81), keen to stay at home with their women (9:87, 93), reluctant to contribute even though they are rich (9:81, 86, 93), cowards who anticipate defeat (48:12), who are scared of death (cf. 33:18 f.; 47:20) and who would boast of their luck if the expedition were hit by disaster but wish that they had been present when things go well (4:72 f.); if they are Bedouin, they are only interested in booty (48:15). Such people are liars (9:42; cf. 48:11), hypocrites (3:167), | cursed by God for only obeying part of what he sent down (47:26), closer to unbelief than to faith (3:167), indeed outright unbelievers (3:156; 33:19; cf. 9:44 f.), who are really fighting for *ṭāghūt* (4:76, cf. 4:72); they will be cast into a blazing fire (48:13) and hell is to be their abode (9:95). Some people who have been granted permission to stay behind, a decision now regretted, are singled out for particular attention in increasingly sharp terms (9:43–88). But the Bedouin who stayed behind are promised a second chance: they will be called against a mighty people and rewarded if they obey (48:16). The believers in general are told that if they do not go forth, God will punish them and choose another people (9:39). If they think their fathers, sons, brothers, wives, kinsmen, trade and houses are more important than God, his messenger, and *jihād fī sabīl Allāh*, then they will eventually learn otherwise (9:24). There is no need to be afraid. Death will come at its appointed time, wherever one may be (4:78), and God might restrain the power of the unbelievers (4:84); in any case, unbelievers, hypocrites and People of the Book are all cowards who will turn their backs (cf. 3:110 f.; 48:22; 59:11 f.).

Attempts are also made to shame the believers into fighting by construing war as a test: God could have avenged himself on his opponents but he wants the believers to do it so that he and they can see their true worth (47:4, 31). Most people have failed the test, as they had done back in the time of Moses and Saul and David (see above), whose experiences clearly reflect the messenger's own. Misfortunes in battles are likewise cast as tests (3:166 f.; 33:10 f.). God alternates good and bad days to purify the believers and to destroy the unbelievers, i.e. to weed out those of little faith (3:140 f.). Here as so often, the unbelievers seem to be members of the party deemed lacking in commitment to the cause.

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The Objectives of War

Opponents have wronged the believers by breaking their oaths and plotting to expel or kill the messenger (8:30; 9:13; 17:76) and by actually expelling both him (60:1; 9:40) and the believers without right, just for saying "God is our lord" (e.g. 22:40; cf. 60:1, 8 f.); they have also blocked access to the sanctuary (2:217; 48:25). The objective of war is to avenge these wrongs, to help the weak men, women and children left behind (4:75), to expel the people in control of the sanctuary as they expelled the believers (2:191), to put an end to *fitna* (trial or test, traditionally understood as persecution, more probably communal division), to make the religion entirely God's (2:193; 8:39), to make his religion prevail even if the polytheists dislike it (9:33; 61:9; cf. 48:2) and to punish the opponents: one should fight them so that God might chastise them "at your hands" (9:14); God will chastise them either on his own (*min 'indihi*, presumably meaning by natural disasters) or "at our hands" (9:52); he would have exacted retribution himself if he had not decided to do it through the believers to let them test one another (47:4). The *jizya* verse stands out by enjoining fighting until unbelieving People of the Book are reduced to tributary status (9:29). That the opponents will be destroyed is treated as certain: "How many a city stronger than the one that expelled you have We destroyed," God says (47:13); "are your unbelievers better than they?" (54:43). And the objectives are in fact achieved: God has expelled the un|believing People of the Book from their homes and their fortresses, banishing them (59:2 f.); and he has fulfilled the vision he had granted the messenger by allowing the believers to enter the sanctuary (48:27), though the presence of believing men and women there has caused him to withhold his punishment (48:25).

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Exegesis

The exegetes understood the Qur'ānic verses on war as legislation regarding the Islamic duty of *jihād* and typically treated each verse as an independent unit for which the context was to be found in the tradition rather than the Qur'ān itself. For the result, see *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, s.vv. "conquest," "jihād," "Jews and Judaism," and the further cross-references given there.

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CHAPTER 9

Jewish Christianity and the Qur'ān (Part 1)*

1   Introduction

"Jewish Christianity" is a modern term for the beliefs of those followers of Jesus who saw devotion to Jesus as part of God's covenant with Israel, not as a transfer of God's promise of salvation from the Jews to the gentiles. Some of them regarded Jesus as a prophet, others saw him as a heavenly power, but all retained their Jewish identity and continued to observe the law.[1] The first Christians were all Jews, but they were not all Jewish Christians by this definition, for they disagreed over the necessity of keeping the law after the coming of Christ. The question whether gentile believers in Christ should undergo full conversion to Judaism is a highly contentious issue in the New Testament. Both Paul and his opponents, the leaders of the Jerusalem church, are presented as accepting that gentile Christians did not have to be circumcised or otherwise observe Jewish law (with some exceptions), but whereas Paul, "the apostle to the gentiles," seems to have been happy with the idea of any Christ-believer abandoning Jewish law, his opponents insisted that those of Jewish origin must continue to practice it. This was the Jewish Christian position. It was somewhat like saying today that non-Muslims attracted to Sufism can be accepted as Sufis without full conversion to Islam, whereas Sufis of Muslim origin must continue to observe Islamic law.

It was not a stable solution in the long run, and as Christianity spread among the gentiles, the latter became the dominating force. Observance of Jewish law was now forbidden and Jewish Christians were marginalized, to be described by patristic authors of the third and fourth centuries under the

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1   My minimalist definition of Jewish Christianity is indebted to that of Edwin Keith Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus* (Tübingen, 2010), e.g., 161. For an extended discussion of the term, see James Carleton Paget, "The Definition of the Terms Jewish Christian and Jewish Christianity in the History of Research," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, MA, 2007), 22–52.

names of Ebionites, Nazoreans, and Elchasaites.[2] These labels notwithstanding, it would be a mistake to think of them as divided into three neatly demarcated sects. Rather, they formed a wide variety of Christians who did not think of Christianity as a religion that abrogated Judaism. Their views shade into those of other Christians who followed select aspects of the law such as circumcision, Sabbath-observance, or avoidance of pork (as did Ethiopian Christians and many Syrian | "Judaizers"),[3] or who interpreted Jesus' message in the light of Jewish traditions without following Jewish law at all, but on the contrary engaged in anti-Jewish polemics (after the fashion of Aphrahat).[4]

Originally, the bastion of law-observing Christianity was the Jerusalem church, the undisputed center of Christianity until the first Jewish war with Rome (AD 66–70). When this war broke out, the Jerusalem Christians reportedly fled to Pella (Ar. Fiḥl) in the Decapolis in Transjordan, and though some returned to the devastated city in 70,[5] they were expelled again after the suppression of Bar Kokhba's revolt in 135, when Hadrian forbade Jews to reside in Jerusalem. Thereafter, Jewish Christians were concentrated in the Aleppo region in northern Syria, in the Decapolis around Pella, including Dir'a in the

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2   Their testimonies are helpfully assembled and translated in Albertus F.J. Klijn and G.J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (Leiden, 1973).

3   For the Ethiopian observance of both Sabbath and Sunday, circumcision (a local custom interpreted in a Biblical vein), and other Jewish customs, see Edward Ullendorff, "Hebraic-Jewish Elements in Abyssinian (Monophysite) Christianity," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 1 (1958): 216–256; Ephraim Isaac, "An Obscure Component in Ethiopian Church History," *Le Muséon* 85 (1972): 225–258 (suggesting Jewish Christian roots). For the Syrians, see Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, "Jewish Christians, Judaizers, and Christian Anti-Judaism," in *Late Ancient Christianity*, ed. Virginia Burrus (Minneapolis, 2005), 234–254; cf. also Anders Ekenberg, "Evidence for Jewish Believers in 'Church Orders' and Liturgical Texts," in *Jewish Believers*, ed. Skarsaune and Hvalvik, 640–657.

4   For the Jewish element in Syriac Christianity, see Sebastian Brock, "Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 30 (1979): 212–232; Bas ter Haar Romeny, "Hypotheses on the Development of Judaism and Christianity in Syria in the Period after 70 C.E.," in *Matthew and the Didache: Two Documents from the Same Jewish Christian Milieu?*, ed. Huub van de Sandt (Assen, 2005), 13–33. For Aphrahat, see William L. Petersen, "The Christology of Aphrahat, the Persian Sage: An Excursus on the 17th Demonstration," *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992): 241–256; Adam Lehto, *The Demonstrations of Aphrahat, the Persian Sage* (Piscataway, NJ, 2010), 48 ff. and the literature cited there.

5   The main sources for the flight to Pella are Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.5.1–3; Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 29.7.7; and Epiphanius, *Treatise of Weights and Measures: The Syriac Version*, trans. and ed. James Elmer Dean (Chicago, 1935), par. 15, 2–5 (the Greek original only survives in fragments).

territory of the Ghassānids, and in the Dead Sea region, as we know from Epiphanius (d. 403) and Jerome (d. 420).[6] They would seem also to have been present in the Golan, where excavators of an abandoned village have found lintels decorated with a combination of crosses, menorahs, and other mixed Jewish and Christian symbols, probably indicating that the building was a Jewish Christian synagogue.[7] After Epiphanius and Jerome, however, we have no certain evidence for the existence of Jewish Christians in Greek, Latin, or Syriac sources written before the rise of Islam.[8] Theodoret of Cyrus (d. 457) even claims that they and other early sects, such as the Marcionites, had been so completely forgotten that most people did not know their names.[9] But this is hyperbole, for Theodoret himself claims to have converted eight Marcionite villages in Syria to the true faith;[10] and even if we assume that they were the very last Marcionites left in Syria, there were many more of them on the Persian side of the Euphrates. Jewish Christians, too, could well have survived beyond the Byzantine border, in the Sasanian empire, Ethiopia, and Arabia, and even in that part of Arabia which formed the deep south of the Byzantine empire itself. They certainly reappear after the Arab conquests. According to the seventh-century abbot of Iona, Adomnán, the Frankish pilgrim Arculf (c. 670) heard, during his visit to Jerusalem, that back in the days after the resurrection of Jesus, a believing Jew (a common term for what modern scholars call a Jewish Christian) had stolen the sacred linen cloth from Jesus' sepul-

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6   The testimonia are discussed in Broadhead, *Jewish Ways*, chapters 7–11.

7   Claudine Dauphin, "Farj en Gaulanitide: Refuge judéo-chrétien?," *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 34 (1984): 233–245; cf. Joan E. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins* (Oxford, 1993), 39 ff. (disputes that the remains are necessarily Jewish Christian); Broadhead, *Jewish Ways*, chap. 14, esp. 346 ff., on this and other real and alleged archaeological remains.

8   Both John of Damascus and Theodore Bar Koni describe Jewish Christians as still living in the Dead Sea region (Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 265, 267), but their information plainly comes from Epiphanius. Only he knew about the two women of Elxai's family, Marthous and Marthana, one of whom had died in Epiphanius' time (cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 19.2.3) and neither of whom can have been present among them "even up to now," as John of Damascus says (my thanks to Tommaso Tesei for reminding me of these passages).

9   Theodoret of Cyrus, *Haereticarum Fabularum Compendium* (MPG 83), II, 11; trans. Glenn Melvin Cope, "An Analysis of the Heresiological Method of Theodoret of Cyrus in the 'Haereticarum Fabularum Compendium'" (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1990), 155.

10   Theodoret of Cyrus, *Correspondance*, trans. and ed. Yvan Azéma (Paris, 1955–1998), 2:196–197 (letter 81).

cher and that this linen cloth had recently been rediscovered. By now, however, it had passed into the hands of unbelieving Jews and the believing Jews wanted it back; both parties appealed to Muʿāwiya, who threw the cloth into a fire, over which it hovered | until it descended in the camp of the Christians.[11] This story is one out of several involving Jewish possession of a Christian relic in Jerusalem or Constantinople,[12] but Arculf is the only author to mention "believing Jews" in this connection. We also hear of them later in the Islamic world, in sources composed from the second/eighth centuries onwards.[13]

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The relevance of all this to Islamicists lies in the fact that many scholars have come away from the Qurʾān with the impression that Jewish Christianity must have played a role in its formation. A major argument to this effect

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11   Arculf, *De Locis Sanctis*, I, 11 (composed c. 679–688 by Adomnán on the basis of, among other things, Arculf's information), trans. James Rose Macpherson, *The Pilgrimage of Arculfus in the Holy Land* (London, 1889), 12–15; cf. the helpful discussion of Adomnán's text by Robert Hoyland and Sarah Waidler, "Adomnán's De Locis Sanctis and the Seventh-Century Near East," *English Historical Review* 129, no. 539 (2014): 787–807, with reference to a more recent edition and translation. Arculf's "believing Jew" was first brought to scholarly attention by Shlomo Pines, "Notes on Islam and on Arabic Christianity and Judaeo-Christianity," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 4 (1984): part i, 135–152, at 145.

12   Cf. Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford, 2002), 71–72, in which two converts from Arianism, Galbius and Candidus, transport the Virgin's robe to Jerusalem after stealing it from a Jewish woman who had kindly offered them hospitality on their way to Jerusalem; Arculf, *De Locis Sanctis*, III, 5, 62–63, in which an unbelieving Jew in Constantinople has a picture of Mary.

13   Shlomo Pines, "'Israel, My Firstborn' and the Sonship of Jesus," in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem*, ed. Efraim Urbach et al. (Jerusalem, 1967), 177–190, at 179, citing Saadia Gaon, *al-Amānāt waʾl-iʿtiqādāt*, ed. S. Landauer (Leiden, 1880), 90–91. Saadia explicitly says that this group emerged recently; Shlomo Pines, "The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* (Jerusalem, 1968), 2:237–309; Pines, "Judaeo-Christian Materials in an Arabic Jewish Treatise," *American Academy for Jewish Research* 35 (1967): 197–217; Pines, "Studies in Christianity and in Judaeo-Christianity Based on Arabic Sources," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 6 (1985): 107–161; Pines, "Gospel Quotations and Cognate Topics in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's *Tathbīt* in Relation to Early Christian Readings and Traditions," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9 (1987): 195–278; Patricia Crone, "Islam, Judeo-Christianity and Byzantine Iconoclasm," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980) (= Crone, *From Kavād to al-Ghazālī* [Aldershot, 2005], no. III): 59–95, in which the Jewish Christians reflected in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's account are seen as a response to the rise of Islam. All of Pines' articles on the subject can now be found in his *Collected Works*, vol. 4, ed. G.G. Stroumsa (Jerusalem, 1996).

was mounted by Aloys Sprenger in 1861.[14] His thesis was taken up by several specialists in Christian theology, notably Jules-Charles Scholl in 1874,[15] Gustav Rösch in 1876,[16] Adolf von Harnack in 1909,[17] Adolf Schlatter in 1918,[18] Hans-Joachim Schoeps in 1949,[19] M.P. Roncaglia in 1971,[20] J. Dorra-Haddad in 1973,[21] J.M. Magnin in 1977–1978,[22] Édouard Gallez in 2005,[23] and Joachim Gnilka in 2007;[24] but several scholars coming to the subject from the study of Islam have likewise argued for, or simply assumed, a Jewish Christian input, notably Clément Huart in 1904,[25] Tor Andrae between 1918 and 1932,[26] Karl | Ahrens in

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14   Aloys Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Moḥammad* (Berlin, 1861–1865; repr., Hildesheim, 2003), esp. 1:22–43.

15   Jules-Charles Scholl, *L'Islam et son fondateur* (Neuchatel, 1874), 64–73.

16   Gustav Rösch, "Die Jesusmythen des Islam," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* (1876): 409–454, esp. 415, 417–418, 426–427, 433–434.

17   Adolf von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, 4th ed. (Tübingen, 1909), 2:529–538.

18   Adolf Schlatter, "Die Entwicklung des jüdischen Christentums zum Islam," *Evangelisches Missionsmagazin* 62 (1918): 251–264.

19   Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen, 1949), 334–342. Sidney Griffith adds R.A. Pritz, S.C. Mimouni, and G. Parrinder in his "Syriacisms in the 'Arabic Qurʾān': Who Were 'Those Who Said "Allāh Is Third of Three"' According to *al-Māʾida* 73," in *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies in Mediaeval Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the Qurʾān Presented to Haggai Ben Shammai*, ed. Meir Michael Bar-Asher et al. (Jerusalem, 2007), 83*–110*, at nn. 16–17. But Pritz and Mimouni wrote on Jewish Christianity without reference to the Qurʾān, and Parrinder mentioned the Jewish Christian hypothesis only to say that it was beyond his concern (Geoffrey Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qurʾān* [London, 1965], 11).

20   M.P. Roncaglia, "Éléments ébionites et élkésaites dans le Coran," *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 21 (1971): 101–126.

21   J. Dorra-Haddad, "Coran, prédication nazaréenne," *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 23 (1973): 148–155 (the book of the same title mentioned at p. 155 does not seem to have been published). The article by C. Colpe, "Die Mhagraye—Hinweise auf ein arabisches Judenchristentum?," *Internationale kirchliche Zeitschrift* 76 (1986): 203–217, is not based on the Qurʾān.

22   J.M. Magnin, "Notes sur l'Ébionisme," *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 27 (1977): 250–273, and 28 (1978): 220–242. These are the last two of six articles on the Ebionites with this title published by this author in that periodical from 1973 onwards.

23   Édouard M. Gallez, *Le messie et son prophète: Aux origines de l'Islam* (Versailles, 2005).

24   Joachim Gnilka, *Die Nazarener und der Koran: Eine Spurensuche* (Freiburg, 2007).

25   Clément Huart, "Une nouvelle source du Qoran," *Journal Asiatique*, 10th series, 4 (1904): 125–167, 161 ff., treating Sprenger's thesis as generally accepted, and postulating poets such as Umayya b. Abī ʾl-Ṣalt as intermediaries.

26   Tor Andrae, *Die Person Muhammeds in Lehre und Glauben seiner Gemeinde*, Archives d'Études Orientales 16 (Stockholm, 1918), 292–293 and 293n, where Muḥammad's chain of prophets, ablution, *qibla*, and other matters are considered perhaps all of Ebionite ori-

1935,[27] Günter Lüling from the 1970s onwards,[28] Abū Mūsā al-Ḥarīrī in 1979 (= J. Azzi, 2001),[29] Thomas O'Shaughnessy in 1984,[30] Shlomo Pines in 1984,[31] Julian Baldick in 1989,[32] and François de Blois in 2002.[33] Holger Zellentin, a Judaist, has now joined the fray,[34] and a book by John Jandora in support of the Jewish Christian thesis has recently appeared, too.[35] Some of these works are based

gin; see also Andrae, *Mohammed, the Man and His Faith* (German orig. 1932; New York, 2000), 98–107, on the Ebionites, Elchasaites, and Manichaeans as contributors to Muḥammad's concept of prophecy; and Andrae, "Der Ursprung des Islams und das Christentum," *Kyrkohistorisk Årsskrift* 23 (1923): 149–206 (the first of three installments), 153, on the chain of prophets. Griffith, "Syriacisms," 87*–88*, nonetheless adduces Andrae in support of his view that only mainstream Christianity is reflected in the Qurʾān.

27   Karl Ahrens, *Muhammed als Religionsstifter* (Leipzig, 1935), 130–131, on the prophetic chain.

28   Günter Lüling, *Über den Ur-Qurʾān* (Erlangen, 1974); index s.v. "Judenchristentum"; Lüling, *Der Christliche Kult an der vorislamischen Kaaba als Problem der Islamwissenschaft und Christlichen Theologie* (Erlangen, 1977), 41 and n. 88 thereto (at 91*; 59 and the notes thereto); briefly also Lüling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation* (Delhi, 2003), 21. It is also in his *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten Muhammad* (Erlangen, 1981), on which see the full review by Uri Rubin in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 6 (1985): 481–492. See also the summary of this thesis by Gerhard Böwering, "Recent Research on the Construction of the Qurʾān," in *The Qurʾān in Its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds (London, 2008), 74–77.

29   Abū Mūsā al-Ḥarīrī, *Qiss wa-nabī: Baḥth fī nashʾat al-Islām* (Jounieh-Kasslik, 1979); translated as Joseph Azzi, *Le Prêtre et le prophète: Aux sources du Coran* (Paris, 2001). On this work, see Böwering, "Recent Research," 79–80.

30   Thomas J. O'Shaughnessy, *Word of God in the Qurʾān* (Rome, 1984), 20: "Certain teachings of Elkesaism and the sect of the Nazarenes, both similar to Essenism, bear such close resemblance to certain points of Qurʾānic Christology that these also must be seen as part of the religious background that prepared the Arabs to receive the message Muhammad was to bring"; cf. also 30, 33.

31   Pines, "Notes." His other articles on Jewish Christianity (above, note 13) are not concerned with the Qurʾān.

32   Julian Baldick, *Mystical Islam: An Introduction to Sufism* (New York, 1989), 19, 25 (drawn to my attention by Matthijs van der Bos).

33   François de Blois, "*Naṣrānī* (*nazōraios*) and *ḥanīf* (*ethnikos*): Studies on the Religious Vocabulary of Christianity and Islam," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 65 (2002): 1–30; de Blois, "Elchasai—Manes—Muhammad," *Der Islam* 81 (2004): 31–48; recapitulated in de Blois, "Islam in Its Arabian Context," in *The Qurʾān in Context*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden, 2011), 615–624, at 621–622.

34   Holger M. Zellentin, *The Qurʾān's Legal Culture* (Tübingen, 2013).

35   John Jandora, *The Latent Trace of Islamic Origins: Midian's Legacy in Mecca's Moral Awakening* (Piscataway, NJ, 2012). I have not been able to procure a copy.

on poor scholarship (especially, but not only, those by laymen, who seem to have a particular liking for the Jewish Christian thesis);[36] but this certainly is not true of all of them. Yet many Qurʾān scholars ignore the Jewish Christian thesis, and some argue against it.[37] The most notable opponent of a Jewish Christian input is Sidney Griffith, who holds that nothing but mainstream Near Eastern (i.e., Melkite, Jacobite, and Nestorian) Christianity is reflected in the Qurʾān.[38] This is a somewhat extreme position, but it provides a useful benchmark.[39]

In what follows, I re-examine the question of whether there is a Jewish Christian input in the Qurʾān by examining the Qurʾānic topics of relevance to the subject, taking full account of Griffith's position where known. The argument may be summarized as follows.[40] Four points are extremely hard to explain without recourse to the hypothesis of a Jewish Christian contribution: the Qurʾānic Jesus is a prophet sent to the Israelites, not to the gentiles (no. 2); the Israelites appear to include Christians (no. 3); the Messenger sees Jesus as second | in importance to Moses and as charged with confirmation of the Torah (no. 4), and insists that Jesus was only a human being, not the son of God (no. 9).

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36   Thus Nick Brown, *The Judaeo-Christian Presbyter of Makah* [*sic*] *& Madinah* (New York, 2011) (drawn to my attention by Adam Silverstein); Samuel Zinner, *The Abrahamic Archetype: Conceptual and Historical Relationships between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Bartlow, 2011), a work in the metaphysical and philosophical tradition of Frithjof Schuon which takes the Jewish Christian contribution to Islam for granted on the basis of Schoeps. Jandora is also a layman, though he has published extensively on Islamic subjects (esp. military matters); and Azzi, also known as Abū Mūsā al-Ḥarīrī, is not a specialist either.

37   E.g., S.D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts through the Ages* (New York, 1964), 53–54.

38   Sidney H. Griffith, "Christians and Christianity," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān* (Leiden 2001–2006), 1:313, dismissing this and other views with which he disagrees as the product of a polemical or apologetic agenda; Griffith, "Syriacisms," 85*ff.; Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque* (Princeton, NJ, 2008), 8; Griffith, "*Al-Naṣārā* in the Qurʾān: A Hermeneutical Reflection," in *New Perspectives on the Qurʾān: The Qurʾān in Its Historical Context 2*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds (London, 2011), 301–322, at 313–314. Cf. also his *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the "People of the Book" in the Language of Islam* (Princeton, NJ, 2013), 29.

39   For the opposite view that the Messenger never knew mainstream Christianity, see Scholl, *L'Islam et son fondateur*, 63. Neuwirth similarly holds that the Meccan suras do not reflect interaction with "official Christians" of any kind, but rather syncretistic circles perhaps related to Jewish Christians (Angelika Neuwirth, "The House of Abraham and House of Amram," in *Qurʾān in Context*, ed. Neuwirth, Sinai, and Marx, 505; also in Neuwirth, "Mary and Jesus—Counterbalancing the Biblical Patriarchs," *Parole de l'Orient* 30 [2005]: 231–260, at 232).

40   The first half of this article will cover sections no. 1–7, with 8–15 in the next half.

Another two doctrines are often held to point away from Jewish Christianity, but actually point in that direction, too: some of the Messenger's opponents regarded both Mary and Jesus as divine beings (no. 7), and the crucifixion is interpreted docetically—as though it did not really happen—even though the death of Jesus seems to be accepted (no. 10). Yet another doctrine, namely the virgin birth of Jesus, at first sight looks equally compatible with mainstream and some strands of Jewish Christianity, but must in fact also have come from a Jewish Christian milieu (no. 11). Another is incompatible with mainstream Christianity and probably also of Jewish Christian origin, namely that Mary was an Aaronid (no. 12); and the Qur'ānic chain of prophets may be related to that of the Elchasaites and other Jewish Christians, though this is much less obvious to me than it was to Schoeps, Andrae, and others (no. 13). Two further elements of Qur'ānic Christology are incompatible with mainstream Christianity without pointing in a Jewish Christian direction: the Messenger seems to think that Jesus was born under a palm tree rather than in a cave or stable (no. 14); and although he calls him *al-masīḥ* (Christ) and *al-kalima* (the Word), he does not credit Jesus with the characteristic features of the Christian messiah or present him as the *logos* in the Christian sense (no. 15). All in all, a full seven doctrines, several of them central to the Qur'ān, point to the presence of Jewish Christians in the Messenger's locality, and since they are attested in Egypt in the seventh century (no. 8), there is nothing particularly hazardous about postulating that they were present in Arabia too.

It is also clear that in order to understand the Qur'ānic Jesus, whether as seen by the Messenger or by his opponents, one has to go back to the early centuries of Christianity. This would appear to be when these Jewish Christians parted ways with mainstream Christianity and Judaism, not in the sense that their further development took place in isolation, but rather that whatever mainstream ideas they received thereafter were interpreted in the light of their own fundamental convictions.

2   Christ's Mission Is to the Israelites

Along with the *mushrikūn*, the sons of Israel (*banū Isrāʾīl*) are the prime audience to whom the Qur'ān is directed: "This Qur'ān tells the sons of Israel most of what they are disagreeing about," as a Meccan sura says (27:76). The reference may be to the disagreement over Jesus, though the immediate context suggests that it is over the resurrection; it is at all events clear that the Messenger was active in a locality in which Israelites formed part of the population.

(One can, of course, strike out all passages mentioning Israelites in the Meccan suras, as the exegetes tend to do, on the premise that all such passages must reflect Medinese conditions, but the premise is not valid.)

Several suras, both Meccan and Medinese, inform us that Jesus was sent to the Israelites. Thus the angels announced to Mary that her son would be a messenger to the Israelites (*rasūlan ilā banī Isrā'īl*) (3:49). Jesus himself declared, "O Sons of Israel, I am God's messenger to you, confirming the Torah in front of me and giving good news of a messenger to come after me whose name is Aḥmad" (61:6). God made Jesus an example (*mathalan*) to the sons of Israel, as we are also told (43:59); Jesus came with evident proofs to explain the things they disagreed about, but the disagreement only increased (43:63–65), for one party of the Israelites believed in him while another did not (61:14). The sons of Israel fell into disagreement after knowledge came to them, presumably meaning after Jesus had brought them the Gospel (45:17; cf. 2:253). All these passages present the mission of Jesus and the conflict it generated as internal to the Israelites.[41]

That Jesus was sent to the Israelites is an astonishing claim for a seventh-century preacher to make. It is perfectly true, of course, that Jesus was a Jew who preached to Jews, some of whom believed while others did not, and that one can read as much in the New Testament; but it is not how gentile Christians normally thought of his mission. To their minds, the Jews were those who refused the new covenant and crucified Jesus, whereas Jesus and his disciples were Christians like themselves. As Origen explains, when Jesus says, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" (Matthew 15:24), we should remember that there was an Israel according to the flesh and another according to the spirit; we should not think that Christ came especially to the Israelites according to the flesh, as the Ebionites, poor in understanding, claimed.[42] But it is precisely to the Israelites according to the flesh that Jesus came in the Qur'ān.

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It might be argued that all we see here is an example of the Messenger's belief that all prophets were sent to their own people,[43] but leaving aside that this belief is not always in operation in the Qur'ān (e.g., that Moses was sent to Pharaoh, not the Israelites), it is hard to believe that any seventh-century (as opposed to first-, second-, or third-century) Christian saw the Jews as Jesus' own people. One would have expected the Messenger to say that

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41   Similarly Pines, "Notes on Islam," 137–138; Gnilka, *Nazarener*, 111–112.

42   Origen, *On First Principles*, IV, 3, 8 (trans. G.W. Butterworth, *On First Principles* [New York, 1966], 299–300); Greek and Latin text with English translation in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 124–125.

43   This possibility was suggested to me by Adam Silverstein.

Jesus was sent to the *Christians*. Of course there were no Christians before Jesus, but this would hardly have prevented the Messenger from seeing God as sending Jesus to them; and even if we assume his historical sense to have been too well developed for him to do so, one would have expected him to say that the Israelites responded to his preaching by dividing into Jews and Christians, which is historically correct. But what he actually says is that they divided into believing and unbelieving *Israelites* (61:14): in religious terms they split, but ethnically they remained the same. This is in line with a famous passage in the Jewish Christian section of the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* (probably composed in the mid-fourth century), in which we are told that the only difference between the authors and "those of our people who do not believe" or, as the Latin version puts it, "between us who believe in Jesus and the unbelieving Jews" is that "we" believe Jesus to be the prophet foretold by Moses and the eternal Christ whereas the unbelieving Jews do not.[44] It is not easy to imagine Chalcedonian (Melkite), West Syrian (Monophysite or Jacobite), or East Syrian (Nestorian) Christians presenting Jesus as a prophet to the Israelites, nor have mainstream Christian parallels ever been adduced to my knowledge (and Griffith says nothing about it). The perspective here is unquestionably Jewish Christian.

How then did the Messenger know that Jesus was sent to the Israelites? We are hardly to imagine that he had worked it out on the basis of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, for even if he possessed the requisite books and skills, he had no interest in the past for its own sake. He was a preacher rather than a historian, and he routinely rewrote the past in his own image: all the prophets before him preached the same message as he did, and all contended with opponents guilty of the same "polytheism" (*shirk*) and denial of the afterlife. It will not have been on the basis of research that the Messenger knew Jesus to have had Israelite followers. Rather, he will have taken it for granted, because believing and unbelieving Israelites were what he was confronted with in his own locality. Indeed, everybody in his locality seems to have taken it for granted, for he did not engage in polemics about it or argue against alternative views. He does not explain how Jesus had come to be "the King of all the gentiles,"[45] or even that there were people who saw him as such. Paul is not

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44   *Recognitions* 1.43.2, in F. Stanley Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27–71* (Atlanta, GA, 1995) (also translated in Robert E. van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology in a Jewish-Christian Community* [Atlanta, GA, 1989]). The Latin and Syriac translations were made in c. 406 and before 411, respectively, from a Greek original now lost.

45   Jacob of Sarugh, *On the Mother of God*, trans. Mary Hansbury (New York, 1998), 637 of

mentioned, and though the Disciples are called ḥawāriyyun, an Ethiopic word for apostles, there is no reference to their apostolic role as missionaries to the gentiles.[46]

All this is surprising, for the Messenger must have had considerable contact with gentile Christians. For example, his famous statement "there is no compulsion in religion" is downstream of third-century Christianity.[47] Further, he plainly had a concept of religion in the sense of a system of beliefs and laws separate from ethnic and civic affiliation, a concept pioneered by the Christians. It is true that every messenger is sent to his own people in the Qurʾān,[48] and that each messenger addresses his people in their own language; but the result is not a string of ethnic religions, for all genuine messengers preach the same message. The Messenger never addressed his audience as Arabs, only as believers and unbelievers, and he made it clear that there had been believers in quite different communities.

In addition, he often fielded arguments against the Jews that he must have learned from Syriac-speaking Christians, and retold several Old Testament stories in versions partly or wholly filtered through the Syriac tradition.[49] He

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Bedjan's edition (Paul Bedjan, *S. Martyrii, qui et Sahdona quae supersunt omnia* [Paris, 1902]), to which the editor refers in the margin = 40 of the translation (homily 1).

46   The commentators make up for it by unpersuasively identifying the *mursalūn* sent to a town in 36:13 as disciples of Jesus, while Reynolds identifies the *rusul* of 23:51 as apostles in the sense of missionary disciples of Jesus rather than messengers sent by God to their own communities on the model of Muḥammad himself (Gabriel Said Reynolds, "The Quran and the Apostles of Jesus," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 76 [2013]: 1–19, at 16). Though I am generously thanked in this article, I disagree with almost every word said in it.

47   For the emergence of the idea among third-century Christians, see Patricia Crone, "No Compulsion in Religion: Q. 2:256 in Medieval and Modern Interpretation," in *Le Shīʿisme imāmite quarante ans après*, ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, Meir M. Bar-Asher, and Simon Hopkins (Turnhout, 2009), 131–178 [Ed.: included as article 13 in the present volume], at 164–166.

48   This notion is probably also rooted in Christianity, though its pre-history is still obscure. The starting point would be the New Testament concept of the apostles as missionaries. When the apostles came to be understood as divinely commissioned envoys (prophets), it was they who were seen as sent to a specific people, as already in Manichaeism (at least in the case of the Buddha and Zoroaster), though the Manichaeans retained the idea of disciples as missionaries too.

49   Karl Ahrens, "Christliches im Qoran. Eine Nachlese, III," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 84 (1930): 148–190, at 156 ff.; Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Qurʾān and Its Biblical Subtext* (London, 2010), 251; and above all Joseph Witztum, "The Syriac Milieu of the Quran: The Recasting of Biblical Narratives" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2011),

may have been addressing gentile Christians in 6:101, and even seemed to side with them at times. When the Qurʾān informs us in the course of anti-Jewish polemics that God promised Jesus to make his followers superior to the unbelievers until the day of resurrection (3:55), one could admittedly take it simply to predict the victory of the Messenger's followers—but it could also be taken to suggest that he saw himself as continuing the veneration of Jesus by the dominant, i.e., gentile, Christians, or more probably, by all Christians without distinction. Further, when he says that Jesus and his mother were a sign to all beings (*lil-ʿālamīn*) (21:91), he appears to be adopting a universalist view of the two of them that sits better with gentile than Jewish Christianity; and finally, when he notes that one party of the Israelites believed in Jesus and another did not, he says that it was the believers that won: "We assisted those who believed against their enemy and they became victorious" (61:14). If this statement is taken to refer to the believing Israelites, it is wildly unrealistic.[50]

It is admittedly possible that the Messenger identified so strongly with the believing Israelites that he presented them as victorious by way of predicting his own victory over the Jews: he promised God's help (*naṣrun min Allāh*) and a victory soon to come (*fatḥun qarībun*) to the believers in the preceding verse, and started 61:14 by presenting his position as analogous to that of Jesus: "O you who believe, be helpers of God (*anṣāra ʾllāh*), as Jesus said to his disciples, 'Who will be my helpers unto God?' So the disciples said, 'We are God's helpers'." The expression "God's helpers" (*anṣāra ʾllāh*) is undoubtedly a word play on "Christians" (*naṣārā*). But leaving aside the question of whether the *naṣārā* were Jewish or gentile Christians, it seems more likely that the Messenger was ignoring the divided state of the Christians in order to field them as a single, dominant party against the Jews. All in all, the Messenger was clearly familiar with gentile Christianity; but even so, the fact that Jesus had a following outside the ranks of the Israelites cannot be said to receive much attention in the book.

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on the fall of Iblīs and the expulsion from paradise, Cain and Abel, Abraham, and Joseph. See also Witztum, "The Foundations of the House (Q. 2:127)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 72 (2009): 25–40; Witztum, "Joseph among the Ishmaelites: Q. 12 in Light of Syriac Sources," in *New Perspectives on the Qurʾān*, ed. Reynolds, 425–448.

50   This is nonetheless how S. Pines seems to understand it; cf. his "Notes on Islam," 135–152, esp. 137.

3   The Israelites Include Christians

The term *banū Isrāʾīl* ("sons of Israel") occurs forty-four times in the Qurʾān, in both Meccan and Medinese suras. Many of the passages concern the Israelites in the past, especially in the time of Moses, but some relate to the time of Jesus, and others to that of the Messenger himself; and a few of these passages suggest that the Israelites included both Jews and Christians, not just Jews, as normally assumed. This may sound like a wild theory, but it is actually what many exegetes say in their comments on 27:76 ("This Qurʾān tells the sons of Israel most of what they are disagreeing about"). Thus Qatāda (d. 117/735) glosses "the sons of Israel" as meaning Jews and Christians here,[51] while al-Ṭabarī adduces the Israelite disagreement over Jesus as an example of the type of question the Israelites could not reach agreement on.[52] Other exegetes say much the same.[53] Even a modern scholar such as Heikki Räisänen renders "the sons of Israel" in 27:76 as "Jews and Christians."[54] The exegetes do not seem to give thought to the implication that the Israelites of | Muḥammad's own time included Christians, for they usually read the verse with the Israelite division over Jesus with the time of Jesus in mind; but wittingly or unwittingly, they do of course imply that the Israelites consisted of Jews and Christians in the Messenger's time as well. So too do the traditions regarding Waraqa b. Nawfal, Khadīja's cousin, have "presentist" implications. He is said to have abandoned idolatry in pre-Islamic times and to have become a Christian who reacted to Muḥammad's revelation by declaring that it was "the law which God had sent down to Moses." Some corrected this apparent asymmetry by having him become a Jew rather than a Christian, others by having him declare Muḥammad's revelation to be "the law of Christ"; but the combination of Jewish and Christian features recurs in the report that he could write Hebrew and used his skill to copy the Gospel in Hebrew. The asymmetry here caused some to replace Hebrew (*ʿibrāniyya*) with Arabic (*ʿarabiyya*), but the sheer existence of traditions in which a Christian identifies his own law as that given by Moses and the language of the Gospel as Hebrew (presumably in the sense of Jewish Aramaic) is noteworthy.[55]

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51   Cited in ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* (Beirut, 1983), 6:376.

52   Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jamiʿ al-bayān ʿan tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Beirut, 1988), vol. 11, part 20, 11.

53   Thus, Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* (Beirut, 2008), 3:386–387; al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān* (Beirut, 1995), 7:402.

54   Heikki Räisänen, "The Portrait of Jesus in the Qurʾān: Reflections of a Biblical Scholar," *The Muslim World* 70, no. 2 (1980): 122–133, at 125.

55   Sprenger, *Leben*, 1:124–125, 128, citing Ibn Hishām, the *Aghānī*, Bukhārī, and Muslim, with

Sura 5 contains one of the passages suggesting that the Israelites included Christians. Here we are reminded that when God made a covenant with the Israelites and sent messengers to them, the Israelites reacted by calling the messengers liars or by killing them, thinking they would not be tested (after death?) (5:70–71); the next verse continues on to say that those who (go to the other extreme and) say "God is Christ" are unbelievers (5:72, similarly 5:17). This is normally understood as a reference to mainstream Christians, and Griffith too takes it as such.[56] Given that abrupt changes of subject are common in the Qur'ān, this would have been a reasonable interpretation if the verse had not continued by explaining that the culprits should not say this, because Christ had told the *Israelites* not to ascribe partners to God (5:72). Why does the Messenger envisage Jesus as saying this to the Israelites rather than the

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a different explanation of the languages. Hebrew in the sense of Aramaic is well attested in Greek writings from the New Testament period onwards. This has usually been debited to Greek confusion, but a more interesting explanation has recently been proposed by D.R.G. Beattie and Philip R. Davies, "What Does Hebrew Mean?," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 57, no. 1 (2011): 71–83 (drawn to my attention by Kevin van Bladel). According to them, "Hebrew" was actually a word for Aramaic, not for "the holy tongue" (i.e., the language of what we now call the Hebrew Bible). It was only later—in the West perhaps as late as the nineteenth century—that the word came to stand for the "holy tongue." This is wonderfully thought-provoking, but at the very least in need of modification. Leaving aside the complicated and often enigmatic Talmudic statements on the languages and scripts used by the Jews (to which Rachel Neis drew my attention), Judah Halevy (d. 1141) distinguishes clearly between Hebrew (*ʿibrāniyya*), the holy tongue which was called after Eber, and Aramaic (*suryāniyya*), the language of the Chaldaeans that Abraham brought with him and continued to speak for everyday purposes (Hartwig Hirschfeld, trans., *Judah Halevy's Book of Kuzari* [New York, 1946], 309, part III, sections 66–67, drawn to my attention by Adam Silverstein; for the text I have used the edition of Nabīh Bashīr, *al-Kitāb al-Khazarī* [Freiberg am Neckar, 2012], which presents the Arabic text in Arabic script rather than the Judaeo-Arabic used by Halevy himself, retaining Hirschfeld's parts and sections). The *Kuzari* was translated into Hebrew by Judah b. Tibbon in 1167, to be much read by Jews in Europe from then onwards (cf. Adam Shear, *The Kuzari and the Shaping of Jewish Identity, 1167–1900* [Cambridge, 2012]).

56   Griffith, "Al-Naṣārā," 311, explaining that the Qur'ān is not quoting the Christians correctly (the Christians only said that Christ was God) and that the statement is a polemically inspired caricature. But if the reference is to mainstream Christians, it is not actually much of a caricature. Isaac of Antioch, for example, says that people disputed about whether God had died or not, and exclaims in indignation that His death had redeemed the world—and still they asked whether He had died! (P.S. Landersdorfer, trans., *Ausgewählte Schriften der syrischen Dichter* [Kempten, 1912], 140 of the continuous pagination). God is indeed Christ here, exactly as the Messenger says.

Christians? Jesus does of course address his preaching to Jews in the Gospels, but neither the Gospels nor the mainstream Christian tradition say anything that could have caused the Messenger to envisage Jesus as reproaching the *Israelites* for casting *Jesus* as divine. The idea would have sounded utterly absurd to both the Jews and the mainstream Christians of the Messenger's time. If there were Israelites who were at fault for deifying Christ, they must have been Israelite Christians.

The sura continues that those who say that "God is the third of three" are also unbelievers (5:73). One assumes the reference still to be to the Israelites, and this is also how some early readers understood it, for Ibn al-Najīḥ apparently held that it was the *Jew* Phinehas who said that "God is the third of three."[57] Further, Qatāda is credited with the view that when the early Christians split into several groups, it was a certain *Isrāʾīl* who held that "God is the third of | three," and that this Isrāʾīl was supported by the king and others who came to be known as the Melkites![58] The sura continues by polemicizing against a Trinity consisting of God, Christ, and Mary, which it refutes with reference to the fact that both Jesus and Mary ate food (5:75; cf. below, no. 7). The culprits are now addressed as "People of the Book," which leaves their ethnicity unidentified, but Qatāda once more knows them to be *al-isrāʾīliyya min al-naṣārā*, Israelite (as opposed to Jacobite and Nestorian) Christians: it was they who said that Jesus was a deity (*ilāh*), and his mother a deity, along with God Himself. A variant version of his statement once more identifies them as Melkites, or more precisely as the "kings of the Christians" (*al-isrāʾīliyya mulūk al-naṣārā*).[59] Qatāda's strange idea that there were Israelite Melkites reflects the fact that he was trying to combine several Qurʾānic passages to fit a single group,[60]

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57   Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ*, part 4, 195, on 3:181 (noted by Abdelmajid Charfi, "Christianity in the Qurʾān Commentary of Ṭabarī," *Islamochristiana* 6 [1980]: 105–148, at 132).

58   Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. al-Murtaḍā, *al-Munya waʾl-amal fī sharḥ al-milal waʾl-niḥal*, ed. Muḥammad Javād Mashkūr (Beirut, 1979), 74. My thanks to Hassan Ansari for helping me locate the passage.

59   Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ*, vol. 9, part 16, 85–86, on 19:27; Charfi, "Christianity," 140.

60   Apart from 5:73 and 5:75, the main passage Qatāda was working with was 61:14, in which the Israelites split into two—those who believed in Jesus and those who did not—adding that "We assisted those who believed against their enemy and they became victorious" (61:14). As noted, this does not fit the believing Israelites, whereas it does fit the Melkites. But he also worked, in 5:82, on the *naṣārā* who were friendly to the Muslims because their *qissīsūn* and monks were not arrogant (cf. the passage in Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *Munya*, 74, in which the Christian leader who represents the truth is called *Qissīs*, the antithesis of Isrāʾīl).

though there could conceivably be more to it.[61] Here, however, the key point is that Qatāda took the Qurʾānic Israelites to include Christians.

Other passages in the same sura also suggest that the Jews and Christians formed two parts of a whole. In 5:18 they both declare that "We are children of God and His beloved," and the Messenger is instructed to retort, "Why then does He punish you for your sins?" That God was punishing the Jews for their sins by depriving them of sovereignty was a well-known anti-Jewish trope, but how could the same be said of the Christians, God's seeming favorites at the time? Perhaps the Persian victories over the Byzantines had enabled the Messenger to turn the anti-Jewish argument against the Christians, but a more persuasive explanation would be that the local Christians were Israelites suffering from the same loss of autonomy as their unbelieving counterparts. What is more, at the beginning of the sura the Messenger declares the food of the People of the Book to be lawful to Muslims (5:5), which is puzzling. Jesus had supposedly declared all foods to be clean (Mark 7:18–19), and Paul had allowed the Christians to eat anything "from gnats to elephants," as a later Muslim polemicist put it,[62] meaning that the Christians were free to eat foods forbidden in the Qurʾān.[63]

How then could their food be permitted to the believers? One solution would be that the "People of the Book" here stand for the Jews alone: this is what Griffith argues.[64] But the Messenger is engaging in legislation, not in loose polemics: he can hardly have used a term bracketing Jews and Christians if he meant the Christians to be excluded. The only alternative is that the local Christians also followed dietary law. In fact, all Near Eastern Christians did follow some dietary law, notably the prohibition of sacrificial meat, Jewish food, blood, and thus also strangled animals (which had not been drained of blood).[65] But that still left them free to eat many things forbidden in Muslim law, e.g., pork, so that does not solve the problem. In 7:157, which

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61   See below, p. 251 [273], at note 213.

62   Sayf b. ʿUmar (d. before 193/809), *Kitāb al-ridda waʾl-futūḥ wa-kitāb al-jamal wa-masīr ʿĀʾisha wa-ʿAlī*, ed. Qasim al-Samarrai (Leiden, 1995), 133 ult. (par. 133); cf. Sean Anthony, "The Composition of Sayf b. ʿUmar's Account of King Paul and His Corruption of Ancient Christianity," *Der Islam* 85 (2008): 164–202, at 177 (with beetles in lieu of gnats).

63   Noted by de Blois, "Naṣrānī," 16. The continuation that "your food is permitted to them" is hardly a problem. The message is that the believers may share their food with the People of the Book; whether the latter regard the believers' food as kosher was not for the Messenger to decide.

64   Griffith, "Syriacisms," 87*, n. 18; Griffith, "Al-Naṣārā," 315–316.

65   See David M. Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food* (Berkeley, 2011), part 3 (drawn to my attention by Sarah Stroumsa). For the prohibition of blood, which is still upheld in the Greek orthodox church today, cf. the Council of Gangra (AD 340), canon 2; Council

is addressed to the followers of Moses and set in Moses' own time, God says that He will have mercy on those who follow the gentile prophet predicted in the Torah and the Gospel who will release them from the burden and fetters upon them. The reference is to the Messenger, who believed himself to be predicted in both the Jewish and the Christian | scripture, and it implies that the   234
devotees of the Torah and the Gospel alike carried heavy legal burdens, from which he would free them. The prohibitions observed by the gentile Christians hardly suffice in the role of their "burden and fetters," however; the local Christians must have observed dietary restrictions comparable with those of the Jews.

Finally, in the originally Christian story of the Companions of the Cave, one of the young men is sent out to find the cleanest (*azkā*) food available (18:19). Torrey thought that the Qurʾānic story might reflect a Jewish recension, on the grounds that there are no Christian elements in it and that the clean-food motif is not found in any early Christian version.[66] This argument would work equally well if the transmitter was a Jewish Christian.

It is not until the Medinese suras that the Messenger uses the terms Jews (*yahūd*) and Christians (*naṣārā*), though the expression *alladhīna hādū*, "those who Judaize/follow Judaism," appears in three Meccan (or one Medinese and two Meccan) suras (6:146; 16:118; 22:17). In the Medinese suras, we find both the expression *alladhīna hādū* (seven attestations) and the term *yahūd* (nine attestations) along with the term Israelites. The Christians, on the other hand, are either covered by the term "Israelites," or else not mentioned by name at all in the Meccan suras, though there are certainly references to their doctrines (notably 19:16–36). It is striking that once the Messenger starts speaking of Jews and Christians, he almost always speaks of them in tandem, casting them as equally misguided rivals: the Jews say that ʿUzayr is the son of God, the Christians say the same of Jesus (9:30); both treat their religious leaders as lords

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of Trullo (AD 692), canon 67; Herman G.B. Teule, "Juridical texts in the *Ethicon* of Bar Hebraeus," *Oriens Christianus* 79 (1995): 23–47, at 33 (Jacob of Edessa). In the Latin West, too, the prohibition of blood was often upheld, but in the end the Latins followed Augustine, who held that it need not be upheld any more (Augustine, *Contra Faustrum*, XXXII, 13).

66   Charles C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam* (New York, 1933), 121. Griffith does not discuss the reference to clean food, or for that matter the absence of Christian features, in his study of the "Companions of the Cave" (Sidney Griffith, "Christian Lore and the Arabic Qurʾān: The 'Companions of the Cave' in Sūrat al-Kahf and in Syriac Christian Tradition," in *The Qurʾān in Its Historical Context*, ed. Reynolds, 109–131), though he does speak of "the way in which the Qurʾān … removes the Christian frame of reference" of the story, 130.

(9:31); both claim to be sons and beloved of God (5:18); both claim that one can only be saved as a member of their community; both denigrate the rival community as worthless; both proselytize (2:111, 113, 120, 135); and both claim Abraham as their own.[67]

The Messenger does engage in polemics against the Jews on their own in one verse (5:64: the Jews say that God's hand is tied), and links the *naṣārā* with the Israelites rather than with the Jews in another (5:12–14: the Israelites broke their covenant, the Christians forgot theirs, and both forgot a portion of what they had been reminded of). There is also a famous passage describing the Christians as being friendlier to the believers than were the Jews, with the explanation that their presbyters or priests (*qissīsūn*) and monks were not arrogant (5:82).[68] Even so, we are assured, the believers should not choose friends from either the Jews or the Christians (5:51). There are also three passages in which the Jews and Christians are listed together, but there together with other religious groups.[69] In short, the Messenger seems to think that the Jews and Christians belonged together, as also when he subsumes them under the label of "People of the Book" (*ahl al-kitāb*). This strengthens the case for the view that both had been covered by the name of Israelites.

That the Israelites included both Jews and Christians is also suggested by the very substitution, in the Medinese suras, of *yahūd* and *naṣārā* for *banū Isrāʾīl* when the Messenger is speaking of contemporaries. It is not the case that *banū Isrāʾīl* always refers to the ancient Israelites, as some have held: the Meccan verse 27:76 ("This Qurʾān tells the sons of Israel most of what they are disagreeing about"), for example, clearly envisages the Israelites as alive and well in the Messenger's own locality, and they are addressed directly in several other passages as well (e.g., 2:40, 47, 122; 17:5–8). But the Qurʾān does seem to separate the Israelites of the past from their contemporary manifestations as Jews and Christians in the Medinese suras.

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67   The Messenger retorts that Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian (2:140; 3:67) and that the same was true of Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the (twelve) tribes (2:140). Compare Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, 1.2.5.

68   This passage is discussed in Patricia Crone, "Pagan Arabs as God-Fearers," to appear in *Islam and Its Past: Jāhiliyya and Late Antiquity in Early Muslim Sources*, ed. Carol Bakhos and Michael Cook (Oxford, forthcoming) [Ed.: included as article 11 in the present volume].

69   God would judge between the believers, Jews, Christians, Sabians, Zoroastrians, and polytheists on the day of judgment (22:17); and anyone who believed in God and the last day and did good works, including the Jews, Christians, and Sabians, would get their due reward (2:62; similarly 5:69).

Why did the Messenger start using these terms in Medina? One possibility is that the change reflected a new hostility to the Jews and Christians, or perhaps just to the Jews, for Israel(ites) is what the Jews called themselves in their liturgy and other religious writings (such as the Talmud)—and also, at least in Graeco-Roman Palestine, in everyday usage. It was outsiders and Jews writing in Greek outside Palestine who used the term "Jews" (*Ioudaioi*, i.e., inhabitants of Judaea).[70] Polemical works, whether written in Greek, Syriac, or (after the conquests) in Arabic, were always directed against "Jews," and the word quickly acquired derogatory overtones. One would have expected the Messenger likewise to direct his anti-Jewish polemics against "Jews," and so eventually he did. But though he argued against them already in the Meccan suras, he still called them Israelites, accepting their self-designation. This is why the switch to "Jews" in Medina comes across as a sign of increased hostility to them.

The usual term for Christians in Syriac was *kristyānē*, which was also a self-designation and which is translatable as *masīḥiyyūn*. This term does not appear in the Qur'ān. Hostile Zoroastrians in Mesopotamia, however, would call the Christians *nāṣrāyē*, Nazoreans, using the same word as the Qur'ānic *naṣārā*.[71] *Kristyānē* and *nāṣrāyē* were not simply insider and outsider terms for the same group, however, for they appear as the names of two separate religious communities in the inscriptions of Kirdīr in the late third century; they could stand for gentile and Jewish Christians.[72] One takes it that the gentile Christians disliked being mixed up with their Jewish Christian counterparts, whom they probably despised, and that this is precisely why the Zoroastrians would taunt them by calling them *nāṣrāyē*.

Did the Messenger also use the name in a derogatory vein? It would be a neat parallel to the derogatory "Jews," but it does not go well with 5:14 and 5:82, for both verses refer to those who say, "we are *naṣārā*"; and though the first passage is hostile, the second eulogizes the *naṣārā* as believers, so the apparent self-designation cannot be explained away as a sarcasm. If *naṣārā* was a self-designation, the Messenger probably adopted it in Medina simply because he had to call the Christians something now that the unitary category of "Israelites" had broken down. But why was it *naṣārā*, rather than *masīḥiyyūn*, that the local

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70   Cf. Malcolm Lowe, "Ioudaioi of the Apocrypha," *Novum Testamentum* 23 (1981): 56–90 (covering the Greek-speaking world in the period c. 200 BC–200 AD), 56–57.

71   See de Blois, "Naṣrānī," 8; cf. also Reynolds, "The Quran and the Apostles," 4, n. 19, mistaking Griffith's use of this observation to mean that it is Griffith's own insight and directed against de Blois.

72   Cf. de Blois, "Naṣrānī," 5 ff. There are several other proposals.

Christians called themselves? The simplest solution is the one proposed by de Blois, namely, that they were Jewish Christians,[73] though that solution also leaves some problems.[74]

4 The Relative Importance of Moses and Jesus

By far the most prominent prophet in the Qurʾān is Moses. He is mentioned in thirty-six suras, Jesus in eleven; Moses' name appears in 153 verses against a mere twenty-five for Jesus. There are many more references to the book of Moses than to the Gospel, and far more material from the Old Testament than from the New. The New Testament material is concentrated in eight suras, whereas there is Old Testament material in almost every sura.[75] The Qurʾān refers to the birth of Moses, his exposure in a box (not basket), his upbringing among Pharaoh's people, his killing of an Egyptian, his time in Midian, the burning bush, the miracles that he and Aaron performed at Pharaoh's court, the exodus from Egypt, the revelation at Sinai, the golden calf, and the dispatch of scouts to the holy land: practically all the key points of his life are narrated. As regards Jesus, we hear of the annunciation, Mary's labor pains under a palm tree (cf. below, no. 14), the Jewish calumnies against her (see also no. 14), his childhood miracles (3:46, 49; 5:110), and, in the view of some modern scholars, his second coming | (43:61);[76] but not of his baptism, his temptation, his descent into hell, the last supper (the echoes in 5:112–115 notwithstanding), Gethsemane, or Judas' betrayal. His adult miracles are mentioned only in general terms (3:49; 5:110), and the crucifixion is denied (see no. 10), while his resurrection is left unmentioned. In short, the Jesus venerated by mainstream Christians is barely represented.

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73   De Blois, "Naṣrānī," 12–15; cf. also Gnilka, *Nazarener*. De Blois holds them to have been Nazoreans/Nazarenes "pure and simple," but it is not clear exactly what he means by that, given that, as he himself notes, "Nazorean" would seem not always to be the name of a clearly defined sect, but rather to cover a large part of the Jewish Christian spectrum (de Blois, "Naṣrānī," 4). The picture drawn of them in Ray A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity* (Jerusalem, 1988), is misleadingly coherent. On top of that, there is no direct continuity between any of the Jewish Christian sects described by Patristic authors and those reflected in the Qurʾān: for every similarity, there are numerous differences.

74   The main problem is 5:82, in which those who call themselves *naṣārā* have priests/presbyters/elders (*qissīsūn*) and monks (*ruhbān*), which suggests that they are gentile Christians. De Blois does not discuss the passage.

75   Cf. Gnilka, *Nazarener*, 123–124; similarly Goitein, *Jews and Arabs*, 55–56.

76   This view is not tenable; see Part II, no. 15.

Instead, Jesus had become a prophet like Moses, and indeed like the Messenger himself, in that he had become a prophet bringing a revealed book. There are admittedly verses which could be taken to imply that the only recipient of a book before the Messenger himself was Moses: "We gave Moses the book … and We made the son of Mary and his mother a sign" (23:49–50); "We gave Moses the book … and We gave Jesus, the son of Mary, the clear proofs (*al-bayyināt*) and strengthened him with the holy spirit" (2:87, 253). But in another verse, Jesus declares, "I am God's servant; God has given me the book and made me a prophet" (19:30), and elsewhere God is said to have given him the Gospel (5:46; 57:27) and to have sent down the Torah and the Gospel (3:3, 65; cf. 3:48; 5:46, 66, cf. 68; 9:111, all Medinese).[77]

Injīl is a derivative of the Greek *evangelion*, not a translation, and it is not clear how far the Messenger knew that the word meant good news; but he depicts all God's messengers, Jesus and himself included, as bringers of good news (*bushrā*). The good news that Jesus brings is not, however, the news of God's incarnation in a human being, the sacrifice of His only son, or the latter's resurrection, but rather the news of the coming of Aḥmad (61:6). In addition, Jesus preaches strict monotheism (5:72; cf. 3:51; 19:30), and the duty to pray and pay alms (19:31). The Gospel seems to be the contents of the teachings of Jesus, presumed by the Messenger to be identical with his own, not the news of God's redemption of mankind through his death.

Jesus by this account was sent to confirm (*muṣaddiqan li-*) the book of Moses or (as the Medinese suras say) the Torah (3:50; 5:46; 61:6); so too was the Messenger himself (e.g., 3:3; 46:12, cf. 46:30). The idea of Jesus as a prophet confirming the Pentateuch would have been alien to gentile Christians. Jesus did of course say in the Gospel that he had come to fulfill the law, not to abolish it, and that not a single jot of it would ever pass away (Matthew 5:17–18); but Christians explained the law as meaning the Decalogue, dismissing everything else as punishment imposed on the Jews for their worship of the golden calf,[78] or they used the word "law" in the vague sense of natural law, moral principles,

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77   For all the passages on the Injīl, see Parrinder, *Jesus*, 143–144.

78   Cf. Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire* (London, 1946), 88–91. The argument is used in the *Didascalia*, chap. 2 (Arthur Vööbus, ed. and trans., *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac* [Louvain, 1979], 18 = 15); cf. also chap. 26 (esp. 244–245 = 226–227). This text nonetheless speaks in rapturous tones about the law, claiming that Jesus did not come to abrogate the law, but rather to renew, confirm, and perfect it (cf. Joel Marcus, "The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and the *Didascalia Apostolorum*: A Common Jewish Christian Milieu?," *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, 61, no. 2 [2010]: 596–626, at 608, cf. also 616–617, 625).

or "the law of the Gospel."[79] Origen, for example, held Ebion (the supposed ancestor of the Ebionites) to have destroyed the law, even though it was by observing Jewish law that Ebion did so: Christ came to lead people away from the law, as Origen said.[80] Or, as a converted Jew exclaims in the *Doctrina Iacobi*, written in the 630s: "After the law of Moses another law has been proclaimed, that of Christ, the holy gospels of the new covenant … We will no longer Judaize or observe the Sabbath."[81] What is so striking about the Qurʾānic Jesus is that it is specifically the *Torah*, at least in the Medinese suras, and not the law in some unspecified sense, that he was sent to confirm. God taught him the book, wisdom, the Torah, and the Gospel, apparently all containing the same message (5:110). The Qurʾān also says that Jesus came to undo some of the prohibitions imposed on the recipients of the Torah (3:50), and informs us that some foods had been forbidden for the Jews by way of punishment for their sins (4:160). This is much more suggestive of a gentile Christian perspective. Christ came to fulfill the law and to loosen us from the bonds of the "second legislation" (i.e., Jewish law), as the twelve apostles are made to declare in the *Didascalia* (composed in | Syria c. 200), contradictory though it sounds.[82] But it is only some of the prohibitions that Jesus came to undo in the Qurʾān, and the very same passage has him confirming the Torah too. In short, the Messenger's view of Jesus suggests that he had been shaped in a community in which Jesus was revered, but Moses remained the paradigmatic prophet. Only Jewish Christians fit that description.

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5   Jewish Christian Christologies

Before proceeding, the reader needs to invest a bit of energy into familiarizing him/herself with Jewish Christian Christology. It is often assumed, especially by laymen, that all Jewish Christians regarded Jesus as a prophet of the purely human kind, much as did the Messenger, but this is not correct. There were indeed Jewish Christians who espoused a low Christology, and it is indeed likely

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79   Cf. *Didascalia*, chap. 15 (ed. and trans. Vööbus, 166 = 151); cf. Zellentin, *The Qurʾān's Legal Culture*.

80   Origen in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 130, 132 (*in epist. ad Rom.* III, 11; *in Matth. comm.* ser. 79).

81   *Doctrina Iacobi*, ed. and trans., with commentary, in Gilbert Dagron and Vincent Déroche, "Juifs et Chrétiens dans l'Orient du VIIe siècle," *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): I, para. 29, line 13.

82   *Didascalia*, chap. 2 (ed. and trans. Vööbus, 18 = 15); cf. Zellentin, *The Qurʾān's Legal Culture*.

that the Christology of the Qur'ān is of Jewish Christian origin, though it is difficult to prove (see no. 9). But many other Jewish Christians—perhaps most of them—had high Christological views of the type that some modern scholars classify (or classified) as Gnostic, and we need to understand both types in order to assess the degree to which Jewish Christian ideas are present in the Qur'ān, whether as an element of the Messenger's thought or as a target of his polemics.

Unlike the question of whether gentile converts had to follow Jewish law, Christology was not an object of debate between Paul and the Jerusalem church, so we do not actually know how the earliest Christians envisaged Christ, or even whether they shared a single understanding of him. However, a famous passage from an epistle of Paul, widely assumed to be a hymn, and perhaps one translated from Aramaic, may give us a glimpse of early Palestinian Christology.[83] It appears in the Epistle to the Philippians (2:6–11), one of the seven Pauline letters generally accepted as genuine; if it was indeed written by him, it takes us back to the 50s or 60s, a mere twenty or thirty years after Jesus' death. Against this, it must be said that the Epistle to the Philippians is not among the four letters to which Baur, the founder of the Tübingen school, would reduce the authentic Pauline corpus, and that the Dutch Radicals, who dated all the Pauline epistles to the second century, still have their sympathizers.[84] There is, in fact, something suspicious about the fact that Paul's letters simply presuppose a high estimation of Jesus as messiah, Lord, and son of God instead of explaining that he was all of these things, especially considering that his audience included gentile newcomers.[85] But be that as it may, the hymn is certainly early.

In this hymn, Christ is described as a pre-existing heavenly being that assumed human form and was obedient even to the point of death: "though he

83   The literature is enormous. For a readable introduction and references, see Larry W. Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2005), chap. 4.

84   Notably Hermann Detering (cf. his "The Dutch Approach to the Pauline Epistles," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 3 [1996]: 163–193); also Robert M. Price, whose delightful reviews can be found at http://www.robertmprice.mindvendor.com (accessed August 2012 onwards).

85   Cf. Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 33, taking this to mean that all these concepts had established themselves at enormous speed. "More happened in Christology within these few years than in the whole subsequent seven hundred years of church history," he cites Martin Hengel as saying. It similarly used to be thought that more happened in the decades from Muḥammad to the First Civil War than in the next seven hundred years of Islamic history. It is the pattern you get when all legitimate doctrine has to go back to the time of the founder and his disciples.

was in the form of God,[86] [he] did not regard equality with God as something to be desired, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness." Moreover, as a human he humbled himself to the point of dying on the cross; therefore God exalted him and gave him the name above all names, "so that every knee should bend ... at the name of Jesus and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." In other words, instead of seeking parity with God (after the fashion of arrogant human kings), he chose to become a slave, i.e., a human being, and further humiliated himself by letting himself be killed on the cross, whereupon God exalted him. It is not clear whether his exaltation simply restored him to his former position or rather elevated him to parity with God, but the latter seems the more likely implication.[87] Contrary to what used | to be thought, there was nothing particularly unusual about the idea of such a second divine power in Judaism at the time.[88] Philo happily called the *logos* both an archangel and a "second God," as well as God's "first-born son" and His viceroy (*hyparchos*);[89] many modern scholars speak of Jewish "binitarianism." But Philo never envisaged this archangel or "second God" as appearing on earth in human form. It was this idea that was new, and clearly immensely exciting to people at the time.

In Paul's hymn, the heavenly Christ is born in the likeness of a human being; so too in the *Dialogue* of Justin Martyr (d. c. 165), if we take "in the likeness of" to mean no more than "as."[90] This was to become the standard Christian position: the word became flesh, as John 1:14 puts it. Other Christians, however, used imagery implying that the pre-existing being did not actually become flesh, but rather assumed flesh as an outer cover: they compared the body to a vessel or temple that he filled, or to clothes that he put on. Christ's body was "the

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86   *Morphē theou*, a much debated expression which could perhaps be taken to mean that he was an angel.

87   Needless to say, opinions are divided. The fact that he is addressed as "lord" (*kyrios*) is not decisive, but the "name above all names" that he receives must surely be that of God; and, above all, the hymn is paraphrasing Isaiah 45:24, in which it is God who says, "to me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear by God."

88   Cf., for example, S.G.F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (London, 1951), 78, 82–83, in which the older view shapes the interpretation of the hymn.

89   Philo, *On Agriculture*, 51; *Who is the Heir of Divine Things*, 205; *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, II, 62; *On the Confusion of Tongues*, 146–147.

90   "You say that this Christ existed as God before the ages, then that he submitted to be born and become a man, yet that he is not a man of man," as the Jew protests to Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 48. This could be read as a summary of Paul's hymn.

receptacle of the spirit," as we read in the epistle of Barnabas (130s?); or "God caused the holy pre-existent spirit which had created the whole of creation to dwell in flesh that He desired," as the probably mid-second-century *Shepherd of Hermas* says.[91] Christ "clothed himself with the/a man," as Melito of Sardis (d. c. 180) and Clement of Alexandria (d. c. 215) put it.[92] "There are some who say that Jesus was merely a receptacle of Christ, upon whom the Christ, as a dove, descended from above," as Irenaeus (d. c. 202) informs us.[93]

The two concepts of the incarnation coexisted in the first centuries, and the differences between them may sometimes have been purely verbal, but this was certainly not always the case. Those who saw Jesus' body as a receptacle for the pre-existing being often envisaged this being as having taken up abode in him when he was an adult, usually (but not always) meaning when he was baptized; until then, Jesus had been an ordinary being. They also saw the pre-existing being as remaining distinct from its human host, and as departing when the latter died. "My God, why have you abandoned me?" as Jesus says in Mark (15:34) and Matthew (27:46): this could easily be understood as a complaint about the departure of the spirit that had taken up abode in him. "My power (*dynamis*), O my power, you have left me behind!" as Jesus exclaims in the Jewish Christian Gospel of Peter.[94] Modern scholars often refer to this idea as "spirit Christology," meaning the concept of the spirit as the pre-existing Christ that dwelt in the man Jesus.[95]

But it was not necessarily the spirit, as opposed to the word (*logos*), wisdom or power of God, or a power or angel, or the son, or simply the pre-existing Christ without further explanation, that was said to have filled the human Jesus.[96] Some scholars speak of "possession Christology," which has

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91   Both cited in J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (New York, 1978), 144.

92   Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 145, 154. Compare the Valentinian *Excerpta ex Theodoto* compiled by Clement, ed. and trans. Robert Pierce Casey (London, 1934), 1:1: Christ's body was a "receptacle of flesh for the *logos*" and "clad in it the Saviour descended."

93   Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 3.16.1 (ed. and trans. Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau [Paris, 1965–1982]).

94   Bart D. Ehrman and Zlatko Pleše, ed. and trans., *The Apocryphal Gospels* (Oxford, 2011), 381 (Akhmim fragment, 19). This understanding of the passage is questioned by P.M. Head, "On the Christology of the Gospel of Peter," *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992): 209–224, at 214.

95   Cf. Manlio Simonetti, "Note di cristologia pneumatica," *Augustinianum* 12 (1972): 201–232; Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 143–144.

96   For the near synonymity of these terms, see Justin Martyr, *Dialogue*, chap. 61: God begat a rational power called now the holy spirit, now the glory of God, now the son, wisdom, angel, god, lord, and *logos*.

the unfortunate effect of suggesting that Jesus was in need of exorcism; still others speak of "separation Christology," with reference to the fact that the human Jesus and the divine Christ were distinct and eventually separated. An even better term, if it were not so cross, would be hotel Christology, since it is precisely as if the body were a hotel that the spirit (or word, wisdom, angel, etc.) moves in and out of. Since one can say that the body hosted the pre-existing Christ, I shall settle for "host Christology." The doctrine was premised on a sharp distinction between the human Jesus and the heavenly Christ, and since mainstream Christians stopped making this distinction, they sometimes found the doctrine contradictory: *on the one hand* the Ebionites | claimed that "Christ" (read Jesus) was an ordinary human being and *on the other hand* they held that he was a heavenly power, as Epiphanius complained, though the two doctrines were two sides of the same coin (as in fact he knew very well).[97]

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Modern scholars sometimes react much like Epiphanius.[98] But host Christology was a very old form of Christology, perhaps the oldest recorded.[99] It is combated already in the first Epistle of John (probably c. 90),[100] and it seems to be espoused in the Gospel of Mark, which "begins with the entrance of the Holy Spirit into Jesus and ends with the Spirit forsaking him on the cross," as Price nicely puts it,[101] though Mark does tell of the resurrection as well.[102]

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97   Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 30.34.6; cf. 30.3.1–6; 30.14.4. He himself explained that according to the Ebionites, "Christ himself is from God on high, but Jesus is the offspring of a man's seed and a woman," and responded that Jesus was Christ and God from the moment of his birth, not thirty years later or after his baptism (*Panarion*, 30.29.1–10).

98   See, for example, Darrell D. Hannah, *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity* (Tübingen, 1999), 176.

99   Cf. Goulder, below, note 101; Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York, 1996), 48 ff. (here adoptionist Christology); Sakari Häkkinen, "Ebionites," in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian "Heretics*," ed. Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen (Leiden, 2008), 247–278, at 268–269 and n. 60 (here, "possessionist Christology").

100   Cf. Christoph Markschies, "Kerinth: Wer war er und was lehrte er?," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 41 (1998): 48–76, at 67–68.

101   Robert M. Price, review of Michael Goulder, *St. Paul versus St. Peter: A Tale of Two Missions* (Louisville, KY, 1995) (for the website, see note 84; this review was accessed January 2013). Goulder himself believes Mark to be a reworking of an earlier gospel espousing the Christology of the Jerusalem church (*Two Missions*, 129, 134), which would indeed make it the oldest known Christology.

102   The last twelve lines of the gospel are deemed to be a later addition, but the original includes the empty tomb. The resurrection is actually something of a problem in terms of

Mainstream Christians rejected this view of the incarnation as heretical, but it remained characteristic of that stream of Christianity that modern scholars label Gnostic, and also of much Jewish Christianity.[103]

Host Christology could be understood in both a high and a low Christological vein, and both positions were found (with many variations) among Jewish Christians. Many passages in the Patristic literature taken by modern scholars to deny Christ's divinity actually deny only the virgin birth. From a mainstream Christian point of view, of course, anyone who denied the virgin birth ipso facto denied that Christ was the son of God, and modern scholars sometimes seem to share this view;[104] but it was not how Jewish Christians reasoned. Most of them denied that Jesus had been born of a virgin, but that still left the question of whether he remained a human being or achieved divine or angelic status when he was baptized; alternatively, when he was transfigured (on which more below); or when he was resurrected (the position in Romans 1:4). There were also some who postponed his deification until he was raised to heaven,[105] and still others held that Jesus was never deified at all. Low Christology is attested (along with high Christology) in early Christian literature such as the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, a work of uncertain date variously held to be a Jewish work adapted by Christians, a Christian composition ab initio, or a work by Jewish Christians. Jesus was here predicted as "a man who by the power of God renews the law."[106]

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host Christology, for if the spirit left Jesus on the cross, what enabled him to be resurrected? Cerinthus did say both that the Christ flew away and that Jesus rose again if Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.*, 1.26.1) is to be trusted. But Epiphanius, who repeats this at *Panarion*, 28.1.7, also has Cerinthus claim that Christ (i.e., Jesus?) will not rise again until the general resurrection (ibid., 28.6.1).

103   For a discussion of Jewish Christian host Christology (here "possession Christology"), see Goulder, *Two Missions*, chapters 15–18.

104   See, for example, Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, 173–174: of the four attestations that Hannah adduces in support of the view that the Ebionites denied the divinity of Christ, only one passes muster (like Epiphanius, Hannah also sees contradictions where there are none); and according to Simon Claude Mimouni, *Le judéo-christianisme ancien* (Paris, 1998), 88, the Ebionites and Elchasaites regarded Jesus as a man chosen by God to be the messiah and refused to deify him in any way!

105   Thus some of the pupils of Theodotus of Byzantium, fl. c. 190 (Hippolytus, *Refut.*, 7.35).

106   T. Levi 16:3, in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, *Apocalyptic Literature & Testaments* (New York, 1983), 794; cf. Torleif Elgvin, "Jewish Christian Editing of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha," in *Jewish Believers*, ed. Skarsaune and Hvalvik, chap. 10, 287–288; Marcus, "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," 598, n. 8.

"The most High will send forth His salvation in the visitation of an only-begotten prophet," as we are also told (however exactly this is to be understood).[107]

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It is not always clear what type of Christology is implied in the texts. Our earliest heresiographer, Irenaeus (d. c. 202), says that the views of the Ebionites regarding Christ were similar to those of Cerinthus | (c. 100) and Carpocrates (fl. 130s).[108] Of the latter two, he informs us that they held a pre-existing, heavenly being (the Christ according to Cerinthus, a power according to Carpocrates) to have descended upon, or rather into, Jesus, thanks to his superior merits. According to Cerinthus, it came down in the form of a dove when he was baptized.[109] The reference of Cerinthus is to Mark 1:10 (cf. Matthew 3:16–17; Luke 3:21–22): "just as he was coming out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove [going] into him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'" The passage obviously suggests that Jesus only became the son of God when God's spirit entered him (which it only does in Mark).[110] But does it mean that Jesus became divine? "Son of God" could simply mean the messiah. Irenaeus says that Christ eventually "flew away" from Jesus, presumably during the crucifixion (though he also seems to say the opposite);[111] but this does not necessarily mean that Jesus had been divine before the departure of Christ.

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107   T. Benj. 9:2, cited in Elgvin, "Jewish Christian Editing," 288.

108   Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 1.25.1, 1.26.2, in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 105, where the second passage has Irenaeus declare the Ebionite view to be *not* similar to that of Cerinthus and Carpocrates, which contradicts Irenaeus as understood by Hippolytus, ed. Miroslav Marcovich (Berlin, 1986), 7.34.1; 10.22.1 (trans. John Henry Macmahon, in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson [Edinburgh, 1868], with a chapter numbering that is lower than Marcovich's); and Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 30.1.2. As noted by Petri Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish-Christian Sects and Gospels* (Leiden, 2012), 234, the Latin translation is corrupt here.

109   Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 1.26.1 (in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 103–105).

110   Mark 1:10 has *eis auton* where Matthew 3:16 and Luke 3:22 have *ep' auton*; and Irenaeus' account of Cerinthus likewise has *eis auton* in Greek, *in eum* in the Latin translation (*Adv. Haer.*, 1.26.1). Modern translations of both the gospels and Irenaeus routinely opt for "upon" whatever the preposition.

111   He continues that Jesus suffered and rose again while Christ remained impassible, being a spiritual being, as if Christ had not left him after all, but rather stayed to be crucified along with his human host, who suffered whereas he did not. This would certainly help to explain how it was possible for the human host to be resurrected (see above, note 102), but in that case Irenaeus is combining two different positions.

Irenaeus further says that Cerinthus held the pre-existing Christ to have descended on, or rather into, Jesus by way of reward for his righteousness, prudence, and wisdom, with the result that he proclaimed the unknown Father and performed miracles.[112] This suggests that Jesus acquired otherwise unobtainable knowledge and power when he was baptized and used them to preach and work wonders, just as other prophets did. He had special powers, but he was not divine. Those Ebionites who held a position similar to Cerinthus (according to Irenaeus) are said by Hippolytus (d. 235) to have held it possible for everyone to become Christ on the grounds that Christ was a man like any other; he was named both Jesus and "Christ of God" (not Christ *and* God) because he had kept the law, whereas everyone else had failed to do so—these Ebionites lived according to the law and believed in justification by it, as Hippolytus explains, without telling us exactly what the status of Jesus as Christ/the messiah meant to them.[113] Hippolytus does not explicitly say that they denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, but a group so committed to the observance of the law was not likely to have believed it possible for the divine to manifest itself in a man, let alone for every human to be a potential host: direct contact with the divinity normally led to the view that the observance of the law was superfluous.

Justin Martyr (d. c. 165) also knew of Christians who held that Christ was an ordinary human being and the messiah by election: they are "of your race," he said, i.e., they were Jews.[114] Theodotus of Byzantium (fl. c. 190), a leatherworker or shoemaker who disseminated host Christology some thirty years after Justin, had followers who likewise denied that Jesus was ever more than a man.[115] These Ebionites probably believed Jesus to have been filled with God's spirit in the same way that ordinary prophets were, or more so, but not to the point of making him divine: it enabled him to prophesy, but did not alter his human status. If so, it was prophetic status that all could hope to achieve by imitation of

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112   Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 1.26.1 (in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 103–104).

113   Hippolytus, *Refut.*, 7.34.1–2 (in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 113).

114   Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 48:4–5. In most editions Justin says that they were "of our race," i.e., gentiles; but according to Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish-Christian Sects*, 240, this rests on a mistaken emendation. The un-emended version certainly makes better sense.

115   Theodotus, who also held the Christ to have descended on Jesus when he was baptized, apparently held this to deify him, but some of his followers thought that Jesus never became divine, and others held that he did so when he was resurrected (Hippolytus, *Refut.*, 7.35). For the third position, compare Romans 1:3–4; Acts 13:32–33, discussed by Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption*, 48–49.

Jesus. This is perfectly credible, for it was widely held in the first two centuries of Christianity that ordinary believers | could be filled by the spirit and function as prophets while it was in them.[116]

Ebionites who cast Jesus as an ordinary human being were known to others too. According to Origen, some Ebionites accepted that Jesus was born of a virgin, but did so without any *theologia*, presumably meaning without any talk about divinity.[117] They did not accept his pre-existence as God, the *logos*, and wisdom, as Eusebius reformulated it.[118] They claimed that Christ did not exist before Mary, as Jerome put it.[119] According to Tertullian, Ebion asserted that "Jesus is a mere man and only of the seed of David, that means not also the son of God."[120] Here it is not just virgin birth that was denied (though Tertullian knew the Ebionites to reject that too), but also the status of Jesus as the son of God. Tertullian further said that the Ebionites made their claim about Jesus as a mere man even though Jesus was obviously more glorious than the prophets (according to them or to him?), "so as to say that an angel is in him in the same way as in Zachariah."[121] In other words, they agreed with adherents of host Christology that an angel dwelt in Jesus, but they held this angel to be his source of inspiration rather than a being which raised him to the status of mediator between the divine and human worlds. The fact that these Ebionites spoke of an angel "in him" (*in illo*), which is not dictated by the text of Zachariah, suggests that the union of Jesus with a pre-existing being was taken for granted even by those who wanted to keep him as a mere man.[122] Tertullian later mentioned that, in Ebion's opinion, one ought to believe that Jesus was nothing more than

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116   Cf. David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1983), chap. 8.

117   Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, XVI, 12 (in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 129–130, translating it quite differently); cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, V, 61 (in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 134–135). Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish-Christian Sects*, 28, 234, unpersuasively argues that Origen's distinction between the two groups is a mere inference from the two versions of Irenaeus' statement that Ebionite Christology was/was not similar to that of Cerinthus (who did not believe in the virgin birth); cf. above, note 108.

118   Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, 3.27.3.

119   Jerome, *De viris illustribus*, 9 (in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 211), crediting this position to Cerinthus and the Ebionites in general.

120   Tertullian, *De carne Christi*, 14 (in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 109).

121   Ibid.; and cf. Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 21–22, whose interpretation does not tally entirely with mine.

122   Cf. Zachariah 1:14; 4:1; 5:2: the angel spoke *bī* and *alay*, all rendered *pros me* in the Vulgate and "to me" in English versions, not "in me."

Solomon and Jonah.[123] This confirms that the Ebionites in question regarded him as a prophet of the normal human kind.

Modern scholars usually call the position of Cerinthus and the Ebionites adoptionist, but it is a misleading label in that the crucial movement is that of a heavenly being from heaven to the earth,[124] and it also fails to bring out that the result was the indwelling of a heavenly being in the body of an ordinary man. Like Cerinthus and Carpocrates, the Ebionites (and others too) saw the transformation as having taken place when Jesus was baptized.[125]

Both the Ebionites and the Nazoreans read an uncanonical gospel in "Hebrew" (i.e., Aramaic),[126] which they called the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* and which was widely believed to be a "Hebrew" version of Matthew,[127] though

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123 Tertullian, *De carne Christi*, 18 (in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 109).

124 "Adoptionism" is actually defined by Kelly as the doctrine that Christ was a mere man on whom God's spirit had descended (*Early Christian Doctrines*, 115), but this does not fit the ordinary sense of adoption, so it is not a helpful term. Another expression for "adoptionism" is "dynamic monarchianism," which requires more explanation than the phenomenon it is meant to explain.

125 For the Ebionites, see their gospel in, for example, Ehrman and Pleše, *Apocryphal Gospels*, 213, from Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 30.13.7; for the Nazoreans, see the same work, in ibid., 221. The position is also attested for Theodotus of Byzantium (fl. c. 190), cf. Hippolytus, *Refut.*, 7.35.

126 For Hebrew in the sense of Aramaic, see now Beattie and Davies, "What Does Hebrew Mean?," and note 55, above.

127 Most scholars postulate the existence of three distinct Jewish Christian gospels, of which only one, the Gospel of the Nazoreans, was in Aramaic; the other two, the Gospel of the Ebionites and that of the Hebrews, are both held to have been in Greek (for this view, pioneered by J. Waitz, see A.F.J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* [Leiden, 1992], chap. 2; Ehrman and Pleše, *Apocryphal Gospels*, 197 ff.; P. Vielhauer and G. Strecker, "Jewish Christian Gospels," in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson [Cambridge, UK, 1991–1992], 1:134–178, at 135–136; J.K. Elliott, trans., *The Apocryphal New Testament* [Oxford, 1993], 3 ff.). But a few (with whose position I sympathize) hold that there was only one Jewish Christian gospel, or at least that the Ebionites and the Nazoreans read different recensions of the same Aramaic gospel known as *According to the Hebrews*. Pioneered by A. Schmidtke, this view is favored by William L. Petersen, "A New Testimonium to a Judaic-Christian Gospel Fragment from a Hymn of Romanos the Melodist," *Vigiliae Christianae* 50 (1996): 105–116 (reprinted in his collected essays, *Patristic and Text-Critical Studies* [Leiden, 2012], chap. 18), n. 4; Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 85–86. Whether this gospel was a "Hebrew" version of Matthew is another question, but even if it was, it evidently would not follow that it was the *original* version of Matthew, as some assume (rejecting its identification as Matthew, because the

242 that read by the Ebionites was | actually closer to Mark in its account of the baptism.[128] In the gospel used by the Nazoreans, the account of the baptism is somewhat different:

> When the Lord came up out of the water, the whole fount of the holy spirit descended upon him and rested on him and said to him, My Son, in all the prophets I was waiting for you that you should come and I might rest in you. For you are my rest, you are my firstborn son, who rules for ever.[129]

Here Jesus is presented as the culmination of a chain of prophets in all of whom the spirit has been: the spirit of God, which is the spirit of wisdom, has passed into holy souls before, making them prophets and friends of God, but the whole fount of the holy spirit descended on Jesus when he was baptized and found its final resting place in him.[130] This is also compatible with the interpretation of Jesus as a human prophet, but the Nazoreans known to Jerome understood it to mean that "the whole fullness of the godhead (*omnem plenitudinem divinitatis*) took pleasure to dwell corporeally" in Jesus, whereas it had only dwelled "moderately" in the earlier holy persons.[131] In this passage, the human Jesus is indeed deified when the heavenly being (here the holy spirit) takes up abode

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canonical Matthew clearly is not a translation of a Semitic original). If a "Hebrew" version of Matthew circulated, Greek-speaking Christians who had not seen or read it would have naturally assumed it to be the original behind the Greek text.

128 As in Mark (cf. above, note 110), the holy spirit comes down as a dove which enters him (cf. Ehrman and Pleše, *Apocryphal Gospels*, 213, from Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 30.13.7). Here the word "entered" has been added for clarification, as has the statement, "Today I have given you birth."

129 Jerome, *In Esaiam*, 11:1–3, in Ehrman and Pleše, *Apocryphal Gospels*, 221; in Klijn, *Jewish Christian Gospel Tradition*, 98 (text and a less idiomatic translation; the passage is cited only in a truncated form in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 223). It is on the basis of the difference between these two baptism narratives that some hold that there must have been at least two different gospels.

130 The passage weaves together Isaiah 11:2; Wisdom of Solomon 7:27; Sirach 24:7. For further discussion, see Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge, 2012), 291–293.

131 Jerome, *In Esaiam*, 11:1–3, in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 223; cf. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, 19, strangely supposing that their version of Isaiah had revealed to Jerome a Christology "which might be called orthodox." That the fullness of divinity dwelt in Christ is Pauline orthodoxy (cf. Colossians 1:19; 2:9), but the idea that it had done so moderately in earlier figures was not.

in him. A stronger version of this view is voiced in a passage in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, in which we are told that the pre-existing being "has changed his forms and his names from the beginning of the world until, coming upon his own times, and being anointed with mercy for the works of God, he shall enjoy rest for ever."[132] Here all the prophets are the same divine being in different human bodies, but only the last of them is the messiah (who seems still to be awaited). Yet another view is found in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*: Jesus (presumably in the sense of the heavenly Christ) "took a Jewish body and was born among the Jews."[133] As in other forms of host Christology, Jesus assumes a body as if it were clothing, but here he does so before, or when, he is born.

Both the Nazorean understanding of the divinity dwelling moderately in the prophets before Jesus, but fully in him, and the passage in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* in which the messiah is still to come are likely to reflect the magnetic pull of the Book of Elchasai, a work composed in Aramaic by a Jew or Jewish Christian writing in Parthian Mesopotamia in 116–117.[134] Elchasai (if that is indeed what he called himself) construed all the prophets as incarnations of the same pre-existing Christ in different bodies: all prophets were ultimately identical and all bore the same message, but only the last of them was the messiah, in whom the spirit would enjoy rest for ever. About a century later this book, now apparently translated into Greek, was brought to Palestine and Rome, where it stirred up much excitement among Christians and so attracted the attention of Hippolytus, Origen, and Epiphanius. | The heavenly Christ was "transfused" into many bodies and was now in Jesus, as Hippolytus observed with reference to the beliefs of the Elchasaites in

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132   *Homilies*, III, 20; discussed in Crone, *Nativist Prophets*, 289 ff. This does not represent the normal view in the *Homilies*, in which only Adam and Christ are incarnations of the divine spirit.

133   *Recognitions*, 1.60.7 (cf. 1.48.4). The passage is deemed remarkable by van Voorst, *Ascents of James*, 164, in view of the "generally low" Christology of the second and third centuries, when there was supposedly no belief in the pre-existence of Jesus, an extraordinary claim for an expert to make. Yet Richard Bauckham, "The Origin of the Ebionites," in *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature*, ed. Peter J. Tomson and Doris Lambers-Petry (Tübingen, 2003), 162–181, at 171, goes so far as to dismiss the passage as an editorial interpolation.

134   For the Mesopotamian/Iranian background and further details, see Crone, *Nativist Prophets*, esp. chapters 11, 14, and pp. 336–341 (at which point I would have cited the Biblical scholars advocating host Christology as the oldest form of Christology if I had been aware of them at the time).

Rome.[135] "When he chooses, he takes Adam's body off and puts it on again," as the Sampseans, formerly called Ossenes, said according to Epiphanius.[136] The Ossenes/Sampseans were one of four groups that the Elchasaites had corrupted, according to Epiphanius, the other three being the Ebionites, the Nazoreans, and the Nasareans:[137] in other words, at least some if not all of them had adopted this Christology. It is clear from both Hippolytus and Epiphanius that on the Greek side of the border the number of divine incarnations was reduced to two, Adam and Christ, whereas the Book of Elchasai postulated many more. By contrast, the Elchasaites of Iraq apparently accepted all their prophets (or, as they more commonly said, apostles) as the same divine being in human bodies; or at least their Manichaean offshoot did, and so too did the Mandaeans.[138]

The Elchasaites explicitly identified the pre-existing Christ as an angel created by God.[139] If nothing created can be divine, as the Qurʾānic Messenger held, the Elchasaites and the many Jewish Christians who adopted their Christology could claim that they did not deify him. Whether they made this claim or not we cannot tell, presumably because it did not matter yet: nobody operated with a sharp distinction between divine and angelic status at the time. Thus Mechizedek, identified with the archangel Michael, was called both *el* and *elohim* in the Dead Sea scrolls;[140] and when God's spirit, power, wisdom, or *logos* were personified as angels, the import was not that they were angels as *opposed* to divine beings, but rather that they were part of Him. The sharp distinction between God and angels that we encounter in the later literature, including the Qurʾān, seems to be a product of the Christian battle against paganism.

What the Elchasaites did claim, according to Epiphanius, was that the heavenly Christ was a being "created before all things ... higher than the angels and Lord of all," which sounds much like Christ in Paul's hymn.[141] Like the

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135   Hippolytus, *Refut.*, 10.29.2.

136   Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 53.1.8. Further discussion in Crone, *Nativist Prophets*, chap. 14, 283 ff.

137   Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 19.5.4–5.

138   For all this, see Crone, *Nativist Prophets*, 293–301.

139   Hippolytus, *Refut.*, 9.13.2; Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 30.3.4; 30.16.4. Christ also appears as an archangel in a passage in the North African author Pseudo-Cyprian, probably active in the late second century, and in an inscription on a fourth-century gem, both probably Jewish Christian; cf. Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London, 1964), 122–123.

140   See 11Q13 in Geza Vermes, trans., *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 4th ed. (London, 1997), 500–502.

141   Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 30.3.4.

Michael/Melchizedek of the Dead Sea scrolls or Philo's *logos*, the heavenly Christ occupied the position of mediator, a heavenly being placed at the intersection between the divine and human worlds; and on lodging himself in a human host, he propelled the latter, too, to mediator position: this seems to be the sense in which Jesus became the son of God and Christ in their view.

6   The *Gospel According to the Hebrews* in the Seventh Century

All this is relevant to a book called the *Gospel According to the Hebrews*, which has a bearing on the Qurʾān. We hear about it in a Coptic sermon attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386), but probably composed in the sixth or seventh century.[142] In the sermon, "Cyril" discusses a heresy to the effect that Mary brought her body from heaven, which he traces to Ebion and Harpocratius (also known as Carpocrates), informing us that a monk in the neighborhood of Maiuma at Gaza was among those who had been spreading it.[143] The monk, whose name was Annarichos or Annarikos, is presented as crediting his own beliefs to Ebion and Sator/Sarton/Sarto, i.e., | Satornilus (a Gnostic active in   244
Antioch c. 120); and we are told that the bishop of Gaza sent him to Cyril in Jerusalem, whereupon we get some snippets of the debate between them. The monk cited the Gospel of the Hebrews as saying that

> when Christ wished to come upon the earth to men the Good Father
> called a mighty "power" in the heavens which was called "Michael", and

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142   The sermon has been edited and translated three times, by Ernest A. Wallis Budge, "Discourse on Mary Theotokos," in his *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London, 1915), 626–651 (reproducing British Library Or. 6784, fols. 1ᵃ–23ᵇ; the folio numbers are given in the left margin); by Antonella Campagnano, *Omelie Copte: sulla passione, sulla croce e sulla vergine* (Milan, 1980), 152–195 (based on Pierpont Morgan M 583); and by Stefan Bombeck, "Pseudo-Kyrillos *In Mariam virginem*," *Orientalia* 70 (2001): 40–88 (based on Pierpont Morgan M 597). I shall use the title "On the Virgin" for all three versions. For all of the works attributed to Cyril with short summaries of their contents, see Tito Orlandi, "Cirillo di Gerusalemme nella letteratura copta," *Vetera Christianorum* 9 (1972): 93–100.

143   For the date, see Simon Claude Mimouni, *Dormition et assomption de Marie* (Paris, 1995), 193–194 (between 431 and the second half of the sixth century); Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 60 (before the mid-sixth century); cf. Terry Wilfong, "Constantine in Coptic: Egyptian Constructions of Constantine the Great," in *Constantine: History, Historiography, and Legend*, ed. Samuel N.C. Lieu and Dominic Montserrat (London, 2002), chap. 9, 181 (placing the six pseudo-Cyrillian works in Coptic in the sixth or seventh century).

committed Christ to the care thereof. And the "power" came down into
the world, and it was called Mary, and [Christ] was in her womb for seven
months.[144]

The monk affirmed that there were five gospels, the four canonical ones plus
the Gospel written to the Hebrews. "Cyril" responded by emphatically declaring
Hebrew doctrine to be incompatible with that of Christ, whereupon the monk
realised his error and repented. Ebion (once just Bion) and Harpocratius are
probably concatenated in this story because Ebion had once been depicted
as adhering to much the same views regarding Christ as Carpocrates and
Cerinthus. But Cerinthus is missing in the Coptic sermon and, though Irenaeus
is cited, the doctrine reported is unknown to the patristic literature.

Just as the pre-existing Christ was an archangel according to Jewish Christians
influenced by Elchasai,[145] so Mary was a power identified as an archangel
according to the Gospel of the Hebrews available in the seventh-century Gaza
region. But the Ebionites and Nazoreans saw the heavenly Christ or holy spirit
as having descended on the human Jesus, son of Joseph and Mary, to take up
abode in him when he was baptized, whereas the Jewish Christians quoted by
Annarichos held that the heavenly being was actually born to Mary as the Christ
and son of God; and the idea that *Mary* was a heavenly being is new. This makes
it unlikely that the passage quoted from the Gospel of the Hebrews in the Coptic
sermon originated in the older gospel of that name. It is hard to be sure, for
if the older gospel grew by accretion as its readers updated it, the passage cited
in the Coptic sermon could perhaps have come to form part of it by "Cyril's"
time.[146] But more probably, the gospel read by Annarichos was a later Jewish
Christian composition of the Gnosticizing type.

Whatever the precise identity of Annarichos' gospel, is "Cyril" right to identify
the doctrine he quotes from it as Jewish Christian? Or should we rather

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144   Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Virgin," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fol. 12ª = 637; Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, par. 28; Bombeck, "Pseudo-Kyrillos," par. 28; cf. Pieter van der Horst, "Seven Months' Children in Jewish and Christian Literature from Antiquity," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 54 (1978): 346–360. For Micha and (in the BL manuscript used by Budge) Michael, see Roelof van den Broek, "Der Bericht des koptischen Kyrillos von Jerusalem über das Hebräerevangelium," in his *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity* (Leiden, 1996), chap. 9, 147, nn. 13, 15.

145   Cf. above, pp. 241–243 [255–257].

146   The citation is accepted as part of the original Gospel of the Hebrews in Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 177, but it is omitted in other compilations, and van den Broek, "Kyrillos," 148–150, fiercely rejects it.

see it as having developed within Monophysitism? There are several reasons to think that "Cyril" is right. In the first place, Jewish Christians were not normally envisaged as a live presence anymore, and as a heresiographical bugbear, Ebion stood for the view that Jesus was a mere man born to ordinary human parents, not that he was a heavenly power born of an archangel in human guise.[147] If "Cyril" had been thinking stereotypically, he would have attributed the doctrine regarding Mary's angelic status to "Manichaeans" or "Borborians" or some such Gnostic group, not to Ebion. The tenth-century Eutychius of Alexandria (Saʿīd b. Baṭrīq), followed by the fourteenth-century Abū ʾl-Barakāt, did in fact ascribe the doctrine to the Borborians, in wording taken from the Qurʾān (16:51). Van den Broek is inclined to agree with them, without explaining why in that case "Cyril" chose to present the doctrine as Hebrew.[148]

In the second place, there is nothing implausible about the claim that a Jewish Christian gospel (even an ancient one) was available in the sixth or seventh century. The sixth-century Byzantine poet Romanos the Melodist, who was born in Emesa (Hims), "of the Hebrew race," and who drew heavily on Syrian traditions, has two quotations from a Jewish Christian gospel. One of them is also found in Tatian's *Diatesseron*, which is probably where Romanos found it, but the other is not attested anywhere else apart from a fourteenth-century Latin source, which credits it (in a variant form) to the gospel used by the Nazoreans. Romanos may have quoted or paraphrased this passage directly from a Jewish Christian gospel.[149]

In the third place, a variant version of the passage cited by "Cyril" from the Hebrew Gospel turns up in a medieval Latin source. In the *Interrogatio Iohannis* used by the Cathars of Italy and southern France, Christ says, "When my Father thought to send me to this earth, He sent before me one of His angels through the holy spirit; this angel was called Mary, my mother. I descended: I entered and left again through her ear."[150] The Cathars had obtained their book around 1190 from the Bogomils of Bulgaria,[151] and the Bogomils had it from

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147   Cf. Schoeps, *Theologie*, 324.

148   Van den Broek, "Kyrillos," 152–153.

149   For all this, see Petersen, "New Testimonium," 105–116 and n. 24. Petersen regards Romanos' familiarity with this gospel as a testimony to his great learning (p. 110), but one might also infer that the Hebrew family he was born into was Jewish Christian.

150   Edina Bozóky, trans. and ed., *Le Livre secret des Cathares: Interrogatio Iohannis* (Paris, 1980), 68 v; cf. also Roelof van den Broek, "The Cathars: Medieval Gnostics?," in his *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity*, chap. 10. Van den Broek notes the parallel with the Qurʾānic Trinity of God, Mary, and Jesus at p. 167.

151   Cf. Nazarius, an old former bishop of the Cathars, who declared that he had heard many

an unknown eastern source, presumably Paulician. There can in any case be no doubt that it was based on Near Eastern materials.[152] As noted already, the passage quoted by "Cyril" probably did not form part of the Hebrew Gospel known to the Church Fathers, but it was not spurious in the sense that "Cyril" had invented it. He had it from a real book. It is of central interest for a doctrine about Jesus and Mary rejected in the Qurʾān, namely, that both Jesus and Mary were divine.

7 Mary and the Trinity

In the Medinese sura 5:116, we are told that on the day of judgment God will ask Jesus, *a-anta qulta lil-nāsi ʾttakhidhūnī wa-ummī ilāhayni min dūni ʾllāhi*, "did you tell people, 'adopt me and my mother as two gods apart from God'?" Jesus responds with a vigorous denial. That there were people who venerated both Jesus and his mother as divine beings could hardly be clearer.[153] This is not how Griffith reads the passage, however: in his view, its rhetoric is designed to bring out the absurdity of the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus by showing that it would entail that Mary was also divine.[154] But this cannot be right. For one thing, there is no inference from the one to the other in the passage, nor is the response that such a doctrine regarding Mary would be manifestly absurd, but rather that there is no basis for deification of either

declare in his presence that the Blessed Virgin was an angel and that Christ did not assume human nature but an angelic one, and a celestial body. "He said he got this error from the bishop and elder son of the church of Bulgaria almost sixty years ago" [i.e., around 1190] (Rainerius Sacconi, *Summa de catharis*, cited in Bozóky, *Livre*, 151–152; Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans, trans., *Heresies of the High Middle Ages: Selected Sources Translated and Annotated* [New York, 1969], 344 [25]).

152 The Paulician origin is denied by van der Broek, "Kyrillos," 155; van der Broek, "Cathars," 168, on the grounds that both the Armenian and Byzantine Paulicians held Mary to be an ordinary woman who had merely served as a conduit for the heavenly Jesus (she had children by Joseph afterwards; cf. Peter of Sicily below, notes 222, 224). But they share the conduit idea (first proposed by Valentinus), and there must have been many kinds of Paulicians, not just the Armenian and Byzantine varieties. There were at least three kinds of Cathars (some thought Mary was an archangel, others that she was a real woman born without human seed, and still others that her body was made of heavenly elements; cf. Bokózy, *Livre*, 152). For the eastern origins, see van den Broek, "Cathars," esp. 164–165, 172–176.

153 Similarly de Blois, "Naṣrānī," 13, noting the agreement of the exegetes.

154 Griffith, "Syriacisms," 103*.

her or her son in Jesus' own preaching. For another thing, an earlier passage in the same sura tells us that "Christ (*al-masīḥ*), the son of Mary, was nothing but a messenger and his mother was [simply] a truthful woman, both of them ate food" (5:75). The fact that they ate food is given as proof of their human status. According to the Qur'ān, the messengers (in the sense of angels rather than prophets) who visited Abraham did not touch the calf that Abraham had prepared for them (11:69–70; 51:26–28). The polytheists who expected the Messenger to be an angel sarcastically asked what kind of messenger it was who ate food and walked about in the markets (25:7). God replied that all earlier messengers had also been humans, not endowed with bodies that did not eat, and not immortal (21:8). It is plain that the Messenger was up against opponents who regarded both Jesus and Mary as heavenly beings of the type indiscriminately known as angels or gods in the Qur'ān. This is also why he declared that God could destroy both Jesus and his mother if He wished (5:17), and probably why he denied that God had either a consort (*ṣāḥiba*) or a son (6:101; 72:3). The adherents of the view he opposed were identified as People of the Book in 4:171, where they were told (for the second time) not to go to extremes and say "three," and here the Messenger affirmed that Jesus was just a messenger of God, and His Word and a spirit from Him that God cast into Mary.

That angels did not eat or drink was an old view. The Bible does of course depict them as eating with Abraham (Genesis 18:8; 19:3) and describes manna | as their food,[155] but Jewish readers from the Second Temple period onwards interpreted these and other passages in a docetic vein. "Although you were watching me, I really did not eat or drink anything—but what you saw was a vision," the archangel Raphael explains to Tobit and Tobias in the Book of Tobit (second century BC).[156] The angels who visited Abraham only seemed to eat and drink, as Philo, Josephus, and the Palestinian targums inform us.[157] According to the Testament of Abraham (c. AD 100?), God told the archangel Michael to eat whatever Abraham ate, whereupon Michael protested that angels neither ate nor drank, so God assured him that an all-devouring spirit would consume

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155   Psalms 77:25 LXX (78:25 RSV); Wisdom of Solomon 16:20; cf. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (orig. 1909–1956; Baltimore, 1998), 1:243. See also Joseph and Asenath 16:8, where a honeycomb made by the bees of the heavenly paradise is the food of angels: he who eats it will never die.

156   Book of Tobit 12:19.

157   Philo, "On Abraham," 118; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 1.11.2 (197); Roger le Déaut and Jacques Robert, trans., *Targum du Pentateuque* (Paris, 1978), 1:187 (on Gen. 18:8), with further references; cf. also Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:243.

the food for him.[158] When in Rome one must do as the Romans do, the rabbis explained, so Moses abstained from food and drink when he ascended on high, while conversely the angels ate with Abraham down below—except that the angels only appeared to eat.[159] The view that angels did not eat is also widespread in the patristic literature.[160]

The question discussed with reference to angels came to be debated about Jesus as well. The fact that he ate food and drank wine was an objection to his status as the heavenly being "Son of Man" already to be found in the Gospels (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34); and many Christians reacted, like the Jews, by recourse to docetic interpretation. The apocryphal Acts of John (c. 150–200) simply denied that Jesus ate.[161] Others affirmed that his flesh, though a mere appearance, allowed physical attributes such as eating to be performed: this seems to have been the position of Marcion, who adduced Abraham's angelic visitors as a parallel.[162] Still others granted that Jesus ate and drank, but insisted that he did not do so out of physical need, only for the sake of appearance.[163] There were also some who granted that Jesus ate and drank, but held that he did so in a special way, without excreting and experiencing corruption.[164] To other Christians, however, the essence of Christianity lay in the fact that the son of God had become human and died for us, so they insisted on the reality of Christ's body. "He ate and drank," as already Ignatius (d. before 117) declared, sounding much like the Messenger.[165] Tertullian, writing against Marcion, insisted that even the angels who visited Abraham had solid bodies and truly ate;[166] and a Coptic sermon seems to share this view, for it has Abraham casually mention that he ate with the archangel

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158   *Testament of Abraham*, version A, 4:4 (version B lacks Michael's protest and God's response) in Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:884.

159   *Genesis Rabba*, 48:14; cf. the later *Deuteronomy Rabba*, 11:4; *Exodus Rabba*, 47:5.

160   See *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, ed. Theodor Klauser (Stuttgart, 1950–2010), s.v. "Engel IV (christlich)," cols. 123–124 (J. Michl).

161   Daniel R. Streett, *They Went Out from Us: The Identity of the Opponents in First John* (Berlin, 2011), 44 (Acts of John, chap. 93).

162   Ibid., 39–40, 199.

163   Ibid., 45 (Acts of Peter, chap. 20).

164   Ibid., 46–47 (Clement, *Stromata*, 3.59.3, on Valentinus, apparently in an approving vein). Compare Justin Martyr, *Dialogue*, 57, on the angels who visited Abraham: they ate the way fire devours wood, without teeth and jaws.

165   Ignatius, *Epistle to the Trallians*, 9:1 (in Michael W. Holmes, trans. and ed., *The Apostolic Fathers* [Grand Rapids, MI, 1999], 165).

166   Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, III, 9.

Michael.[167] Even the Monophysite Julian of Halicarnassos, who was often accused of docetism (and on whom more will be said below), accepted that Christ ate and drank and had normal vital functions.[168]

This was also the Messenger's view. Like his "polytheist" and Christian opponents, he held that angels did not eat, but he did not think that either Jesus or Mary were angels, let alone gods. In sura 16:51, God tells people not to adopt two gods (*lā tattakhidhū ilāhayni 'thnayni*) without naming the deities in question. The passage is so similar in wording to the Medinese 5:116—in which God asks Jesus, "did you tell people, 'adopt me and my mother as two gods apart from God' (*ittakhidhūnī wa-ummī ilāhayni min dūni 'llāhi*)?"—that one wonders if the reference is not to Jesus and Mary here too. In short, it is hard to see how Griffith, who is presumably familiar with all these passages, can deny that the Messenger was arguing against Christians who operated with a Trinity consisting of God, Mary, and Jesus as Father, Wife/Mother, and Son.

In the wording of the Qur'ān, the offensive Christians said that "God is the third of three" (5:73).[169] The Messenger could of course have made this observation with reference to any Trinitarian Christians: only the continuation in 5:75 indicates what kind of Trinity is involved. But Griffith does not even grant that the reference is to the Trinity, a fact which necessitates a brief digression. According to him, the expression "the third of three" (*thālithu thalāthatin*) is enigmatic and best understood as a rendering of the Syriac epithet for Christ, *tlīthāyā*, meaning treble or threefold: Christ is threefold with reference to Biblical narratives figuring "three days," taken as types of Christ's three days in the tomb; and the expression also refers obliquely to Jesus as one of the persons in the triune God.[170] But this is somewhat far-fetched, and in any case it is not Christ who is characterized as *thālithu thalāthatin*, but rather God, nor is the expression enigmatic, since it simply means "the third of three," just as *thāniya 'thnayni* means "the second of two" in the account of those who sought refuge in a cave (9:40).[171] The charge is that the Christians reduce God to the position of the third of three deities by giving Him two partners, even though Christ explic-

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167   Theodosius of Alexandria, "Encomium on St Michael, the Archangel," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, 910 (fol. 18ᵃ).

168   Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, part 4, 352, n. 45. See also below in sections 7(b) and 10 (in Part II).

169   Cf. further above, in section 3.

170   Griffith, "Christians and Christianity," 312–313; "Syriacisms," 103*ff.; and "Al-Naṣārā," 316 ff.

171   Griffith, "Al-Naṣārā," 317, n. 9, where this is pointed out to him by Manfred Kropp and Joseph Witztum; also noted in Joseph Witztum, "The Syriac milieu of the Qur'ān: Recasting the Biblical Narratives" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2011), 60.

itly tells them not to do so according to the preceding verse (5:72).[172] "Do not say three ... [for] God is one deity," as a variant version addressed to the People of the Book has it (4:171). One partner they ascribe to God is Christ, as we are also told in 5:72; the other is Mary, whose full humanity is asserted against them along with that of Christ in 5:75. The evidence is both coherent and unambiguous.

(a) *The Offensive Christians*

So what kind of Christians was the Messenger confronting here? I shall start by discussing the possibilities fielded in the secondary literature and then move on to the Coptic evidence, which no Islamicist seems to have considered yet.

One view is that the Messenger's target was a sect dignified by Epiphanius with the grand name of "Collyridians."[173] Actually, there was no sect of that name, merely a practice that Epiphanius had learned about from oral sources,[174] and which he deemed quite ridiculous, absurd, nonsensical, mad, and more besides. The practice had been brought to Arabia by Thracian and Scythian women, presumably wives of the legionaries at Bostra (Buṣrā). Once a year, they would cover a square seat with a cloth, put bread (or cake) on it, offer it to Mary, and eat it. What incensed Epiphanius about this practice, making him write page after page against it, was the fact that the ritual was performed by women. "Never at any time has a woman been a priest!" he thundered:[175] women were unstable, prone to error, and mean-spirited; all priests had been men; even Mary, deemed worthy of bearing the son of God, had not served as a priest; even Eve had not undertaken anything so impious; and so on. "Servants of God, let us adopt a manly frame of mind and dispel the madness of these women":[176] Mary was not to be worshipped, nor were any of the saints.[177]

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172 For other attempts to make the statement technical, see Parrinder, *Jesus*, 31, 133–134, 137, construing 5:72 as a reference to Patripassians; C. Jonn Block, "Philoponian Monophysitism in South Arabia at the Advent of Islam with Implications for the English Translation of 'Thalātha' in Qurʾān 4.171 and 5.73," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 23 (2012): 50–75, arguing that the reference is to a Philoponian type of Monophysitism derided by opponents as Tritheist.

173 Cf. *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1960–2009), s.v. "Maryam," col. 629b (Wensinck, Johnstone); Parrinder, *Jesus*, 135. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 78.23.2 ff.; 79.1–9.

174 Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 78.23.3–4 ("I have heard," "they say that"); 79.1.1 ("word of it has reached me").

175 Ibid., 79.2.3.

176 Ibid., 79.4.6; 5.3.

177 Ibid., 79.9.3. For the issue of saint veneration in connection with the Collyridians, see

Epiphanius did not actually know whether the "worthless women" were offering Mary the loaf "as though in worship," but whatever they were doing, it was an altogether silly, heretical, and demon-inspired insolence and imposture.[178]

It would have been good to know how these women regarded Mary, but since even Epiphanius could not claim to know, we shall have to leave this aside. It is in any case somewhat unlikely that a ritual attested for a clutch of foreign women in fourth-century Arabia should have been sufficiently long-lived | and widespread to attract the polemical attention of the Qurʾānic Messenger.

Another hypothesis is that the Qurʾānic Trinity had something to do with the fact that "spirit" is grammatically feminine in Aramaic and Syriac, and often envisaged as female by Syrian Christians, meaning that it could be identified as Mary. (This was so up to the early fifth century; thereafter, it became customary to treat the word *ruḥā* as masculine in connection with the holy spirit even though this did violence to the grammatical rules.)[179] Sometimes the spirit was envisaged as a daughter of God. Thus a Mandaean hymn cast the human spirit as God's daughter when it had it ask, "My Father, my Father … why hast thou … cut me off and left me in the depths of earth?"[180] The holy spirit was similarly cast in the Book of Elchasai, which described two giant angels identified as Christ and his sister, the holy spirit (i.e., the son and daughter of God).[181] Origen remarks that his Hebrew teacher used to say that the two angels (seraphs) with six wings in Isaiah were the only begotten son of God and the holy spirit, probably meaning that this teacher likewise envisaged the holy spirit as Christ's sister.[182]

S.J. Shoemaker, "Epiphanius of Salamis, the Kollyridians, and Early Church Dormition Narratives: The Cult of the Virgin in the Fourth Century," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 (2008): 371–401.

178   Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 79.9.3; cf. also Averil Cameron, "The Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity," *Studies in Church History* 39 (2004): 1–21.

179   Sebastian Brock, "The Holy Spirit as Feminine in Early Syriac Literature," in *After Eve: Women, Theology and the Christian Tradition*, ed. Janet Martin Soskice (London, 1990), 73–88; and "Come Compassionate Mother … Come Holy Spirit: A Forgotten Aspect of Early Christian Imagery," *Aram* 3 (1991): 249–257 (reprinted in his *Fire from Heaven: Studies in Syriac Theology and Liturgy* [Aldershot, U.K., 2006], no. VI), 252 ff., with examples.

180   E.S. Drower, trans., *The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans* (Leiden, 1959), 74 (my thanks to Charles Häberl for locating the reference for me), in which the human spirit is said to be crying out because it has been abandoned in the darkness of the material world.

181   Hippolytus, *Refut.*, 9.13.2–3; Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 19.4.1–2; 30.17.6; 53.1.9; cf. de Blois, "Naṣrānī," 14.

182   Origen, *On First Principles*, I, 3, 4 (trans. G.W. Butterworth [New York, 1966], 32); John Anthony McGuckin, ed., *The SCM Press A–Z of Origen* (London, 2006), 11.

More often, however, the spirit was envisaged as a mother. Sometimes she was said to be the mother of all of us, just as God was the father of all of us, and not just of Christ; sometimes she was said to be the mother of the entire creation; and at other times it was her status as the mother of Christ that was singled out.[183] Christ referred to himself as "the son of the holy spirit" in the (possibly second-century) letter or apocryphon of James ("James" is a confusing English form of the name Jacob).[184] The Greek version of the possibly third-century Acts of Thomas, which was composed in Syriac and translated into Greek from a more primitive Syriac version than the one extant today, repeatedly invoked the holy spirit as "mother" (once as "hidden mother") and declared to Christ that "We hymn you and your unseen Father and your holy spirit, (and) the mother of all created things." As Brock says, the "and" placed in parenthesis here should be deleted as an intrusion; the passages, he notes, provide clear evidence of a Trinity consisting of Father, Mother, and Son.[185] Such a Trinity is also reflected in the Hymn of the Pearl, which was incorporated in the Acts of Thomas and which features a king, a queen, and their son (Christ).[186] Bar Dayṣān similarly spoke of a Father and Mother of Life who begot a Son of Life, i.e., Christ,[187] while Mani envisaged God ("the Father of Greatness") as having evoked the Great Spirit (alias "the Mother of Life"), who evoked the firstborn Son of God (i.e., Ohrmazd), who was Primal Man.[188]

The spirit also appears as a mother in the old *Gospel According to the Hebrews* read by the early Jewish Christians. Origen cites it as containing a passage in which Christ says that "My mother, the holy spirit, took me by one of my hairs and brought me to a great hill, the Tabor."[189] The reference is to

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183   Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition*, rev. ed. (orig. 1975; Piscataway, NJ, 2004), 312 ff.; Brock, "The Holy Spirit as Feminine," 78; cf. Brock, "Come Compassionate Mother," 251, citing Aphrahat: as long as he remains unmarried, a man has no love other than God his father, and the holy spirit, his mother.

184   "The Apocryphon of James," in Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 293.

185   Brock, "The Holy Spirit as Feminine," 79.

186   Ibid.

187   P.O. Skjaervø, "Bardesanes," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London, 1988), 3:780–785; cf. Murray, *Symbols*, 318, remarking that Bar Dayṣān's holy spirit looks like an allegorization of Atargatis, the goddess of Hierapolis/Mabbog.

188   Cf. Iain Gardner and Samuel N.C. Lieu, *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 2004), 13, deeming this a consciously Trinitarian structure.

189   Origen, *Commentary on John*, II, 12; Origen, *Homilies on Jeremiah*, XV, 4, in *Patristic Evidence*, ed. Klijn and Reinink, 127; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, 52 (probably the Gospel read by the Ebionites); brief references to the passage in Jerome with reference

either the | transfiguration or the temptation of Christ. In the synoptic gospels, the transfiguration took place on a great mountain which was not named; some readers took it to be the Mount of Olives,[190] but Origen identified it as Tabor, and this was the winning solution.[191] When Jesus went up this mountain, we are told that his face became radiant (like that of Moses at Sinai), both Moses and Elijah appeared to him, and a voice said, "This is my son in whom I am well pleased."[192] These are the words that others place at the baptism of Jesus, suggesting that the story of the transfiguration originated as one out of several different accounts of how the holy spirit transformed the human Jesus into the pre-existing Christ. But it is in the company of the Disciples that Jesus goes up the mountain in the Synoptics, whereas he seems to be transported on his own in the Gospel of the Hebrews, so the reference is perhaps more likely to be to the temptation. It was the spirit that led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted (Mark 1:12; Matthew 4:1; Luke 4:1), and the temptation continued first in Jerusalem and next on a mountain (thus Matthew 4:8–11; implicitly also Luke 4:5, not Mark). This mountain, too, was identified as Mount Tabor.[193] But it was the Devil rather than the spirit who took Jesus to Jerusalem and up this mountain in the Synoptics (Matthew 4:10; similarly Luke 4:5). Maybe the Jewish Christian gospel presented the spirit as transporting Jesus through all three stages of the temptation. In any case, it is its identification of the spirit as Christ's mother that matters here.

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to that read by the Nazoreans, in *Patristic Evidence*, ed. Klijn and Reinink, 209, 225, 227; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, 52–53 ("in Micha," 7:5–7; "in Esaiam," 40:9–11; and "in Hiezechielem," 16:3). Compare the apocryphal "Bel and the Dragon," verses 33–42, in which an angel carried Habakkuk by his hair from Judaea to Babylon to feed Daniel in the lions' den. The inspiration of both is Ezechiel 8:3, in which a supernatural being carried Ezechiel by his hair from Babylon to Jerusalem; cf. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, 54, for two further parallels.

190   Thus the Bordeaux pilgrim of 333 (A. Stewart, trans., "Itinerary from Bordeaux to Jerusalem," in *Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society* 1 [London, 1887]: 24–25); similarly *Pistis Sophia*, chap. 1 (here placed after the resurrection).

191   Mount Tabor won universal assent as the location of the transfiguration among other things because both Origen and Cyril of Jerusalem had placed it there; see above, note 189, and Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses*, trans. Edward Yarnold, *Cyril of Jerusalem* (London, 2000), 12:16.

192   Matthew 17:1–9, Mark 9:2–8, Luke 9:28–36; compare *Pistis Sophia*, I, 15 ff., in which Jesus was enveloped by a light-power and transported to heaven, just as Moses was enveloped by a cloud and, in the view of many, transported to heaven when he stood on Mount Sinai.

193   Thus Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 51.21.7.

The fact that the spirit was often identified as Christ's mother does not necessarily mean that it was identified with Mary, however.[194] Neither Bar Dayṣān nor Mani seems to have envisaged the Mother of Life as having appeared on earth in a human body, whether real or illusory; and the readers of the Gospel of the Hebrews probably distinguished between Mary, the mother of the human Jesus, and the holy spirit, the mother of the heavenly Christ. The *Odes of Solomon*, written in Mesopotamia in the second or third century, do connect the holy spirit with Mary, but they too stop short of identifying them. "I rested on the spirit of the Lord and she lifted me up to heaven and caused me to stand in the Lord's high place," the author tells us, adding, now speaking as Christ, that "(the spirit) brought me before the Lord's face, and although I was human [or, "because I was the Son of Man"], I was named the Light, the son of God."[195] Jesus here becomes the son of God, not by baptism or ascent of Mount Tabor, but rather by ascent to the highest realm, carried by the spirit. (This too models Jesus on Moses, who was envisaged as having ascended to heaven when he went up Mount Sinai.)[196] In another passage the spirit milks the Father, then herself, and gives the milk of both to the womb of Mary, who conceives and gives birth; the son is the cup, the Father is he who was milked, and the holy spirit is she who milked him, we are told.[197] The two portions of milk were envisaged along the lines of sperm and egg, which were mixed in a heavenly petri dish and then implanted in Mary. The real parents of Christ were clearly God and the spirit. But in the *Odes*, as in the other works, Mary is a human being distinct from the members of the Trinity. Ephrem does have a verse blessing "the child [Jesus] whose mother [Mary] is the bride of the Holy One,"[198] but he does not mean that

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194   This point seems always to be overlooked by those who adduce the feminine nature of the spirit in explanation of the Qurʾānic Trinity (most recently de Blois, "Naṣrānī," 14–15; Gallez, *Le messie*, 11, 80 ff.).

195   J.H. Charlesworth, ed. and trans., *The Odes of Solomon* (Chico, CA, 1977), ode 36:1–3 (cf. Charlesworth, *Critical Reflections on the Odes of Solomon*, vol. 1 [Sheffield, 1998], for the work). Charlesworth prefers the translation that I have put in parenthesis. The passage is also discussed in Murray, *Symbols*, 314–315, 318, on the basis of Charlesworth's translation, which he does not discuss. He does wonder, though, whether there is a reminiscence of Origen's Mount Tabor account (see above note 189, in verse 1).

196   Cf. Wayne A. Meeks, "Moses as God and King," in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of E.R. Goodenough*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden, 1968), 354–371, esp. 357 ff.

197   Charlesworth, *Odes of Solomon*, ode 19:1–6; also in Murray, *Symbols*, 315.

198   Sebastian Brock, "Passover, Annunciation and Epiclesis: Some Remarks on the Term Aggen in the Syriac Versions of Lk. 1:35," *Novum Testamentum* 24, no. 3 (1982): 228, citing Ephrem, *H. de Nativitate*, VIII, 18, 2–3.

Mary was God's consort in a literal sense. In short, none of this takes us to the doctrine condemned in the Qurʾān.

Yet another (by no means incompatible) hypothesis is that the Trinity reflected in the Qurʾān should be related to the long tradition in the Near East for divine triads consisting of Father, Mother, and Son. The best known example is probably the Egyptian triad of Osiris, Isis, and their child Horus, but other triads are attested for the pagan Syrians at Hierapolis/Mabbog,[199] and for the pagan Arabs at Hatra.[200] (It used to be thought that there was also one at Heliopolis/Baʿlabakk, but this seems not to be correct.[201]) At Petra, a virgin mother and her son Dusares were venerated without any father being named.[202] If the virgin mother was al-ʿUzzā, the father was presumably the chief deity (Dhū ʾl-Sharā), with whom she was associated. Christianization eliminated the pagan divinities, but even so the triads reappeared. In fact, they remained alive into the twentieth century, for Alois Musil heard an old tribesman in the Kerak area of the Syrian Desert mumble, "In the name of the Father, the Mother, and the Son" as he crossed himself.[203]

That the triads played a role in the formation of the Trinity consisting of Father, Mother, and Son is undoubtedly true: we have seen them return in the Acts of Thomas, the Hymn of the Pearl, and in Bar Dayṣān's and Mani's thought. But Mary is not implied to be the divine Mother until we reach the heresy about her heavenly body.

The earliest evidence thus dates from the late fourth century, when Epiphanius says, against the women denounced as Collyridians, that Mary was not to be worshipped (see above, p. 247 [266]). Though he did not actually know whether these women worshipped Mary as a super-human being, it does suggest that he knew of people who did, and this is confirmed by another passage

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199   J.B. Segal, *Edessa, the Blessed City* (Oxford, 1970), 46 (Zeus, Hera, and Apollo, i.e., Hadad, Atargatis, and a third deity whose native name is unknown).

200   Brock, "Come Compassionate Mother," 249, with reference to Francesco Vattioni, *Le Iscrizioni di Hatra* (Naples, 1981), nos. 25, 26, 29, 30, etc.

201   It has been rejected on the basis of epigraphic evidence by Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1993), 283–285; and on the basis of iconographic evidence by Andreas J.M. Kropp, "Jupiter, Venus and Mercury of Heliopolis (Baalbek): The Images of the 'Triad' and Its Alleged Syncretisms," *Syria* 87 (2010): 229–264, at 248–249 (with full reference to earlier literature).

202   Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 51.22.12; cf. Fawzi Zayadine, "The Nabataean Gods and Their Sanctuaries," in *Petra Rediscovered: Lost City of the Nabataeans*, ed. Glenn Markoe (New York, 2003), chap. 4, 60.

203   Alois Musil, *Arabia Petraea* (Vienna, 1907–1908), 3:91.

in which he sternly warns us that "Mary is not God and does not have her body from heaven but by human conception."[204] In another work, he or a Coptic author writing as him tells us not to think that Mary's status was so exalted that she could not have been of this earth or born of a man, but rather must have come from heaven, as claimed by those "who go about publicly stirring up schism."[205] The adherents of the doctrine that Mary's body was from heaven were disseminating it quite openly, then. The doctrine is also reflected in a Sahidic fragment which affirms that "she died like all human beings and was generated from human seed, like us."[206] In the same vein, a Coptic sermon on the dormition by Theodosius of Alexandria (d. 566 or 567) has Christ tell Mary that he did not want her to know death: "I wanted to carry you up to heaven, like Enoch and Elijah," he says, but if he had done so, "bad people would think that you are a heavenly power descended on the earth from heaven and that the plan for the incarnation and the way it has come about is an illusion."[207] The heresy reappears in the Coptic sermon by "Cyril," in which he mentions Annarichos and the Gospel of the Hebrews.[208] "Cyril" protests that Mary was flesh and blood, begotten by a human father and mother like all other human beings, and not a power (*dynamis*), as claimed by Ebion and Harpocratius, the godless heretics who said that she was a power of God that took the form of a woman and came upon the earth, to be called Mary.[209] "Cyril" rehearses her conception and childhood as presented in the Protoevangelium of James, assuring us that she died like everyone else as well.[210] Here we have the divine Mary also opposed by the Messenger in the Qurʾān.

251   The doctrine also appears in the Greek *Doctrina Iacobi* (*Didascalia Iakôbou*), written in Syria in the 630s. Here, a Jewish teacher of the law from Tiberias is presented as denying that Mary was the mother of God (*theotokos*), and

204   Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 78.23.10.

205   Epiphanius (attrib.), "On the Holy Virgin," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, 701.

206   Van den Broek, "Kyrillos," 150, citing Forbes Robinson, ed., *Coptic Apocryphal Gospels* (Cambridge, 1896), 108.

207   M. Chaine, "Sermon de Théodose, patriarch d'Alexandrie, sur la dormition et l'assomp-tion de la vierge," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 29 (1933–1934): 272–314, at 309; cf. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 58, deeming it authentic.

208   See note 142, above.

209   Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Virgin," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fol. 3ª = 628; Campag-nano, *Omelie Copte*, par. 7; Bombeck, "Pseudo-Kyrillos," par. 7.

210   Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Virgin," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fols. 4bff. = 629ff.; Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, pars. 10ff.; Bombeck, "Pseudo-Kyrillos," pars. 10ff. His source is Africanus' letter; see Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, 1.7; 6.31.

affirming that she was of Davidic descent, which to him (as to "Cyril") means that she was an ordinary human being. "So don't let the Christians think that Mary is from heaven," he concludes.[211] In the next paragraph, the Jews are presented as arguing that Jesus could not be God's son, because God had not taken a wife, presumably another reference to Mary.[212] The *Doctrina Iacobi* was written for Jews forced into Christianity, and its Christian author apparently wanted these Jews to understand that even their own rabbinic authorities believed Mary to be of Davidic descent (which is quite untrue, of course). Apparently, he also wanted them to understand that Jewish objections to the Trinity rested on a misunderstanding of the Christian doctrine: Christians did not in fact regard Mary as God's wife or a heavenly being, though they did regard her as the mother of God. The author was clearly familiar with a Christian version of the Near Eastern triads of Father, Mother, and Son. So too was the Messenger, for it is surely the same doctrine that he is rejecting when he says that "God has taken neither a wife nor a son" (72:3). In another passage he asks, "How can God have a son when He does not have a consort?" (6:101); but here the opponents would seem to share his assumption that God does not have a wife, suggesting that they are mainstream Christians, or alternatively that he has caught them in an inconsistency.

(b)   *The Role of Mainstream Christianity*

Even if we accept that "Cyril" was familiar with a Jewish Christian gospel of the Gnosticizing type, its readers had long coexisted with gentile Christianity, and "Cyril" clearly envisaged some of them as gentile Christians themselves. The monk Annarichos is presented as a Christian subject to the bishops of Gaza and Jerusalem (which makes him a Melkite),[213] who repents of his errors when he realizes that he was wrong. Annarichos does say, in two manuscripts, that he had been baptized in "the heresy of Ebion,"[214] but it sounds like the mere elaboration of a story which probably was not literally true, but rather meant to illustrate where the heresy regarding Mary flourished. In his sermon on the passion, "Cyril" observed that "We do not say, as Anthony the shoemaker (or leatherworker) and Severus say ... that the

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211   *Doctrina Iacobi*, II, 42.

212   *Doctrina Iacobi*, II, 1.

213   This could conceivably have contributed to Qatāda's idea of Melkite Israelites (see above [pp. 239–240]).

214   Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Virgin," in Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, par. 32; Bombeck, "Pseudo-Kyrillos," par. 32.

Theotokos is a spirit; rather, we believe she was born in the same way as other human beings."[215] Anthony the shoemaker/leatherworker and Severus also sound like gentiles, presumably Monophysites, though they could all have been Melkites. This was also true of the "bad people" who saw Mary as a heavenly power (according to Theodosius) and of the unidentified people from whom the author of *Doctrina Iacobi* had heard of Mary as a heavenly being and the wife of God. In fact, the doctrine of Mary's heavenly origins was occasionally branded Eutychian or Julianist, but this does not seem to be right at all.

That the doctrine should be debited to Eutyches (d. c. 456) was the view of the late sixth/early seventh-century Oecumenius, who wrote in Greek in (probably) Anatolia. He assured his readers that Mary was consubstantial with us: "the unholy doctrine of Eutyches, that the virgin is of a miraculously different substance from us, together with his other docetic doctrines, must be banished from the divine courts."[216] Eutyches was a Monophysite monk who seems not to have had any theological training, and who could not bring himself to accept two natures in Christ. He did not deny that two natures had gone into his making (though he did object to explaining the deity in terms of notions about "nature"); but he insisted that in the incarnate Word the two were fused, and he would not affirm that Christ's body was consubstantial with ours: the body of God was not a human body, as he said. Accordingly, he was accused of saying that Christ had taken his flesh from heaven, which he himself characterized as an insane belief.[217]

252   That Christ (not Mary) had taken his flesh from heaven was an old view, however. It was associated, among others, with the Gnostic Valentinus (d. 160), and it had proven hard to eradicate. In the Apocalypse of Paul, a fourth-century work extant in several languages, Paul (or, in an Ethiopic version, Mary) visits heaven and hell, and sees a flaming pit in hell full of people who said "that Jesus has not come in the flesh and that he was not brought forth by

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215   Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Passion (α)," in Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, par. 6.

216   Oecumenius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, trans. John N. Suggit (Washington, DC, 2006), 12:2.

217   Cf. George A. Bevan and Patrick T.R. Gray, "The Trial of Eutyches: A New Interpretation," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 101 (2008): 617–657, esp. 619, 633, 638, 640–641, 645; Vasilije Vranić, "The Christology of Eutyches at the Council of Constantinople 448," *Philotheos* 8 (2008): 208–221. (Pseudo-?)Isaac of Antioch duly refutes the view that Christ had brought his body with him from heaven in his polemics against Eutyches (Landersdorfer, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 144).

Mary," i.e., that he did not receive his body from her.[218] Shenoute (d. 465) also knew of blasphemers who denied that Christ was conceived by Mary, and four centuries later Peter of Sicily (c. 870) informed the archbishop of Bulgaria that the Paulicians claimed that Christ had brought his body from heaven, denying that he was born of Mary.[219] But this evidently was not what Eutyches himself believed.

That the doctrine was Julianist, on the other hand, is the view of the modern scholar Dirk Krausmüller, who simply treats it as self-evident that the "bad people" mentioned by Theodosius were "aphthartodoceticists."[220] Julian of Halicarnassos (d. after 527) was a Monophysite who held that Christ's body was incorruptible (*aphthartos*) from the moment of its conception, not just from the resurrection, so that he could not sin, an uncontroversial point, and was not subject to pain or death, which seems to make the doctrine docetic. If Christ had not suffered and died, in what sense had he died for us? Had he merely seemed to do so? It was because the Julianists were taken to deny the reality of the incarnation that they were saddled with the cumbersome name of aphthartodocetists.

What neither Oecumenius nor Krausmüller explains is how a doctrine regarding Christ's body had come to be transferred to *Mary*, for neither Eutyches nor Julian nor their followers are on record as having professed that *Mary's* body was incorruptible, let alone that she had come from heaven. On the contrary, Eutyches explicitly affirmed that the virgin's body was consubstantial with ours.[221] Denying that Christ is consubstantial with us in no way implies that Mary, too, was a heavenly being. On the contrary, if Christ had brought his body from heaven, Mary did not have to be seen as the mother of God, but rather an ordinary woman who had served as a mere conduit for the entrance of

218   "The Apocalypse of Paul," in Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 637 (par. 41), with an introduction to the work; in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, 1066.

219   Peter of Sicily in Charles Astruc et al., trans. and ed., "Les sources grecques pour l'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure," *Travaux et Mémoires* 4 (1970): 3–67; in Janet and Bernard Hamilton, trans., *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World, c. 650–c. 1450* (Manchester, 1998), 63–92, par. 39, cf. par. 22.

220   Dirk Krausmüller, "Timothy of Antioch: Byzantine Concepts of the Resurrection, Part 2," *Gouden Hoorn* 5, no. 2 (1997–1998): (unpaginated web publication) 11–26, 27–28 of my print-out: http://goudenhoorn.com/2011/11/28/timothy-of-antioch-byzantine-concepts-of-the-resurrection-part-2/.

221   Vranić, "Christology of Eutyches," 219–220; cf. Theodore Bar Koni, *Livres des scolies* (*recension de Séert*), ed. A. Scher, *Liber Scholiorum* (CSCO 55, 69/Syr. 19, 26) (Paris 1910, 1912); trans. R. Hespel and R. Draguet (CSCO 431–432/Syr. 187–188) (Louvain, 1981–1982), mimrā XI, 81.

Christ into this world, a point which some Paulicians emphasized by accepting the idea that she had children after the birth of Christ.[222] Bar Koni presented Eutyches as sometimes claiming that Christ entered Mary through her ear and came out through her side, thus stressing that she had served as a mere conduit for him, but this is actually unlikely: what Eutyches meant seems rather to have been that Christ had taken his human flesh from his mother, but that the union with the Word had so glorified his flesh that it differed from ours from the moment of the incarnation.[223]

Exaltation of Mary was a general feature of Byzantine Christianity in the sixth century, when both Chalcedonian and Monophysite Christians had come to accept that although she was born and died in the same way as other human beings, her body was too pure to have suffered decay after death: when she died, her body was transferred to paradise and either reunited with her soul, or else left beneath the Tree of Life to await the resurrection.[224] It could perhaps be postulated that veneration of Mary had caused her to be envisaged as a pre-existing heavenly being by analogy with Christ himself at a popular level. But even if we accept this, it does not explain how she came to be seen as an angel or archangel in human guise, as she is in the doctrine refuted by "Cyril." Angel Christology had disappeared from mainstream Christianity in its Melkite, Jacobite, and Nestorian | form alike by the time of "Cyril." It was a feature of Jewish Christianity of the Elchasaite type, and as noted, Christ still appears as a "great angel" in the Ethiopian *Liber Requiei*. In short, the adherents of the heresy were formally mainstream Christians, or at least they lived among them; but "Cyril" was probably right that the heresy was of Jewish Christian origin.

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222   Peter of Sicily in Astruc et al., "Les sources grecques," par. 22.

223   Bar Koni, *Scolies*, XI, 81; cf. Vranić, "Christology of Eutyches," 219–220.

224   Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 198 and *passim*; cf. also Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, part 4, 340, n. 11; 352–353, n. 45.

CHAPTER 10

Jewish Christianity and the Qurʾān (Part II)

8 Live Jewish Christians

"Cyril" (hereafter Pseudo-Cyril) is an extremely interesting author in that he seems to be a former Jewish Christian himself who is writing for other Jewish Christians (in the hope of converting them to mainstream Christianity), and whose tradition went all the way back to the earliest centuries of Christianity. We may start by noting that he goes out of his way to relate himself and his authorities to a Jewish Christian environment. Most strikingly, he tells us that the fourteenth and fifteenth bishops "of the circumcision" in Jerusalem were Joseph and Judas; that they were followed by Mark, the first bishop who was not a native of Jerusalem;[225] and that he himself was brought into the church by Apa Joseph, the fourteenth of them.[226] He must be indebted to Eusebius or the latter's source (Hegesippus, d. c. 180), for this, for Eusebius gives us a list of the "Hebrew" bishops of Jerusalem, of whom Joseph and Judas were the fourteenth and fifteenth and also the last: thereafter the bishops were gentiles.[227] Eusebius calls the first gentile bishop Xystus rather than Mark, but more significantly, he is speaking of the bishops of Jerusalem from the time of Christ to Bar Kokhba's revolt (132–136). Pseudo-Cyril has moved the last Hebrew bishops to the reign of Constantine (306–337), when the genuine Cyril of Jerusalem was active, and apparently envisages all the bishops of Jerusalem as Hebrews from the beginning down to the time of the Cyril he is impersonating. He is taking the Hebrew bishops to have come to an end with the victory of Christianity under Constantine and casts "Cyril of Jerusalem" (i.e., himself) as a Christian converted by the penultimate bishop "of the circumcision." In fact, he explicitly says of himself that he was of Hebrew origin.[228] That he was a former Jewish

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225 Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Cross," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fols. 31ᵇ, 37ᵇ = 799, 805; Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, par. 95 (without mention of the end of Mark).

226 Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Cross," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fol. 32ᵇ =799; Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, par. 95.

227 Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 4.5.1–12.

228 Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Virgin," in Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, par. 12; Bombeck, "Pseudo-Kyrillos," par. 12 ("Josephus and Irenaeus, former Hebrews like me"). Budge translates differently: "Josephus and Irenaeus [and] those of the Hebrews which I have searched out for

Christian rather than a former Jew is clear from his handling of Josephus and Irenaeus, a Jewish and a gentile Christian author respectively, whom he | cites and characterizes together as "Hebrew sages" and "former Hebrews."[229]

Among the points for which Josephus and Irenaeus, the former Hebrews, are adduced as authorities is that Mary was descended "from the Jews, from the tribe of David."[230] Indeed, Mary herself tells Pseudo-Cyril that she is of Davidic descent, or it is the Paraclete, identified as the holy spirit, who fills Cyril's heart with this knowledge after Cyril has implored him to reveal the truth of the matter against the godless heretics who claim that she was a divine power.[231] Here as in the *Doctrina Iacobi*, her Davidic descent is being mobilized against the view that she was a heavenly figure;[232] and just as the *Doctrina Iacobi* puts the information in the mouth of Jews, so Pseudo-Cyril attributes it to Hebrews, or former Hebrews. Both authors, in other words, seem to be writing for an audience to whom Jewish/Hebrew authorities were more persuasive than gentile Christian ones, even though they were in principle gentile Christians themselves. Pseudo-Cyril may have written about the same time as the author of *Doctrina Iacobi*, and it is a reasonable guess that in both cases the background is Heraclius' forced conversion of the Jews (and thus Jewish Christians too) after his reconquest of Jerusalem in 628. But whereas the *Doctrina Iacobi* invokes the rabbis as authorities, Pseudo-Cyril marshals Josephus and Irenaeus and associates his opponents with heresiarchs such

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myself" (*Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fol. 5ᵃ = 630), but Orlandi, "Cirillo," 100, summarizing the sermon on the basis of the same BL manuscript as that used by Budge, also has "former Hebrews like me."

229   Cf. Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Virgin," in Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, par. 39 ("Josephus and Irenaeus, former Hebrews"); similarly Bombeck, "Pseudo-Kyrillos," par. 39 ("people of Jewish descent"); Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fol. 17ᵃ = 643, again tones the statement down ("Josephus and Irenaeus and the Hebrew authorities"). See also Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Cross," in Budge, fol. 18ᵇ = 781 ("Irenaeus, Josephus and Philemon on the authority of Hebrew writers"); fol. 22ᵃ = 785 ("Josephus and Irenaeus and other historiographers"). Campagnano's versions have "former Hebrews" (par. 49), and "Irenaeus and Philo" (par. 60, where Philo is presumably the residue of Philemon).

230   Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Virgin," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fol. 5ᵃ = 630; Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, par. 12; Bombeck, "Pseudo-Kyrillos," par. 12.

231   Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Virgin," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fols. 3ᵃ–4ᵇ = 628f.; Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, pars. 7–10; Bombeck, "Pseudo-Kyrillos," pars. 7–10. Cyril invokes the Paraclete in all three versions, but Mary only speaks in two of them, the exception being Bombeck's version.

232   Cf. *Doctrina Iacobi*, II, 42 (discussed in Part I of this article, p. 251 [272–273]).

as Harpocratius (Carpocrates) and Ebion, suggesting that his audience were Jewish Christians of long standing, with very deep roots.

In fact, Pseudo-Cyril seems to know Carpocrates from live tradition, for he has Annarichos depict him as expelling demons, which is unknown to the patristic literature.[233] He also polemicizes against him in his sermon on the passion, addressing him as a Jew and crediting him with the view that Christ could not have known that the vinegar offered to him on the cross was vinegar unless he had tasted it.[234] This point, to which Pseudo-Cyril objects, seems to be directed against Ephrem's claim that Christ "did not taste" it,[235] and this too is unknown to the patristic literature.

As noted, Pseudo-Cyril affirms that Mary was of the tribe of Judah and the house of David, against the view that she was a heavenly figure.[236] In fact, he frequently mentions her Davidic descent. Yet he also says that Mary's grandfather heard a voice saying, "O *Aaron*, the redeemer of Israel shall spring from *your family*."[237] Here we have the Virgin as an Aaronid, implied by her kinship with Elizabeth in the gospels and related to the idea of an Aaronid messiah found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Testaments of the Twelve Apostles which is also reflected in the Qurʾān (cf. below, no. 12). This shows the roots of Pseudo-Cyril's sermon, and those of the Qurʾān as well, to be very long indeed. It may be added that Pseudo-Cyril places the transfiguration on the Mount of Olives, in agreement with the Bordeaux pilgrim of AD 333, not on Mount Tabor, which had won universal assent as the location by the sixth or seventh century, among other things because both Origen and the genuine Cyril of Jerusalem had placed it there.[238]

All in all, Pseudo-Cyril's sermons, especially the one on Mary, read like a potpourri of Jewish Christian writings hastily reworked to persuade Jewish Christians of the truth of mainstream Christianity. There can be no doubt that Pseudo-Cyril lived in a milieu | in which Jewish Christians of the high Christological type were a real presence.

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233 Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Virgin," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fol. 1ᵇ = 627; Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, par. 27; Bombeck, "Pseudo-Kyrillos," par. 27.

234 Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Passion (α)," in Campagnano, *Omelie copte*, pars. 22–23.

235 Ephrem cited in Pines, "Gospel Quotations," 219.

236 See the references given above, notes 230 and 231.

237 Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Virgin," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fol. 6ᵃ = 631; Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, par. 14; Bombeck, "Pseudo-Kyrillos," par. 14, here "David son of Aaron," a clumsy attempt at harmonization.

238 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses* (trans. Edward Yarnold, *Cyril of Jerusalem* [London, 2000]), 12:16; for Origen, see above, Part I, note 189.

It was Jewish Christians of this type who said that God was the third of three according to the Qurʾān and who were characterized by Qatāda as *al-isrāʾīliyya min al-naṣārā*. We too ought to speak of Israelite rather than Jewish Christians (though in practice the standard terminology always wins out), for one of the men whom Pseudo-Cyril boasts of having baptized was not a Jew, but rather a Samaritan called Isaac, a native of Joppa, whom Pseudo-Cyril supposedly converted to Christianity along with other Samaritans. Pseudo-Cyril polemicizes against unconverted Samaritans for not believing in "the cross as God,"[239] and he cites Isaac as holding, before his conversion, that "the son of Mary was a prophet of God" and as explaining the crucifixion docetically (cf. below, no. 10).[240] This Samaritan must have been a Samarito-Christian then.[241] Since neither of the two beliefs is mentioned in the refutation of his views or the account of his conversion that follow, this too would seem to come from an earlier source. That "the son of Mary" was a prophet of God rather than His son is the view we have encountered in connection with those Ebionites who had resisted the blandishments of Elchasai (Part I, no. 5). It was also the view of the Qurʾānic Messenger (cf. below, no. 9), who also explained the crucifixion docetically (cf. below, no. 10).

In short, Pseudo-Cyril was familiar with live Israelite Christians, mostly of the Gnosticizing type, but including at least one adherent of low Christology. A good deal of what he says in his sermons comes from much earlier sources; and he may well be right that a Jewish Christian scripture was circulating in the Gaza region. Gaza was a region frequented by Quraysh according to the tradition, and Pseudo-Cyril was writing either shortly before or shortly after the rise of Islam. He does not say in what language the gospel was written, but it could well have been in "Hebrew" (i.e., Aramaic).[242] If Annarichos' gospel was in "Hebrew," it could have been on the basis of the very same gospel that the Messenger's Christian opponents had come to think of Jesus and Mary as angels

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239   Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Virgin," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fol. 2ᵃ = 627; Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, par. 5; Bombeck, "Pseudo-Kyrillos," par. 5; Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Cross," in Budge, fol. 6ᵇ–15ᵃ = 766–776; Campagnano, pars. 14–40.

240   Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Cross," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fol. 8ᵃ = 768; Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, par. 17.

241   Cf. Alan D. Crown, Reinhard Pummer, and Abraham Tal, eds., *A Companion to Samaritan Studies* (Tübingen, 1993), s.v. "Jesus" (end), where the existence of such Samaritans is still conjectural.

242   Van den Broek, "Kyrillos," 144, holds the sermons to be original compositions in Coptic on the grounds that none of them are known in Greek, but he does not consider the possibility of Aramaic. For Hebrew in the sense of Aramaic, see above, Part I, note 55.

who did not eat or drink: as we have seen, Waraqa b. Nawfal, Khadīja's cousin, was reported to have copied a gospel written "in Hebrew."[243] If Pseudo-Cyril is held to have written after the beginning of the conquests, it could even have been thanks to the Arab conquerors that the gospel had come to be available in the Gaza region, just as it was probably thanks to them that there had come to be "believing Jews" in Jerusalem by Muʿāwiya's time (if only in the sense that the Muslim conquest had allowed them to come out of the woodwork). But this is pure guesswork. However this may be, it evidently was not the case that "believing Jews" had disappeared by c. AD 400.

9   Jesus Was a Prophet, but Not the Son of God

That leaves us with Jewish Christians of the low Christological type. In the Qurʾān, Jesus is accepted as a prophet (19:30; implicitly also in many other passages), a messenger (3:49; 4:157, 171; 61:6), a servant of God (4:172; 19:30; 43:59), the Word (3:45, 171), and the messiah (al-masīḥ, altogether eleven passages, all Medinese),[244] but not as the son of God or divine. He differs from all other messengers in the Qurʾān in the manner of his birth (cf. below, no. 11), and in that he is sent as an example (mathalan, 43:59) or a sign and a mercy (19:21); in fact, both he and his mother were a sign (23:50). Jesus is also the only messenger who is not presented as a "warner" (nadhīr). He does preach monotheism, as we have seen, and he threatens polytheists with hellfire too (5:72), but he is not sent to warn the Israelites of their impending doom or call his people to turn to God before it is too late. Rather, he is sent to confirm the Torah, as we have seen (Part I, no. 4), and to clarify some things, though in practice his mission only increased the disagreement (43:63–65). This was the fault of wrongdoers, presumably meaning all those who either rejected him or went to the other extreme of deifying him instead | of sticking to the obvious truth, for Jesus himself had openly declared that he was a servant of God (19:30) and that God was his lord (3:51). He was a created being like Adam, whom God created from dust and then told, "Be!" (3:59).

That the Qurʾānic denial of Christ's divinity is a Jewish Christian legacy has been suggested before,[245] and it is certainly the simplest explanation. But

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243   Bukhārī and Muslim in Sprenger, *Leben*, 1:128.

244   For all the passages on all four titles with a discussion, see Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qurʾān*, 30–48.

245   Schoeps, *Theologie*, 338–339; Pines, "Notes," 139.

it is not easy to prove. Unlike the tradition, the Qurʾān never distinguishes between true Christians who remained faithful to the message of Jesus, and false Christians who corrupted it by turning Jesus into God.[246] We only hear of those who got things wrong, either by deifying or by rejecting him. No recipients of the earlier book are praised for holding that Jesus was a mere man, nor do we find indirect evidence for this view in statements attributed to the pagans. On the contrary, they too—or some of them—took it for granted that Jesus was regarded as divine: "What, are our gods better or he [Jesus]?" they would ask (43:58). The Qurʾān does mention scriptuaries who believed in the Messenger's revelations, and so must be presumed to have shared his view of Jesus,[247] but whether they had done so before they were exposed to the Messenger's message is impossible to establish. If Jewish Christians of the low Christological type were in fact present in the Messenger's town, it will have been among the believing scripturaries that they were found, at least after his appearance.

By far the strongest reasons for postulating that Jewish Christians of the low Christological type were present in the Messenger's locality is that the Messenger's view of Jesus as an ordinary human prophet was so unusual by his time that no other antecedent is plausible. Contrary to what is often said, the Qurʾānic doctrine of Jesus cannot have grown from Arian or Nestorian roots. All gentile Christians held Jesus to be divine even though they sometimes subordinated Jesus to God in order to preserve their monotheism, and always differed violently about the manner in which the divine and the human elements were united in him. O'Shaughnessy quotes an anti-Arian passage by Alexander, bishop of Alexandria (d. 326 or 328), which seemingly agrees with the position taken in the Qurʾān: the bishop quotes Arius as holding

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246 Cf. Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ*, part 28, on 61:14, where the Christians divide into Jacobites, Nestorians, and Muslims after the death of Jesus, and the Muslims are persecuted until Muḥammad's time, when they become victorious; similarly Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, on 61:14; cf. also Suliman Bashear, "Qurʾān 2:114 and Jerusalem," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 52 (1989): 221, on those who were forbidden to mention God's name in His mosques. There are countless versions of the story about the split that caused the believing Israelites/people of Islam to be persecuted, some with and some without Paul as the villain, in *tafsīr*s and other works alike, both early and late, in both Arabic and Persian. It would be good if somebody would collect them.

247 Cf. Crone, "Pagan Arabs as God-Fearers." Many of the passages from the Medinese period are cited in a different vein by Fred M. Donner, "From Believers to Muslims," *al-Abhath* 50–51 (2002–2003): 9–53; cf. also Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers* (Cambridge, MA, 2010).

that the word of God has not always been, but that it has been made from nothing; that this so-called son is a creature and a work; that he is not at all like to the father in substance, nor his true Word, nor his true Wisdom, but one of those things that has been made and created.[248]

This does indeed sound entirely in line with the Qur'ān, but only if it is read in isolation. The reference is to the Word, the heavenly *logos* with which God created everything and which was to be born as Jesus. This Word or son was indeed a created being in Arius' view, but he was created long before the history of mankind began, and he was certainly divine: the unbegotten God engendered "the only begotten God" who never concealed that "this God is in second place," as an Arian bishop put it.[249] Arius evidently did not think that divinity required pre-eternity. It was his view of Christ, God's Word, as created that made him a heretic: to Nicene Christians, Christ was begotten beyond time, without a beginning, as Jacob of Sarugh said.[250] There is only the most superficial similarity with the Qur'ānic view of Jesus here.

The Messenger's view of Christ could not be rooted in Nestorianism either. There was a long tradition of host Christology in East Syrian Christianity, of the type which deified the host. Nestorius was accused of casting Jesus as a mere "God-receiver," and East Syrian Christians continued to stress the separate divine and human natures in Christ along lines that were | unacceptable to Christians of other kinds.[251] But contrary to what their opponents routinely claimed, this was not in any way meant to deny Christ's divinity.[252] Mono-

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248   O'Shaughnessy, *Word of God in the Qur'ān*, 22.

249   Letter of Auxentius in Roger Gryson, ed., *Scripta Arriana Latina*, part 1 (Turnhout, 1982), pars. 25–26; Peter Heather and John Matthews, trans., *The Goths in the Fourth Century* (Liverpool, 1991), 137–138 (my thanks to Yitzhak Hen for this reference).

250   Jacob of Sarugh, *On the Mother of God*, 640 = 43 (homily 2).

251   Cf. Sebastian P. Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East," in his *Fire from Heaven*, no. III, 159–179; cf. also Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East in the Synods of the Fifth to Early Seventh Centuries: Preliminary Considerations and Materials," in his *Studies in Syriac Christianity: History, Literature and Theology* (Ashgate, 1992), no. XII; Crone, *Nativist Prophets*, 301–303.

252   Cf. the charge in the *Martyrium Arethae* that the Nestorians believe Christ to be a mere prophet (cited in Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2nd ed. [Atlanta, 1975–1996], vol. 2, part 4, 321). Isaac of Antioch (if it is he) similarly wrote against Nestorius in the conviction that he held Christ to be a mere man (Landersdorfer, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 141–142); cf. also Frank van der Velden, "Konvergenztexte syrischer und arabischer Christologie: Stufen der Textentwicklung von Sure 3, 33–64," *Oriens Christianus* 91 (2001): 189, 190n.

physites and Dyophysites alike accepted the Nicene creed (AD 325), which identified Christ as consubstantial with God. Gentile Christians had their Judaizers, subordinationists, monarchianists, Arians, Nestorians, and many others written off (under complicated names) as heretics for what appeared to those in authority to give Christ less than his due, and some Christians held Muḥammad to have been taught by an Arian or Nestorian monk.[253] But modern scholars ought to do better. There simply was no gentile Christian precedent for upholding Jesus' purely human status as the truth that all devotees of Jesus ought to acknowledge.

Maybe no precedent is needed. Many Christians have been privately troubled by the doctrine of Jesus' divinity, and it is possible that the Messenger was among those who had come to doubt it on their own. In early modern Europe, a whole movement was formed against the Trinity by the so-called Socinians, who appear to have been the first to postulate a historical link between Jewish Christianity and Islam (and who hoped for Muslim support).[254] They postulated the link because they had an interest in it, but one does not have to be a Socinian to see that they were on to something real: if the Messenger had not inherited the Jewish Christian view of Jesus, he had certainly reinvented it; and though the Qurʾān does not identify Islam with Jewish Christianity, the tradition certainly does.[255] Muqātil even speaks of "unbelieving Israelites" (*kuffār banī Isrāʾīl*) who killed, captured, and expelled their believing counterparts.[256]

Given that the Messenger casts Jesus as a prophet sent to the Israelites and treats Moses as by far the more important of the two, one suspects that the tradition is right, or in other words that the Messenger inherited the conception

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253   See Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 34 (2008): 200; *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Baḥīrā" (A. Abel).

254   Cf. Martin Mulsow and Jan Rohls, eds., *Socinianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists, and Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Leiden, 2005), esp. 58–59, 153; Martin Mulsow, "Socinianism and the Radical Uses of Arabic Scholarship," *Al-Qantara* 31 (2010): 549–586, with further references.

255   See, for example, Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ*, part 28, 29, on 61:14: when Jesus died, the Christians split into Jacobites, Nestorians, and a group who continued to regard Jesus as a plain servant of God and who are the Muslims. For traditions connecting this development with Paul's corruption of Christianity, see the articles by Pines mentioned in Part I, note 13; Sean Anthony, "Sayf b. ʿUmar's Account of 'King' Paul and the Corruption of Ancient Christianity," *Der Islam* 85/1 (2008): 164–202. There are many more stories of this kind.

256   Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh Maḥmūd Shiḥāta (Beirut, 2002), vol. 2, 137, on 2:246, on the Israelites who said they had been expelled.

of Jesus as a purely human prophet from Jewish Christians. Griffith, who insists that only mainstream Christianity is reflected in the Qur'ān, does not discuss the question.

10   Docetic Crucifixion

According to sura 4:157, the Jews claimed to have killed Jesus, the son of Mary and messenger of God, but they did not kill or crucify him; it was just made to appear to them that way (*wa-lākin shubbiha la-hum*). That the Jews only seemed to crucify Jesus could mean that Christ was a heavenly figure whose body was not real, or that he left his perfectly real body when he was crucified, or that somebody else was crucified in his place. In any case, the Qur'ān here explains the crucifixion docetically. A few modern scholars deny this,[257] but *shubbiha la-hum* is perfectly unambiguous even though the manner in which the crucifixion was only apparent is left unspecified. Just what the expression would mean if the passage is taken to endorse the crucifixion, whether at the hands of God, the Jews, | or others, is either left unexplained or answered in a highly contrived manner.

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Docetism, encountered above in connection with the question of whether Jesus ate or drank, was a very old doctrine for which one could claim the authority of the New Testament itself: God sent his son "in the likeness of" sinful flesh, as Paul says in his letter to the Romans (8:3). No wonder that already Ignatius had to combat those who denied that Christ was truly born of a virgin or that he ate or drank or really died on the cross, and that he had suffered, except in appearance.[258] Marcion (d. c. 160), Valentinian (d. c. 160), the Manichaeans (240s onwards), and other Gnostics were among those who denied that his body was flesh,[259] though Marcion still accepted the reality of

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257   Thus Suleiman A. Mourad, "Does the Qur'ān deny or assert Jesus' Crucifixion and Death?," in *New Perspectives on the Qur'ān*, ed. Reynolds, ch. 13, 354–355; Gabriel Said Reynolds, "The Muslim Jesus: Dead or Alive?," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 72 (2009): 252; cf. also Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qur'ān*, 119–121.

258   Ignatius (in Michael W. Holmes, trans. and ed., *The Apostolic Fathers* [Grand Rapids, MI, 1999]), "To the Trallians," 9–10; "To the Smyrnaeans," 1–6.

259   Marcion deemed both the birth and the flesh of Christ to be *phantasma* (E.C. Black-man, *Marcion and His Influence* [Eugene, OR, 1948; repr. 2004], 99 ff.); Valentinus also held his body to be spiritual (Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 1:96, 99); and the Manichaeans known to Augustine held that Jesus did not come in real flesh, merely in a

the crucifixion. Cerinthus was among those who held that Christ left the body of his human host when he was crucified,[260] and Basilides (d. 138) is the best known exponent of the doctrine that another was crucified in Jesus' place.[261]

Docetism is an odd doctrine for the Qurʾānic Messenger to adopt, given that he insists on Jesus' humanity and stresses not only that Jesus and his mother ate food, but also that Jesus died. Exactly how he envisages Jesus as departing from this world is unclear. "I will make you die (*mutawaffīka*) and raise you to Myself," God declares in one verse (3:55), which does not leave much room for the exegetical idea that Jesus was raised live to heaven, unless we take him to have been resurrected first. But his resurrection is not mentioned here, or for that matter elsewhere in the book, so perhaps God is saying that Jesus will go straight to heaven when he dies, after the fashion of martyrs (cf. 2:154; 3:169). Both interpretations are compatible with a passage set on the day of judgment in which Jesus refers to "when You [God] made me die" (*tawaffaytanī*, 5:117); but given that his resurrection is never mentioned, the second interpretation is perhaps the more plausible. However, in the Meccan sura 19:33 the infant Jesus says, "Peace be on me the day I was born, the day I will die (*amūtu*), and the day I will be raised up alive" (*ubʿathu ḥayyan*), clearly meaning that he will die and be resurrected on the day of judgment like everyone else (cf. 19:15, where the same phrase is used of John the Baptist, here in the third rather than the first person;[262] cf. also 5:75). This is hardly compatible with God's

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shape which resembled it (Augustine, *De Haeresibus* [MPL 42, cols. 21–50], par. 46; similarly Hegemonius, *Acta Archelai*, trans. Mark Vermes [Louvain, 2001], VIII, 4).

260 Hippolytus, *Refut.*, 7.33 (the human Jesus suffered, but the heavenly Christ, who had come down to him when he was baptized, departed from him); similarly the Nag Hammadi Apocalypse/Revelation of Peter (3rd century): Jesus' body was crucified while the real Jesus, the heavenly revealer, stood by laughing at his enemy (NH VII, 3, 81–83, "Apocalypse of Peter," James Brashler and Roger A. Bullard, trans., in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, rev. ed., ed. James Robinson [Leiden, 1996], 377).

261 Basilides said that Simon of Cyrene had taken his place; the heavenly Jesus, assuming the appearance of Simon of Cyrene, stood by and laughed (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 1.24.4); similarly the Second Treatise of the Great Seth (Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library in English*, VII, 2, 56). It is condemned as a Manichaean doctrine in Samuel N.C. Lieu, "An Early Byzantine Formula for the Renunciation of Manichaeism," in his *Manichaeism in Mesopotamia and the Roman East* (Leiden, 1994), 203–251 (first published in a slightly different version in *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 26 [1983]: 152–218), 242 ff.

262 Neal Robinson (*Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, s.v. "Jesus" [IV, 17]) claims that Jesus is speaking of his death as a past event, just as John the Baptist's death lay in the past. But for one thing, how could the *infant* Jesus speak of his death as a past event? His death on the cross and subsequent resurrection took place shortly before he ascended to heaven, and he is

promise in 3:55 that He will raise Jesus to Himself, but all statements do at least agree that Jesus died. Why then did the Messenger opt for docetism instead of simply accepting that he died by crucifixion? His choice of docetism is all the odder in that it makes him sound Pauline to the point of siding with the Marcionites, Manichaeans, and other Gnostics whom later Muslims were to denounce as *zindīq*s and *ghulāt*; and that the doctrine also looks superfluous, for it has no bearing on any other religious issue discussed in the Qur'ān. The Messenger frequently accuses the Jews of killing their prophets, a standard Christian charge, so why did he not simply charge them with killing Jesus as well, as the gentile Christians were constantly doing? Perhaps he wanted to avoid entanglement with the idea of Christ's redemptive death, but one can deny | that his death was redemptive while still accepting that he died on the cross. It may admittedly have been difficult to do so without falling into the camp of the unbelieving Jews, who would have none of Jesus at all. But what 4:157 actually suggests is that the Messenger simply found the idea of the Jews killing and crucifying Jesus too offensive for acceptance. The Jews did claim responsibility for his death: in accordance with Mishnaic law, they first stoned him and next crucified him, or, as the rabbis called it, "hanged" him on a tree for practicing sorcery and luring Israel into idolatry.[263] To the Messenger, this was outrageous: the charges were false, and the Jews could not possibly have succeeded in killing so revered a prophet in so demeaning a way.[264] They did not kill or crucify him, as 4:157 asserts. God kept the Israelites away from Jesus when he was accused of sorcery, as another sura says (5:110). In sum, the Messenger had no problem with Jesus' death, only with the idea of the Jews having brought it about.[265]

That still leaves the question of how the Messenger had come to be familiar with the docetic doctrine with which the Jewish claim is denied. A common

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not presented as making predictions here. For another, of both Jesus and John the Baptist it is said that they *will* die (*amūtu, yamūtu*) and *will be* resurrected (*ub'athu, yub'athu*).

263   Cf. Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton, NJ, 2007), 63–66. Talmudic law dropped hanging from the list of legal modes of capital punishment (pp. 63–64), so its appearance in connection with Jesus in the Babylonian Talmud suggests that the material goes back to Mishnaic times, as one would indeed expect.

264   Crucifixion was demeaning whether it was a mode of execution or just "hanging," i.e. post-mortem exposure of an executed criminal. As a method of execution, crucifixion was a Roman institution and not used in Judaism. The Muslims did speak of crucifixion, but what they meant by it was usually post-mortem "hanging," as probably in the case of 4:157, given that it mentions killing and crucifixion in that order.

265   Similarly Gnilka, *Nazarener*, 114–115.

answer is that he had it from the Manichaeans,[266] for by the sixth century they were the only well-known docetists left. A sixth-century abjuration formula for Manichaeans anathemizes those who say that Christ suffered in appearance and that there was one on the cross while another stood by and laughed.[267] The man on the cross is the earthly Jesus, not a person crucified in his place, for Jesus had come without a body: the heavenly being had entered and transformed the human Jesus when he was baptized, as the same abjuration formula explains. It is the heavenly being that stands by and laughs. The *Kephalaia* (c. 400) similarly tells us that Jesus Christ "came without a body" and "received a servant's form (*morphē*), an appearance (*skhēma*) as of men." The passage continues by fully endorsing the crucifixion, however: the Jews took hold of the son of God, they crucified him with some robbers and placed him in the grave, and after three days he rose from the dead and breathed his holy spirit into his disciples.[268] All that remained after the crucifixion was the *skhēma*, the material shape, as the Coptic Psalm-book says.[269] The savior from on high did not die (a fundamental point), but the man Jesus certainly did. Indeed, his suffering on the cross typified the pain endured by all the light imprisoned in this world, subsumed as *Jesus patibilis* (also known as the Living Self): he hangs on every tree, he suffers whenever you pluck a fruit, he is being crucified every day. Mani's own death is described as a crucifixion.[270] In short, the position of the Manichaeans is quite different from the Messenger's: they could not accept that the divine Jesus died, but they fully accepted the death of the human Jesus (the only Jesus known to the Qurʾān), and it never occurred to them to deny the crucifixion.

In fact, it is not likely that there are any Manichaean doctrines in the Qurʾān at all, for Mani's thought world was quite alien to the Messenger's, and on several fundamental points their doctrines were diametrically opposed. The Manichaeans denied that God had created this world; they would have none of Moses and disliked the Old Testament depiction of God as prone to anger and punishment; they did not believe in bodily resurrection, only in spiritual after-

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266   E.g. Andrae, *Muhammed, the Man and His Faith*, 112; Moshe Gil, "The Creed of Abū ʿĀmir," *Israel Oriental Studies* 12 (1992): 41.

267   Lieu, "Formula for the Renunciation of Manichaeism," 242 ff.

268   *The Kephalaia of the Teacher*, trans. Iain Gardner (Leiden, 1995), 18–19 (chap. I, 12, 24 ff.). Cf. also Werner Sundermann, "Christianity, v. Christ in Manichaeism," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Costa Mesa, CA, 1991), 5:335–339.

269   Paul van Lindt, "Remarks on the Use of *Skhema* in the Coptic Manichaeica," in *Manichaean Studies: Proceedings of the First International Conference of Manichaeism*, ed. Peter Bryder (Lund, Sweden, 1988), 97, 101.

270   See Majella Franzmann, *Jesus in the Manichaean Writings* (London, 2003), 10, 24.

life in conjunction with reincarnation, and they denigrated both marriage and meat-eating. The Qurʾān devotes much attention to God's creation of the world, the punishments He inflicts, the high status of Moses, bodily resurrection, marriage and ritual slaughter, but at no point does he engage in polemics against a Manichaean doctrine. It is scarcely conceivable that the Manichaeans | should have been sufficiently important in the Messenger's locality for a doctrine of theirs to be reflected in the Qurʾān without there being any polemics against what the Messenger would have regarded as their fundamentally misguided and impious beliefs. This is not to deny that there is some overlap between Manichaeism and the Qurʾān: both espouse docetism (in different ways); both present Mary as an Aaronid (cf. below, no. 12); both may operate with the concept of a prophetic chain (cf. below, no. 13); and both speak of apostles in the sense of prophets bearing revelation;[271] but the simplest explanation is that this reflects common origins, for Mani grew up in an Elchasaite community.

Griffith suggests that docetism had come into the Qurʾān from Julianists (though he also seems to deny its presence in the book).[272] As noted in Part I, no. 7(b), the sixth-century Julian of Halicarnassos held that Christ's body was incorruptible already before the resurrection so that from the moment of union of divinity and humanity in him he was incapable of undergoing physical suffering or death. His opponent, Severus of Antioch, complained that this amounted to docetism: it implied that Christ had only seemed to suffer and die on the cross, thus denying his redemptive death. In actual fact, Julian does not seem to have denied the reality of Jesus' suffering and death: apparently he held that Christ could and did suffer and die by the free disposition of the *logos* (presumably meaning by choice), as opposed to by necessity.[273] There may have been Julianists in Arabia,[274] as Griffith notes, but Griffith does not attempt to prove that they were docetists in actual fact; and if they were not, how could the Messenger have picked up docetism from them? He is not likely to have been sympathetic to the doctrine if it was only from refutations that he knew it. On top of that, Julianist docetism was not of the right kind: no Julianist

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271 Cf. Jarl Fossum, "The Apostle Concept in the Qurʾān and Pre-Islamic Near Eastern Literature," in *Literary Heritage of Classical Islam: Studies in Honor of James A. Bellamy*, ed. Mustansir Mir (Princeton, NJ, 1993), 149–167.

272 Griffith, "Christians and Christianity," 312; Griffith, "Al-Naṣārā," 318–319. For an earlier attempt to link the verse with Julianism, see Henri Grégoire, "Mahomet et le Monophysitisme," *Mélanges Charles Diehl*, vol. 1, *Histoire* (Paris, 1930), 116 ff.

273 Grillmeier, *Christ in the Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, part 2, 213, 216.

274 Theresia Hainthaler, *Christliche Araber vor dem Islam* (Leuven and Paris, 2007), 133–134; cf. Grégoire, "Mahomet et le monophysitisme," 1:117–118.

denied that Christ had been crucified, only that he had suffered in the process, or that he had suffered as a human subject to the laws of nature rather than by choice, an issue in which the Qur'ān displays no interest. So the Julianists cannot account for the Qur'ānic position.

The Qur'ānic refusal to accept the crucifixion is more likely to have Israelite Christian roots. Annarichos, the Gazan monk who read the Gospel of the Hebrews, tells us that "when he [Jesus] was put on the wood of the cross, his Father saved him from their [the Jews'] hands and brought him up to heaven, beside him in glory."[275] Here we have the same denial that the Jews succeeded in killing Jesus as in the Qur'ān, and here too God moves Jesus to heaven, apparently snatching him directly from the cross. Pseudo-Cyril attributes the same doctrine to the Samaritan Isaac whom he claims to have converted to Christianity. As we have seen, Isaac's errors before his conversion included his belief that "Jesus, the son of Mary," was (only) a prophet of God, but he combined this belief with a docetic interpretation of the crucifixion.[276] In Budge's British Library manuscript he first claims that Jesus, the son of Mary, was crucified by the Jews because he abrogated the law of the Sabbath; but he adds that the man they crucified instead of Jesus was also a prophet called Jesus. The true Jesus went up "a certain mountain" and it is not known what happened to him.[277] Here we have the Qur'ānic view of Jesus as a mere prophet, complete with the designation "Jesus, the son of Mary," and docetism, possibly as understood by the Messenger himself and certainly as understood by the exegetes. There is a crucifixion, but it is of the wrong man; the real Jesus ascends the mountain (which is not mentioned in the Qur'ān), perhaps the mountain on which others said that he was transfigured, and then he disappears, presumably by translation to heaven. But according to Cerinthus, Jesus would not rise again until the general resurrection, as is also said (or at least implied) about Jesus in | the Qur'ān (19:33).[278] Pseudo-Cyril does not

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275   Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Virgin," in Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, par. 28 (as translated into English by Roelof van den Broek, *Pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem on the Life and Passion of Christ* [Leiden, 2012], 94); Bombeck, "Pseudo-Kyrillos," par. 28. Budge's version (*Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fol. 12ª = 637) is shorter and less explicit.

276   See above, p. 3 [280].

277   Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Cross," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fol. 8af = 768 (a confusing narrative); Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, par. 17.

278   Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 28.6.1. If Christ here is Epiphanius' word for the human Jesus who suffered on the cross, whereas the heavenly Christ did not (see Part I, note 97), this makes good sense: the human host would indeed have died and been left in the grave until the general resurrection.

mention Cerinthus' claim, but his sermons show us a thought world closely related to that of the Qurʾān. Its roots are clearly Israelite Christian. That the milieu from which the docetic interpretation of the crucifixion passed into the Qurʾān was Israelite Christian (or, in the traditional nomenclature, Jewish Christian) was clear already to Schoeps and Busse.[279]

11   The Virgin Birth

The Messenger accepts that Jesus was born of a virgin (3:45–47; 19:16–22; 21:91; 66:12), which is odd, given that he insists on Jesus' ordinary human status. To late antique Christians, Mary's virginal motherhood and Jesus' divinity were two sides of the same coin;[280] and if Jesus was the son of Mary by an infusion of the spirit of God, as the Qurʾān seems to say (21:91; 66:12), he would be the son of God by the Messenger's own standards. The second point, however, only holds true if the spirit is seen as impregnating Mary, and this does not appear to be the case. God does say in one verse that He blew some of His spirit into Mary (*nafakhnā fīhā min rūḥinā*, 21:91), but in 66:12 He says that He blew it into him (Jesus) or it (Mary's vagina), and Jesus could be the ultimate recipient in all three cases. If God blew His breath into Jesus, the latter was already present in some form in Mary's womb, and the parallel with Adam and Jesus' clay birds suggests that this is in fact what is intended. Jesus is explicitly said to be like Adam, whom God created from clay and into whom He then blew His breath (15:29; 32:9; 38:72). In the same way, Jesus himself first created birds of clay and next blew his breath into them, with the result that they became real birds and flew away (3:49; 5:110). In both cases it is the infusion of breath that makes the inert model come alive: the models exist already. We are also informed that Jesus was like Adam in that God first created him from dust and next (*thumma*) said "Be," whereupon he was (*kun fa-yakūnu*, 3:59); here the divine

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279   Schoeps, *Theologie*, 339, noting that 4:157 shows traces of "post-Ebionitic docetic Christology"; Heribert Busse, "Das Leben Jesu im Koran," *Christiana Albertina* 15 (1981): 23, without explanation.

280   "If the Mother had not remained a virgin, her child would have been a mere man and his birth not wonderful," as Proclus of Constantinople (d. 446) declared. "If he had been born like us, he would have been a man," as Theodotus of Ancyra (d. before 446) put it, also observing that "the fact that he did not destroy her virginity plainly shows that the one born is the Word of God" (Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church* [Rome, 1991], 253, 262–263, 269). "If he was not God, how could he leave the virginity of his mother intact?" as Isaac of Antioch (d. c. 451) agreed (Landersdorfer, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 142).

command "Be" replaces the infusion of divine breath, suggesting that the two were regarded as largely or wholly identical. In line with this, when Mary asks how she can have a son when no man has touched her, she is told that God creates what He wants: when He has decided something, He merely says "Be" to it, whereupon it is (*kun fa-yakūnu*, 3:47). In short, what God blew into Jesus was the spirit of life, but one of a special, divine power, since it enabled Jesus to speak in the cradle and work other miracles (5:110). "I assisted you (*ayyadtuka*) with the holy spirit," as God tells him (5:110, cf. 2:81, 254), now leaving no doubt that Jesus was the ultimate recipient of the spirit that God blew into Mary. It played no role in his conception.

Unlike Adam and Jesus, other prophets received the divine spirit indirectly, and the command with which it is closely associated is now an order to speak, recite, or do whatever God wants, not a command to be. "Thus We have revealed to you a spirit of Our command," as God tells the Messenger in 42:52, using a somewhat enigmatic expression and explaining that this was how the Messenger had acquired his knowledge of the book and the faith. "He sends down an angel with the spirit of His command on whomsoever He wants of His servants," as we are also told (16:102; cf. 70:4; 97:4, where the angels and the spirit descend and ascend together). As an agent of revelation, the spirit is called the holy spirit (*rūḥ al-qudus*, 16:102) and personified as Gabriel, who brings down the revelation to the Messenger's heart (2:97). But no intermediary is involved in the case of Adam and Jesus. Both are created by God Himself, neither has a father, and both receive their life and superhuman powers by God blowing His spirit directly into them.

The presentation of Adam and Jesus as recipients of God's holy spirit in the Qurʾān has affinities with the account of the same subject in the Jewish Christian Pseudo-Clementines (though this work has a high rather than low Christology). Here, too, Adam, formed by God's hands, is given God's great and holy spirit, that is, the spirit of foreknowledge by which the True Prophet knows hidden things, at all times, not | just in moments of inspiration.[281] This spirit is that of Christ as well, the latter being a prophet by virtue of an inborn and ever-flowing spirit,[282] since Adam and Christ are identical; for there is only one True Prophet, Christ, a pre-existing angelic being who has

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281   Clement (attrib.), *Homilies*, III, 12–14 (in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. 17 [Edinburgh, 1870; repr. 2005]); cf. H.J.W. Drijvers, "Adam and the True Prophet in the Pseudo-Clementines," in *Loyalitätskonflikte in der Religionsgeschichte*: *Festschrift für Carsten Colpe*, ed. Christoph Elsas and Hans Kippenberg (Würzburg, 1990), 314–323.

282   Clement (attrib.), *Homilies*, III, 15.

manifested himself in different forms and under different names from the beginning of the world.[283] The Pseudo-Clementine argument is shaped by different concerns (notably anti-Marcionism) from those of the Qurʾān, which does not identify Adam and Christ, but merely presents them as parallel cases. Unlike the Pseudo-Clementines, it does not deny that Adam sinned or discuss the question of whether the spirit left him when he did so;[284] and it draws on the apocryphal infancy gospels for its depiction of Jesus, which the Pseudo-Clementines do not. But the fact remains that both see the divine spirit in Adam and Christ as the factor endowing them with special knowledge, not as an agent of conception. In short, the Qurʾānic doctrine of the virgin birth is quite different from that current among gentile Christians.

That still leaves the question of why the Messenger accepted a dogma so intimately linked with Jesus' divinity instead of just making him a son of Joseph (who is not even mentioned in the Qurʾān): if Jesus was a ordinary human being with special gifts rather than the son of God, one would expect him to have ordinary human parents too. The Messenger does insist on the humanity of Mary, so why does he not give her a husband by whom to father Jesus? The answer is surely that by the Messenger's time it was difficult to cast Joseph as Jesus' father any more without implicitly identifying Jesus as a bastard, for everyone knew that if he was not born of God and a virgin, as the Christians insisted, then he was the son of Panthera/Panther, the Roman soldier who had slept with Mary, as the Jews asserted (and as pagans too had said in the past).[285] Scurrilous stories about Jesus' birth to an unmarried woman clearly circulated in the Messenger's locality, for Mary's people, i.e. the Jews, are presented as accusing her of fornication; Jesus clears her reputation by explaining the truth in the cradle (4:156; 19:27 ff.), and it is repeatedly stressed that Mary was a virgin (3:47; 19:20) and a chaste woman (21:91; 66:12) who spoke the truth (5:75). All this is in line with Syriac Christian views,[286] but it is striking that Mary's virtue is in need of repeated defense. The Messenger evidently did not live in an

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283   Ibid., III, 20.

284   Cf. Drijvers, "Adam and the True Prophet," 315.

285   Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I, 32; Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, esp. 18 ff., 97–98, 113–114; Schäfer, Michael Meerson, and Yaacov Deutsch, *Toledot Yeshu* ("*The Life Story of Jesus*") *Revisited* (Tübingen, 2011).

286   Cf. the dialogue poem in Sebastian Brock, "Mary in Syriac Tradition," Ecumenical Marian Pilgrimage Trust (2007), http://ecumenicalmarianpilgrimage.faithweb.com/07Brock.pdf: 19–20 (accessed Nov. 2015; this is the later of two articles with identical titles by the same author): accused of unchastity by Joseph, Mary declares that the child in her womb will reveal that she is still a virgin. Here too her chastity and truthfulness are stressed.

environment where her unblemished nature had come to be taken for granted, and this is probably why he liked the doctrine of the virgin birth: Jesus' birth had to be miraculous in order not to be scandalous. It may have been for the same reason that some Ebionites had come to accept the doctrine of virgin birth by Origen's time,[287] and that the Nazoreans known to Jerome (or some of them) had as well.[288] It had no soteriological function for them, nor did it for the Messenger.

It is not just the virgin birth that is accepted in the Qurʾān; Mary seems to be envisaged as a perpetual virgin. She has no husband, only a guardian, to whom she is awarded by lots (3:44) and who is identified as Zachariah (3:37). The Qurʾān is here following the Protoevangelium of Jacob/James, the gospel in which the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity was first formulated, apparently for purposes of defending her against Jewish calumnies.[289] According to the Protoevangelium, Mary was dedicated to the temple at the | age of three years and a day, the age at which infant girls became minors according to the Mishna, and also the earliest age at which she could be betrothed; and Zachariah, the priest in charge of the temple in which she grows up, hands her to Joseph when she is twelve and becomes pubescent.[290] Joseph is presented as an old man with children from a previous marriage (explaining Jesus' brothers and sisters in the Gospels) and as reluctant to take on a young bride. The message is that he never claimed his conjugal rights. In fact, it is not even clear that he had such rights, for although Zachariah is informed that Mary will be Joseph's wife, Zachariah himself tells Joseph that he must take Mary ("this virgin of the Lord") into his care and protection;[291] and when Mary gets pregnant,

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287   For Origen, see Part I, note 117; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, 3.27.3. Horner seems not to be aware that some Jewish Christians accepted the virgin birth, though he cites both of these passages (cf. Timothy J. Horner, "Jewish Aspects of the Protoevangelium of James," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12 [2004]: 333).

288   Epiphanius did not know whether the Nazoreans accepted the virgin birth (*Panarion*, 29.7.6), but Jerome claims that they did: in a letter to Augustine he writes that they "believe in Christ, the Son of God, born of Mary the Virgin …" (*Ep.*, 112, 13, in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 201). But he also has a passage implying that they regarded Jesus as the son of the carpenter (*In Matth.*, 13, 54, in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 217); differently interpreted by Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 54–55, so as to eliminate the contradiction.

289   Horner, "Jewish Aspects," 330, noting that it has even been presented as a direct response to Celsus.

290   Cf. ibid., 323, 325.

291   *Protoevangelium of James* (in Ehrman and Pleše, *Apocryphal Gospels*, no. 3), par. 9; Horner, "Jewish Aspects," 326.

Joseph is accused of having violated her, if only in the sense of having slept with her without having the marriage solemnized first.[292] That the marriage was to be understood as nothing but guardianship is told to us explicitly by Epiphanius.[293] In short, Mary was the bride of God: betrothed to Him at the age of three and a day, the earliest possible age, she was fully married to Him when the vow was consummated, i.e. when the spirit impregnated her.

It has been suggested that the Protoevangelium, which dates from the late second century, was composed by an author who understood Christianity from a Jewish point of view.[294] It does seem to argue in favor of Mary's perpetual virginity on the basis of Mishnaic rules. But it quickly became enormously popular with all Christians and came close to achieving canonicity, so that it had completely saturated Christian literature by the time it was rejected as apocryphal, by the *Decretum Gelasianum* in the fifth or sixth century.[295] The Messenger's use of this gospel, or of ideas rooted in it, cannot be taken to indicate that the Christians in his locality were more Jewish in their orientation than any other Christians. Only Jewish Christians, however, could accept the virgin birth without *theologia*, as Origen put it.[296] Differently put, only they could decouple Jesus' virgin birth from his status as the son of God (which some Jewish Christians rejected and others accepted with reference to his baptism rather than his birth). To all other Christians, the one was the proof of the other, a fact of which there is no awareness in the Qur'ān.

12   Mary as an Aaronid

Jesus' mother, Mary (Maryam), was "the sister of Aaron" (19:28) and "daughter of 'Imrān" (Amram, the father of Aaron and Moses in the Bible) (66:12). This is a well-known puzzle. Aaron and Moses did have a sister called Mary (Miriam in the Bible), but the Qur'ān distinguishes quite clearly between this sister

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292   *Protoevangelium of James*; Horner, "Jewish Aspects," 327–328.

293   Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 78.7.2 ff.; cf. 28.7.6. Mary was betrothed to a suitor "who was to be, properly speaking, the guardian of her virginity," as John of Damascus put it (Homily 1 on the Dormition, 6, in B.E. Daley, trans., *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* [New York, 1998], 190).

294   Thus Horner, "Jewish Aspects" (not all the arguments are convincing). Rösch, "Jesus-mythen," 426–427, takes the Jewish Christian origin of this text for granted.

295   Cf. Horner, "Jewish Aspects," 315 (fifth century); Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:38 (sixth century).

296   Cf. Part I, p. 241 [254].

(left unnamed in the Qurʾān), who kept an eye on her little brother in Egypt (20:40; 28:11–13), and Mary, who spent her childhood in the temple in Jerusalem (3:36–37). Accordingly, one takes the identification of Mary as the daughter of ʿImrān and sister of Aaron to mean that she was a member of ʿImrān's/Aaron's lineage, which accords with normal Arabic (and indeed Qurʾānic) usage.[297] But another verse calls Mary's mother "the wife of ʿImrān" (3:35) and this can only be understood literally: here, ʿImrān, presumably known to the Messenger's audience as the father of Moses and Aaron, is envisaged as the father of Mary too, not her distant ancestor, even though the story line about Mary follows the Protoevangelium, in which Mary's mother is the wife of Joachim.[298] The common explanation that the Messenger is envisaging Mary as a sister of Aaron in a typological sense does not help. For one thing, the Christians, from whom the Messenger would have picked up typological | interpretation, did not see Miriam as the prototype of Mary.[299] It would in fact have made more sense for Moses' mother rather than his sister to be presented as such. For another thing, the relationship between Mary and Aaron was not typological if both were the offspring of ʿImrān and his wife. Besides, the Medinese sura which identifies Mary's mother as the wife of ʿImrān also says that God chose Adam, Noah, the family of Abraham, and the family of ʿImrān above all beings, adding that some of them were descendants of others (*dhurriyyatan baʿḍuhā min baʿḍin*, 3:33–34). If Jesus is here included in the family of ʿImrān, as has been

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297 Cf. Suleiman A. Mourad, "Mary in the Qurʾān," in *The Qurʾān in Its Historical Context*, ed. Reynolds, 165–166. Compare the Qurʾānic use of "brother" in the sense of fellow tribesman (e.g. 7:65: "[We sent] to ʿĀd their brother Hūd"; similarly 7:73, 85; 11:50, 61, 84; 27:45 of this and other Arabian prophets). Gallez, *Le messie*, 1:20, strangely denies that "sister" can be used in the sense of fellow tribeswoman.

298 Pace Mourad, "Mary in the Qurʾān," 166, claiming that Mary's mother was Amram's wife in the sense that she was married to a descendant of Amram. This is not idiomatic usage: one could not say of a woman married to a Tamīmī that she was the wife of Tamīm.

299 Neuwirth holds that Mary as the "sister of Aaron" may be understood as reflecting a typological interpretation cherished by the Old Church, which sought to connect the events around Moses with those around Mary and Jesus. But she does not give any examples or references (Angelika Neuwirth, "Imagining Mary—Disputing Jesus," in *Fremde, Feinde und Kurioses*, ed. Benjamin Jokisch, Ulrich Rebstock, and Lawrence I. Conrad [Berlin, 2009], 399). Van der Velden, "Konvergenztexte," 176–177, also postulates a Christian tradition without documenting it. Dye tries his best to find Christian precedents for the Miriam/Mary typology, but he admits that it is hard (see Guillaume Dye, "Lieux saints communs, partagés ou confiscques," in *Partage du sacré: transferts, dévotions mixtes, rivalités interconfessionnelles*, ed. Guillaume Dye and Isabelle Dépret [Brussels, 2012], 95–98).

argued,[300] the relationship is clearly envisaged as physical yet again: *dhurriyya* are descendants in the flesh, not spiritual progeny, a concept which is in general somewhat alien to the Qurʾān.[301] However this conundrum is to be resolved,[302] it is Mary's relationship with Aaron that matters in the Qurʾān: she is never called the sister of Moses. And whether she was literally a sister of Aaron or just a member of the Aaronid clan, she was not a descendant of David. Since the Messenger accepts the doctrine of the virgin birth, neither was her son.

What we have in the Qurʾān, then, seems to be residues of the idea of an Aaronid messiah which we also encountered in the sermon on the virgin by Pseudo-Cyril. It was a concept that went a long way back. Priests had been the leading political force in Palestine in the Persian and Hellenistic periods, and in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* it is predicted that God will raise up a high priest from Levi (the ancestor of Aaron) and a king from Judah (the ancestor of David).[303] Salvation would come through Judah, or God would raise up a savior from both Levi and Judah, whom one patriarch after the other tells his children to honor,[304] "because from them shall arise the salvation of Israel."[305] In the Gospel of Luke we are told that Mary was a relative of Elizabeth (the mother of John the Baptist) and that Elizabeth was an Aaronid.[306] This could be taken to imply that Jesus was regarded as an Aaronid on his mother's side and of Davidic descent on his father's until the adoption of the doctrine of the virgin birth. There were certainly people who held Mary to be of Levite descent in the time of Origen (d. 253 f.).[307] Origen did not share their view, for by

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300 Samir Khalil Samir, "The Theological Christian Influence on the Qurʾān: A Reflection," in *The Qurʾān in Its Historical Context*, ed. Reynolds, 142–143; Reynolds, *Qurʾān and Its Biblical Subtext*, 145–146. Neuwirth, "House of Abraham," 507, goes so far as to claim that Āl ʿImrān here consist of Mary, her mother, and her son only.

301 Michael Marx, "Glimpses of Mariology in the Qurʾān," in *The Qurʾān in Context*, ed. Neuwirth, Marx, and Sinai, 548–549, claims that *dhurriyya* in the Qurʾān can also refer to "a spiritual adherence, the participation in a 'prophetic project.'" But he gives no examples.

302 One possibility is that she was called the sister of Aaron and the daughter of ʿImrān in the sense of an Aaronid in old texts reflected in the Meccan suras and that this had gradually come to be understood literally, giving us Mary's mother as the wife of ʿImrān in the Medinese 3:5.

303 "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," in Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, T. Reuben, 6:7–12; T. Simeon, 7; T. Levi, 2:10; cf. T. Dan, 5:4.

304 T. Naphtali, 8; T. Gad, 8:1; T. Joseph, 19:11.

305 T. Joseph, 19:11, Armenian version, reflecting an earlier redaction than the Greek.

306 Luke 1:5, 36.

307 Cf. O. Skarsaune, "Fragments of Jewish Christian Literature Quoted in Some Greek and

then the virgin birth had come to be generally accepted, and so Mary too had to descend from David in order for her son to do so. Her Davidic descent seems to be affirmed already by Ignatius, and Justin Martyr (d. c. 165) certainly endorses it,[308] as do other authors of the second century.[309] But this created | problems. "How could Mary, of the tribe of David and Judah, be related to Elizabeth, of the tribe of Levi?" people were asking in Epiphanius' time, and still in that of Jacob of Sarugh (d. 521).[310] The standard answer was that the royal and priestly tribes had intermarried, as Epiphanius duly explains, though Jacob of Sarugh had a different solution: he held the kinship to be a metaphor for similarity, much as do many modern Islamicists.[311] A few went so far as to make Mary and Jesus descendants of Levi and Judah alike,[312] but even this partial Levite descent was never more than a marginal idea. In the New Testament Epistle to the Hebrews, Jesus is of Davidic descent and *superior* to the Aaronids, who were priests according to the flesh, and this seems to have been a more comfortable position.[313]

How did the idea of Mary as an Aaronid pass into the Qurʾān? The view is not represented in mainstream Syriac, nor in any other mainstream form of Christianity,[314] for the obvious reason that it would invalidate Jesus' messianic

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Latin Fathers," in *Jewish Believers*, ed. Skarsaune and Hvalvik, 3355, n. 102, citing Origen's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1.5.4; cf. 353–355 on why Christians might have wanted Jesus to be of double descent.

308 Ignatius, in "To the Ephesians," 18:2, 19:1; "To the Trallians," 9:1; and "To the Smyrnaeans," 1:1, mentions that Jesus was born of David's seed and of a virgin, but he never explicitly says that the virgin was of David's seed. Differently Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 100, where the Virgin is explicitly said to be of David's family.

309 E.g., "Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah," trans. M.A. Knibb, in *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*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York, 1985), chap. 11, 2. For other second-century authors, see Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh, 1990), 26–27.

310 Jacob of Sarugh, *On the Mother of God*, 642 = 46 (homily 2).

311 Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 78.13.6; Jacob of Sarugh, *On the Mother of God*, 644 = 48 (homily 2).

312 Cf. Hippolytus, anonymous people refuted by Julius Africanus, and Gregory of Nazianzus in Joseph Fischer, "Die Davidische Abkunft der Mutter Jesu," *Weidenauer Studien* 4 (1911): 63–64, 69, 79–81 (an extremely learned trawl through all the sources directed against the skeptics of the day).

313 Hebrews 7:4–10, 14; 8:4 ff., etc. cf. Eric F. Mason, *"You are a Priest for ever": Second Temple Judaism and the Priestly Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden, 2008), 33 ff.

314 According to Neuwirth, "House of Abraham," 507, n. 25, a number of East Syrian liturgical

status. Even the Ebionites are reported to have accepted Jesus as a descendant of David, evidently via his father, Joseph. Where we do find the idea of an Aaronid who is to come, apart from the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, is in the Dead Sea scrolls from Qumran. Here we hear of the "messiahs of Aaron and of Israel" or, as all the other passages say, "the messiah of Aaron and Israel," which could mean that in fact there was only one. Modern scholars assume the messiah of Israel to be the Davidic messiah, but he is never actually identified as such, and one would have expected the counterpart of Aaron to be Judah rather than Israel, to whom they both belonged.[315] The sect behind these scrolls is usually (but not always) held to be Essene and to have disappeared in the course of the Jewish revolt against Rome. It has been conjectured on poor evidence that thereafter they converted to Christianity and merged with their Jewish Christian neighbors.[316] The best evidence for this is actually Epiphanius' familiarity with a Jewish Christian sect in the Dead Sea region called Sampsaeans: formerly they were known as Ossenes, he says, including them among the many Jewish Christians who have been corrupted by Elchasai. He has considerable local knowledge about them.[317] These Ossenes were probably Essenes. This is sometimes denied on the grounds that Epiphanius mentions the Essenes under their normal name as well,[318] but it makes good sense that he should have written about them under two names, for he knew of the Ossenes by word of mouth

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texts, still unpublished, present Mary as belonging to the Aaronid lineage. This would be a major discovery with radical implications for our view of the origin and nature of Syrian Christianity if it were true, but the examples adduced by Michael Marx, "Glimpses of a Mariology in the Qurʾān: From Hagiography to Theology via Religious-Political Debate," in *Qurʾān in Context*, ed. Neuwirth, Sinai, and Marx, 557–559, on the basis of what I take to be the same liturgical texts, do not make her an Aaronid, merely the type of Aaron's rod (which sprouted on its own), as Marx himself acknowledges. Ephrem explicitly identifies her lineage as Davidic (Brock, "Mary in Syriac Tradition" [2007], 3), and so does the Syriac tradition in general (Murray, "Mary, the Second Eve," 374).

315 Cf. John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York, 1995), chap. 4, arguing in favor of two messiahs.

316 Oscar Cullmann, "Die neuentdeckten Qumran-Texte und das Judenchristentum der Pseudoklementinen," in *Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann zu seinem 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Walther Eltester (Berlin, 1954), 35–51. His evidence is the similarities between the Dead Sea scrolls and the Pseudo-Clementines, though the most obvious explanation for that is shared roots in second-temple Judaism.

317 Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 19.2.1ff.; cf. 19.5.4.

318 Epiphanius mentions the Essenes as a Samaritan (!) sect in his *Panarion*, 10.1.2 (cf. the brief discussion in Crown, Pummer, and Tal, ed., *Companion to Samaritan Studies*, s.v. "Essenes").

and/or personal observation, whereas he speaks of the Essenes on the basis of literary sources of some kind. He does not know that the two sects were identical. Like the Essenes of Qumran, moreover, the Ossenes/Sampsaeans and the Elchasaites were baptists. We do not know what the Ossenes or the Elchasaites said about the descent of Mary, but we do know that the Manichaean offshoot of the Elchasaites denied that she was of Davidic descent: in their view she was "from the tribe of Levi, from which the priests came."[319] This strengthens the case for the view that | the Qur'ānic conception of Mary as an Aaronid had Elchasaite roots as well.

One does not get the impression that Mary's Aaronid descent was of great importance to the Messenger, for all that he mentions it three times.[320] Maybe it sounded right to him because he knew her to have been brought up in the temple, a fact familiar to him as to so many others from the Protoevangelium of James. This text admittedly identifies her as a member of David's house in its present form,[321] but the chapter in which it does so did not form part of the original work and probably was not known to either the Messenger or the Manichaeans.[322] At all events, the Messenger does not seem to have given much thought to the fact that Mary's Aaronid descent made Jesus an Aaronid too, and it is a striking fact that he does not try to connect Jesus with David in any way, except perhaps in a Medinese verse proclaiming that the unbelieving Israelites have been cursed by the tongues of David and Jesus (5:78). Jesus' Davidic descent, crucial for his messianic status, was not apparently of interest to him.

13   The Prophetic Chain

The Messenger operates with the assumption that prophets have appeared throughout history and that all of them have been bearers of the same monotheist message. "We believe in God and that which He sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the [twelve] tribes, and what was given to Moses and

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319   Faustus in Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, 23:4. Faustus knows Mary's father to be Joachim, the name given to him in the Protoevangelium of James, chap. 1, but he also identifies him as a priest, which the Protoevangelium does not. He is putting his own construction on the text to support an idea he has from elsewhere.

320   Differently Marx, "Glimpses of a Mariology in the Qur'ān," who sees an intention to revive memories of the temple tradition founded by Aaron here.

321   *Protoevangelium of James* (in Ehrman and Pleše, *Apocryphal Gospels*, no. 3), par. 10.

322   Cf. Fischer, "Davidische Abkunft," 26 ff.

Jesus, and what was given to [all the other?] prophets; we do not distinguish between any of them," as a characteristic passage says (2:136; similarly, 3:84; 4:150–152). God "has prescribed for you the religion that He enjoined on Noah and which We revealed to you (sg.) and which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus," as another passage has it (42:13). Yet another enumerates Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Zachariah, John, Jesus, Elijah, Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah, and Lot (in that peculiar order) as righteous people favored by God, presumably all as prophets, though this is not specified (6:83–86). God taught Jesus the book, wisdom, the Torah, and the Gospel, apparently all containing the same message (5:110). "We did not send any messenger before you without revealing to him that there is no God except for Me, so serve Me," as God declares (21:25). As noted above, the Book of Elchasai, composed in 116–117, construed all the prophets from Adam to the messiah as incarnations of the same pre-existing Christ, all ultimately identical and bearing the same message, though the last of them was a fuller incarnation than the rest. The godhead dwelled "moderately" in the earlier holy persons to appear fully in Christ, as Jerome explained with reference to the Nazoreans,[323] whose Gospel of the Hebrews similarly presented Jesus as the culmination of a chain of prophets in all of whom the spirit of God had resided.[324] The Pseudo-Clementine Homilies operate with a comparable succession of prophets, and the chain of prophets also appears among the Mandaeans and the Manichaeans.[325]

Schoeps, Andrae, and others postulated that the Qurʾānic concept of successive prophets developed out of the Jewish Christian chain of prophets as we know it from the Book of Elchasai and other works.[326] The similarity is obvious. Like their Jewish Christian predecessors, the Qurʾānic prophets bear the same message from Adam, or at least from Noah, until "today," and though the prophets are no longer incarnations of the same pre-existing figure, they are united by the fact that all are members of the same prophetic line: all are descendants of Noah and Abraham, in whose offspring God had placed prophethood and the book (57:26); all are descendants of Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Israel, as we are told with reference to a selection of them (19:58).

323   Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 11:1–3, in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 223.

324   See Part I, p. 242 [256].

325   Cf. Clement (attrib.), *Homilies*, II, 15; III, 20. John C. Reeves, *Heralds of That Good Realm: Syro-Mesopotamian Gnosis and Jewish Traditions* (Leiden, 1996), 5–30; Crone, *Nativist Prophets*, 293, 296 ff.

326   Schoeps, *Theologie*, 335–336; Ahrens, *Muhammed als Religionsstifter*, 130–131; Andrae, *Mohammed*, 99–107; cf. also Andrae, *Person Muhammeds*, 292–293.

The trouble is that shorn of their divinity and identity as incarnations of the same figure, the prophets who succeed one another have no diagnostically Jewish Christian features. Mainstream Christians sometimes speak of something close to a chain of prophets too. Jacob of Sarugh, for example, lists Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, his twelve sons, Moses, Aaron, Eliezer (cf. | 1 Chron. 15: 24), the Levite priests, David, Samuel, Ezechiel, Isaiah, and all the prophets as rejoicing at Mary's role in the economy of salvation. In another passage, he lists Adam, Seth, Noah and his three sons, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, his companion Hur, Joshua, Aaron and the Levites, David, Daniel, Jephta, Gideon, Samson, the twelve (minor) prophets, Samuel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and all righteous people in illustration of the many generations who had died before Mary.[327] Both passages envisage these figures as forming a chain of righteous people, many of them prophets. The case for a Jewish Christian origin of the Qurʾānic chain thus has to rest on the names included and excluded, and this does not get us anywhere. According to Epiphanius, the Ebionites accepted Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Aaron, and Christ, but not Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezechiel, Elijah, and Elisha.[328] This fits the Qurʾān, which also accepts Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, and Christ, and which only makes minimal reference to the great Old Testament prophets, though it does mention both Elijah and Elisha in an approving way (6:85 f.; 37:123, 130; 38:48). In addition, however, the Ebionites rejected David and Solomon, whereas the Qurʾān thoroughly approves of both.[329] A passage in the Pseudo-Clementines enumerates Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Jesus, who are all mentioned in the Qurʾān (Enoch twice, under the name of Idrīs, the other six repeatedly).[330] But the Pseudo-Clementines reject John the Baptist,[331] who is accepted in the Qurʾān, so again there is no direct carry-over. It is of course likely that there were many different versions of the Jewish Christian chain and that local differences developed in the course of time, so it remains perfectly possi-

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327   Jacob of Sarugh, *On the Mother of God*, 711–712, 717–718 = 91–92, 97–98 (homily on the death of the virgin).

328   Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 30.18.4–5. They also accepted Joshua, but only as Moses' (political) successor.

329   See *Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān*, s.vv.

330   Clement (attrib.), *Homilies*, XVII, 4; cf. *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., and *Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān*, s.v. "Idrīs."

331   Clement (attrib.), *Homilies*, II, 23, where he is the teacher of Simon Magus, presumably directed against baptists such as the future Mandaeans. For others who took a negative view of John the Baptist, see Majella Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings* (Edinburgh, 1996), 52–53 ("The Testimony of Truth").

ble that the Jewish Christian and the Qur'ānic chains are connected, but where is the evidence for it? None of those postulating a genetic relationship between these chains has actually tried to prove it.

The only evidence I can think of is the Meccan verse which tells us that "for every prophet We established an enemy—the demons of mankind and of the spirits" (*shayāṭīna 'l-insi wa'l-jinni*, 6:112). This is a distinctive position which is not enunciated or elaborated in the rest of the Qur'ān, but which is characteristic of the Pseudo-Clementines. Here every prophet has a false or unrighteous counterpart, so that the history of error always runs parallel to that of salvation. There are ten pairs of opposites (syzygies) from Adam until the destruction of the temple, including Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Ishmael and Isaac, and Simon Magus (the arch-villain of the Pseudo-Clementines) and Peter (who narrates all this). The inferior half of the syzygies always comes first, for this world is female whereas the next is male. (Accordingly, false prophecy is also female whereas true prophecy is male, but the false prophets themselves are male, of course).[332] Though the Qur'ān has different heroes, there can hardly be much doubt that it is espousing the syzygy idea in 6:112. Syzygies (known to the Ismailis as *aḍdād*) are not exclusive to the Pseudo-Clementines, of course; we also find them in Valentinian Gnosticism, for example, but here the pairs are male and female without representing truth and falsehood (thus Mind is paired with Truth). The fact that the Qur'ān has *both* a prophetic chain *and* a residual syzygy idea reminiscent of that in the Pseudo-Clementines strengthens the case for the view that Jewish Christians are lurking in the background here. But it is only after the conquests, when chains of divine prophets representing incarnations of the same holy spirit reappear, that the continuity with Jewish Christianity is obvious.[333]

Adherents of the Jewish Christian origin of the Qur'ānic chain sometimes hold that the concept was transmitted to the Messenger by Manichaeans,[334] but as Ahrens notes, this is most unlikely.[335] Leaving aside the points already raised against the idea | of Manichaean elements in the Qur'ān (above, no. 10), their chain is very different from the Messenger's even if we disregard the fact

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332   See F. Stanley Jones, "Jewish Christianity of the *Pseudo-Clementines*," in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian "Heretics*," ed. Marjanen and Luomanen, 316 ff., listing all ten syzygies; Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Heresiology and the (Jewish-)Christian Novel," in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, ed. Eduard Iricinschi and Holger M. Zellentin (Tübingen, 2008), 284–285.

333   See Crone, *Nativist Prophets*, 221–232, 281–303, 326–341; cf. also chap. 19, *passim*.

334   Schoeps, *Theologie*, 110, 335; Andrae, *Mohammed*, 105 ff.

335   Ahrens, *Muhammed als Religionsstifter*, 131.

that they rejected Moses, the hero of the Qurʾān.[336] If the Qurʾānic and the Manichaean chains are indeed related, it is in terms of shared origins, not transmission from the one to the other.

14   Jesus' Birth under a Palm Tree

In sura 19, we are told that after Mary conceived, she withdrew to a remote place, and that her labor pains drove her to the trunk of a palm tree, where she exclaimed that she wished she had died. A voice then cried out from under her that she should not grieve, for God had placed a spring under her and the palm tree would provide her with ripe dates, so she should eat and drink and be content (19:23–26). God sheltered her and her son on a restful hill endowed with a spring, as we are also told, probably with reference to the same episode, though there is no mention of a palm tree here (23:50). The story is rather odd: Mary is driven to the palm tree by labor pains (*al-makhāḍ*), but the divine consolation takes the form of food and drink, not exactly what a woman needs in that situation. It is in the context of the flight to Egypt after Jesus' birth that the story of the palm tree appears in the earlier *Liber Requiei* (dating from fifth century and fully preserved only in Ethiopic translation)[337] and in the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew (a Latin reworking of the Protoevangelium of James which was probably composed in the early seventh century).[338] It is in this context that it fits: where could Mary and Joseph find food to eat on such a journey, as unbelieving people would ask.[339] If the Qurʾān had not mentioned Mary's labor pains, one would have assumed its account of the palm tree miracle to relate to

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336   For a detailed exposition, see Reeves, *Heralds of That Good Realm*, 5–30.

337   Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 34, 93, 292–294 (Ethiopian *L. Requiei*, 5–7, and Georgian parallel); cf. Shoemaker, "Christmas in the Qurʾān: The Qurʾānic Account of Jesus' Nativity and Palestinian Local Tradition," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 28 (2003): 20–21, quoting the Ethiopian *Liber Requiei*. In this work we hear only of the palm tree providing food, though it is apparently by a spring that it does so.

338   Pseudo-Matthew, 20:2, ed. Jan Gijsel, *Libri de Nativitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium Textum et Commentarius* (Turnhout, 1997), 460–465; for the dating, see 66–67; trans. in Ehrman and Pleše, *Apocryphal Gospels*, 109. Here both the palm tree and the spring appear.

339   Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Virgin," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fol. 9ᵃ = 634; Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, par. 20; Bombeck, "Pseudo-Kyrillos," par. 20. There was also a story of an Egyptian tree which bent down to worship Christ when the holy family arrived there, but it did not deliver food (Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, v, 21.8–11).

the flight to Egypt as well, for the passage does not actually mention Jesus' birth. But the Qurʾān omits the flight to Egypt (a feature it shares with the second-century *Ascension of Isaiah*).[340] Given that Mary is driven to the palm tree by labor pains and that the continuation, again in agreement with the *Ascension of Isaiah*, has her bring Jesus to her people, we are probably meant to infer that the palm tree was his birthplace.

If Jesus was born under the palm tree, he evidently was not born in a stable or cave, as mainstream Christians believed.[341] He could still have been born in or near Bethlehem, but the Qurʾān displays no interest in the location of the palm tree, and this is noteworthy, for Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, as prophesied, was crucial to his messianic status for Christians. In fact, a passage in the Gospel of John (7:41–43) has a crowd deny that he was the messiah on the grounds that the messiah was expected to come from Bethlehem in Judea, not from Galilee. The Gospel of Luke duly assures us that although Jesus grew up in the Galilean town of Nazareth, he did in fact come from Bethlehem. But this is not an issue in the Qurʾān. In line with this, the Qurʾānic Jesus is the messiah only in name (cf. below, no. 15).

It has been argued that the Qurʾānic conflation of the stories of Jesus' birth and the miracle of the palm tree reflects developments within mainstream Christianity. According to Shoemaker, the so-called Kathisma church on the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, originally built in celebration of the nativity, had come to be associated with the flight to Egypt by the sixth century at the latest. The spring from which Mary drank during the flight to Egypt is explicitly located on the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem by the pilgrim of Piacenza, who wrote between 560 and 570, i.e. around the time of Muḥammad's birth; and the pilgrim also mentions that a church had been built there. Shoemaker proposes that the Qurʾānic conflation of the themes of nativity and palm | 17 tree miracle could be rooted in the liturgy associated with this church, which he assumes to have combined the themes of flight into Egypt and nativity. He further takes this hypothesis to imply that the Muslims must have picked up the story of Mary and the palm tree after the conquests, though this does not follow, of course.[342] We need not even postulate that Qurayshī merchants

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340   "Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah," chap. 11, relating Jesus' birth and continuing: "And they took him and went to Nazareth in Galilee."

341   Cf. Luke 2:7 for the stable (manger). The cave appears already in Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chap. 70, 78; and the Protoevangelium of James, 18:1.

342   Shoemaker, "Christmas in the Qurʾān," esp. 12–13, 35–36, 38–39; cf. also Shoemaker, "The (Re?)Discovery of the Kathisma Church and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antique Palestine," *Maria* 2 (2001): 21–72.

had frequented the church during their trading journeys,[343] for narratives connecting the story of the palm tree with Jesus' birth could have traveled from the Bethlehem region to Arabia, disseminated by popular preachers. This would dispose of the problem that services at the Kathisma church, a bastion of Chalcedonian (Melkite) Christianity, were conducted in Greek, a language that Quraysh are not normally assumed to have mastered (though it is not impossible that some did); the story would have passed into other languages as it spread.

Shoemaker's hypothesis is not without its problems, however. For a start, it is based on the assumption that one and the same church had come to be associated with two hitherto separate themes, nativity and flight to Egypt, but archaeologists have discovered *two* churches on the Bethlehem road, located within a couple of hundred meters of each other,[344] so maybe the themes had a church each. Further, the postulated conflation of the two themes at the Kathisma church is not actually reflected in the account of the Piacenza pilgrim, who does not mention Jesus' birth at all, only the water from which Mary drank during her flight to Egypt.[345] He does not even mention the palm tree, so what his account offers is at best a parallel to the Qur'ānic verse 23:50, in which God shelters Mary and her son on a restful hill endowed with a spring.[346]

Above all, the Kathisma church was Chalcedonian, and Chalcedonian Christians generally denied that Mary had suffered labor pains; indeed, so did most mainstream Christians. Already Moses' mother had given birth to her son with-

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343 A possibility considered by Dye, "Lieux saints communs," 110.

344 Shoemaker, "Christmas in the Qur'ān," 31 ff., and the literature by R. Avner cited there.

345 Shoemaker takes the pilgrim to be describing the "new Kathisma" (the more recent of the two neighboring churches), but the "new Kathisma" was an octagonal structure built around a rock much like the Dome of the Rock (which it is now held to have inspired), and the Piacenza pilgrim does not convey the impression that the church he saw enclosed or covered the rock and its water, so it probably was not this church he was describing.

346 Shoemaker, "Christmas in the Qur'ān," 28–29, arguing that the palm tree was no longer there because several versions of the legend say that Christ rewarded it by transferring it to paradise. But if it played an important role in the legend, it would have been commemorated at the site one way or the other. The Kathisma church does have a mosaic depicting a palm tree, but it was only put in around 800, when the church was being converted into a mosque, and it displays the palm tree with two smaller ones next to it, which does not fit the legend. A single palm tree does figure on the back of a sixth-century ivory, but it depicts the flight into Egypt, not the nativity.

out much pain, as we are told by Josephus (d. c. 100),[347] and Jesus' mother soon followed suit. In the *Ascension of Isaiah*, the child simply appears to an astonished Mary, who has been pregnant for a mere two months (cf. Isaiah 66:7: "before the pangs of labor arrived, a male child came forth and was born"); and we are told that many refused to believe that she had given birth on the grounds that "the midwife did not go up (to her) and we did not hear cries of pain."[348] The Syriac *Odes of Solomon*, perhaps composed in the early second century, also tells us that Mary gave birth without a midwife and that she labored without pain.[349] The passage from the *Ascension of Isaiah* is quoted in the *Acts of Peter* (a work eventually declared heretical) and the same point is made by Irenaeus (a bastion of orthodoxy),[350] and thereafter the idea of Mary's freedom from labor pains spread together with the doctrine that her virginity was left intact by the birth. Mary was cast as the antitype of Eve, who was cursed for her disobedience by painful childbirth, and Mary's freedom from labor pain was endorsed by Epiphanius,[351] Gregory of Nyssa | (d. c. 394),[352] Hesychius of Jerusalem (d. c. 433),[353] Theodotus of Ancyra (d. before 446),[354] Severus of Antioch (d. 538),[355] Oecumenius (late sixth/early seventh century),[356] and

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347   Josephus, *Antiquities*, 11, 218; cf. Exod. Rabbah, 1:20; bSotah, 12a (my thanks to Adam Silverstein for getting my references straight).

348   "Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah," 11:14, trans. Knibb, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:175. In the Protoevangelium of James, 19:1, the child also seems simply to appear, though here a midwife has been summoned (compare the Muslim exegetical view that Mary gave birth as soon as she had conceived in Charfi, "Christianity," 116); but the absence of labor pains is not explicitly mentioned.

349   *Odes of Solomon*, ed. and trans. Charlesworth, 19:8.

350   Acts of Peter, 24 (Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 417); Irenaeus in P.F. Buck, "Are the 'Ascension of Isaiah' and the 'Odes of Solomon' Witnesses to an Early Cult of Mary?," in *De Primordiis Cultus Mariani*, vol. 4, *De Cultu B.V. Mariae respectu habito ad mythologiam et libros apocryphos*, Acta Congressus Mariologici-Mariani in Lusitania Anno 1967 Celebrati (Rome, 1970), 392.

351   Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 30.20.4.

352   Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, 158, citing Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Song of Songs*, 13 (where Isaiah 66:7 is invoked).

353   Robert S. Pittman, "The Marian Homilies of Hesychius of Jerusalem" (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1974), 82 (MPG 93, col. 1463); cf. 62 (col. 1453), where Hesychius even claims that Mary removed the pains of childbirth for all women!

354   Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, 271, citing Theodotus, "On the Mother of God and on the Nativity," in *Patrologia Orientalis* 19, 330–331.

355   Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion* (London, 1963), 123.

356   Oecumenius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, trans. John N. Suggit (Washington, DC, 2006), 6.19.7 ff.

John of Damascus (d. 749),[357] as well as others in the Latin West.[358] Judging from the web, the idea is still alive today.

Syriac and Coptic authors were also familiar with it, though they tended not to stress it because it lent itself to docetist interpretations of the incarnation (a much more pressing problem in the eastern provinces than in the rest of the Byzantine empire, "aphthartodocetism" notwithstanding). Ephrem does tell Mary that "your womb escaped the pangs of the curse" and that she bore Christ "truly and really but without pain," but he also speaks of "the pains of his [birth]."[359] And though both Isaac of Antioch (fl. c. 450) and Jacob of Sarugh (d. 521) mention that the birth left Mary's virginity intact, the former does not seem to mention her freedom from labor pain, while the latter explicitly mentions that "birth pangs smote the young mother."[360] Narsai (fl. late 5th century) also mentions her birth pangs, though he assures us that God's blessing to Mary did away with the prison of birth pangs in which He had confined Eve.[361] That Mary gave birth without pain is stated in Coptic sermons attributed to Cyril of Alexandria and Cyril of Jerusalem,[362] but another Coptic sermon (attributed to Demetrius of Antioch) mentions that Mary felt the birth pains blowing over her like the droppings of rain water and that she was miserable, even though it also quotes Isaiah 66:7 ("Before she felt the pangs of childbirth she brought forth").[363] In short, Mary's birth pangs are sometimes accepted, but no Christian author of late antiquity known to me highlights Mary's suffering after the fashion of the Qur'ān, where her pain is such that she wishes she was dead; and the fact that Hesychius of Jerusalem celebrates her freedom from pain is particularly significant in that his sermons show us the

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357   Graef, *Mary*, 158.

358   Buck, "Are the 'Ascension of Isaiah' and the 'Odes of Solomon' Witnesses," 392, citing Venantius Fortunatus (d. c. 600).

359   Ephrem in Robert Murray, "Mary, the Second Eve in the Early Syriac Fathers," *Eastern Churches Review* 3 (1971): 379.

360   Jacob of Sarugh, *Homilies on the Nativity*, trans. and ed. Thomas Kollamparampil (Piscataway, NJ, 2010), homily 1, v. 826; homily 2, v. 188; cf. Landersdorfer, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 288.

361   Frederick G. McLeod, trans. and ed., *Narsai's Metrical Homilies* (*Patrologia Orientalis* 40/1) (Turnhout, 1979), no. I, 249, 467–468; cf. no. III, 60 (pp. 53, 67, 109).

362   Cyril of Rakote (Alexandria), "On the Virgin Mary," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, 717–724, 719 (31b); Pseudo-Cyril, "On the Cross," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, fol. 17ᵃ = 779; Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, 107, par. 47.

363   Demetrius, "On the Birth of Our Lord," in Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, 684 (fols 58ᵃ–58ᵇ).

themes that people would hear during the feast of the nativity in the Jerusalem region, including the Kathisma church.

How then are we to account for the Qurʾānic version of the nativity? It has been suggested that Jesus' birth under a palm tree is modeled on the myth of Apollo's birth under a palm tree,[364] but this seems unlikely, given that the Qurʾānic passage is not really about the birth of Jesus at all, but rather about the miraculous appearance of sustenance for Mary. Busse suggests that the pregnant Mary is depicted along the lines of Hagar, who wandered in the desert and abandoned her enfeebled child when an angel saved her and the child from death by making a spring appear (Gen. 21:14–19; cf. 16:7).[365] But this goes better with the account in 23:50, in which only the spring is mentioned, than with that in sura 19, in which the palm tree appears along with food and water. The main inspiration behind the Qurʾānic account is probably the Revelation of John. Here we read of a woman who is "crying out in birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth" and who flees into the wilderness after giving birth and is nourished there for a time (Rev. 12:1–6, 13 f.). Ancient authors generally agreed that the woman stood for the church fleeing from the Romans about to destroy Jerusalem,[366] but she also evoked Mary to them, Mary being the "type of the | church."[367] Thus Epiphanius focused on Revelations 12:13 f. in his search for evidence regarding Mary's death, concluding from its wording that she had not died, though he was not sure.[368] As Andrew of Caesarea remarks, there were some who took the woman to be the Theotokos, though he himself agreed with Methodius, who took her to stand for the church.[369] His younger contemporary Oecumenius nonetheless persisted in identifying the woman with Mary, doing his best to explain away her birth pangs.[370] (But "if one interprets the sun-

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364   Thus Suleiman A. Mourad, "From Hellenism to Christianity and Islam: The Origin of the Palm Tree Story Concerning Mary and Jesus in the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew and the Qurʾān," *Oriens Christianus* 86 (2002): 206–216. Mourad is unwittingly reviving an old idea, cf. Rösch, "Jesusmythen," 437, with reference to a publication of 1832; but already Rösch argues against it.

365   Busse, "Leben Jesu," 19.

366   John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford, 2001), ad loc.

367   Cf. Ephrem in Murray, "Mary, the Second Eve," 384 ("Mary, type of the church"); in Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, 115 ("We call the Church by the name of Mary"). Similarly Zeno of Verona, Augustine, and Ambrose in Graef, *Mary*, 56–57, 97–98.

368   Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 78.11.3–4; Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 12.

369   Andrew of Caesarea, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, trans. Eugenia Scarvelis Constantinou (Washington, DC, 2011), chap. 33.12.1.

370   Oecumenius, *Commentary*, 6.19.2; 6.19.7 ff.

clad woman in Rev. 12 as being Mary, then one would have to say that she was not exempt," reads one contemporary comment by a David Bjornstad to a web discussion of whether Mary was exempt from labor pains.)[371] Since the woman in Revelations 12 gives birth before fleeing into the desert, she cannot be Mary unless she is fleeing to Egypt, and this is in fact what Oecumenius takes her to be doing.[372] According to Revelations 12 the sun-clad woman was nourished in the desert for awhile, and from the fifth century onwards a story circulated about how dates and the water had miraculously appeared to her when she rested under a palm tree on her way to Egypt.[373] Oecumenius does not mention the story of the palm tree, but others would seem to have taken this story to explain how the woman who fled into the desert was nourished there, and this would be how the themes of labor pains and nourishment came to be combined. All that is missing in the Qurʾān is the information that the episode took place during the flight to Egypt. Whether it was mainstream or marginal Christians who put Revelations 12 and the story of the palm tree together is impossible to tell.

15   Jesus as the Messiah and the Word

Jesus is regularly called *al-masīḥ* (the messiah, Christ) in the Qurʾān, but he does not die to undo the sin of Adam and redeem mankind, the role of the Christian messiah as normally understood; he is never called king; and he is not expected to come back on the day of judgment. Some scholars disagree as regards his return, on the grounds that a verse says that Jesus is a sign of the hour (*la-ʿalamun lil-sāʿa*), i.e. of the day of judgment, so that one should not doubt it (43:61).[374] This has been taken to mean that Jesus will return on the last day, but it is hard to see why: the point of the statement is that the day of judgment will certainly come, however much people may doubt or deny it, and Jesus is invoked as an authority for this, not as somebody who will inaugurate it. The Qurʾān devotes enormous attention to the day of judgment, which is described

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371   Catholic Answers, "Catholic Answers Forums," accessed November 2015, http://forums
       .catholic.com/showthread.php?t=11734. Similarly Timothy George, "The Blessed Virgin
       Mary in Evangelical Perspective," in *Mary, Mother of God*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert
       W. Jenson (Grand Rapids, MI, 2004), 110.

372   Oecumenius, *Commentary*, 7.3.9.

373   See above, notes 337–338.

374   The phrase can also be read as "knowledge for the hour" (*la-ʿilmun lil-sāʿa*), but "knowledge
       for" is not idiomatic.

and foretold in many suras, so if the Messenger expected Jesus to return on that day, he would surely have said so repeatedly too. But in fact he never explicitly says so.

In fact, the Qur'ānic Jesus does not have the qualifications for status as the Christian messiah, for as we have seen, he is not born in Bethlehem (see above, no. 14), and three passages implicitly identify him as an Aaronid rather than a member of David's house (see above, no. 12). Jesus was a strange messiah, then: not of David's house, not a king in any sense, and not a sacrificial victim who died for our sins either. He was the messiah only in the sense that this is what everyone called him, perhaps already in pre-Islamic Arabia.[375] It is notable that although Jesus is always the messiah in Jewish Christian writings after his union with the heavenly Christ, it is never explained what he will do in that capacity. After the conquests Jacob of Edessa noted with satisfaction that the Hagarenes held Jesus to be of Davidic descent and the messiah, a position they apparently expounded with enthusiasm.[376] This implies that they had come to credit Mary with Davidic descent too, but Jacob of Edessa does not actually say so. Ibn Isḥāq (d. 150/767) did give her a genealogy going back to David, however, or more | precisely to Solomon, without reference to Aaron.[377]　　20 But others explained that she was an Aaronid.[378] Jesus still was not much of a messiah by Jewish or Christian standards, but at least there were some who now gave him the requisite descent. By then, Jesus was also expected to return to the earth on the day of judgment, an idea amply attested in *ḥadīth*.

The Messenger also describes Jesus as "a word (*kalima*) from God/Him" (3:39, 45) and, in slightly greater detail, as "His [God's] *word* which He conveyed [lit. threw] to Mary and a *spirit* [proceeding] from Him" (4:171). This last formulation appears to reflect the Syriac understanding of the annunciation. In Luke 1:35 the angel informs Mary that "the holy *spirit* will come upon you and the *power* of the Most High will overshadow you," and Syrian churchmen generally took the power of the Most High to mean God's Word (the *logos*).[379] As Jacob

375　Michel Hayek, "L'Origine des termes 'Isâ al-Masîh (Jésus-Christ) dans le Coran," *L'Orient Syrien* 7 (1962): 366 ff.

376　F. Nau, "Lettre de Jacques d'Édesse sur la généalogie de la sainte Vierge," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 6 (1901): 518 = 523–524.

377　Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, ed. M.J. de Goeje, series 1, ed. J. Barth (Leiden, 1879–1881), 712 [reprinted by Brill in 2010]. Ṭabarī himself completes the genealogy by identifying Solomon as the son of David in the genealogy he gives for Joseph, identical with Mary's in its upper links.

378　Charfi, "Christianity," 111–112.

379　Brock, "Passover, Annunciation," 226–227. For the concatenation of word and spirit in

of Sarugh explains, the holy spirit sanctified Mary's womb while the power was the word that entered it and dwelled there.[380] Exactly what the Messenger took "the word" to be is anything but clear,[381] but one is surprised that he had no compunctions about calling Jesus *al-kalima*, for as the word of God, Jesus was anything but an ordinary human being: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," as the opening of the Gospel of John says. As the *logos*, Jesus was divine. The Jewish Christians who held Jesus to have been a wholly human prophet duly denied that he was the *logos*,[382] but the Messenger betrays no awareness of the normal implications of the term, for all that the Christians of South Arabia seem to have accepted them.[383] On the contrary, he stresses that Jesus was *merely* God's word and messenger in polemics against believers in the Trinity (4:171), though it would have been an absurd statement to make in debate with mainstream Christians. The Messenger also seems unaware that Christians held God to have created the world through His *logos* in the sense of Christ or, as the Christians often put it, that Christ was the creator of the world. It is hard to avoid the impression that *al-kalima* was simply an epithet for Jesus that did not carry much meaning, much like *al-masīḥ*.

All in all, the Qurʾānic Christ is not the son of God, nor is he the messiah or the *logos* in anything but name; he is not baptized, crucified, or resurrected, and he has no redemptive role: some verbal residues notwithstanding, all the central doctrines of mainstream Christianity are missing. One takes it that whatever they may have been, the local Christians were not of the mainstream kind.

16   Conclusion

In sum, the view that only mainstream Christianity is reflected in the Qurʾān cannot be said to accord with the evidence for either the Meccan or the

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the Old Testament, and apparently already in Sumerian and Babylonian thought, see O'Shaughnessy, *Word of God in the Qurʾān*, 25.

380   Sebastian Brock, "Mary in Syriac Tradition," (the earlier of two articles with the same title by the same author) in *Mary's Place in Christian Dialogue*, ed. Alberic Stacpoole (Slough, UK, 1983), 184–185.

381   On this question, see O'Shaughnessy, *Word of God in the Qurʾān*, 19 ff., 34 ff.

382   See Part I, p. 241 [254] (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, 3.27.3).

383   Cf. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, part 4, 319–320, cf. 311, citing the Martyrium Arethae, said to date from between 529 and 597.

Medinese suras. Standard Christian doctrines about Jesus are absent, while numerous non-standard ideas are present: no mainstream Christians of the Messenger's time saw Jesus as a prophet to the Israelites, denied that he was the son of God, credited him with a revealed book, held him to have confirmed the Torah, took the virgin birth to mean that God blew His breath into a model, denied that the Jews had crucified Jesus, held his mother to be a Levite, nor envisaged Jesus as having been born under a palm tree. All gentile Christians seem rapidly to have accepted that Jesus was the pre-existing (usually pre-eternal) *logos* and son of God, that Mary was of Davidic descent, that Jesus died on the cross, and that he had been born in a cave or stable; and it was only in Mesopotamia and Iran that the concept of the prophets as constituting a chain of divine incarnations survived, this being probably where it had originated and where the Christian leadership had no state support and could not suppress it.[384] With the exception of Jesus' birth under a palm tree, it is in Jewish Christianity that we find the roots of the non-standard doctrines. Some of them could be the Messenger's own innovations, but the existence of similar beliefs in both Jewish Christianity | and Manichaeism, a religion rooted in an Elchasaite community, makes it highly unlikely that this was true of many of them.

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Even if we insist against the evidence that all Jewish Christians were dead and gone by the Messenger's time, a number of doctrines reflected in the Qurʾān take us back to the first three Christian centuries: thus the doctrine of Jesus as a purely human being and prophet sent to the Israelites, Mary as a Levite, docetism in respect of food intake and the crucifixion, the syzygies, and the chain of prophets (if actually present in the book). The denial of bodily resurrection by the Messenger's opponents, another key issue in the Qurʾān, is at home in the same period, but we do at least know that this question remained a contested issue for centuries thereafter.[385] And even if we strike out the prophetic chain as too uncertain, dismiss the docetism in respect of food intake and the crucifixion as recent developments thanks to the survival of some unknown Gnostics, and for good measure explain Jesus' human status as a case of the Messenger reinventing the wheel, we are left with two doctrines (Jesus as a prophet to the Israelites and Mary as an Aaronid) which disappeared so fast from mainstream Christianity that they must have been transmitted to Arabia by people whose views had been formed in the first or second centuries.

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384   For all this, see Crone, *Nativist Prophets*, 281–301, esp. 290–293.

385   Cf. Patricia Crone, "The Qurʾānic *Mushrikūn* and the Resurrection, Part II," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 76 (2012): 1–20 [Ed.: included as article 6 in the present volume].

The most obvious candidates are Jewish Christians. They did not necessarily come to Arabia in the wake of the Roman wars against the Jews in the first and second centuries. But whatever the date of their arrival, they must in fact have been present in the localities in which the Messenger was active.

Pagan Arabs as God-Fearers*

The pagan Arabs to whom this paper is devoted are those of the Qurʾān, more specifically the unbelievers of whom the Qurʾān informs us that they were the Messenger's own people (62:2, cf. 2:151; 3:164 and implicitly elsewhere). They represent the community in which he must be presumed to have grown up and from which he had broken away by the time we meet them in the Qurʾān, so they give us a glimpse of the milieu in which he had been formed, or at least in which he operated. What kind of milieu was it, then?

That is a big question and I shall only deal with it in terms of religion. Before I try to do so, however, I should explain that we only know the beliefs and practices of the Messenger's opponents from his own polemical statements about them, and that this evidently poses the question how far we can infer what they actually said or did from his account of them. There are certainly times when he is exaggerating, running several positions together, or expressing himself so obscurely that one can only guess at what he meant (a recurrent problem throughout the Qurʾān). Unlike most polemicists, however, he was not working at a safe distance from his opponents, but rather preaching to them face to face, hoping to convert them. This obviously placed a limit on the amount of distortion he could engage in if he was to have hope of gaining a hearing. His statements are often aggressive, but they are also coherent and accord well with what we know about religious patterns in the pre-Islamic Near East. In short, the Messenger does seem to give us enough genuine information about his opponents for us to reconstruct their views and internal divisions, if only in broad outline.

To return to the question of the religious milieu in which the Messenger was active, the answer is that his people were pagans, if only in the minimal sense of being neither Jews nor Christians. They did have at least one genuinely pagan habit, namely infanticide, a practice abhorred by Jews, Christians and the Messenger alike; and by the Messenger's standard, they were downright polytheists, or more precisely 'associationists' (*mushrikūn*), meaning that they assigned 'associates' or 'partners' to God.[1] Some of them venerated the sun and

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1 What follows is based on P. Crone, 'The Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans: God and the Lesser Deities', *Arabica* 57, 2010, 151–200 [Ed.: included as article 3 in the present volume].

moon (27:24; 41:37), a habit also attested for the Arabs of the Syrian desert;[2] and others venerated a number of lesser deities. But they accepted God as the supreme deity whatever else they venerated, and this is presumably why the Messenger called them 'associationists'.

The lesser deities that the Qurʾān condemns are indiscriminately referred to as deities and angels; some of them were female, and some or all were of pagan origin if we trust the names assigned to them in the Qurʾān (al-Lāt, Manāt, al-Uzzā, 53:19 f.; Wadd, Suwāʾ, Yaghūth, Yaʿūq, and Nasr, placed in Noah's time, 71:23). The Messenger is outraged by the idea of female angels, and even more by the fact that the pagans credited the angels with divine status and power of their own. In his view, the angels were created beings wholly subordinated to God, so that whatever power they had was His: they had no agency separate from His. But the unbelievers saw them as sons and daughters of God (e.g. 6:100; 16:57; 37:149, 153; 43:16), or in other words as partaking of His essence, and also as capable of influencing Him, much as the Christians saw Christ. He too was both part of God and a separate person capable of influencing God, by serving as an intermediary to whom one would, or indeed should, address all prayers and petitions to God according to Origen (d. 253 or 4).[3] In the centuries before and after the beginning of the Christian era the dividing line between God and angels was also indistinct in the thought of Jews, Christians and pagans of the Greco-Roman world alike. The 'sons of God' who figure in the Hebrew Bible had come to be understood as angels already in the Hellenistic period, as seen in the Septuagint; and by the second and third centuries philosophically inclined pagans also identified their pagan deities as angels and sons of God (i.e. the supreme pagan deity), claiming that these beings formed part of God.[4] Some early Christians accepted the equation of gods and angels as long as it did not amount to a legitimation of angel worship,[5] but most resisted it, and angel worship seems quickly to have been perceived as too great a danger for

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2   'Doctrina Addai' in I. Ramelli, *Bardaisan of Edessa*, Piscataway, NJ, 2009, 72 (sun and moon); cf. also Cyril of Alexandria on pagans in Phoenicia and Palestine, below (astral bodies).

3   'We have to send up every petition, prayer, intercession, and thanksgiving to the supreme God through the high priest of all angels, the living and divine *logos*' (Origen, *Contra Celsum*, IV 4 (tr. H. Chadwick, Cambridge 1953, 266)). But cf. J.A. McGuckin (ed.), *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, London 2004, 53, s.v. 'angels', citing his Homily on Leviticus 9:8, where all the angels act as intercessors.

4   Thus Maximus of Tyre, Oration 11:5; cf. also 39:55; the Oinoanda inscription in S. Mitchell, 'The Cult of Theos Hypsistos between Pagans, Jews, and Christians', in P. Athanassiadi and M. Frede (eds.), *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 1999, 81–148, at 86.

5   Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, V 4; Augustine, *City of God*, IX 21.

the angels to retain their divine status.[6] The Jews too stressed that angels should not be worshipped, implying that they were in fact being worshipped, or at least venerated in what the religious authorities felt to be an excessive manner.[7] Both the Jews and the Christians regarded the angels as intercessors who carried prayers and petitions to God, a view well represented in the apocryphal and pseudepigraphic literature;[8] and it was precisely for their intercession that the Qurʾānic pagans invoked their lesser deities or angels, as they themselves explained.[9] So there was nothing particularly odd about them by the standards of the Near East outside Arabia, except perhaps that they were somewhat out of date; for by the seventh century most Jews and the Christians had come to distinguish sharply between God and the created world. Created beings, whether angels or saints (in the sense of deceased holy people), could still act as intercessors,[10] but they had no power of their own. This was also the Messenger's view, except that he did not operate with the concept of saints.[11]

To a modern scholar, the Qurʾānic pagans do not really come across as polytheists at all, but rather as monotheists of the inclusive type that casts other deities as manifestations, hypostases or aspects of the One, a form of monotheism well known from the ancient world, both pagan and Jewish (and preserved in a limited form in the Christian Trinity), as well as India and

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6   Scripture forbids angel worship, as Didymus the Blind (d. 398) pointed out (in T.C. Oden
        (ed.), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament*, x (*Hebrews*), ed. E.M.
        Heen and P.D.W. Krey, Downers Grove, IL, 2005, *ad* Hebrews 1:6).

7   Cf. Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', esp. 194, based on L. Stuckenbruck, *Angel
        Worship and Christology*, Tübingen 1995.

8   Angels bring the prayers of men before God, or simply intercede for them (of their own
        accord?) in Zechariah 1:12; Tobit 12:12, 15; 1 Enoch (tr. W.E. Nickelsberg and J.C. VanderKam,
        Minneapolis, MN, 2004), 9:1–3; 15:2; 39:5; 40:6, 9, and elsewhere. In the Life of Adam and
        Eve, 9:3 (tr. M.D. Johnson in J.C. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Apocrypha*, New
        York 1983–1985, ii, 249–295, at 260), Satan, disguised as an angel, falsely reassures Eve that
        her repentance has been accepted: 'all we angels have entreated for you and interceded
        with the Lord'. See also *Enyclopedia Judaica*, Jerusalem 1971–1972, s.v. 'angels'; *Reallexicon
        für Antike und Christentum*, ed. T. Klauser, v, Stuttgart 1962, 163 (s.v. 'Engel IV'). For the
        pagans, see the South Arabian example in Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', 186 f.

9   For the references, see Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', 158 f.

10   See Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments* (Procatechesis and five Mys-
        tagogical Catecheses), ed. F.L. Cross, tr. R.W. Church, New York 1977, Mystagogical Cate-
        chesis V (On the Eucharistic Rite), par. 9, on commemorating those who have died before
        us: the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and martyrs, 'that at their prayers and interventions
        God would receive our petition'.

11   Cf. Crone, 'Religion of the Qurʾānic Pagans', 158 f.

elsewhere.[12] But the *mushrikūn* were not pagan monotheists in the normal sense of that word, for they worshipped the same God as the Messenger, Allāh, who was indeed a pagan deity by origin but had come to be identified with the God of the Biblical tradition.[13] They also accepted that God sent messengers to mankind, but they expected all such messengers to be angels: one of their gripes against the Messenger was that he was not an angel.[14] Maybe the problem was simply that to their ears he *called* himself an angel, for to them *rasūl* seems to have meant 'messenger' in the sense of angel (*angelos*) rather than apostle (*apostolos*); and they accepted Moses as a prophet, indeed the paradigmatic prophet whose example the Messenger ought to have been able to imitate in their view,[15] though they did not cast Moses as an angel.[16] But there was probably more to this question, for there does seem to have been a tradition in the Syro-Arabian region for regarding religious leaders as angels on earth. Unfortunately, however, the tradition is too poorly attested to help us.[17]

However this may be, the *mushrikūn* were also familiar with the concepts of the resurrection and the day of judgement, and some of them believed in them too, without assigning much importance to them in their lives: they did not think that the end was near. Others doubted or denied the reality of these concepts, sometimes denying that there was any kind of afterlife at all; and a radical fringe denied not just the afterlife, but also God's role as creator,

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12   For the pagans of the ancient world, including late antiquity (up to the early fifth century), see Athanassiadi and Frede, *Pagan Monotheism*; S. Mitchell and P. Van Nuffelen (eds.), *One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire*, Cambridge 2010. For one of the many examples in the Pentateuch, see Genesis 18:1–3, where we are told that the Lord appeared to Abraham: Abraham looked up and saw three men, i.e. angels, whom he addressed as 'my Lord'.

13   Cf. J.T. Milik, 'Inscriptions grecques et nabatéennes de Rawwafah', *Bulletin of the Institute of Archaeology* 10, 1971, 54–58, at 58.

14   P. Crone, 'Angels versus Humans as Messengers of God', in P. Townsend and M. Vidas (eds.), *Revelation, Literature, and Community in Late Antiquity*, Tübingen 2011, 315–336 [Ed.: included as article 4 in the present volume], at 317 f. (where the problem is not completely solved).

15   'Why hasn't he [the Messenger] been given the like of what Moses was given?' (28:48); cf. also 'We will not believe until you cause a spring to gush forth from the ground' (17:90); and 'Why was the reading (*qurʾān*) not sent down in one go?', where the implicit contrast is probably also with Moses.

16   Cf. the discussion of 6:91 in Crone, 'Angels versus Humans', 323–327.

17   Cf. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, VII 30.11: the congregation of Paul of Samosata, the bishop of Antioch who enjoyed the support of the Palmyrene queen Zenobia, claimed that their teacher was 'an angel come down from heaven'.

ruler and judge of this world.[18] But their denial was not pagan. Here is how
they spoke: 'There is nothing but our first death. We won't be resurrected' (*in
hiya illā mawtatunā 'l-ūlā wa-mā naḥnu bi-munsharīna*) (44:35). This is odd:
one would expect them to say 'nothing but our first *life*'. The reason that they
formulate themselves as they do is that they are denying the second death. This
expression does not appear in the Qurʾān, with the result that the exegetes had
trouble with it, but it appears in the targums and the Apocalypse of John, and
from there it spread to Syriac, Greek, Manichaean, Mandaean, and Ethiopic
literature. It always means eternal damnation. For example, Oikoumenios, who
wrote around 600 AD, tells us that John speaks 'of the first and the second death.
The first one is the physical death that separates the soul and the body; the
second death is spiritual death, resulting from sin'. Or, as a Christian martyr tells
the Zoroastrian authorities, 'We are dying for the name of Jesus our Saviour, so
that we may be delivered from the second death, which lasts for ever'.[19] So what
the radical *mushrikūn* are saying when they claim that there is only the first
death is that there is no eternal damnation; there is no hell, because there is no
afterlife at all. Their radical views notwithstanding, the pagans were speaking
the same theological language as all the other Near Eastern communities based
on, or heavily influenced by, the Biblical tradition.

   The same is true when the pagans are quoted as saying, 'There is nothing
but our life down here. We die and we live, we will not be resurrected' (23:37)
or 'There is nothing but our life down here. We die and we live. Nothing but
time (*al-dahr*) destroys us' (45:24). Here it is the word order that is odd: why
do they say that 'we die and we live' rather than the other way round? The
answer is that they are paraphrasing a famous Biblical passage: 'I, even I, am
He; there is no god besides me. I kill/make dead (*'myt*) and I make alive (*'ḥyh*)
...' (Deuteronomy 32:39). It is echoed in two other Biblical passages: 'The Lord
kills (*mmyt*) and brings to life (*mḥyh*)' (1 Samuel 2:6), and 'Am I God to kill
and make alive (*lhmyt wlhḥywt*)?' (2 Kings 5:7). Speaking of God's lifegiving and
life-destroying powers in inverted order had apparently become standard. This
proved useful when the rabbis began to look for proofs of the resurrection in the
Pentateuch: it now seemed self-evident that God was talking about death and
the resurrection. Jewish opponents of the idea of resurrection countered this

18   This and what follows is based on P. Crone, 'The Quranic *Mushrikūn* and the Resurrection,
      Part I', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 75/3, 2012, 445–472 [Ed.:
      included as article 5 in the present volume].

19   S. Brock, 'Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 30, 1979, 212–232, at
      220 f.

interpretation by construing God as saying that He would kill one person and give life to another, but the rabbis responded that the continuation 'I wound and I heal' proved God to be talking about one and the same person. The Muslim exegetes claim that when the *mushrikūn* used the inverted word order, they also meant that God killed some and gave life to others, but it is not clear whether they actually remember this to be the case or had worked it out for themselves trying to figure out what the *mushrikūn* could have meant, perhaps assisted by familiarity with the Jewish debate. In any case, it is clear that the *mushrikūn* were using the Deuteronomic word order in polemics against the same interpretation of the Deuteronomic passage as the Jewish deniers of the resurrection, in proof of an even more radical point: it was not just that God did not resurrect people; He did not even cause them to die in the first place, only time did.

The inverted word order appears in several other passages and was used by the Messenger himself too, but for the most part he preferred to correct it. He also spoke of the 'first death' himself, if only once (or twice), but for the rest he opted for other expressions.[20] In both cases one would assume him to have started by sharing the vocabulary of his opponents, to devise his own formulations thereafter, so that it is mostly when he cites his opponents that the Biblical origin of the vocabulary is clear.

Finally, it is a striking fact that the Messenger expects his audience to recognize the Biblical stories to which he refers or alludes and which he sometimes retells. This has often been noted, and the implication is that the audience knew this material before it was exposed to the Messenger's preaching. In short, pagans though the unbelievers were, they were saturated with thought of Biblical origin. How is that to be explained? In the old days this problem was largely ignored, for the study of the Qurʾān was narrowly focused on the Messenger rather than his audience and the assumption was that he had acquired familiarity with the Biblical or para-Biblical material during his trading journeys in Syria and/or by picking up information from holy men, ascetics and (or including) his *ʿajamī* informant (16:103); and he then passed on his knowledge to his fellow-tribesmen. That the latter could have picked up such knowledge themselves during their trading journeys was not denied, but there does not seem to have been any interest in the question. However, it evidently was not from the Messenger that his opponents knew the Biblical tradition, for not only does he take it for granted that they knew it, their own understanding of it also differed from his.

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20   Cf. Crone, '*Mushrikūn* and the Resurrection', I, 460, 462 f.

A more plausible answer is that the *mushrikūn* had absorbed their knowledge from the Israelites in their locality. This solution is rarely considered because it seems to be taken for granted that there were no Israelites in the Messenger's hometown, only in Yathrib, but this is not correct. 'This reading/recitation (*qurʾān*) tells the sons of Israel most of what they are disagreeing about', a Meccan sura says (27:76), leaving no doubt that the Messenger was preaching to Israelites no less than to Arabs well before he went to Yathrib.[21] Of course, one can strike out all the references to Israelites in the Meccan suras on the premise that the Messenger simply cannot have encountered them before he came to Yathrib, but there is too much to remove for this to carry conviction. I proceed on the assumption that there were indeed Israelites in 'Mecca', wherever 'Mecca' was.[22] I should add that the Israelites seem to have included both Jews and Jewish Christians—both unbelieving and believing Jews, as the Christians of late antiquity would say; but though I shall have occasion to refer to them again, their inner divisions are not important here. What does matter here is that the Arabs seem to have related to the Israelites in the same way as did the gentiles known in antiquity as God-fearers.

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21   In addition, the Jews are addressed directly in sura 17:5–8, and believing scriptuaries, including Israelites, are mentioned in several Meccan suras (discussed below).

22   The Qurʾān describes the town in which the Messenger was active (and which is never named) as an agricultural settlement devoted to the cultivation of grain, grapes, pomegranates, and other fruits, including olives; and sura 6:141 makes it clear that the olives were grown by the 'Meccans' themselves: it mentions all kinds of produce, including olives and pomegranates and adds, 'so eat of their fruits, but pay the dues on them when the harvest is gathered' (*wa-ātū ḥaqqahu yawma ḥasādihi*). One could not have harvested olives in either Mecca or Medina, however, because the winter temperatures there are too high, nor could one have done so in Ṭāʾif, except perhaps in unusually cold years (for all this, see P. Crone, 'How Did the Quranic Pagans Make a Living?', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 68, 2005, 387–399 [Ed.: included as article 1 in the present volume], esp. 391–395; add the Ṭāʾif temperature chart now available at Wikipedia, s.v. 'Ṭāʾif'). This is only one of several features mentioned in the Qurʾān with reference to the Messenger's locality that do not fit Mecca. The settlement must have been located somewhere in northern Arabia, and it must have been a separate place from the Abrahamic sanctuary in the uncultivated valley. Mecca undoubtedly existed and presumably played a role in the rise of Islam as well, but its relationship with the olive-growing settlement is hard to make out.

The God-Fearers of Antiquity

'God-fearers' are best known from Greek sources, where they appear under the names of *phoboumenoi, seboumenoi, sebomenoi* [*ton theon*], and *theosebeis*, 'those who fear/respect God'. They are also attested in rabbinic writings under the name of *yirei shamayim*, 'those who fear heaven', and *yirei YHWH* and *yirei elohim*, 'those who fear God'. Of these terms *yirei shamayim* seems always to refer to non-Jews (God-fearers in the sense of interest here), but the same is not true of *yirei YHWH* or *yirei elohim*. They appear in the Hebrew Bible as terms for the Jews themselves to highlight their cultic veneration of God or more simply their piety (similarly *yirei el* in the Qumran texts), but they are sometimes used of gentiles too.[23] The Greek terms were also used of both Jews and gentiles attracted to their ways. The Christians eventually took to calling themselves 'the race of God-fearers' (*to tōn theosebōn genos*), or those who 'fear God' (*theon sebein*) in a new way,[24] but we may ignore them here. Of God-fearers in the sense of pagan gentiles, we learn that they would attend synagogue service and observe some parts of Jewish law, such as the Sabbath or abstention from pork, without becoming formal proselytes. They were not circumcised. This was evidently not only because the operation was painful, but also because it changed a person's identity: a circumcised God-fearer was no longer a member of his native community, but a Jew.[25]

   God-fearers in the sense of gentiles attracted to Jewish ways are seemingly first attested under their Greek name of *phoboumenoi*, 'those who fear (the lord/God)', in the Septuagint (c. 200 BC) in its translation of 2 Chronicles 5:6: the Hebrew passage speaks of Solomon and all the congregation of Israel; the Greek translation adds 'and the God-fearers (*kai hoi phoboumenoi*) and those of theirs who had gathered together (*kai hoi episynēgsozomenoi autōn*)'. But exactly how that should be understood is obscure,[26] and we hear nothing of gentile God-fearers thereafter down to the New Testament. The Acts of the Apostles describe Paul as preaching in diaspora synagogues and addressing

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23   For all this, see F. Siegert, 'Gottesfürchtige und Sympathisanten', *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 4, 1973, 109–164, at 112 ff.

24   Cf. J.M. Lieu, 'The Race of God-Fearers', *Journal of Theological Studies* 46, 1995, 483–501, esp. 488–490, 499 f.

25   Josephus, *Antiquities*, XX 2, 39: Izates' mother tried to dissuade Izates from having himself circumcised, among other things because 'he would thereby bring about great disaffection among his subjects when they would find out that he was so devoted to rites that were to them strange and foreign, and that they would never bear to be ruled over by a Jew'.

26   Cf. Siegert, 'Gottesfürchtige und Sympathisanten', 162.

'Israelites and God-fearers' (Acts 13:16, 26; 16:14; 17:1–4; 18:7; cf. 10:1ff. on the famous God-fearer Cornelius). Paul himself never mentions a synagogue context for his mission, and the Acts are widely regarded as ahistorical; but Paul's reliance on arguments drawn from scripture in his writings to gentiles certainly supports the view that the latter had frequented synagogues and that this was where he found them: in the mid-first century AD the synagogue was the only place where gentiles could acquire the familiarity with scripture that Paul presupposes.[27] It is widely believed that God-fearers played a key role in the early spread of Christianity.[28]

It is not only the Acts that have much to say about God-fearers. Josephus (d. c. 100) does too, and they figure in other Greek sources as well.[29] Josephus claims that the Jews throughout the *oikoumenē* and the God-fearers (*sebomenōn ton theon*), even those in Asia and Europe, had long been sending money to the temple;[30] that there was not a single city, whether Greek or barbarian, where the custom of Sabbath rest, fasting, lighting lamps and many of the Jewish food prohibitions had not spread;[31] that the Jews of Antioch were constantly attracting a multitude of Greeks to their religious worship and in some measure (or somehow) making them part of themselves;[32] that with a few exceptions all the wives of the pagans in Damascus had been attracted to the religious worship of the Jews;[33] that Queen Helena of Adiabene and her son Izates were both converted by Jewish merchants;[34] and that Poppaea, the wife of Nero, was a God-fearer (*theosebēs*).[35]

Latin sources also mention God-fearers (*metuentes*). Juvenal, for example, speaks of how a father who is *metuentem sabbata* will be a respecter of the Sabbath and abstain from pork, while his son will worship nothing but heaven

27   P. Fredriksen, 'What "Parting of the Ways"? Jews, Gentiles, and the Ancient Mediterranean City', in A.H. Becker and A.Y. Reed (eds.), *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Tübingen 2003, 35–63, at 51ff.

28   Noted by G. Stanton, '"God-Fearers": Neglected Evidence in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*', in his *Studies in Matthew and Early Christianity*, ed. M. Bockmuehl and D. Linicum, Tübingen 2013, 351–375, at 351.

29   See L.H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, Princeton 1993, ch. 10.

30   Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIV 7, 2 (110). For the question whether the Jews and the God-fearers are identical or two different groups here, see Siegert, 'Gottesfürchtige und Sympathisanten', 127f.

31   Josephus, *Contra Apion*, II 40 (282).

32   Josephus, *Jewish War*, VII 3, 3 (45); cf. Siegert, 'Gottesfürchtige und Sympathisanten', 139.

33   Josephus, *Jewish War*, II 20, 2 (560); cf. Siegert, 'Gottesfürchtige und Sympathisanten', 139n.

34   Josephus, *Antiquities*, XX 1–4 (17–48).

35   Josephus, *Antiquities*, XX 11 (195).

and undergo circumcision (i.e. become a full proselyte).[36] Both Horace and Suetonius may also refer to God-fearers, without using any name for them,[37] and a funerary inscription from Pola in Istria describes the mother of the dedicators as fearing (i.e. respecting or observing) the Jewish religion.[38] But other references are uncertain, as *metuens* is also used to describe respect for a pagan god.

There does not seem to have been any procedure for becoming a God-fearer: apparently, one simply declared oneself to be one, or others did so, or no special word was used.[39] The Jews seem not to have anticipated the appearance of God-fearers. Maybe they had inadvertently attracted them by performing many of their religious activities out of doors, singing, dancing, engaging in communal eating, and building *sukkot* in the open, thereby arousing the curiosity of outsiders and drawing them to the synagogues, which were open to anyone interested.[40] Or maybe the appearance of God-fearers was the unforeseen outcome of Jewish attempts at proselytisation.[41] Both mechanisms may well have been at work. Either way, the Jews seem simply to have accommodated the God-fearers when they appeared, presumably because they were a valuable source of income and social and political connections for the community. The result was that the relationship seems largely to have been determined by the God-fearers themselves, and to have varied considerably from place to place. One Julia Severa is mentioned in an inscription as the builder of an edifice,

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36   Juvenal, Satire XIV 96–106.

37   Cf. J. Reynolds and R. Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers at Aphrodisias*, Cambridge 1987, with reference to Horace, Satire 1.9.68–72 (which is enigmatic), and Suetonius, *Lives*, 'Domitian', 12.2 (which is open to a different interpretation).

38   Siegert, 'Gottesfürchtige und Sympathisanten', 153.

39   Thus, for example, Luke 7:5; Philo, 'On the Life of Moses', II 7 (41); Josephus, *Antiquities*, III 9 (217), on the Greeks who 'revere our customs'; and the companions of Trypho, who seem to have been God-fearers (thus Stanton, 'God-Fearers', 354 ff.).

40   Fredriksen, 'What "Parting of the Ways"?', 51 ff., with G.F. Moore in note 50 on the openness of synagogues. There were many interested outsiders, from the top of the social scale to its bottom, where magicians used garbled Biblical stories and magic Hebrew recipe books.

41   Cf. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 358. It is often objected that there was no Jewish proselytisation at the time, but this rests on the assumption that proselytisation is always done by officially sponsored religious specialists. In Judaism, as in Islam (with the exception of Ismailism), however, missionaries in that sense did not normally exist. Rather, laymen would act as informal missionaries, in the sense that they would try to convert any non-believer they happened to come across after the fashion of the two merchants who converted Helena and Izates to Judaism according to Josephus, *Antiquities*, XX 20.3 (34 f.), 20.4 (71).

which she must have donated to the Jews of Akmoneia in Asia Minor, for they refurbished it for use as a synagogue and put up the inscription mentioning her.[42] If modern scholars are right, this Julia Severa also served as a priestess of the imperial cult in Nero's time, thus providing us (if the identification is correct) with one out of several examples of God-fearers who retained their ancestral customs even though they were attracted to Judaism too, or at least had an interest in cultivating its practitioners.[43] The inscription does not actually call Julia Severa a God-fearer, but she behaved as one, just as Poppaea did when she obtained a favour for the Jews from Nero, causing Josephus actually to call her pious (*theosebēs*).[44] In any case, there were many women, including many of high rank, among the God-fearers.[45] Their prominence in the material is striking, but entirely in keeping with the part they played in the rise of Christianity[46] and with the role of women in spreading Islam in Europe today. A woman also figures in a story in Deuteronomy Rabba, in which the husband is called a God-fearer and the wife's sympathies are likewise with the Jews;[47] and it is a (Roman) *matrona* who asks difficult Bible questions of a second-century rabbi, who is by no means unfriendly to her.[48]

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42   J.M. Lieu, *Neither Jew nor Greek?*, London 2002, 39; cf. E.W. Stegemann and W. Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: a Social History of Its First Century*, Minneapolis 1999, 257, where Julia Severa is wrongly said to have furnished the synagogue too.

43   The role of social and political networking is stressed by Lieu, *Neither Jew nor Greek*, 39 ff. Cf. further below, [327].

44   Josephus, *Antiquities*, xx 11 (195). She did the Jews a favour on a second occasion too (Josephus, *Vita*, 3 (16)), but this time Josephus does not call her *theosebēs*, perhaps because he was now too aware of her misdeeds. On the question of her Jewish leanings, see most recently T. Grüll and L. Benke, 'A Hebrew/Aramaic Graffito and Poppaea's Alleged Jewish Sympathy', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 62, 2011, 37–55.

45   Noted by Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 53; Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 257; Siegert, 'Gottesfürchtige und Sympathisanten', 128, 135 f.; and discussed by Lieu, *Neither Jew nor Greek*, 83 ff.

46   R. Stark, *One True God*, Princeton 2001, 71, by a sociologist who has done his historical homework, with further details on the overrepresentation of women in new religious movements in R. Stark and R. Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 2000. Some of Stark's later books on the consequences of monotheism in the West are too crude to work, but his *One True God* is an absorbing read of great interest to historians of new religious movements.

47   Deuteronomy Rabba 2:24, cited in Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 258; discussed in Siegert, 'Gottesfürchtige und Sympathisanten', 110 f.

48   R. Gershenzon and E. Slomovic, 'A Second Century Jewish-Gnostic Debate: Rabbi Jose Ben Halafta and the Matrona', *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, 16, 1985, 1–41.

There is a related development in the appearance of worshippers of *theos hypsistos*, God the highest. Such worshippers were not always, or even usually, God-fearers, for the highest God was often a pagan deity, usually, but not always, Zeus; even a female deity appears as *thea hypsiste* in two inscriptions.[49] In some cases, however, the highest God was the God of the Jews and his devotees were God-fearers, with or without that term being used.[50] The father of Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 328 or 9), for example, belonged to a sect called Hypsistarians in Cappadocia who worshipped the highest God, the ruler of the cosmos, rejected idols and sacrifices, and observed the Sabbath along with other Jewish customs, but were not circumcised.[51]

The literary evidence for gentile God-fearers (of which there is more than mentioned here) is so ample and consistent that one is surprised to find that there was a time when many regarded them as a literary fiction,[52] or at least denied that the term 'God-fearer' referred to gentiles attracted to Jewish ways. It meant no more than 'pious' or 'devout', it was argued, so that when, for example, the gentile Cornelius is described in the Acts of the Apostles 10:2, 22, as devout/righteous and God-fearing (*eusebēs/dikaios kai phoboumenos ton theon*), the reference is to his personal quality of devotion rather than to his status as a synagogue adherent.[53] This is probably true: Luke, the presumed author of the Acts, is not using the expression as a technical term for gentiles attracted to Jewish ways. But the reason he characterizes Cornelius as God-

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49   See Mitchell, 'The Cult of Theos Hypsistos'; id., 'Further Thoughts on the Cult of Theos Hypsistos', in id. and P. Van Nuffelen (eds.), *One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire*, Cambridge 2010, 167–208, which is probably his clearest statement; for the *thea hypsiste*, see p. 182; for the God-fearer inscriptions, see p. 91. For an earlier statement see S. Mitchell, 'Wer waren die Gottesfürchtigen?', *Chiron* 28, 1998, 55–64 (drawn to my attention by A. Chaniotis).

50   S. Mitchell, who assembled the *hypsistos* inscriptions, mostly from Anatolia, regards all varieties of *theos hypsistos* worship as part of a single phenomenon overlapping with that of God-fearers. It is easy to agree if one takes him to mean that there was a general trend towards centralization of the divine realm in late antiquity, mirroring that of the political world, but he means more than that.

51   Cf. Mitchell, 'The Cult of Theos Hypsistos', 94–96.

52   A.T. Kraabel, 'The Disappearance of the "God-Fearers"', *Numen* 28, 1981, 113–126, at 117: 'If we only had the synagogue inscriptions as evidence, there would be nothing to suggest that such a thing as a God-fearer had ever existed'. Kraabel is right that some of the literary evidence is exaggerated (Josephus) or shaped by the point the author wishes to make (Juvenal), but one needs a real phenomenon in order to exaggerate or reshape it.

53   M. Wilcox, 'The "God-Fearers" in Acts—a Reconsideration', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 13, 1981, 102–122, at 105.

fearing is precisely that he envisages him as revering the Jewish God, praying and giving alms, and being well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, who presumably knew him from the synagogue (Acts 10:2, 22). It was also objected that the terms *phoboumenoi* or *sebo*[*u*]*menoi* (*ton theon*) do not appear in the synagogue inscriptions (or indeed any inscription), which only speak of *theosebeis*. This was held to undermine the credibility of the literary tradition. When synagogue inscriptions describe *theosebeis* as making donations to synagogues, it was held that they were simply Jews.[54] In 1987, however, Reynolds and Tannenbaum published a long inscription from Aphrodisias in Asia Minor with an admirable survey of the whole God-fearer phenomenon.[55] This inscription has since been shown to consist of two separate parts, of which the longer has been tentatively placed between 311 and 381.[56] This part lists 52 God-fearers (*theosebeis*) and 55 Jews (originally more), clearly as donors, but both the cause to which they contributed and the names of some of the Jews are missing thanks to the loss of the top of the inscription. The second inscription is variously dated to the late fourth or fifth century (or even the sixth, which is hard to believe). It, too, is a donor inscription, and it also mentions God-fearers, though only two, along with sixteen Jews, including three proselytes. Some of the God-fearers were men of high status in gentile society: nine of the fifty-two mentioned in the long inscription were members of the local city council (*boulē*).[57] (The rest were craftsmen, traders and workmen.) Most have ordinary gentile names, and those who have Jewish names have fathers with gentile names. By contrast, those who were not God-fearers or proselytes mostly have Biblical names. Though the question whether the God-fearers in this or that passage are Jews or gentiles is often disputed, the Aphrodisias inscription leaves no doubt that gentiles attracted to Jewish ways were known as *theosebeis*, at least in some places. The expressions used in the Acts come across as experimental,[58] whereas *theosebēs*

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54   Thus Kraabel, 'Disappearance', 116. This is hard to square with Capitolina, who made a donation to a synagogue in Caria and called herself a God-fearer (*theosebēs*): she was surely a gentile (on her, see for example Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 257). But maybe she was still unknown in Kraabel's time.

55   Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*. The Greek text is reproduced with an English translation in S.R. Llewelyn (ed.), *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, IX, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, 73–80.

56   Thus A. Chaniotis, 'The Jews of Aphrodisias: New Evidence and Old Problems', *Scripta Classica Israelica* 21, 2002, 209–242, at 218, 228 f.

57   Face b, II, lines 34–38.

58   Cf. Wilcox's characterization of them as Lukanisms ('The "God-Fearers" in Acts', 103 f., 118 f.).

(first attested of gentiles in Josephus) seems gradually to have become a technical term for gentile God-fearers in inscriptions and literary texts alike.[59]

The God-fearer phenomenon survived the victory of Christianity, if only on the fringes of the empire.[60] In one of his sermons Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) discusses Jethro, the Midianite priest and father-in-law of Moses who realized that the Lord was greater than all gods (Exod. 18:11). Cyril comments that Jethro worshipped the highest God (*hypsistō theō*), but that he also recognized other gods, such as the earth, sky and astral bodies (the pattern attested for the pagans in the Qurʾān), and then adds that this has continued to the present day, for there were men in Phoenicia and Palestine who called themselves *theosebeis* and whose worship was not purely according to Jewish custom, nor yet wholly Greek (i.e. pagan); rather it was as if they were darting about and distributing themselves on both sides.[61] Earlier authors had said much the same: the God-fearers do not practise what they learn by studying, but behave in an undecided manner, Epictetus observes;[62] they are 'two-faced' and rush from synagogue to pagan shrine, Commodian, a convert to Christianity (f. c. 250), says;[63] and as we have seen, Julia Severa served as priestess to the emperor while at the same time donating a building to the Jews.[64] Maybe genuine indecision did play a role at times, but from a pagan point of view it was perfectly natural to add new cults to one's religious repertoire, and there were many reasons why one might wish to do so. Only Jews and Christians insisted that one had to renounce all of them in favour of just one.

A contemporary of Cyril, Sozomen (d. c. 450), also knew of pagan God-fearers, though he did not use that term. He locates them in Arabia, probably somewhere in the Gaza region, and probably on the basis of hearsay. Sozomen,

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59   Cf. Cyril of Alexandria and the Venosa inscription (below, notes 60, 61).

60   In addition to the examples from the eastern empire which follow, see the inscription from Pola mentioned above, [324] (note 38), which probably dates from the late empire, since that was when the Jews first came to northern Italy (Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 52); and even more strikingly, the inscription from Venosa in northern Italy in B. Lifshitz, 'Les Juifs à Venosa', *Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica* 90, 1962, 367–371, at 368, where a Latin funerary inscription from the sixth or seventh century describes the deceased youth as *teuseues* (*theosebēs*).

61   Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 63, with reference to Cyril, 'De Adoratione et Cultu in Spiritu et Veritate', 3.92.3 (in MPG LXVIII, 281).

62   Epictetus, *Dissertations*, 2.9.19 ff., as interpreted by Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 62.

63   See Commodian, *Instructions*, I, 24.11–14; I, 37.1, 8, 10 f.; cf. Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 62 f.

64   Cf. above, [325] (note 42).

whose Semitic name was Salamanes and who may have known Arabic,[65] tells us that the Saracens descend from Ishmael and that owing to their shared origin with the Hebrews,[66] they practise [in the present tense] circumcision like the Hebrews, abstain from pork, and observe many other customs of the people (*ethnōn*, i.e. the Jews). In so far as they deviate from them, it is because Moses legislated only for those that he led out of Egypt; the Ishmaelites were left to fall under the influence of their neighbours, who corrupted the unwritten laws given to them by Ishmael, with the result that his descendants came to worship the same false deities (*daimonia*) as their neighbours and eventually forgot what they once knew. Thereafter, however, some of them had dealings with the Jews (*Ioudaiois*) and learned about their true origin from them and so reverted to following Hebrew laws.[67] After this Sozomen goes on to discuss the conversion to Christianity of a chief called Sokomos.

The account does not make perfect sense. It is of the Arabs in general, apparently those of Sozomen's own time, that we are told that they practise circumcision like the Jews, abstain from pork, and observe many other customs of the people (*ethnōn*), i. e. the Jews; but it evidently was not the case that all Arabs followed Hebrew or Jewish customs, and besides, Sozomen also tells us that they had forgotten their ancient law and become idolaters. As for the Arabs who learned about their origin from the Jews and reverted to Hebrew law, we are not told anything concrete about the customs they adopted. Sozomen presumably means that they renounced their idolatry (*daimonia*) in favour of monotheism and adopted all the customs that the others had forgotten, meaning circumcision and pork avoidance. But circumcision was an ancient custom once widespread in the western part of the Near East which the Jews and the Arabs simply happened both to have preserved: to outsiders it looked as if the Arabs owed the institution to the Jews, but this was not actually the case. Pork avoidance would be a better example if it were real, but though it may well be that the pre-Islamic Arabs did not eat pork, it will not have been for religious reasons, but simply because pigs did not thrive in desert areas. In short, most of Sozomen's information seems to be no more than inferences of the type made by outsiders.[68] But he does have one piece of information that

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65   At least he knows that the Saracens are still singing songs about Queen Mavia's round defeat of the Romans (Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, VI.38.4; ed. and tr. (French) A.-J. Festugière and B. Grillet, Paris 2005, 459; tr. E. Walford, London 1855, 308).

66   Not 'Jews', as Walford has it.

67   I am indebted to Emmanuel Papoutsakis for speedy and most helpful answers to questions about the Greek text of this passage.

68   Another example is his claim that the Ishmaelites stopped calling themselves by that

cannot be explained in those terms: there were Arabs who had learned about their origin from the Jews and responded by adopting Hebrew customs.

Disappointing though the dearth of information is, this is what matters here: there were God-fearers in northern Arabia. Unlike their counterparts in the Greco-Roman world, they were drawn to Israelite religion on the basis of their kinship with the Jews,[69] and one cannot tell whether they frequented synagogues (though it was probably there that their kinship with the Jews had become known to them): what we can tell is that they adopted Israelite customs without going so far as to become proselytes. More precisely, if Sozomen is right, they adopted *Hebrew*, i.e. pre-Mosaic, customs, having picked them out as more relevant to descendants of Ishmael than their Jewish equivalents. But the chances are that Sozomen is simply being a good student of Eusebius. It was the latter who introduced the distinction between Hebrews (pre-Mosaic Israelites, of whom he approved) and Jews (the Israelites from Moses onwards, whom he disliked);[70] and the fact that Sozomen was aware of the difference does not imply that the same was true of the Arabs he was writing about.

It has recently been suggested that the monotheist inscriptions of South Arabia also reflect a God-fearer relationship,[71] and I shall argue that it existed in the Messenger's town as well. In fact, one wonders if the God-fearer relationship did not develop wherever Jews and Arabs lived together for extended periods without being disturbed by gentile Christians. We need not postulate any direct carry-over from the Greco-Roman world to Arabia. In so far as there was continuity, it lay in the presence of the same two ingredients, Jews and pagans, in the same place. The word *muttaqūn*, 'fearers' (of God and His law), is common in the Qurʾān, here as in antiquity in the sense of pious, but there is nothing to suggest that it is a translation of *theosebeis* or *phoboumenoi/sebo[u]menoi* (*ton*

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name because of its unflattering nature (Ishmael being the son of a slave girl) and called themselves Saracens instead. In fact, the Arabs never called themselves Saracens, and contrary to what the Greeks often said, the name has nothing to do with Sarah.

69   Compare the Africans and Amerindians who came to see themselves as Jews, sometimes going so far as to adopt some Jewish law, thanks to Christians casting them as black Jews and/or lost tribes (cf. T. Parfitt, *Black Jews in Africa and the Americas*, Cambridge, MA, 2013).

70   See his *Praeparatio evangelica* and, for example, J. Sirinelli, *Les vues historiques d'Eusèbe de Césarée durant la période prénicéenne*, Dakar 1961, 147–163.

71   I. Gajda, *Le royaume de Ḥimyar à l'époque monothéiste: l'histoire de l'Arabie du sud ancienne de la fin du IVe siècle de l'ère chrétienne jusqu'à l'avènement de l'Islam*, Paris 2009, 244f.; also in ead., 'Quel monothéisme en Arabie du sud ancienne?', in J. Beaucamp, F. Briguel-Chatonnet and C.J. Robin (eds.), *Juifs et Chrétiens en Arabie aux Ve et VIe siècles: regards croisés sur les sources*, Paris 2010, 107–117, at 116.

theon). Besides, the Christians had aggressively marketed themselves as the real God-fearers by way of competition with the Jews and probably also in the hope of persuading gentile God-fearers that it was with Christianity that they belonged.[72] So even if we should find a term unquestionably meaning God-fearer in pre-Islamic Arabia, it would not necessarily mean that it was being used in the sense of gentiles attracted to Jewish ways who stopped short of conversion. Nor is that of importance here. The key point is that the relationship existed in Arabia.

The Qurʾān

This then is the explanation proposed here for the fact that the Messenger's pagans were so well informed about the Biblical and para-Biblical literature: Like Sozomen's Arabs, they knew that they were related to the Jews, presumably because the Jews had told them;[73] and like the God-fearers addressed by Paul (and perhaps those of Sozomen too), they must have acquired their learning by attending synagogue services. This presupposes that there were synagogues in the Messenger's locality, wherever it was;[74] and so indeed there must have been if Israelites lived there, but we have no textual (let alone archaeological) proof. Synagogues are only mentioned once in the Qurʾān (22:40: *ṣalawāt*, a translation of Greek *proseuchai*), and the reference is general, without any indication of where they might be found.

What then can be said to clinch the God-fearer hypothesis? As mentioned already, there is good evidence that the pagans had acquired Jewish (including Jewish Christian) beliefs, above all belief in the God of the Biblical tradition, in prophets such as Abraham and Moses, and, in the case of some of them, the resurrection, day of judgement, and eternal afterlife in paradise or hell. But there does not seem to be any evidence that they had adopted Jewish (or Hebrew) customs. The Messenger does not castigate them for Sabbath observance, for

72 Cf. Lieu, 'The Race of the God-Fearers', 488. Lieu only mentions competition with the Jews.

73 Sebeos (attrib.) (wr. c. 660?), *Histoire d'Héraclius*, tr. F. Macler, Paris 1904, 95; tr. R.W. Thomson with historical commentary by J.H. Howard-Johnston and assistance from T. Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, Liverpool 1999, I, 95, explicitly says that when the Jews came to Arabia, they informed the Ishmaelites of their kinship with them, which the latter accepted, though their different cults were a problem until Muḥammad united them. But the Arabs to whom the Messenger preached must have learned their Biblical genealogy well before this.

74 Cf. above, note 22.

example, though he inveighs against it in his anti-Jewish polemics.[75] And it is he himself who prescribes food laws indebted to the Apostolic Decree, which settled the minimum requirements for gentile converts to Christianity,[76] just as it is he who attaches great importance to prayer and charity, as did many God-fearers in antiquity.[77] 'Observing the prayer and paying *zakāt*' (*aqāma 'l-ṣalāta wa-āta 'l-zakāta*) is a fixed expression in the Qurʾān, where it recurs time and again, and next to monotheism, it is what singles out a believer.[78] Are we to see residues of the Messenger's days as a God-fearer here? Maybe, but with so little evidence one guess is as good as another.

What we can show is that the Messenger regarded the recipients of the earlier book (presumably meaning that of Moses) as a source of authoritative knowledge second only to God Himself, and that he assumed the same to be true of his audience, including his opponents. For example, in one of those passages in which he is so dispirited by his lack of success that he is beginning to doubt the veracity of his own revelations, God assures him that 'If you are in doubt about what We have sent down to you, ask those who recited/read the book before you' (10:94). Defending his view that God's messengers did not consist of angels alone, the Messenger says that his predecessors were also human beings who had been granted revelation: 'Ask the people of *dhikr* if you do not know this' (16:43). 'Those to whom We have given the book know this [i.e. that there is only one God] as they know their sons. Those who have lost their own souls don't believe' (6:20; cf. the Medinese 2:146). Or again, 'Is it not a sign for them that the learned men of Israel know this to be true?' (26:197): this is where it is clear that he assumes his opponents to have the same respect for the religious knowledge of the scriptuaries, here identified as Israelites, as

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75   Thus the Medinese suras 2:65; 4:47, 154, all alluding to the story told in the Meccan 7:163, where the Sabbath-violating fishermen are not identified as Israelites, however.

76   See esp. 5:3; cf. also 2:173; 6:118–121, 145; compare Acts 15.

77   The best known example is Cornelius (Acts 10:2).

78   It is part of the definition of a believer in sura 8:2 f.: 'The believers are those whose hearts are filled with fear when they hear Him mentioned … and who observe the prayer, and spend out of that which God has provided them with' (8:2 f.). There is also a striking example in sura 9, where God and the Messenger are declared to be quit of the *mushrikūn* (verse 1), so that when the holy months are over, the believers should fight them, seize them, besiege them and lie in wait for them; but if the *mushrikūn* repent, observe the prayer and give *zakāt*, then they should be set free (verse 5) or, as we are told a couple of verses later, then they are 'your brothers in religion' (verse 11). Here repenting presumably means abandoning *shirk*, but even so, there does not seem to be much to separate the two sides, apart from political rivalry.

he has himself. There is no sense of rivalry between the religious communities here, merely of an extension of knowledge: the truth that God revealed to earlier communities He had now given to the Arabs too. Not everyone was ready to accept them in that role, however. In 46:10 f. the Messenger asks his unbelieving opponents whether they have considered what their situation would be 'if it (his revelation) was from God and you rejected it, whereas a witness from B. Isrāʾīl testified to something similar and believed, while you were too arrogant to do so?' Once again it is the Israelites who are invoked as authoritative. The response of the unbelievers is that if it had been any good, 'they' would not have got it first. 'They' would appear to be the Messenger and his followers, and what the opponents are claiming seems to be that if his revelation had been genuine, it would have gone to an Israelite rather than an Arab.[79] Again it is clear that they had the same respect for Israelite knowledge as the Messenger; they just did not believe that the Messenger's own knowledge was of divine origin.

Further, in the Meccan suras the Messenger repeatedly claims that the recipients of the earlier book believe in his message. Thus God says that He has sent down the book to the Messenger and that 'those who were given the book believe in it, as do some of these ones' (*wa-min hāʾulāʾi man yuʾminu bihi*) (29:47). This is a remarkable statement in that the recipients of the earlier book are described as believers in the Messenger's revelation without qualification, whereas only some of 'these ones', presumably the Messenger's own people, accept it.[80] It cannot be the case that all the recipients of the earlier book believed in his message.[81] He must be speaking of a particular group among them and turning them into all of them in order to impress his opponents. Some exegetes claim that the reference is to ʿAbdallāh b. Salām and his companions, that is to say Jewish converts to Islam.[82] But for one thing, it is not obvious that the passage is speaking about conversion at all: the recipients of the

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79   These unbelievers could come from an Israelite or Arab background alike, and they may not have believed in scriptural authority at all, cf. their dismissal of the Messenger's preaching as an *ifkun qadīmun*, an old lie. For such unbelievers, see Crone, 'Mushrikūn and the Resurrection', I, 454–457, 470–472.

80   Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 63, with reference to Cyril, 'De Adoratione et Cultu in Spiritu et Veritate', 3.92.3 (in *MPG* LXVIII, 281).

81   In fact, the preceding verse enjoins the believers to dispute nicely with the People of the Book, but sura 29 is regarded as composite, and verse 46 is likely to be Medinese.

82   Thus for example Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, ed. ʿĀ.M. Shahāta, Beirut (reprint in four volumes) 2002, iii, 385. But al-Ṭabarī only comments on *min hāʾulāʾi*, saying like others that they were the people of Mecca.

earlier book still constitute a group of their own. For another thing, ʿAbdallāh b. Salām and his companions are envisaged as converting in Medina, whereas 29:47 must be earlier, since it reflects a stage at which the Messenger did not have many Arab followers (this we have to accept, for exaggerating the degree to which the scriptuaries believed in him did not require him to present them as outnumbering his Arab followers). Finally, ʿAbdallāh b. Salām and his companions were too few to be contrasted with *some* of 'these ones'. A better bet would be that the passage refers to a group of sympathizers, whom it is tempting to identify as Israelite Christians of the type that regarded Jesus as a purely human prophet, if only because Israelite Christians of this type ought to have been present somewhere in the Messenger's town.[83] But however this may be, the Messenger here seems to be presenting himself as emerging from an Israelite milieu to preach to his own people. This supports the view that he had started as a God-fearer.

There are several other Meccan passages in which the recipients of the earlier book are characterized as believers without qualification. 'Those to whom We have previously sent the book believe in this; when it is recited to them, they say, We believe in this, it is the truth from our Lord, we were Muslims before this' (28:52 f.). The exegetes take the recipients of the earlier book to have been Muslims in the sense of having worked out on the basis of their scripture that a prophet called Muḥammad would come,[84] but surely what they are saying here is that 'this is what we have always believed', or 'now we realize that we have always been Muslims'. The passage highlights the close similarity between their beliefs and those set out in the Qurʾān, perhaps with reference to a particular doctrine: it would be an apt comment for Jewish Christians of the low Christological type to make in response to the Qurʾānic assertion of Jesus' status as a purely human prophet, which the Messenger was the first gentile ever to endorse as an article of faith. But again, we can only guess.

Or again, 'those to whom We have given the book rejoice in what has been revealed to you (sg.), but of the *aḥzāb* there are some who deny some of it' (13:36). The *aḥzāb* are elsewhere identified as people who reject the prophets sent to them and who are implicitly accused of polytheism too.[85] But here only some *aḥzāb* deny the Messenger's revelation, and then only some of it: one

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83   Cf. Crone, 'Jewish Christianity and the Qurʾān (Part Two)', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 75, 2016 [Ed.: included as article 10 in the present volume], section 8.

84   Cf. J.D. McAuliffe, *Qurʾānic Christians: an Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis*, Cambridge 1991, 244–246.

85   See 38:12 f., where the people of Noah, ʿĀd, Pharaoh, Dhū ʾl-Awtād, Thamūd, Lot, and the *aṣḥāb al-ayka* are enumerated as examples with the comment, 'those are the *aḥzāb*'.

would have liked some more details. 'Whether you believe in it or not, those who were given knowledge before it [i.e. before the Messenger's revelation] fall down on their faces in prostration and say, Glory be to God, truly the promise of our Lord has been fulfilled. They fall on their faces weeping, and it increases their humility' (17:107–109). In this passage we can be reasonably sure that although the believing scriptuaries may have been Israelites, they were not Jews, for the Jews are coldly treated in this sura: their sins, twice punished by God with terrible destruction, are recounted and they are told they may put things right the third time if they will stop sinning; one way in which they might do so was apparently by believing in the Qur'ān and the hereafter (17:4–10). The Messenger cannot have had them in mind. Again, however, he could be referring to Jewish Christians of the low Christological type.

The Messenger's tone changes drastically in the Medinese suras. Here the best he can find to say about the recipients of the earlier book (now called 'People of the Book') is that *some* of them are believers. If the People of the Book had believed, it would have been better for them, he tells us, adding that in fact some of them do believe, but that *most of them* are wrongdoers (*fāsiqūn*) (3:110). The People of the Book are not all the same, he observes, taking it for granted that most of them are bad: *some* form a righteous nation (*umma qā'ima*) and recite God's verses all night while prostrating. They believe in God and the last day (a standard expression in the Medinese suras for obeying the Messenger);[86] they also command right and prohibit wrong and hasten to do good works, and they will be rewarded, whereas those who reject the faith will go to hell (3:113–116). 'There are among the People of the Book those who believe in God and what He has sent down to you and to them, men humble to God, not selling His verses for a miserable gain' (3:199): no further identification of them is offered.[87] The Jews are guilty of many sins and will suffer grievous punishment; but even so there are among them, or perhaps among the People of the Book, some who are firmly grounded in knowledge and who are believers: they accept what was revealed to the Messenger and to those before him, and they observe the prayer, give charity and believe in God and the last day; they will be rewarded (4:162). Elsewhere it is among the Israelites that there are a few who are rightly guided: 'We made a covenant with the children of Israel and sent Messengers; some they denied, others they slew … *many of them* are blind and deaf' (5:70 f.). God took a covenant from the sons of Israel, but *except for a few* they violated it

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86   Cf. Crone, '*Mushrikūn* and the Resurrection', I, 472.

87   The exegetical suggestions include the Jews in general and ʿAbdallāh b. Salām in particular (cf. McAuliffe, *Qurʾānic Christians*, 160 ff.).

(2:83). If only the People of the Book had believed and feared God, their sins would have been blotted out and they would have been admitted to paradise. If only they had stuck by the Torah, Gospel and everything sent down to them by God, they would have been fine; actually, as we are suddenly told, there is an *umma mutaqaṣṣida*, a moderate community or one that gets things right, among them, but *many* of them are evildoers (5:65 f.). The believing scriptuaries in whom the Messenger sought support in the Meccan suras seem to have been reduced to a minority. Or more probably, they had always been a minority and what had changed was only that the Messenger no longer needed to magnify them in order to impress his own people.

In the Medinese sura 5 the Christians (*naṣārā*), too, are presented as believers in the Messenger's revelation: here we are told that whereas the Jews and the *mushrikūn* were the most hostile to the believers, the Christians were the most filled with love towards them, for they had presbyters/priests (*qissīsūn*) and monks (*ruhbān*) who were not arrogant and who would weep when they heard the Messenger's revelations, declaring them to be the truth and asking why they shouldn't believe, given that they were longing to be with their Lord (5:82–84). The passage is odd, for in general the Messenger is as hostile to the *naṣārā* as he is to the Jews: he goes so far as to curse both of them for elevating ʿUzayr and Jesus along with their own sages (*aḥbār*) and monks to divine status (9:30 f.), and he also accuses the *aḥbār* and monks of devouring people's wealth, in some cases by burying it, and thus barring people from the path of God (9:34).[88] Why then are they here being praised in glowing terms, and at considerable length? It is all the more surprising in that the Christians here seem to be of the gentile rather than the Jewish Christian variety, for *qissīs* is derived from Syriac or Aramaic *qaššīšā*, meaning priest in Syriac, presbyter in Aramaic; and since they are concatenated with monks, one takes them to be priests.

This inference may be overhasty, however. Though Jewish Christians did not have priests, they shared with their ancestors the feature of having elders, known as *zeqenim* in the Hebrew Bible, and sometimes translated as *presbyteroi* in the Septuagint.[89] The Jerusalem church was run by elders (*presbyteroi*) according to the Acts of the Apostles (11:30; 15:22 f.), and in that passage the *presbyteroi* are presumably rendering Aramaic *qaššīšē* rather than Hebrew *zekenim*.

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88   In post-Qurʾānic Arabic *aḥbār* could stand for both Jewish and Christian leaders, but it seems only to stand for Jewish ones in the Qurʾān.

89   E.g. Numbers 11:25; Jeremiah 19:1; Joel 1:2.

It is possible, then, that the *qissīsūn* could be understood as presbyters.[90] Alternatively, we could follow Ubayy b. Kaʿb whose codex had *ṣiddīqūn*, pious or truthful people, rather than *qissīsūn*.[91] But did Jewish Christians have monks? They do in the tradition, in an exegetical story of how those followers of Jesus who refused to deify Christ (sometimes called 'the Muslims') fled into the desert when they were persecuted and lived there as monks until the coming of Muḥammad.[92] But that aside, 57:27 tells us that God placed mildness (*raʾfatan*), mercy (*raḥmatan*), and *rahbāniyyatan* in the hearts of Jesus' followers, oddly continuing the statement by denouncing *rahbāniyya* as a Christian invention. Here as in 5:82, the Christians are a mild and humble lot endowed with something that came to be identified as monasticism/monks, described first as an admirable, God-given quality and next as a bad, human innovation. This suggests that *rahbāniyya* in 57:27 was originally meant in its literal sense of 'fear' (of God) and that a later person, perhaps the Messenger himself, took it to mean monasticism and so revised the oral or literary source in question to fit his own understanding;[93] but whether he understood the *ruhbān* of 5:82 as 'fearers' or as monks one cannot tell. De Blois, who argues that all the Qurʾānic *naṣārā* were Jewish Christians (Nazoreans), does not seem to notice the problem.[94]

Whatever the solution to may turn out to be, the facts remain that the Qurʾānic pagans were semi-believers who did not apparently have any trouble understanding the Qurʾānic references to the Biblical tradition; that the Messenger himself regarded the earlier recipients of the scripture as authoritative to the point of regarding them as able to sit in judgement on the validity of his own revelations; that he assumed his audience to share this view; and

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90   My thanks to Kevin van Bladel, Jack Tannous and others for illumination regarding the diverse meanings of *qaššīšē*.

91   See A. Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qurʾān*, Leiden 1937, 129, *ad* 5:82.

92   See for example al-Ṭabarī, *ad* 57:27.

93   That there are sometimes several chronological layers in one and the same Qurʾānic passage seems to have become widely accepted. But some hold all the layers to date from Muḥammad's time, meaning that he revised earlier statements of his own; others believe the redactors to have added a layer after his death, and still others hold that there are layers which predate him. My own sympathies are with the third position (despite youthful statements going in the opposite direction), but the three possibilities are not mutually exclusive, of course.

94   F. de Blois, 'Naṣrānī (*nazōraios*) and ḥanīf (*ethnikos*): Studies on the Religious Vocabulary of Christianity and Islam', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 65, 2002, 1–30, at 12–15.

that he was eager to have them, or a particular group (or groups) of them, on his side, even depicting himself as emerging from an Israelite milieu. On this basis it seems it seems reasonable to conclude that both he and the pagans who opposed him had grown up as God-fearers.

It is notable that the recipients of the earlier book/People of the Book who declare themselves to be believers or Muslims have not abandoned their Jewish or Christian identity. The tradition does know of individuals, both Jewish and Christian, who converted in Medina,[95] but the Qurʾānic scriptuaries who declare themselves to be believers, or to have been Muslims even before they heard the Messenger's revelations (28:52f.), are still addressed or referred to as People of the Book or the like. Even the fervently believing Christians of sura 5 are still known as Christians; they still have their own religious authorities, too; and when the Messenger describes them as closer to the believers than are the Jews, he acknowledges that they form a separate group. The reason that the communities stayed separate even when their beliefs were shared is presumably that they were based on different ethnicities. Jews and Jewish Christians could form communities *alongside* the Messenger's, but they were not Arabs and so could not merge with his community, nor for that matter could gentile Christians unless they were Arabs. There was no notion that one could *become* an Arab, which is why the Arabs resorted to clientage after the conquests to cope with the influx of non-Arab freedmen and converts; and the idea that the Muslim community was based entirely on faith rather than a combination of ethnicity and faith was still in the future. The believing *naṣārā* are problematic there again, for if they were gentile Christians living in Arabia, they were presumably Arabs and so could have merged with the Believers.[96] But the believing Israelites (Jewish or Christian) ended up in a sort of inverse God-fearer relationship: they accepted the message of the gentile prophet without abandoning their own ethnic and religious community.

By Muḥammad's time there had been God-fearers for at least six hundred years, but no God-fearer that we know of had taken it upon himself to preach to other gentiles, let alone to the Israelites themselves. That is what Muḥammad

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95   For the Jewish converts (Ibn Salām and his companions), see Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, ii, 555, *ad* 17:107–109; iii, 85 (*ad* 29:47, cited above, note 82). For the Christians, see id., *Tafsīr*, iii, 348f., where he takes 28:52f. to refer to eight Syrian converts from Christianity, all whom he names; and id., *Tafsīr*, iv, 246, where he takes 57:27 to refer to twelve Ethiopians and eight Christians from Syria. For other exegetes, see McAuliffe, *Qurʾānic Christians*, ch. 7.

96   It is notable that while the Jews form an *umma* along with the believers in the Constitution of Medina, there is no mention of Christians.

started doing. Eventually, he won enough political control to overrule everybody else in Arabia, and there were many more Arabs there than there were Israelites. So as in the case of the rise of Christianity, the upshot was that the gentiles took over and ousted the Israelites.

CHAPTER 12

Problems in Sura 53[*]

For Gez, whose book of 1999 changed my academic direction

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Sura 53, *al-Najm*, "the Star", is a famous short sura in which the speaker describes a vision of God and/or His angel. It consists of 62 verses in rhymed prose, with the same rhyme used in all but the last six verses, and it falls into four parts.

The Disputed *Ṣāḥib*

Part I opens with an oracular verdict on the credibility of "your man" (*ṣāḥibukum*), narrated in the style of a pre-Islamic diviner (*kāhin*) delivering a verdict in a dispute brought to him, if we may trust the tradition on Jāhilī Arabia.[1] But

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[*] An early version of this paper was presented at a conference in Notre Dame convened by G.S. Reynolds in April 2013. My thanks to Professor Reynolds for permission to publish the final version in the Festschrift for Professor Hawting; it will also appear in G.S. Reynolds and others (eds), *The Qurʾan Seminar Commentary: A Collaborative Study of 50 Qurʾanic Passages* (Berlin and Boston, 2016). I must also thank Michael Cook for helpful comments on an earlier version.

[1] For *kāhin*s (of whom there were several different kinds) acting in dispute settlements, see Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, ed. Kh.A. Fāriq (Hyderabad, 1964). The procedures are particularly well described in the cases at 114–116 (disputed presence at a *majlis*) and 118–120 (accusation of adultery; also in other works). Ibn Ḥabīb strangely calls both cases a *munāfara*, a boasting competition, perhaps because honour was the issue in both of them, but real boasting competitions were about the relative merit and nobility of two men and were normally settled by *ḥakam*s, usually translated as "umpires" or "arbitrators" (correctly, if meaning judges whose verdict could not be enforced). There were several kinds of those too. The key difference between *ḥakam*s and *kāhin*s was that *ḥakam*s were knowledgeable about tribal law, whereas *kāhin*s had knowledge of the supernatural. *Ḥakam*s were chosen on the basis of their "nobility, truthfulness, reliability, leadership, age, dignity and experience", as al-Yaʿqūbī says (see *Taʾrīkh*, ed. M.Th. Houtsma (Leiden, 1883), II, 299), and many were chiefs. By contrast, diviners had opted out of their tribes and lived in isolation, or they were women, sometimes slave women,

whereas a *kāhin* delivers a verdict on another person, the speaker | in sura 53 is delivering a verdict on himself: namely, that he is speaking the truth when he claims to have seen a heavenly being and is neither mistaken nor trying to mislead—he has indeed received a revelation from a mighty power. He proceeds to describe how this revelation was imparted and asks if they are going to dispute what he saw, adding that he saw the mighty power on another occasion too, describing that as well (53:1–18).

There are several problems in this section. Leaving aside the oddity of the *fa-* in verse 6, where it introduces an earlier event rather than a subsequent one, who is the heavenly being imparting revelation to the disputed person? One takes the answer to be God, since the recipient is identified as "His servant" (53:10), but this identification has always been controversial, and a parallel passage in sura 81 identifies the power as the angel by the throne. Here, the oracular verdict on the disputed person's claim is that "this is the statement of a noble messenger (*rasūl karīm*), a powerful one by the firm throne whom your *ṣāḥib* did see in the clear horizon" (81:19–23), presumably giving us an oracular verdict on the disputed person again. Maybe there is no contradiction, for in the Hebrew Bible and elsewhere angels are sometimes manifestations of God, not least the angel of the throne. This is, however, at odds with the rest of the Quran, for the Messenger devotes immense energy to distinguishing angels from God, stressing that they are beings created by Him, not His "partners", as the pagans reputedly claimed. In other words they did not share in His divinity and could not do anything on their own initiative. It is also noteworthy that the word used for the angel in 81:19 is *rasūl*. This term does indeed appear elsewhere in the Quran in the sense of angel (for example, 11:69 f. and 51:26 f., on how the *rusul* did not touch the calf that Abraham prepared for them; cf. also the angels of death as sometimes *rusul* and sometimes *malāʾika* in 4:97; 6:61; 7:37 and 16:28). But normally the Messenger prefers the term *malak*. In his understanding, a *rasūl* was a human messenger (*apostolos*), such as he claimed to be himself. He sometimes clarifies this by glossing *rasūl* as *nabī*, prophet (for example, 19:51), or by using *nabī* alone (for example, 7:157). He even asserts that all the *rusul*

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who stood outside the tribal system of authority. It was for their supernatural knowledge that they were chosen, and they were always tested for their access to the unseen before being asked to deliver a verdict. Ibn Khaldūn saw this very well. T. Fahd, *La divination arabe* (Leiden, 1966), 118, citing his *Muqaddima*, ed. M. Quatremère (Paris, 1858), I, 196; tr. F. Rosenthal, second ed. (Princeton, 1967), I, 218 ff., on *ʿarrāf*s and *kuhhān*. Diviners always delivered their verdict in rhymed prose (*sajʿ*). Al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān waʾl-tabyīn*, ed. ʿA.-S.M. Hārūn, second printing (Cairo, 1960–1961), I, 284, 289 f., claims that *ḥukkām* (enumerated by name) did so as well, thereby creating a confusion that has endured to this day.

sent before him were human (12:109; 13:38; cf. also 2:98, where the *malāʾika* and *rusul* appear together as angels and human messengers respectively). It is his opponents who think that a *rasūl* is an angel (*angelos*) and | who mockingly ask what sort of *rasūl* it is that eats food and walks about in the markets (25:7).[2] The *rasūl karīm* also appears in the account of the exodus from Egypt in 44:17, where one takes him to be the angel of the throne (as in sura 81) identified with the angel of the Lord who accompanied the Israelites on their exodus from Egypt in the Bible (Exod. 14:19: Hebrew *malʾāk YHWH*, Greek *angelos tou theou*); but he now seems to be recognized as Moses. Here the Messenger is reshaping material that he seems to owe to Jews or Christians with a Greek-speaking past.[3]

Another oddity is that the divine being descends to the human recipient of the revelation: he drew near and came down, *danā fa-tadallā* (v. 8), as we are told (the image is of a bucket being lowered down a well), and then he made known his revelation. The second occasion on which the disputed person saw the divine being is explicitly called a *nazlatan ukhrā*, another descent, suggesting that the divine being is indeed envisaged as an angel here. One would otherwise have expected the human recipient of divine knowledge to ascend to the divine realm. In fact, J. Fossum takes it for granted that 53:13–18 (the second vision) records an ascent to heaven,[4] and one has to agree that we do seem to be in the heavenly realm here, but contrary to what Fossum says, the Messenger never claims to have ascended to heaven in the Quran— only in the tradition in the light of which Fossum unwittingly reads suras 53:12–18 and 17:1. It is the Messenger's opponents who undertake, or just read about, heavenly journeys. As the Messenger says, they would not believe in him unless he ascended to heaven and brought down a book (17:95). He sarcastically asks them whether they have a ladder for climbing into heaven (52:36–38) and challenges them to ascend in the heavenly cords (38:10),[5] declaring that they would not believe even if God opened a gate of heaven for them so that they could go on ascending (15:14f.). He never speaks of going on such

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2   See further, P. Crone, "Angels versus Humans as Messengers of God", in P. Townsend and M. Vidas (eds), *Revelation, Literature, and Community in Late Antiquity* (Tübingen, 2011), 315–336 [Ed.: included as article 4 in the present volume], 316–318.

3   Cf. Crone, "Angels versus Humans", esp. 320–323.

4   J.E. Fossum, "The apostle concept in the Qurʾān and pre-Islamic Near Eastern literature", in M. Mir and J.E. Fossum (eds), *Literary Heritage of Classical Islam: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of James A. Bellamy* (Princeton, 1993), 149–167, 157. Similarly Th. Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qorāns*, ed. F. Schwally (Leipzig, 1909–1938), I, 100.

5   On these, see K. van Bladel, "Heavenly cords and prophetic authority in the Quran and its late antique context", *BSOAS* 70/2, 2007, 223–246.

a journey himself. On the contrary, he repeatedly stresses that the book has been *sent down* to him.[6] If a heavenly journey is indeed described in sura 53, the Messenger is here sharing the conception of his opponents.

There can in any case be no question that the process of revelation is being described differently in this sura from elsewhere in the Quran. If God came down to the disputed person and conveyed revelation to him at a distance of two bow lengths, the disputed person must have seen His face, which is more than was possible for Moses, or indeed for any human being. If the Messenger had been an exception, it would have been so momentous that we would have heard about it, both here and in other parts of the Quran. But it | surely was not God Himself who came down. In 42:51 we are informed that "it is not fitting for a human being that God should speak to him except by inspiration (*waḥy*), or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger (*rasūl*) to reveal with God's permission what He wills". Was it then by inspiration that the disputed person of sura 53, part I received his revelation? The fact that it was taught to him by one of the mighty powers (*ʿallamahu shadīdu ʾl-quwā*, v. 5) does not suggest so. Was it then delivered by a messenger, i.e. an angel? This possibility fits very well: the heavenly being would in that case be the high-ranking angel described in sura 81, the *rasūl karīm*. There would be no discrepancy between the two suras, and since the angel represented God, there was nothing odd about the disputed *ṣāḥib* being called His servant—"His" here means God's.

Yet another problem is where the first section ends. The traditional answer is in verse 18, but it is difficult to see why, for verses 18–22 are written in the same oracular style as the beginning, whereas polemics in a more prosaic style with long sentences begin in verse 23 and continue till the end of part II in verse 32. What is more, practically all of this polemical section is generally regarded as a later addition,[7] so that if part I ends at verse 18, we are left with 5 verses constituting an unmotivated section of their own. It seems considerably more likely that these seemingly unmotivated verses belong in part I and should be read in that light.

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6 Cf. Crone, "Angels versus humans", 334 f.

7 The exceptions are verses 24 and 25, cf. Nöldeke, *Geschichte*, I, 103 (one of the many examples where current academic orthodoxy turns out to rest on one line in this book). But verse 24 only makes sense against the background of verse 23 (i.e. the supposedly later addition): for verse 23 assures us that the devotees of the female angels are following nothing but conjecture and "what [their] souls fancy" (*mā tahwā ʾl-anfus*). Verse 24 continues this line of thought by rhetorically asking, "Shall man have whatever he desires?" (*am lil-insāni mā tamannā*). Verse 25, on the other hand, is just a nondescript claim that this world and the next belong to God.

The verses in question ask a famous question, or rather two: "Have you [opponents] seen al-Lāt and al-ʿUzzā and Manāt, the third, the other? Have you got males and He females? That would be an unjust division." The precise significance of this hinges on the meaning of "have you seen" (*a-fa-raʾaytum*). It is normally held to have the sense of "have you thought about/reflected on", and this is certainly what it often means in the Quran, as also in the forms *a-raʾaytum*, *a-lam tarā* and *a-lam tarā ilā*. But a more idiomatic translation would usually be "haven't you seen" or "can't you see" in the sense of "haven't you understood" (for example, 36:71; 56:58, 63; 58:7), while the dividing line between seeing in the literal sense and that of understanding is often thin (for example, 22:65; 31:31; 36:71; 105:1).[8] Here we should probably take the | question to be about literal seeing, for there is no doubt that visual evidence was an issue in connection with the pagan angels. "Have you seen your partners (*a-fa-raʾaytum shurakāʾakum*) whom you call upon apart from God?", the Messenger asks in another sura, using the same expression as in 53:19 and clearly meaning seeing in a literal sense. "Show me (*arūnī*) what they have created", he continues, "or do they have a partnership (*shirk*) in the heavens, or have We given them a book providing them with clear evidence?" (35:40; similarly 46:4). The answer to all four questions is clearly negative: the unbelievers have not seen their alleged deities; they cannot point to any creative activity by the deities in question; they have no partnership in heaven endowing them with privileged knowledge and God has not given them a book vouchsafing the existence of their alleged deities. In short, the unbelievers have no evidence at all. By contrast, we are

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8 Sura 105:1 has, "Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant?" (*a-lam tarā kayfa faʿala rabbuka bi-aṣḥābi ʾl-fīl*). Compare Zuhayr in Th. Nöldeke (ed.), *Delectus Veterum Carminum Arabicorum* (Wiesbaden, 1933; repr. 1961), 106, 1: "Have you not seen Ibn Sinān how he favoured him (*a-lam tarā ʾbna Sinānin kayfa faḍḍalahu*), he does not buy people's praise of him for a price." Obviously Zuhayr is speaking of what one should learn from Ibn Sinān's example, but he presupposes that his audience has seen Ibn Sinān's behaviour. As regards 105:1, an African elephant was brought by a man from Aila to Anastasius I in 496, almost certainly as a gift from the ruler of Aksum. An extremely rare sight, it was depicted in a papyrus (S.M. Burstein, "An elephant for Anastasius: a note on P. Mich. Inv. 4290", in Burstein, *Graeco-Africana* (New Rochelle, NY, 1994), 215–217). Compare the enormous impression made by an elephant sent by an embassy from western Sudan to Marrakesh in 1593, or that made by the Indian elephant Hanno sent to Pope Leo X around 1510 (M. Garcia-Arenal, *Ahmad al-Mansur: the Beginnings of Modern Morocco* (Oxford, 2009), 2). It is presumably the elephant seen at Aila that sura 105 is referring to, though it fuses it with some other story, identified in the tradition as Abraham's campaign against Mecca (cf. A.L. de Prémare, "'Il voulut détruire le temple': L' attaque de la Kaʿba par les rois yéménites avant l' Islam. *Aḫbār* et Histoire", *Journal Asiatique* 28/2, 2000, 261–367).

told no less than five times that the disputed person *saw* the heavenly being, a point repeated in sura 81 (v. 23): "the heart [of the viewer] did not lie about what it saw" (v. 11). The reference is clearly to seeing in the literal sense, and the five passages are closely bunched together: "will you then dispute about what he saw?" (v. 12); "he also saw him at another descent" (v. 13); "his sight never swerved" (v. 17); "he saw the greatest of the signs of the Lord" (v. 18). When the continuation asks, "have you seen al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzā and Manāt?", it is accordingly somewhat artificial not to understand the question literally here as well. What the oracular verdict is saying is that *he*, the disputed person, has seen a divine being whereas *they*, his opponents, have never seen their false deities, because these deities do not actually exist.[9] They are empty concepts devised by the pagans without any authority (53:23; similarly 7:71; 12:40); or they are misconstructions of genuine angels by the unbelievers, who wrongly give them female names (53:27). Either way, the pagans are venerating figments of their own imagination.

This brings us to the question of the identity of the speaker in part 1. One assumes the answer is God, meaning the Messenger in practice, but this means that the disputed *ṣāḥib* is sitting in judgement of a dispute about himself, which is somewhat strange. One would have expected the oracular section to be spoken by an external authority delivering a verdict on the disputed person, whose visions he declares to be genuine and whose sanity he endorses: this | evidently is not a role that the disputed person himself could fulfil. And yet, it seems that he does.   20

Who then is the speaker? Who had the authority to sit in judgement of the Messenger's claim to contact with the divine? In the rest of the Quran, the Messenger regards himself as the direct representative of God and thus the ultimate authority on earth. But he does describe the recipients of the earlier book (presumably meaning that of Moses) as a source of authoritative knowledge second only to God Himself, and in a passage in which he himself doubts the veracity of his revelations, God assures him: "If you are in doubt about what We have sent down to you, ask those who recited/read the book before you" (10:94). Is he following God's instructions in sura 53? The speaker would in that case be a Jewish or Christian *kāhin*, meaning a person renowned for his knowledge of the unknown who used the techniques of his pagan counterparts. In 10:94 it is the divine origin of what has been sent down to

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9   Similarly Nöldeke, *Geschichte*, 1, 100, cited in J. Hämeen-Anttila, "Qur. 53:19, the prophetic experience and the 'satanic verses'—a reconsideration", *Acta Orientalia* 58, 1997, 24–34, 26; cf. also p. 30 (drawn to my attention by J. Witztum). Hämeen-Anttila plays it safe by interpreting the seeing as both literal and metaphorical.

the Messenger that the recipients of the earlier book can confirm: God is not sending down anything to the disputed *ṣāḥib* in sura 53, however. What the *kāhin* is confirming is that the disputed person saw God, if perhaps only in the form of an angel, and received oral revelation or inspiration (*waḥy*) from Him. We are not told anything about the contents of the revelation, nor is there any reference to a book. All this is so different from the manner in which the Messenger normally speaks that one wonders whether the disputed *ṣāḥib* is really the Messenger after all. Did the latter have a predecessor, who envisaged revelation as taking place by direct contact with a divine being rather than by a book being sent down (whether as a whole or in instalments), who claimed to have enjoyed such contact himself and who objected to the pagan angels— not because they violated the dividing line between God and created beings but rather because they were female? We do not hear of such a predecessor elsewhere in the Quran, but we do learn that the Messenger had competitors in his own time, at least in Yathrib (2:79, where they share his concept of revelation as a book), so there is nothing implausible about the proposition that there were preachers before him too, including some whose preaching anticipated features of his own. If we accepted the existence of such a predecessor, we could postulate that part I had come to form part of the literary corpus of the Messenger's community before the latter appeared on the scene, for example by incorporation in a book of oracular decisions. The Messenger would in that case have liked the piece for its relevance to his own situation and recited it as he found it without taking everything it said as reflecting his own experience, or, more probably, without noticing that it was not consistent with his own claims. It is striking that his comments in part II of sura 53 say nothing further about the visions and revelations of the disputed person, only about the female angels. He is equally silent about the visions and revelations elsewhere in the Quran, whereas polemics against the pagan angels abound, suggesting that he had no personal experience of the visions and revelations in question.

The Satanic Verses

The tradition claims that after reciting "have you seen al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?", Muḥammad was prompted by Satan to insert the | verse, "these are the high-flying cranes whose intercession is sought", as a concession to Quraysh, who reacted by being very pleased until Muḥammad withdrew it. This story has usually been accepted as true by Western historians on the grounds that it is so unflattering to Muḥammad that no Muslim could have invented it. According to F.E. Peters, for example, the story is "indu-

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bitably authentic" because "it is impossible to imagine a Muslim inventing such an inauspicious tale".[10] But this rather presupposes that the quality of inauspiciousness, whatever exactly that may be, is an unchanging universal. Certainly, the story became problematic when the doctrine of prophetic infallibility was accepted; and today it is regarded as quite unacceptable.[11] But why should this have been how it was seen back in the early days? The story is no more unflattering to Muḥammad than is that about Gethsemane to Jesus. Jesus prays that the cup be taken from him, in fear of death; Muḥammad compromises with his kinsmen, in fear of ostracism. Both display a human weakness that makes it easier for us to identify with them. The only problem with the story of the Satanic verse is that it does not fit its supposed Quranic context.[12] The question whether the opponents have seen the three deities is clearly posed in a hostile vein, and the continuation is sharply polemical. There simply is no room for a concession here. Presumably the exegetes (or the storytellers who preceded them) were inspired by 7:200 or 22:52, on Satanic suggestions assailing the Messenger's mind, and picked on sura 53 to show exactly where the Messenger's mind had been temporarily subverted.

Polemics against the False Angels/Deities

Unlike the oracular part I, the prosaic part II voices views familiar from the rest of the Quran, mostly in the form of polemics against the angels or deities of the opponents. We are assured that the alleged deities are just names that the fathers of the opponents have made up without authority from God and that the culprits are just following conjecture (*ẓann*, fallible human reasoning as opposed to revelation) and their own fancies (vv. 23–25, an unflattering synonym for the same); no angel (*malak*) can intercede without God's permission (v. 26); those who give the angels (*al-malāʾika*) female names are "those who don't believe in the afterlife" (*lā yuʾminūna biʾl-ākhira*, v. 27); they follow mere conjecture (*al-ẓann*), as we are told again (v. 28). God knows better and to Him belongs everything in heaven and on earth. He will punish those who do evil and reward those who do good, and He is forgiving of those who only

10   F.E. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam* (Albany, NY, 1994), 161.

11   Cf. S. Ahmed, "Satanic verses" in J.D. McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, IV (Leiden, 2004), 531–535; S. Ahmed, *The Formation of Islamic Orthodoxy in Early Islam: The Problem of the Satanic Verses in the First Two Centuries*, forthcoming.

12   See also N. Sinai, "An interpretation of *Sūrat al-Najm* (Q53)", *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 13, 2011, 10f.

commit minor sins. As noted already, the prosaic polemics of part II are generally regarded as a later addition, except for verses 24–25, and this makes good sense if we take part I to predate the Messenger and assume part II (including verses 24–25) to have been composed by the Messenger himself.[13] For example, he could have started his | preaching on a particular day by reciting the oracular part I during the communal morning service (cf. 17:78) and then commented on it in the prosaic style that comes naturally in a sermon during the afternoon service. He will in any case have thought of all of it as revelation from God (which is why it was all preserved together), for he sees the book he has received not just as confirmation (*taṣdīq*) of earlier revelations but also as *tafṣīl*, a spelling out or explanation, and held both the verses and the explanation to come from God. God established the verses first and then explained their meaning, as emerges from 11:1 (*kitābun uḥkimat āyātuhu thumma fuṣṣilat min ladun ḥakīmin khabīrin*, cf. also *faṣṣalnā al-āyāt*, 6:126; and 7:52). It is similarly God who has spelled out (*faṣṣala*) the types of food He has forbidden (6:119). As Sinai observes, only God can act as the exegete of the heavenly book.[14] The Quran is *tafṣīl al-kitāb*, an explanation of the (heavenly) book (10:37); it was sent down *mufaṣṣalan*, endowed with an explanation (6:114); the verses of the heavenly book were "unpacked" in the form of an Arabic recitation (*fuṣṣilat qurʾānan ʿarabiyyan*) (41:3).[15] The Quran is both a translation and an explanation of the heavenly book, as Sinai remarks, but whereas some of the formulations suggest that the two were indistinguishable, sura 11:1 (cited above) envisages them as consecutive. This is the scenario proposed here in connection with sura 53:23 ff.: first the Messenger recites the "translation", then he proceeds to the explanation. The abrupt transition from the oracular to the prosaic style probably struck both him and his audience as perfectly natural.

Polemics against the Miser

After the polemics against the female angels, the sentences go short again and we are back in the oracular style of the beginning, including the peculiar use of *fa-* to introduce an antecedent (v. 35). Once again the question is asked, "have you seen?", this time addressed to "you" in the singular: "Have you seen the one

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13   Cf. above, note 7.

14   N. Sinai, "Qurʾānic self-referentiality as a strategy of self-authorization", in S. Wild (ed.), *Self-Referentiality in the Qurʾān* (Wiesbaden, 2006), 103–134, 127. (I owe my knowledge of this study to J. Witztum.)

15   The formulation here is Sinai's ("Self-referentiality", 121).

who turns back, gives a little, then hardens [his heart]: does *he* have knowledge of the unseen, having seen it?" This is plainly a continuation of the question of whether the opponents have seen the three goddesses. Here the first "have you seen" should probably be understood in the normal Quranic sense of "have you considered" or "haven't you seen how", but what the next line denies is that the miser has actually seen the unseen. (The variation is undoubtedly deliberate.) The passage continues by asking, "has he not been told what is in the scrolls of Moses and of Abraham, who fulfilled [his obligations], [namely] that no [soul] bearing a burden can bear the burden of another [soul], that man shall have only as he has striven, that his striving will be seen, and that then he will be amply requited for it?" (vv. 36–41). In other words, has the miser not learnt from the writings of those two prophets that people will be punished or rewarded for what they have done? The implicit contrast is with people who think they can rely on the merits of their forefathers (presumably the | Israelites, cf. for example 2:47 f., 80). It is followed by some Quranic commonplaces on how God is the bringer of death and life (53:44, where the Messenger uses the Deuteronomic word order also current among his opponents),[16] as well as the creator of male and female, the bringer of a second creation and the destroyer of the people of Noah, ʿĀd, and Thamūd, all of which one can read in many other suras, and it culminates in yet another question: "So what benefits of your lord will you dispute? This is a warner from among the warners of old" (vv. 55 f.).[17]

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   This passage is a mirror image of the first. Both contrast the fanciful ideas of opponents with the certainty possessed by prophets: have you polytheists seen your alleged deities, has the miserly person seen the *ghayb*? (vv. 19, 34). Why then do you dispute your *ṣāḥib*'s claims, why do you dispute the benefits of your lord, who has sent you a warner? (vv. 12, 55 f.). The two units are built around the same themes of seeing and wrongly disputing, and the passage about the uncharitable person also echoes the first by reusing the same words: *nazlatan ukhrā* is echoed in *wizra ukhrā* and *al-nashʾata ʾl-ukhrā* (vv. 13, 38, 47), *sidrati ʾl-muntahā* is echoed in *ilā rabbika ʾl-muntahā* (vv. 14, 42), *ṭaghā* in *aṭghā* (vv. 17, 52), *yaghshā* in *ghashshā* (vv. 16, 54) and *unthā* in *al-dhakaru waʾl-unthā* (vv. 21, 45). The piece on the uncharitable person is not nearly so striking a composition as the first oracular section, however, and it voices views that

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16   Cf. P. Crone, "The Quranic *mushrikūn* and the Resurrection (Part I)", *BSOAS* 75/3, 2012, 445–472 [Ed.: included as article 5 in the present volume], 461 ff.

17   The precise meaning of this is open to debate since no benefits have been mentioned, only punishments, but we can leave that aside here.

accord with the rest of the book, so it is apparently the Messenger himself who is composing here. If he is citing an earlier work in part I, here he is simply imitating it, composing a continuation in the same style.

Warnings of the Imminent End

The last six verses retain the oracular style but introduce new rhymes in a manner suggesting a deliberate variation to wake people up. "The end is imminent, nobody but God can unveil it [different translations are possible]. So do you marvel at this talk? Will you laugh rather than weep, diverting yourselves? Rather, prostrate to God and worship!" (vv. 57–62). This sounds like the Messenger composing again.

No Compulsion in Religion: Q. 2:256 in Mediaeval and Modern Interpretation*

Sura 2:256 famously contains a statement which, read on its own, sounds to the modern ear like a declaration of a human right: *lā ikrāha fī ʾl-dīn*, "there is no compulsion in religion". Read as part of the unit formed by verses 255–257, it seems less a declaration of rights than a reference to a point taken for granted by both the speaker and his audience,[1] but that does not make it any less liberal. Since a polity based on religion cannot coexist with unlimited freedom of religion, the verse was a problem to the early exegetes, who reacted by interpreting it restrictively.[2] It is only in modern times that the verse has come to be understood as a declaration of universal religious tolerance. In the words of a Chief Justice of Pakistan, the verse contains "a charter of freedom of conscience unparalleled in the religious annals of mankind ... It is with regret mingled by perturbation that one notices attempts made by Muslim scholars themselves to whittle down its broad humanistic meaning".[3] Given that they did whittle it down, how was it possible to broaden it again? The answer offered here is that two Muʿtazilite interpretations of Q. 2:256 played a major role in facilitating the modernist reinterpretation of the verse in Sunnism and Shiʿism alike, without their Muʿtazilite roots being acknowledged, or even known. I discuss the history of these interpretations against the background of the exegetical literature on Q. 2:256 in general in the first part of this article,

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1 See below, p. [393].
2 Cf. M. Cook, *The Koran: a Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2000, pp. 100–102. For a longer treatment, see Y. Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam*, Cambridge 2003, chap. III.
3 S.A. Rahman, *Punishment of Apostasy in Islam*, Lahore 1978², p. 16.

ending with post-revolutionary Iran. The second part is in the nature of an appendix on three questions that suggest themselves in the course of the first half of the article: how do the Sunni Islamists handle the verse? How do the modernists and Islamists who interpret the verse as a declaration of religious freedom dispose of unwanted parts of the tradition? And just what did the verse actually mean when it was first recited? Should the reader wonder how a mediaevalist such as myself | dares to venture into the modern world, all I can say is that the sixty-fifth birthday of a friend and scholar such as Etan Kohlberg does call for something unusual.

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The Mainstream and Muʿtazilite Interpretations

The Salaf

When the curtain opens on the exegetical literature, it presents us with three positions regarding the meaning of *lā ikrāha fī ʾl-dīn* that remained canonical down to modern times (henceforth the three traditional interpretations). The first is that the verse had been abrogated by the Qurʾānic injunction to fight,[4] a view upheld, among others, by the foremost jurist of late Umayyad Syria.[5] The second is that the verse referred to a bygone historical situation in Medina to do with Anṣārī women whose children had been raised among the Jews in pre-Islamic times,[6] or alternatively with an Anṣārī whose sons had converted to

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4   Thus Sulaymān b. Mūsā (below, note 5); Zayd b. Aslam (d. 136/743 f.) in Ibn Wahb, *Jāmiʿ*, fol. 20ᵃ, pp. 12 ff.; the same and his son, Ibn Zayd (d. 182/798), in Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 5, nos. 5825, 5833, and other works; Ibn Zayd and Ibn Masʿūd (d. c. 33/653 f.) in Thaʿlabī, *Kashf*, vol. 2, p. 234; ʿIkrima (d. 107/725 or later) and al-Suddī (d. 127/745) in Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, no. 2615. It is also one of two opinions transmitted from al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim (d. 105/724) (cf. his reconstituted *Tafsīr*, no. 263, without use of the word *mansūkh*). The abrogating verse is usually Q. 9:5, the so-called sword verse ("Kill them wherever you find them"), or Q. 9:73 ("Fight the unbelievers and hypocrites"), but ʿIkrima strangely identifies it as Q. 2:285 ("They say, we hear and obey"). In Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, p. 595, the abrogator is the *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet says that he has come to fight people until they profess the unity of God.

5   That is Sulaymān b. Mūsā (d. 115/733 f. or later), a Damascene client of the Umayyads (cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, Hyderabad 1325, vol. 4, p. 226 f., s.v.). His view is recorded in Abū ʿUbayd, *al-Nāsikh waʾl-mansūkh*, p. 96; Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, no. 2616; al-Naḥḥās, *al-Nāsikh waʾl-mansūkh*, vol. 2, p. 99, and elsewhere.

6   Anṣārī women would have their children fostered by Jews, and/or Anṣārī women who had trouble producing viable offspring would vow to bring up their children as Jews if they lived. When the Banū Naḍīr were expelled, there were Anṣārī children among them, and their parents wanted them to stay as Muslims: thus Saʿīd b. Jubayr (d. 95/713 f.) (sometimes from

Christianity before the rise of Islam:[7] in both cases the parents wanted to force their children to become Muslims when Islam came to Medina, whereupon the "no compulsion" verse was revealed, telling them not to. This interpretation, which deprived the verse of current relevance, was sometimes combined with the view that the verse had been abrogated.[8] The third position was that the verse granted religious freedom to *jizya*-paying infidels by ruling that it was unlawful to convert them by force.[9] In fact, all jurists, whatever their views on this verse, accepted that *jizya*-paying infidels were free to practise their own religion, but the verse | had the merit of being epigrammatic, and we know of real cases in which it was invoked to safeguard the rights of *dhimmī*s who had been forced to convert.[10] This third position came in many versions, some identifying the *jizya*-paying category more broadly than others,[11] some providing illustrative material,[12] or justifying the inclusion of Zoroastrians in it,[13] and some claiming that slaves (who did not pay *jizya*) or Christian and

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Ibn ʿAbbās), Mujāhid (100/718 or later) (sometimes from al-Ḥasan), and al-Shaʿbī (d. 103/ 721 or later) in Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 5, nos. 5812–5816, 5818, 5820–5824, 5826.

7 Abū ʾl-Ḥusayn had two sons who were converted to Christianity by traders coming from Syria. When they wanted to leave for Syria, he asked the Prophet to stop them: thus al-Suddī and ʿIkrima or Saʿīd b. Jubayr from Ibn ʿAbbās in Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 5, nos. 5817, 5819. For a collection of the *ḥadīth*s relating the verse to Anṣārī affairs, see Ibn Ḥajar, *al-ʿUjāb fī bayān al-asbāb*, vol. 1, pp. 609 ff.

8 Thus for example Ibn Salāma al-Baghdādī, *al-Nāsikh waʾl-mansūkh*, p. 56.

9 Thus Qatāda (d. 117/735 f.) and al-Ḍaḥḥāk in Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 5, nos. 5827–5830, cf. also Ibn ʿAbbās in no. 5832.

10 I. Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, tr. A. and R. Hamori, Princeton 1981 (German original 1910), p. 33. Some Ḥanafīs held forced conversions to be legally binding even though they were wrong (thus Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, vol. 1, pp. 549 f.; cf. Ibn Qudāma, *Mughnī*, vol. 12, pp. 291 f. [*Kitāb al-murtadd*; drawn to my attention by Phillip Lieberman]).

11 The statement transmitted from the Basran Qatāda refers now to the People of the Book and now to both them and the Zoroastrians (Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 5, nos. 5827 f., 5830; ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, no. 324); others speak of anyone other than the pagan Arabs (e.g. Ḍaḥḥāk, *Tafsīr*, no. 262 [= Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 5, no. 5829]), and the Khurāsānī Muqātil b. Ḥayyān (d. 135/752 f.) in Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 394 (*al-wajh al-sābiʿ* [in fact the sixth], missing its paragraph number).

12 Cf. the story of the old Christian woman whom ʿUmar wanted to convert (Naḥḥās, *al-Nāsikh waʾl-mansūkh*, vol. 2, no. 280).

13 Thus Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767), *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 134 f.; Mujāhid in Abū ʿUbayd, *Amwāl*, vol. 48, no. 86; cf. Y. Friedmann, "Classification of unbelievers in Sunni Muslim law and tradition", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 22 (1998), pp. 179 ff.; id., *Tolerance and Coercion*, pp. 72 ff.

Jewish captives (who were still *ḥarbī*s devoid of legal protection) could not be forced to convert either.[14] Nobody, however, held the verse to limit the obligation to fight the infidels outside the abode of Islam until they either converted or accepted *dhimmī* status,[15] and there was general agreement that *some* infidels, notably Arab pagans and apostates, were ineligible for *jizya*-paying status and so had to choose between conversion and death. The Prophet himself had given the last two categories the choice between Islam and death, as al-Ṭabarī pointed out.[16] Before the twentieth century, with the exception of the Ismailis, nobody seems to have considered how the verse was to be reconciled with the use of force against Muslim dissenters.[17]

The three traditional interpretations are regularly cited in exegetical and other works down to modern times, in the Sunni, Zaydi, Imāmī, and Ibāḍī literature alike, often as the only comments given. One or the other, or all three, are cited in practically every work of *tafsīr* mentioned in this article, and in many others in addition. They presuppose different times of revelation (in Mecca, early Medina, | and late Medina respectively), but all three identify the import of the verse as legal and construe the words *lā ikrāha* as a negative command ("do not use force"). Differently put, all three understand the verse as prescriptive.

From as early as the ninth century, other interpretations appeared. These later interpretations usually construe *lā ikrāha* as a statement of fact, so that the meaning of the verse is descriptive rather than prescriptive. They do not seem to be meant as alternatives to the three traditional interpretations, merely

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14   The verse was revealed when an Anṣārī forced his black slave to convert (Mujāhid in Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-nuzūl*, p. 45), or Mujāhid told a Christian slave to convert ('Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, no. 325; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 5, no. 5831); a Rūmī slave of 'Umar's invoked the verse when 'Umar told him to convert (Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 6, p. 110 [vol. 6, p. 159], s.v. "Ussaq"); Abū 'Ubayd, *Amwāl*, vol. 48, no. 87; id., *al-Nāsikh wa'l-mansūkh*, p. 97, and elsewhere); al-Ḥasan (al-Baṣrī) cited it when asked about forcing slaves to convert (Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, no. 2613, cf. 2610 on Ussaq, 2616 on Sulaymān b. Mūsā's disagreement). Listed as a rule about captives (no coercion if they are adult *kitābī*s) in Qurṭubī, *Aḥkām*, vol. 3, p. 281 (doctrine 6); Shawkānī, *Fatḥ*, vol. 1, p. 275 (doctrine 5); Muḥammad Ṣiddīq Khan, *Fatḥ*, vol. 1, p. 427 (copying Shawkānī).

15   "The applicability of the verse is limited to the Jews that it was revealed about. As for compelling infidels to (submit) to the religion of truth, it is obligatory, and for this reason we fight them until they either convert or pay *jizya*, accepting to be ruled by the religion", as the fourth/tenth-century al-Khaṭṭābī says (*Ma'ālim al-sunan*, vol. 2, p. 287).

16   Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 5, pp. 414 f. The whole *umma* is agreed *'alā ikrāh al-murtadd 'alā 'l-islām*, as Ibn Ḥazm remarks in his comments on the verse (*Iḥkām*, vol. 2, p. 890).

17   See below, p. [367 f.].

as additional ways of putting the verse to work, and the meaning they find in it is typically what we would broadly call theological. The Mu'tazilite al-Aṣamm (d. c. 200/816), for example, understood *ikrāh* "compulsion" as *karāha* "dislike", and took the verse to say that there was nothing in the religion (of Islam) for its adherents, as opposed to hypocrites, to dislike.[18] In the same vein, unidentified exegetes cited by al-Māturīdī held the verse to proclaim that God instilled such love of the divine commands in the hearts of the believers that they obeyed them willingly, without the need for compulsion.[19] Fourth/tenth-century Mu'tazilites, on the other hand, read the verse as a statement that God did not compel His servants to believe: humans had free will. And still other Mu'tazilites of the same period construed the verse as saying, or simply presupposing, that humans could not force others to believe: their innermost selves were inaccessible. It is with the last two arguments that the first part of this article is concerned. I shall refer to them as the first and the second Mu'tazilite arguments, though only the first articulates a central Mu'tazilite doctrine; the second reflects a common idea which the Mu'tazilites liked, but which they may not have originated.

The Two Mu'tazilite Interpretations

The first Mu'tazilite interpretation, i.e. the understanding of 2:256 as meaning "there is no (divine) compulsion in religion", seems first to be attested in the exegesis of Abū Muslim al-Iṣbahānī, a Mu'tazilite secretary who worked in Baghdad and Isfahan and died in 322/934.[20] His exegetical work is lost, but quotations survive, and his comments on 2:256 are cited by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī together with those of al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī (d. 365/976), a Shāfiʿite jurist who was once a Mu'tazilite and whose commentary on the Qurʾān (also lost) was written in his Mu'tazilite phase. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī expressly characterizes their interpretation as the one "that concords best with the doctrines of the Mu'tazila". It seems to be from Abū Muslim that he cites the statement (which we shall meet time and again) that God "has not based the matter of faith on coercion and

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18   Cited in Jishumī (also known as Jushamī), *Tahdhīb*, fol. 95ᵇ, 5 up. My thanks to Suleiman Mourad, who is preparing an edition of the manuscript, for a photocopy of the section relating to Q. 2:256.

19   Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, pp. 594 f., where Māturīdī himself compares the verse with Q. 22:78 (*He has imposed no difficulties upon you in the religion*). This interpretation was also known to the Imāmīs (cf. Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 5, p. 98).

20   Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. R. Tajaddud, Tehran 1971, p. 151; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, ed. A.F. Rifāʿī, Cairo n.d., vol. 18, pp. 35 ff.; cf. also Kirmānī, *Abū Muslim*, pp. 11 ff.

135 force but rather on enablement and choice".[21] What follows is explicitly said to
be by al-Qaffāl. According to the | latter, God set out the proofs of monotheism
and then said, "the infidel no longer has any excuse for remaining an infidel,
now that these proofs have been made clear; rather, he ought to be forced and
coerced to adopt the faith; but this is not possible/allowed (*jāʾiz*) in this world,
which is a world of tribulation (*ibtilāʾ*), given that coercion and compulsion
nullify trial and tribulation".[22]

A modern reader is apt to read both Abū Muslim's and al-Qaffāl's statements
as prohibitions of human compulsion in matters of faith. Who would God be
speaking to if not to human beings, and why else should He characterize things
as possible or allowed? Besides, al-Qaffāl adduces two Qurʾānic verses in which
God tells the Prophet not to compel people to become believers, Q. 18:29 (*Let
him who will, believe, and him who will, disbelieve*) and Q. 10:99 (*If your Lord had
wanted it, every one on earth would believe, all of them; so will you force people to
become believers?*). If God told the Prophet not to force people to convert, surely
the message is that lesser human beings may not do so either. Fakhr al-Dīn al-
Rāzī seems to agree when he adds that al-Qaffāl's interpretation is supported
by the statement, *right guidance has become distinct from error* (which follows
lā ikrāha fī ʾl-dīn) and glosses it as meaning that "the proofs have been made
manifest and the evidence clear, so now there is no method left other than
coercion, compulsion and force; but that is not allowed/possible, given that it
rules out moral responsibility (*taklīf*)". For all that, there can be no doubt that
Abū Muslim, al-Qaffāl and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī all read the verse as a statement
about free will: al-Qaffāl invokes God's words to the Prophet in illustration of
God's wish to let the unbelievers choose for themselves, not for the injunction
to the Prophet to refrain from using force (which was later abrogated). When,
in a recent book of mine, I read Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's passage as prohibiting
forced conversion, I was unwittingly adopting the modernist interpretation of
the verse.[23]

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21 *Mā banā amr al-īmān ʿalā ʾl-ijbār waʾl-qasr wa-innamā banāhu ʿalā ʾl-tamakkun waʾl-
ikhtiyār*. He could have this from Zamakhsharī, who has *lam yujri ʾllāh amr al-īmān ʿalā
ʾl-ijbār waʾl-qasr wa-lākin ʿalā ʾl-tamkīn waʾl-ikhtiyār*, without naming an authority (below,
note 45). But given that Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī explicitly names Abū Muslim and al-Qaffāl,
it seems more likely that both he and Zamakhsharī are citing Abū Muslim here.

22 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 7, p. 15 (*lam yabqa baʿda īḍāḥ hādhihi ʾl-dalāʾil lil-kāfir ʿudhr
fī ʾl-iqāma ʿalā ʾl-kufr illā an yuqsara ʿalā ʾl-īmān wa-yujbara ʿalayhi wa-dhālika lā yajūzu fī
dār al-dunyā allatī hiya dār al-ibtilāʾ idh fī ʾl-qahr waʾl-ikrāh ʿalā ʾl-dīn buṭlān maʿnā ʾl-ibtilāʾ
waʾl-imtiḥān*).

23 P. Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, Edinburgh 2004 (published in America as

That Abū Muslim, al-Qaffāl, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī were concerned with free will is made explicit in several *tafsīr*s by later scholars that we will come to in due course and whose understanding of the tradition is undoubtedly correct.[24] For one thing, the concatenation of free will with the (Qurʾānic) idea of life as a test is standard in Qadarism. Thus al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) explains that in Q. 6:35 God reproaches the Prophet for his sadness when the polytheists would | not believe and tells him that if He had wanted to force them (*yujbirahum*) to obey He could have done so, but He had not done so because He wanted to test them (*yabtaliyahum*), so that He could recompense them for their actions.[25] Al-Ḥasan, too, quotes Q. 10:99 (*If your Lord had wanted it, every one on earth would believe, all of them; so will you force people to become believers?*). Al-Masʿūdī (d. 345/956 or 346) mentions the Muʿtazilite belief that "If He had wanted to, He would have compelled (*jabara*) human beings to obey Him … but He does not because that would eliminate trial (*miḥna*) and put an end to tribulation (*balwā*)".[26]

Further, the Muʿtazilite al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī (d. 494/1101) also interprets Q 2:256 in an anti-determinist vein. He lists the view that "there is no compulsion by God in the religion (*laysa fī ʾl-dīn ikrāh min Allāh*)" among the diverse interpretations of the verse and later explains it as meaning that God wanted His servants to believe voluntarily (*yurīdu min al-ʿibād al-īmān ṭawʿan*). In his view the verse demonstrated that the determinists (*mujabbira*) were wrong and that faith was not something created by God, but rather a human act

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God's Rule. Government and Islam. Six Centuries of Medieval Islamic Political Thought, New York 2004), p. 381. The error is noted in the additions and corrections to the British paperback version, but not yet incorporated in the American edition. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī is also read as opposing forced conversion by J.D. McAuliffe, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on *āyat al-jizyah* and *āyat al-sayf*", in M. Gervers and R.J. Bikhazi (eds.), *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, Toronto 1990, pp. 111 ff.

24   See Ṭabrisī, below, note 90; Khūʾī, *Bayān*, vol. 1, p. 328; Ālūsī, below, note 49; Ṭanṭāwī and Shiḥāṭa, below, note 114.

25   Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, *Risāla fī ʾl-qadar*, ed. H. Ritter in his "Studien zur Geschichte der islamischen Frömmigkeit", *Der Islam* 21 (1933), p. 76.

26   Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, ed. C. Barbier de Meynard and A.J.B. Pavet de Courteille, Paris, 1861–1877, vol. 4, p. 22 (ed. C. Pellat, Beirut 1966–1979, vol. 4, § 2255). If He had made every human sinless or given all humans the knowledge available to messengers, He would not have made this world a *dār al-balwā waʾl-imtiḥān*, as one reads in al-Maqdisī (wrote ca. 355/966), *Kitāb al-badʾ waʾl-taʾrīkh*, ed. and tr. C. Huart, Paris 1899–1919, vol. 1, pp. 110 f.

(*wa'l-īmān fi'l al-ʿibād*): "it is the servant who chooses (*al-ʿabd mukhtār*); if it were otherwise, His statement *Right guidance has been distinguished from falsehood* until the end of the verse would not be correct".[27]

To this may be added that Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī cites al-Qaffāl again in his comments on another verse, apparently once more from the latter's *tafsīr*, and here al-Qaffāl not only approves of forced conversion, but positively praises it:[28] the merit of fighting in the cause of religion could not be denied by any fair-minded person, he says, for people clung to their wrong religions out of habit; but when they were forced to adopt the true religion for fear of being killed, their love of the false religion would gradually vanish while their love of the true one would grow, so that eventually they would achieve salvation instead of everlasting punishment.[29] Clearly, the religious freedom he envisages as granted by the "no compulsion" verse is not freedom from coercion by humans.

It may seem odd that al-Qaffāl should believe God to abstain from compulsion in matters of faith and yet approve of humans practising it, but the Muʿtazilites had an answer to this in the form of the second interpretation of 2:256: the verse said or presupposed that forced conversion was not really coercion to believe, for it was impossible to change the inner beliefs of other people; coercion only affec|ted external conformity. This is what the Ḥanafī and Muʿtazilite jurist al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/981) tells us in a legal work in answer to the question why the Prophet gave the pagan Arabs the choice between Islam and the sword when it was well known that forced converts did not become real Muslims. The Arabs were only forced in terms of external observance (*iẓhār*), he says, not religious conviction (*iʿtiqād*), which is beyond compulsion; but having been forced to live as Muslims, such people would gradually come to accept Islam, or their children would. In other words, he distinguished between religion as internal conviction and religion as communal affiliation, deeming it a good thing to force people into the community on the same grounds as al-

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27　　*Tahdhīb*, fol. 95ᵇ, 4 up; 96ᵃ, 4 ff. Jishumī was murdered by predestinarians in Mecca (W. Madelung, *Der Imām al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm und die Glaubenslehre der Zaiditen*, Berlin 1965, p. 188).

28　　Qaffāl in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 8, p. 192 (*ad* Q. 3:110). The muddle of which I suspected al-Qaffāl in *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, p. 381n., was my own.

29　　Augustine had said the same in justification of the forced conversion of the Donatists: many were glad to be delivered from the tyranny of custom, the cloth of ignorance, and parental example; surely the use of a little force in things temporal was worth the eternal gain? (N.Q. King, "*Compelle Intrare* and the plea of the pagans", *The Modern Churchman* 4 [1961], p. 112).

Qaffāl: it made it easier for them to see the truth.[30] In answer to the question
how killing (read: fighting?) could be obligatory if there was no compulsion in
religion, al-Jishumī said that people were given the choice between conversion,
acceptance of *jizya*, and fighting, which did not in his view amount to com-
pulsion in religion. As he saw it, there was not really any such thing as forced
conversion at all: "religion is what people adhere to by conviction, and one can
only conceive of coercing somebody to behave as an adherent of the religion,
not to believe in the religion (*al-dīn mā yutamassaku bihi iʿtiqādan fa-innamā
yutaṣawwaru al-ikrāh ʿalā iẓhār al-dīn lā ʿalā ʾl-dīn)*".[31] Unlike al-Jishumī, al-
Jaṣṣāṣ read the *lā ikrāha* verse as a legal command, entertaining the possibility
that it was an injunction of global tolerance of infidels which had later been
narrowed down by the order to fight, but his denial that inner conviction could
be forced does seem to be linked to his theology. To a Muʿtazilite, there was nei-
ther divine nor human coercion where it really mattered: people were free to
choose their own convictions in their innermost selves.

 The distinction between inner conviction and communal affiliation was not
unique to the Muʿtazilites, and there were others too who brought it to bear on
Q. 2:256. According to the grammarian al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923), some scholars read
the verse as a command not to say that people who had been incorporated into
the Muslim community after war had become Muslims by force, on the grounds
that when they did become genuine Muslims, it would not be by force.[32]
This statement is widely encountered in the literature after him, often as an
anonymous opinion, sometimes as his.[33] Jishumī is among those who cite it,
explicitly crediting it to al-Zajjāj.[34] Apparently, al-Zajjāj and unspecified others
construed *lā ikrāha* as meaning "no calling (forced converts) reluctant", not as
a factual statement that coercion could not affect religion in the sense of inner
conviction; but Ibn al-Anbārī (d. 328/940), another grammarian and a pupil of
the Ḥanbalite Thaʿlab, is cited as commenting that only that which people have
accepted in their hearts | counts as religion, not what they are simply forced   138

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30   Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām*, vol. 1, pp. 548 f. The Muʿtazilites have overtaken Augustine here: to the
      latter, the ineffectiveness of the use of force was still a bit of an embarrassment (cf. King,
      "*Compelle Intrare*", p. 112).

31   Jishumī, *Tahdhīb*, fol. 96ᵃ, 5.

32   Zajjāj, *Maʿānī*, vol. 1, p. 335.

33   Thus Thaʿlabī, *Kashf*, vol. 2, p. 236 (where he invokes Q. 4:94: *Do not say to those who
      offer you a greeting, "you are not a believer"*); Shahrastānī, *Mafātīḥ*, vol. 1, p. 399b (from
      Thaʿlabī?); also Ḥalabī, *Durr*, p. 546; Thalāʾī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, pp. 102 f., and other works. For
      Imāmī citations, see below, notes 85, 88.

34   *Tahdhīb*, p. 95b, 8 up.

to do.[35] This view, which is also mentioned by al-Māturīdī,[36] corresponds to al-Jaṣṣāṣ' position. Many grammarians were said to be Muʿtazilites,[37] but al-Zajjāj and Ibn al-Anbārī are not among them, so whether this interpretation was actually pioneered by the Muʿtazilites is hard to say. It would have helped to know what Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/915), Abū ʾl-Qāsim al-Balkhī (also known as al-Kaʿbī, d. 319/931) and al-Rummānī (d. 384/994) said about the verse, but it is not covered in the quotations from the (lost) works of the first two scholars collected by Gimaret and Nabhā respectively or in the Paris fragment of the (incompletely preserved and unpublished) *tafsīr* of the third.[38] Whatever the answer, the Ismailis also read the verse in the light of the distinction between external observance and inner conviction, as we shall see, but with a different implication. One would have expected the Sufis to have done so as well. Kāshānī (d. 730/1329) does say that religion is inner guidance, which is not amenable to coercion,[39] and the much later Sulṭān ʿAlī Shāh Gunābādī (d. 1327/1909) makes the same point in more elaborate terms.[40] But most Sufis say little or nothing about the *lā ikrāha* statement, which does not seem to have interested them much.[41]

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35   Cited in Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr*, vol. 1, p. 252; Ibn Taymiyya, *Qāʿida mukhtaṣara fī qitāl al-kuffār*, p. 123.

36   Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, p. 594 ("Some people say, *No compulsion is there in religion*: i.e. no religion is accepted by force; that is not faith").

37   Cf. C.H.M. Versteegh, *Greek Elements in Arabic Linguistic Thinking*, Leiden 1977, p. 150 (my thanks to Monique Bernards for a reference which led to this one).

38   Cf. D. Gimaret (ed.), *Une lecture muʿtazilite du Coran: le Tafsīr d'Abū ʿAli al-Djubbāʾī (m. 303/9151)*, Louvain 1994; Abū ʾl-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī al-Balkhī, *Tafsīr*, ed. Kh.M. Nabhā, Beirut 2007 (my thanks to Hüseyin Hansu for showing me this work); al-Rummānī's *Tafsīr*, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS arabe 6523: it starts with Q. 3:55 (I am much indebted to Maroun Aouad for checking the manuscript for me). But there are other manuscripts, possibly containing different fragments (cf. F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, vol. 8, Leiden 1982, pp. 113, 270).

39   Ibn ʿArabī (attrib.), *Tafsīr* (in fact Kāshānī, *Taʾwīlāt*), vol. 1, pp. 89 f. (drawn to my attention by Ludmila Zamah). For the authorship, see R. Forster, *Methoden mittelalterlicher arabischer Qurʾānexegese*, Berlin 2001, p. 93.

40   Gunābādī, *Bayān al-saʿāda*, vol. 1, p. 122 (the death-date given here is from *EI*², s.v. "Niʿmat-Allāhiyya"; ʿA. Nuwayhiḍ gives it as 1311/1894 in his *Muʿjam al-mufassirīn*, Beirut 1983–1984, vol. 2, p. 526).

41   There are no comments on the verse in Tustarī, *Tafsīr*, p. 37; Sulamī, *Ḥaqāʾiq*, vol. 1, pp. 76 f.; or id., *Minor Qurʾān Commentary*, pp. 17–19; Ruzbihān Baqlī, *ʿArāʾis*, vol. 1, pp. 53 f. Qushayrī merely explains that the proofs are clear (*Laṭāʾif*, vol. 1, p. 210); Niʿmat Allāh Nakhjawānī merely paraphrases the text (*Fawātiḥ*, vol. 1, p. 87); and Ismāʿīl Ḥaqqī al-Bursawī

The Tenth-Century Context

There cannot be much doubt that the Muʿtazilites who denied that forced coercion existed while at the same time declaring it a good thing were responding to | a situation in which the use of force in the service of religion had come to be seen as problematic.[42] When al-Qaffāl asserts that no fair-minded person could deny the merit of fighting in the cause of religion, it was precisely because it had been denied, even by Muslims; and when al-Jaṣṣāṣ explains why the Prophet forced the Arabs to convert, it was because some people had come to find it unacceptable. To that extent, the tenth-century exegetes were facing much the same problems as twentieth-century modernists responding to Western criticisms of *jihād*.

Unlike the modernists, however, the tenth-century exegetes were not trying to rewrite Islam as a religion which had renounced the use of force, thus recasting *jihād* as secular warfare, but rather to distinguish their religion as a set of beliefs about eternal matters from the obligations it prescribed regarding life in the here and now. Islam was both a set of doctrines about the transcendent and a civic religion. In its second capacity it regulated a society that most people entered for reasons beyond their control, usually by being born into it, sometimes by being dragged into it. Many thinking men in the fourth/tenth century had a strong sense that such external vicissitudes were separate from people's innermost convictions: communal affiliation was not to be conflated with religion in the sense of individual faith; social obligations were one thing, individual salvation was something else. In the context of Q. 2:256 adherents of this view would insist that only individual conviction counted as religion (*dīn*), which comes across as forced in linguistic terms, given that *dīn* was often used synonymously with *sharīʿa* (law, civic religion); but they had to say it because it was *dīn* that the verse located in the compulsion-free zone. To a modern reader their reading also comes across as self-serving in that it allowed them to endorse the use of compulsion in religious matters while claiming to do noth-

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merely quotes (without mentioning them) Shaykhzādeh, *Ḥāshiya*, p. 570, on *jizya*-payers versus the Arab pagans and Abū ʾl-Suʿūd, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 386, on how the rational person will choose the religion of his own accord, in his *Tafsīr al-adhān min tafsīr nūr al-bayān*, vol. 1, pp. 200 f. He does have considerably more to say about the verse in the unabbreviated edition (*Tafsīr rūḥ al-bayān*, vol. 1, pp. 406 ff.), but not about the words *lā ikrāha* (my thanks to Ludmila Zamah for introducing me to Ismāʿīl Ḥaqqī and to Susan Gunasti for drawing my attention to the unabbreviated edition). But for a highflown Sufi interpretation centering on *lā ikrāha*, understood as divine coercion, see al-Harrālī in Biqāʿī, *Naẓm*, vol. 4, pp. 40 ff.

42   Cf. Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, pp. 375 ff.

ing of the kind; but it did have the satisfying effect not just of reconciling the law with the *lā ikrāha* verse, but also of identifying the individual as an autonomous agent responsible for his own salvation.

The Later History of the Two Interpretations

Both the first and the second Muʿtazilite interpretation of the *lā ikrāha* verse became standard in Imāmī exegesis, as will be seen. On the Sunni side the second interpretation reappears in two works on *aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, by the Shāfiʿite Kiyā al-Harrāsī (d. 504/1110) and the Malikī Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148) respectively,[43] but not in any verse-by-verse *tafsīr* on Q. 2:256 that I have seen before modern times. The Sunnis did pick up the interpretation of *lā ikrāha* as relating to free will, however. After Abū Muslim, al-Qaffāl and al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī, the interpretation appears in the Muʿtazilite al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), a Sunni by adoption.[44] "God did not make the matter of faith a matter of compulsion and coercion but rather of enablement and choice", he says, probably quoting Abū Muslim al-Iṣbahānī; like so many, perhaps including Abū Muslim himself, he adduces | Q. 10:99 as well (*If your Lord had wanted it, every one on earth would believe, all of them; so will you force people to become believers?*).[45] After al-Zamakhsharī the interpretation appears in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, as seen already, and thereafter it is cited, now from al-Zamakhsharī and now from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, occasionally from both, by Niẓām al-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Qummī al-Naysabūrī (d. 728/1327 f.),[46] Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī (d. 745/1344), Muṣṭafā b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Tamjīd al-Ḥanafī (d. 880/1475),[47] the Yemeni al-Shawkānī (d. 1250/1834, a Zaydī who was a virtual Sunni),[48] the Iraqi

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43   Kiyā al-Harrāsī, *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, vol. 1, pp. 339 ff. (cf. M. Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*, Cambridge 2000, p. 347); Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, vol. 1, p. 233.

44   Cf. A.J. Lane, *A Traditional Muʿtazilite Qurʾān Commentary: the Kashshāf of Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī*, Leiden 2005. Cf. also M.Ḥ. al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr waʾl-mufassirūn*, [Cairo] 1976–1989, vol. 1, pp. 457 ff. for a discussion of where his Muʿtazilism shows.

45   Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, vol. 1, p. 387. Unfortunately, Lane does not discuss Zamakhsharī's use of earlier Muʿtazilite *tafsīr* in his chapter on the sources of the *Kashshāf*.

46   Niẓām al-Dīn, *Gharāʾib*, vol. 3, p. 19. The lines he cites are from al-Qaffāl, but he names no names.

47   Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-muḥīt*, vol. 2, p. 292 (citing Abū Muslim and al-Qaffāl, i.e. from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī); Muṣṭafā b. Ibrāhīm, *Ḥāshiya*, vol. 5, p. 394 (where both al-Zamakhsharī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī are acknowledged: *wa-fī ʾl-Kashshāf … qāla al-imām*).

48   Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-qadīr*, vol. 1, p. 275 (*wa-fī ʾl-Kashshāf*). Cf. B. Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: the Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkānī*, Cambridge 2003.

Ālūsī (d. 1270/1854)[49] and (on the basis of al-Shawkānī) the Indian Muḥammad Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān (d. 1307/1889 f.).[50] Ālūsī apart, it is not clear from any of these authors that the reference is to freedom from divine rather than human compulsion unless one knows the tradition.

Non-Muʿtazilite Developments

The Muʿtazilites were not the only exegetes to express themselves in a fashion that laid them open to misunderstanding by modern readers. Traditionalist scholars will sometimes gloss *lā ikrāha fī ʾl-dīn* as meaning: "Do not force anyone to convert". Contrary to what one might think, this is not a global prohibition of forced conversion, but rather a statement regarding the eligibility of infidels other than Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians for status as *jizya*-paying *dhimmī*s. According to the Shāfiʿites and many Ḥanbalīs, only Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians could be accepted as *jizya*-payers; all other infidels had to be either converted or killed. "Do not force anyone from among the People of the Book or the Zoroastrians to become monotheists after the conversion of the Arabs", as Ibn Wahb al-Dīnawarī (d. 308/920) put it, meaning that all other infidels should be forced.[51] But the Ḥanafīs and most Mālikīs held that all infidels other than the now extinct pagan Arabs (or just the now extinct pagan Quraysh) could be accepted,[52] and this is what they mean when they say that nobody at all should be forced to convert. "Do not force anyone to adopt the faith after the conquest of Mecca and the conversion of the Arabs", as Abū ʾl-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. 370/980 f.) said.[53] Apostates still had to be given the choice between conversion and death. The jurists were of course | well aware that the verse could be read as a universal grant of tolerance incompatible with the duty to execute apostates and wage *jihād* against non-Muslims; but he who understood it in that vein always added that it had been abrogated. The meaning was either general and abrogated or specific and concerned *with jizya*-payers, as Ālūsī said.[54]

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49 Ālūsī, *Rūḥ*, vol. 3, p. 18 (some people say that the meaning is *laysa fī ʾl-dīn ikrāh min Allāh*, among them al-Qaffāl—clearly from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī).

50 *Fatḥ al-bayān*, vol. 1, p. 427 (*qāla fī ʾl-Kashshāf*).

51 Dīnawarī, *Wāḍiḥ*, vol. 1, p. 85; similarly Fīrūzābādī, *Tanwīr*, ad loc. (unpaginated); cf. Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion*, pp. 76 ff. This view is also reported in Hūd b. Muḥkim, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 240, but whether the Ibāḍīs adopted it is not clear, cf. below, note 70.

52 Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion*, pp. 77 f., 79 f.; cf. the Mālikī position in Ibn ʿAṭiyya, *Muḥarrar*, vol. 2, pp. 195 f.; Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, *Baḥr*, vol. 2, p. 292.

53 Abū ʾl-Layth, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 695 f.

54 Ālūsī, *Rūḥ*, vol. 3, p. 18.

Some mediaeval scholars voiced dissident views. Thus the Andalusian Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) held that even Christians and Jews had to be fought until they were either converted or killed, on the grounds that the *kitābī*s mentioned by God in the *jizya* verse (Q. 9:29) had died out and others had appeared who plainly were not those who had been given the pre-Qurʾānic scriptures.[55] Tolerance was not for him. Nor was it for the later Andalusian Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148), who took the meaning of Q. 2:256 to be both general and valid on the grounds that what it prohibited was compelling people to adopt falsehood: Muslims could not be forced to convert to other faiths. As for compelling people with truth on one's side (*bi'l-ḥaqq*), it was part of the religion, he said.[56] The militance of these two scholars should presumably be related to the Christian *reconquista*.

In a diametrically opposed vein, the Ḥanbalite Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) argued in a number of non-exegetical works that even Arab poly-theists qualified for *jizya*-paying status (though as it happened, they no longer existed). The only reason they had been forced to convert, he said in one work, was that the *jizya* verse (Q. 9:29) had not been revealed until year 9, by which time there were no idolaters left in Arabia.[57] The plain meaning of the "no compulsion" verse was that all infidels without exception qualified for *jizya*-paying status and that none of them should be forced to convert when they were conquered. Indeed, he claimed in another work, "to anyone who carefully considers the life of the Prophet it will be clear that he did not ever force any-one to adopt his religion, and that he only fought those who fought him". Where that leaves the pagan Arabs is not clear.[58] In a third work he lays down that spiritual struggle (*jihād al-nafs*), or battling with one's own devilish inclinations, must always precede physical warfare, as it did in the case of the Prophet; one has to master every form of *jihād to* fight the enemies of God with one's heart, tongue, hand and property, and thus make God's word uppermost.[59] It sounds extraordinarily modern. He owed his conviction that the Prophet only

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55 Ibn Ḥazm, *Iḥkām*, vol. 2, p. 890; cf. Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion*, pp. 104f.

56 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Aḥkām*, vol. 1, p. 233 (*ʿumūm fī ikrāh al-bāṭil fa-ammā ʾl-ikrāh bi'l-ḥaqq fa-min al-dīn*).

57 Friedmann, "Classification of unbelievers", p. 185, citing Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā*, p. 24f.

58 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Badāʾiʿ al-tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 414, expressing his agreement with the Iraqis and Medinese "even though they except some idolaters" (i.e. Arab pagans). Ibn al-Qayyim did not actually write a *tafsīr*; this work is a modern compilation from his writings (cf. the editorial introduction, pp. 16ff.).

59 *Zād al-maʿād*, vol. 3, pp. 5ff.

fought defensive wars and never compelled anyone to convert to his teacher
Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), who also insisted (in some of his works) that infi-
dels were only to be fought for their transgressions, not for their unbelief on
its own, and he adduced the *lā ikrāha* verse in support of this | view.[60] In Ibn

Taymiyya's case it should perhaps be seen as the obverse of the high standards
of obedience to Islamic law that he demanded within the Muslim community,
at least for purposes of excluding the newly converted Mongols and their Mus-
lim collaborators from it, declaring *jihād* to be obligatory against them:[61] just
as mere unbelief did not suffice to make people an object of *jihād*, so mere
profession of the faith did not suffice to shield against it; what counted was
behaviour. But there may well be more to it. It is far beyond my competence,
however, and I must limit myself to the observation that neither Ibn Taymiyya
nor Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya make their comments on *lā ikrāha* in formal works
of *tafsīr*, let alone those of the *musalsal* (verse-by-verse) type, which tend to be
more conservative than most.[62] In line with this, their views are not cited in
later exegetical comments on the verse either.[63]

   The two exegetes constantly cited in the post-Tīmūrid period, al-Bayḍāwī
(d. 685/1286 or later) and Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), also make some modern-
sounding statements. Al-Bayḍāwī, a Shāfiʿite keen to purge al-Zamakhsharī's
tafsīr of its Muʿtazilite elements,[64] explains that there is no (human) compul-

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60   *Qāʿida mukhtaṣara fī qitāl al-kuffār*, p. 121 (with the astonishing claim, at p. 123, that most
      of the *salaf* considered the verse to be neither limited nor abrogated), cf. pp. 155 f.; M. Abū
      Zahra, *Ibn Taymiyya: ḥayātuhu wa-ʿaṣruhu, ārāʾuhu wa-fiqhuhu*, [Cairo] 1952, pp. 379 ff. But
      Ibn Taymiyya also says that *jihād* is obligatory against anyone who has heard the call to
      God and the Prophet without responding, see *al-Siyāsa al-sharʿiyya* in *Majmūʿ fatāwā Ibn
      Taymiyya*, vol. 28 (*fiqh*, VIII: *jihād*), [Beirut] 1997, p. 349; tr. O.A. Farrukh, *Ibn Taimiyya on
      Public and Private Law in Islam*, Beirut 1966, p. 135 (with a mistranslation); also R. Peters
      (tr.), *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*, Princeton 1996, p. 44. Here the cause of war is
      indeed unbelief.

61   Cf. the letters in *Majmūʿ fatāwā Ibn Taymiyya*, vol. 28, pp. 410 ff., 424 ff. (reproduced in Ibn
      Taymiyya, *Thalāth rasāʾil fī ʾl-jihād*, ed. M. Abū Ṣuʿaylik and I. al-ʿAlī, Amman 1993, nos. 1
      and 2), and the responsa, ibid., pp. 501 ff., 509 ff. (reproduced in Ibn Taymiyya, *Fiqh al-jihād*,
      ed. Z.Sh. al-Kabbī, Beirut 1992, pp. 119 ff., 125 ff.).

62   Compare below, pp. [372, 388].

63   The only citation of Ibn al-Qayyim's views that I have encountered is in the mottos of Āl
      Ḥamad's edition of Ibn Taymiyya's treatise *Qāʿida mukhtaṣara fī qitāl al-kuffār*, intended
      to persuade misguided Muslim youth that shedding innocent blood is not in accordance
      with Islam or the model of the Prophet (p. 6, cf. 12, 17 f.).

64   cf. *EI*², s.v. "al-Bayḍāwī". Curiously, Ibn al-Munayyir (d. 683/1284), whose *Kitāb al-inṣāf fīmā
      taḍammanahu al-Kashshāf min al-iʿtizāl* polemicizes against Zamakhsharī's Muʿtazilite

sion in religion (as far as *jizya*-paying infidels are concerned) because compulsion is forcing somebody to do something that he does not regard as good, and this is not necessary now that right guidance has become distinct from falsehood; any rational person will hasten to embrace the faith.[65] It was with this statement that he replaced al-Zamakhsharī's reading of the verse as a proclamation of free will, and his reading is certainly more persuasive, if only without my parenthetical additions. The second parentheses are necessary because he accepted the traditional limitations on religious freedom: as far as the legal import of the verse was concerned, it was either abrogated or concerned with *kitābī*s alone, as he declared in agreement with al-Zamakhsharī, adducing the story of the Anṣārī father of two Christian | sons. (This story, originally set in Medina before the permission to fight and the institution of *the jizya* rules, was increasingly coming to be read as a story about the rights of *jizya*-payers.)[66] When he casts the truth as something freely chosen, he means it as mere praise of Islam: there was nothing in it for its adherents to dislike, as al-Aṣamm had said; its obligations were so light that everybody obeyed them of their own accord, as others had put it;[67] the evidence in its favour was so clear that every rational person would hasten to adopt it, al-Bayḍāwī now added himself.

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In the same vein Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) glosses the verse as meaning "do not force anyone to adopt the religion of Islam", explaining that the evidence in favour of the truth of Islam is manifest and clear, so that compulsion is unnecessary; he whom God guides to Islam will adopt it and he whose heart God makes blind will not benefit from being forced into it.[68] This is close to al-Bayḍāwī, though the wording is different, and again no legal claim beyond the usual prohibition of the forced conversion of *dhimmī*s seems to be made. For all that, it is impossible not to be struck by the distancing tone in which forced conversion is mentioned in these *tafsīr*s, especially that of Ibn Kathīr. The latter takes us back to Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's Damascus and the enigma of how all these modern-sounding statements are to be explained.

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interpretations (cf. I. Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung*, Leiden 1920, pp. 123 ff.), does not comment on Q. 2:256. (For Ibn al-Munayyir's own unexceptional views on the possible meanings, see his versified work, *al-Tafsīr al-ʿajīb*, pp. 43 f.)

65   Bayḍāwī, *Anwār*, vol. 1, pp. 259 f.

66   That it was revealed before the order to fight scriptuaries is noted e.g. by al-Suddī in Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-nuzūl*, pp. 45 f.; Ibn ʿAṭiyya, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 197; Qurṭubī, *Aḥkām*, vol. 3, p. 281. Contrast Shirbīnī, *Sirāj*, vol. 1, p. 170; Abū ʾl-Suʿūd, *Irshād*, vol. 1, p. 386; Fayḍī, *Sawāṭiʿ*, vol. 1, pp. 238 f. (where the Anṣārī is barely recognizable); and later works.

67   Above, notes 18–19.

68   Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 310 f.

Later exegetical works often mention that Islam is too obviously true to be in need of compulsion. In fact, Ottoman *tafsīr*s on Q. 2:256 seem to be mostly commentaries on and paraphrases of either al-Zamakhsharī or al-Bayḍāwī.[69]

Sectarian Interpretations

Neither the Shiʿites nor, in so far as one can tell, the Kharijites seem to have taken a particular interest in Q. 2:256.[70] But some Shiʿites did come up with views of their own.

Ismailis

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The most interesting Shiʿite interpretation is that of the Ismailis, who voice it outside the genre of *tafsīr*. In his work on prophethood, the missionary Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/934) declares that *jihād* is meant to bring people under the law (the *ẓāhir*); once this has been achieved, they are to be left to choose their own saving faith without further compulsion: this, in his view, is what the *lā ikrāha* verse proclaimed.[71] Here we have the distinction between outer and inner man that we met in the Muʿtazilite justification of forced conversion: outer man is subject to compulsion, inner man is free. But there are two significant differences. First, the freedom that al-Jaṣṣāṣ had described as a plain fact, arising from the impossibility of forcing people to believe, is here a legal right: Abū Ḥātim is saying that it is not *allowed* to force people to believe. Secondly, Abū Ḥātim is not talking about infidels living as hypocrites under Islamic law, but about Muslims living as dissidents under that law: what the verse established was that they were free to choose their own path to salvation; as long as they observed the law, their beliefs were a private matter and nobody

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69   I am indebted to Susan Gunasti for discussions of this point.

70   Only Ibāḍī *tafsīr*s survive, and they are not numerous. Of those available, that of Hūd b. Muḥkim al-Hawwārī (mid-3rd/9th cent.) could have been written by a mainstream Basran, as indeed in a sense it was, since it is based on the commentary of Yaḥyā b. Sallām (d. 200/815) (cf. C. Gilliot, "Le commentaire de Hūd b. Muḥakkam/Muḥkim", *Arabica* 44 [1997], pp. 181 f.); and the late 3rd/9th-century Abū ʾl-Ḥawārī omits the verse from his *Dirāya*. The epistle attributed to Sālim b. Dhakwān makes it clear that the "tolerance verses" were abrogated by the permission to fight, but does not cite Q. 2:256 (P. Crone and F. Zimmermann [eds. and trs.], *The Epistle of Sālim b. Dhakwān*, Oxford 2001, pp. 65 ff. [vol. 2, § 25–31]; for the expression "tolerance verses", which Sālim does not use, see below, note 109). The modern Ibāḍī Aṭfayyish (d. 1322/1914) merely says that nobody should be forced to convert to Islam (*Taysīr al-tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 412; cf. below, note 72), though he also says that infidels other than *kitābī*s and Zoroastrians should be killed if they do not convert (*Himyān al-zād*, vol. 3, p. 358).

71   Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Aʿlām al-nubuwwa*, pp. 110–112.

had the right to interfere with them. In other words, the Ismailis read the verse as a proclamation of tolerance of Muslim dissidence. They were the only Muslims to do so until modern times. (The Ibāḍī Muḥammad b. Yūsuf Aṭfayyish (d. 1332/1914) does comment that opponents are not to be forced to adopt "our religion", but whether this ruling is of pre-modern origin is impossible to say.)[72] One would assume the Ismailis originally to have adopted this interpretation in an attempt to legalise their own position, but they applied their understanding of the verse to mainstream Muslims living under Ismaili rule as well.[73]

Given that the distinction between inner and outer man was widely made in the tenth century and that Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī died almost half a century before al-Qaffāl (d. 365/976) and al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/981), it seems unlikely that the Ismailis should be indebted to Muʿtazilism here. But Muʿtazilism does seem to be involved when we reach Abū ʾl-Fawāris (fl. c. 400/1000). In answer to the question why ʿAlī did not take up the sword when he was deprived of the caliphate, Abū ʾl-Fawāris replies that *jihād* (against other Muslims) was oblig-atory only in connection with apostasy and adduces Q. 2:256 in support of this view, explaining that acts performed under compulsion have no moral value and that "all these tests (*imtiḥānāt*) and trials (*fitan*) … have been instituted as a respite for the devils so that they can lead astray and tempt and cause people to deviate from God's path by way of trial (*ikhtibāran*) and tribulation (*balwan*) for the community".[74] This does sound remarkably Muʿtazilite. Here as in Abū Ḥātim and other Ismaili attestations, however, the verse is understood not as a description of God's refusal to coerce human beings to believe, but rather as God's injunction to humans to refrain from using force against others in mat-ters of faith as long as they abide by the law: it was in obedience to this verse that ʿAlī had abstained from taking up arms against his opponents. The toler-ance granted by the Ismailis only applied to followers of Islamic law, not to adherents of any other religion, so we are still a long way from the modernist interpreta|tion. But it does show how easily the Muʿtazilite exegetes on free will could be read as ruling out human rather than, or as well as, divine coercion.

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Zaydis

The Zaydis also came up with an interpretation of their own. According to them, the Imam al-Hādī (d. 298/911) took the verse to mean there could be no such thing as forced conversion of Muslims. He said that the verse was

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72   Aṭfayyish, *Himyān al-zād*, vol. 3, p. 358.

73   Cf. Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, p. 380.

74   Abū ʾl-Fawāris, *Risāla fī ʾl-imāma*, ch. VII (my translation).

revealed to Muḥammad after the treaty of Ḥudaybiyya: in accordance with that treaty, Muḥammad would return Meccans who came to him, and back in Mecca the unbelievers would force them to renounce Islam; God put an end to this situation by telling Muḥammad to stop sending converts back and permitting the Muslims to use force against the unbelievers until they had been either converted or annihilated.[75] In other words, God forbade forced conversion to falsehood and permitted forced conversion to the truth: this is the interpretation that later crops up in the Andalusian Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148).[76] Since the Andalusian is not likely to have read Zaydi literature, one would take the interpretation to have enjoyed wider currency than the exegetical tradition currently available suggests. It crops up in modern times too, as will be seen. Then as now the condemnation of forced conversion to falsehood is not a plea for tolerance by a beleaguered minority, but rather a refusal by militants to practise tolerance themselves: the verse established religious freedom for Muslims, not for anyone else.

The Zaydis were also familiar with the traditional interpretations of Q. 2:256[77] and at some point they adopted the first Muʿtazilite interpretation as well. Presumably, they were introduced to it by al-Jishumī (d. 494/1101), given that the latter, who started as a Ḥanafī, ended as a Zaydi.[78] But they also knew it from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.[79]

Imāmīs

Unlike the Zaydis and the Ismailis, the Imāmīs do not seem to have come up with their own interpretation of *lā ikrāha*, which does not in fact seem to have interested them very much. Their earliest exegetes only comment on other parts of Q. 2:256 or omit the verse altogether;[80] the same is true of several

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75   Sharafī, *Maṣābīḥ*, MS, vol. 2, p. 506. This passage was located by Bernard Haykel, who kindly sent me both a photograph and a transcription.

76   Cf. above, note 56.

77   Najrī, *Shāfī al-ʿalīl*, vol. 1, p. 340. He is also classified as a Ḥanafī.

78   Madelung, *Qāsim*, p. 186 f. Jishumī could be the ultimate source of the statement of the 9th/15th-century al-ʿAqam that "there is no coercion from God in religion; rather, the servant chooses" (*Tafsīr*, p. 57).

79   Sharafī, *Maṣābīḥ*, MS, vol. 2, p. 505. The authorities are given as Abū Muslim and al-Qaffāl, but it is clearly from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī that they are cited.

80   Thus Thumālī, *Tafsīr*, p. 119; Furāt, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 69 f.; ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 259 f., nos. 563 f.; al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (attrib.), *Tafsīr*, pp. 497 ff. For the limited interest of pre-Būyid exegetes in issues not directly related to Shiʿism, see M.M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shiism*, Leiden 1999, p. 79.

146 | later exegetes.[81] | The view that *lā ikrāha* referred to the ease with which the Islamic precepts were obeyed appears in Imāmī *ḥadīth*, but not, it seems, in the extant works of *tafsīr*.[82] The earliest Imāmī exegete to comment on *lā ikrāha*, al-Qummī (fl. c. 307/919), merely cites ʿAlī al-Riḍā (d. 203/818) as commenting that nobody is (or should be?) forced to convert (*lā yukrahu aḥad ʿalā dīnihi*); rather, people come (should come?) to the truth after seeing the difference between right guidance and falsehood.[83] Exactly what he meant is unclear, but he could be referring to the impossibility of coercing inner man. Some later scholars list the verse as abrogated.[84]

Inner man makes his unambiguous appearance in Imāmī literature with al-Ṭūsī (d. 459/1067), who cites the three traditional interpretations along with al-Zajjāj's injunction (cited anonymously) that people who have become Muslims thanks to war should not be told that they have been forced to convert. In answer to the question how there can be no compulsion in religion when people are being killed (read: fought?) over it, he gives the same answer as al-Jishumī, but in different words: there is no compulsion in that which is truly religion (*fīmā huwa dīn fī 'l-ḥaqīqa*), which is the acts of the heart, as opposed to that which is open to coercion, namely external conformity; the person compelled to utter the two *shahāda*s does not actually adopt the religion, any more than the person forced to profess unbelief actually becomes an unbeliever.[85] He is endorsing the second Muʿtazilite interpretation. Ibn Idrīs al-Ḥillī (d. 598/1202) reproduces al-Ṭūsī's statement,[86] and a condensed version of Ibn Idrīs appears in al-Shaybānī (d. 994/1585).[87] Al-Zajjāj's injunction also appears in other Imāmī works without being linked to the Muʿtazilite interpretation.[88]

The first Muʿtazilite interpretation appears with al-Ṭabrisī (d. 548/1154). The verse means that "the affairs of religion are based on enablement and choice

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81   Thus the 10th/16th-century commentators Ardabīlī, *Zubdat al-bayān ʿan aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, p. 863; Astarābādī, *Taʾwīl al-āyāt al-ẓāhira*, pp. 101 f.; and the 11th/17th-century Baḥrānī (cf. the reference below, note 92).

82   Cf. above, note 19.

83   Qummī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 92; also cited in Majlisī, *Bihār*, vol. 92, pp. 263 f., where it is attributed to ʿAlī al-Riḍā.

84   Ibn al-ʿAtāʾiqī, *al-Nāsikh waʾl-mansūkh*, pp. 52 f.; cf. also Ibn Abī ʾl-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ*, vol. 1, p. 121.

85   Ṭūsī, *Tibyān*, vol. 2, p. 311.

86   Ibn Idrīs al-Ḥillī, *Muntakhab*, p. 95.

87   Shaybānī, *Mukhtaṣar nahj al-bayān*, p. 42.

88   Thus the first Imāmī *tafsīr* in Persian, Abū ʾl-Futūḥ al-Rāzī, *Rawḥ al-jinān*, vol. 2, p. 330 (probably using al-Thaʿlibī), and Mullā Fatḥ Allāh Kāshānī, *Manhaj al-ṣādiqīn*, p. 98; cf. also below, note 90, on al-Ṭabrisī.

(*al-tamakkun wa'l-ikhtiyār*), not on force and coercion (*al-qasr wa'l-ijbār*)", he says, adducing Q. 10:99 and drawing on either Abū Muslim al-Iṣbahānī or al-Zamakhsharī.[89] "The meaning is that there is no divine coercion in religion (*laysa fī 'l-dīn ikrāh min Allāh*); rather, the servant is given a choice (*al-ʿabd mukhayyar*)", he says in another work, using the same words as al-Jishumī and adding al-Ṭūsī's explanation that true religion is in the acts of the heart, not the profession of the two *shahāda*s (which can be imposed by human force).[90] Here he is fusing the two Muʿtazilite interpretations. The same seems to hold true of Nūr al-Dīn al-Kāshānī (d. after 1115/1703 f.), according to whom "God did not base faith (*īmān*) and Shiʿism on force and coercion but rather on enablement and | choice, unlike *islām* (i.e. membership of the Muslim community)".[91] The words are Abū Muslim's (or al-Zamakhsharī's) on free will, but what they are being made to support appears to be the claim that inner man remains free even when outer man is coerced by other human beings.

With al-Shaybānī and Nūr al-Dīn al-Kāshānī we have reached the Ṣafavid period, when Iran was being converted to Shiʿism by force, and what al-Kāshānī is saying may be that people cannot be forced to become Shiʿites in terms of *īmān*, inner faith, but only in terms of *islām*, external practice: if so, he is condoning the forced conversion of Sunnis on the grounds that their inner convictions are left alone. But one can also read him as saying that people can only be forced to become Muslims, not Shiʿites, since Shiʿism is inner faith. If so, the passage is critical of the forced conversion of Sunnis. Criticism certainly seems to be what we encounter in Nūr al-Dīn al-Kāshānī's grandfather, Muḥsin Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680). This scholar starts by citing al-Qummī on how nobody should be forced to convert, al-Bayḍāwī (unnamed) on how there is no need for compulsion because any rational person will embrace the faith, and the traditional view that the verse should be understood as a general proclamation of tolerance which had been abrogated or limited to the People of the Book. He proceeds to conclude that if the word *dīn* means Shiʿism here, as it does in the *ḥadīth* of Ibn Yaʿfūr, then the verse should be understood as prohibiting the use of force in Shiʿism *without* recourse to postulates of abrogation or limitation.[92] This sounds like polemics against current policies.

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89 Ṭabrisī, *Jawāmiʿ*, vol. 1, pp. 167 f.

90 Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, vol. 2, p. 306. He also cites al-Zajjāj's injunction, but separately from his Muʿtazilite interpretation.

91 Kāshānī, *Tafsīr al-muʿīn*, vol. 1, p. 127.

92 Kāshānī, *Ṣāfī*, vol. 1, p. 261; more briefly also id., *Aṣfā*, vol. 1, p. 121. For the tradition (cited in full in the *Aṣfā*), see ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 259, no. 564; Baḥrānī, *Burhān*, vol. 3, pp. 242 f.,

But the polemics, if such they are, can hardly be described as resounding, and it is impossible to discern any reference to current affairs in other exegetes, whether Ṣafavid or later. Some refrain from commenting on *lā ikrāha* altogether.[93] Mirzā Muḥammad al-Mashhadī (d. 1125/1713 f.) glosses the statement with some words from al-Bayḍāwī (unnamed), construing the right guidance (*rushd*) that has become clear from error in the next line as evidence that there must be an infallible guide at all times.[94] ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-ʿĀmilī (d. after 1168/1754 f.) repeats that God did not base faith (*īmān*) on compulsion, only on choice, but does not develop the theme.[95] Shubbar (d. 1242/1826 f.) says the same, adducing Q. 10:99.[96] Exegetes writing in Persian stick to the three traditional interpretations.[97] There can be no doubt that the verse-by-verse commentary (*tafsīr musalsal*) was an extremely conservative genre.

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The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries
The Sunnis

We now reach the period in which the great wrench from the tradition begins. It does not always show: some exegetes continue to write much as before, even into the 1990s.[98] But they are greatly outnumbered by those in whom change can be discerned.

There is an early modernist in al-Qāsimī, a Damascene who died in 1332/1913. He cites Ibn Kathīr (Do not force anyone to convert) and, without naming him, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the first Muʿtazilite argument (God did not base religion on force and compulsion: force would be incompatible with this world

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where the tradition is also adduced *ad* Q. 2:256, here to identify the Shiʿites as the believers whom God will lead into His light as against the adherents of *ṭāghūt* whom He will lead into darkness, regardless of behaviour (the *ṭāghūt*, treated as a plural, are the usurpers already in Qummī).

93   Cf. above, note 81.

94   Mashhadī, *Kanz al-daqāʾiq*, vol. 1, pp. 611 f.

95   ʿĀmilī, *Wajīz*, vol. 1, p. 205.

96   Shubbar, *Tafsīr*, p. 79.

97   Thus the 11th-century Isfarāʾinī, *Tāj al-tarājim*, vol. 1, pp. 297 f.; the 12th-century Abū ʾl-Futūḥ al-Rāzī, *Rawḥ al-jinān*, vol. 2, pp. 329 f.; the 15th- or 16th-century Abū ʾl-Maḥāsin Jurjānī, *Tafsīr-i gāzūr*, vol. 1, pp. 336 f.; and Mullā Fatḥ Allāh Kāshānī (d. 988/1580), *Manhaj al-ṣādiqīn*, vol. 2, pp. 97 f. (with some echoes of al-Bayḍāwī). I cannot find Q. 2:256 in Abū ʾl-Fatḥ Jurjānī (d. 976/1568), *Tafsīr-i shāhī*.

98   See for example Āl Mubārak, *Tawfīq*, vol. 1, p. 331; Tuʿaylab, *Fatḥ al-raḥmān*, vol. 1, pp. 308 f.; Ḥikmat b. Bashīr b. Yāsīn, *Tafsīr*—three Saudis who could all have written a thousand years earlier.

as a place of trial and tribulation, with al-Qaffāl's explanation). His modernism shows in the fact that he takes the two statements to mean the same, namely that "the sword *of jihād* … is not employed to force people to adopt religion, but rather as protection for the mission on behalf of religion and surrender to its sovereign and just rule".[99] What he is trying to rebut, without mentioning it, is the old charge that Islam had been spread by force, now taken up by the all too powerful Westerners. Al-Qāsimī, whose argument recurs in later Syrian *tafsīr*,[100] rebuts the charge by reading the verse as an unconditional rejection of force in matters of religion and explaining that the armies involved in the expansion of Islam had been acting as mere protectors of the missionaries. This was a good argument because it was how the Christian detractors of Islam had often legitimated their own use of military force. The idea that conquest would allow missionaries to go about their business is as old as Gregory I (d. 605).[101] Pope Innocent IV (d. 1254) had formally ruled that infidel rulers could be forced to allow the free movement of missionaries in their lands, and the Spanish had used that argument to legitimate their conquest of the Americas.[102] Where the Muslims traditionally fused the roles of warrior and missionary, the Christians traditionally separated them:[103] this was what al-Qāsimī was now doing as well.

Al-Qāsimī does not mention the Western charges that he is trying to dismiss, but they are explicit in Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1354/1935), a reformist whose comments on Q. 2:256 are based on Muḥammad ʿAbduh's lectures. Many of our enemies claim that the religion was established by the sword (*qāma biʾl-sayf*), he says, but this is not true; for in Mecca, Islam was persecuted and in Medina the "no coercion" verse was revealed as soon as the idea of forcing somebody to convert suggested itself, namely when Anṣārī parents wanted to compel their Jewish or Christian children to become Muslims; it was other religious communities that | went in for the use of force, especially the Christians, he says. To Riḍā, the story of the Anṣārīs does not illustrate the rights of *dhimmī*s

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99   Qāsimī, *Maḥāsin*, vol. 3, pp. 664 f.

100   Cf. Sāʾis, Karsūn and al-Subkī, and Zuḥaylī, below, notes 111, 159, without mentioning his name. Note also the concept of *ḥurriyyat al-daʿwa* in Sayyid Quṭb, below, note 137.

101   C. Erdmann, *The Origin of the Idea of the Crusade*, Princeton 1977 (German original 1935), pp. 10 f.

102   J.J. Muldoon, *Americas in the Spanish World Order: the Justification for Conquest in the Seventeenth Century*, Philadelphia 1994, pp. 17 f., 21 ff.

103   They did so in the Crusades as well. The Crusaders were out to liberate Jerusalem, not to convert the Muslims.

(let alone a bygone historical situation), but rather a universal prohibition of forced conversion; of limitation or abrogation he does not say a word.[104] His tone is highly rhetorical, but his claims certainly struck a chord. They are often cited,[105] even by Shiʿites.[106]

There is no trace of the Muʿtazilite arguments in Rashīd Riḍā, nor is there in the Palestinian Darwaza (wrote 1930s–1940s), who examines the verse with a new attention to the overall context and concludes that it must be meant as a general affirmation of religious freedom (*al-ḥurriyya al-dīniyya*).[107] But both Muʿtazilite arguments reappear in Elmalılı (d. 1942), author of a *tafsīr* in Turkish, who argues that religion is confession by the heart and beyond the reach of compulsion: even God refrains from constraint in the matter. As a modernist, he took this to mean that the verse forbids the use of force, and that moreover it does so generally, without being limited to the People of the Book, let alone abrogated.[108] In the same vein al-Ḥijāzī (first published 1951) adduces the old idea that inner man is beyond compulsion to prove not that forced conversion is perfectly compatible with the *lā ikrāha* verse, but on the contrary that the verse forbids it. In favour of this view he also cites Q. 10:99 (*Will you then force people to become believers?*) and other tolerance verses traditionally held to have been abrogated in Medina,[109] reading them as eternal commands, and combines all this with arguments drawn from Rashīd Riḍā.[110] Forty years later, Sāʾis, Karsūn and al-Subkī (published 1994) likewise seize on the view that inner man is beyond compulsion; "one cannot conceive of compulsion in it (*lā yutaṣawwaru al-ikrāh fīhi*), given that religion is a creed", as they say,

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104   Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, pp. 36 f.; cf. J. Jomier, *Le commentaire coranique du Manār*, Paris 1954, ch. IX.

105   Cf. al-Ḥijāzī, al-Khaṭīb al-Mawṣilī and al-Zuḥaylī, below notes 110, 139, and 159, and the modern editor in Māwardī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 271, note, who all quote him without mentioning him.

106   Rashīd Riḍā is quoted by name by Shīrāzī (below, note 124), and without acknowledgement in Āyatullāh Sabzawārī (below, note 130).

107   Darwaza, *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, p. 384. The verse also endorses *ḥurriyyat al-iʿtiqād* in Ibn al-Khaṭīb (publ. 1964), *Awḍaḥ al-tafāsīr*, p. 50.

108   A. Karamustafa, "Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi Yazır's (1878–1942) philosophy of religion", *Archivum Ottomanicum* 19 (2001), p. 278 (drawn to my attention by Susan Gunasti).

109   "Tolerance verses" here translates *āyāt al-muwādaʿa*, an expression which seems to have been coined in the western Islamic world (cf. Ibn ʿAṭiyya, *al-Muḥarrar*, vol. 2, p. 196; Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, *Baḥr*, vol. 2, p. 292; Thaʿālibī, *Jawāhir*, vol. 1, p. 245; compare also Ibn Juzayy, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 64).

110   Ḥijāzī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 7 f. The author is not otherwise known to me.

sounding remarkably like al-Jishumī, but taking the fact that it was impossible to mean that it was forbidden.[111]

More commonly, though, it is the first Muʿtazilite understanding of the verse that the modernists use, tacitly rewriting the freedom from divine coercion as a prohibition of its human counterpart. Thus Ḥamza, Barāniq and ʿAlwān (published 1953–1962) read al-Qaffāl in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (both unnamed) as prohibiting human coercion in matters of faith and identify this as the message of the story of the Anṣārī and his two Christian sons, which they understand as a grant of | universal tolerance.[112] The Tunisian Ibn ʿĀshūr (d. 1970) echoes al-Zamakhsharī on how faith is based on enablement and choice in his discussion of Q. 2:256 as a grant of universal tolerance, in which there are also shades of al-Bayḍāwī on how rational people will accept Islam of their own accord. (He plays around with the chronology of revelation, too, as will be seen.)[113] Ṭanṭāwī (published 1977) quotes al-Ālūsī's rendition of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, as well as Ibn Kathīr and al-Bayḍāwī, without naming any names, retaining al-Ālūsī's explicit identification of *lā ikrāha* as a denial of divine compulsion, but nonetheless concluding that the verse prohibits forced conversion (by humans); and Shiḥāta (1980s) repeats Ṭanṭāwī's comments, also without naming his source.[114] The modernist recasting of the first Muʿtazilite interpretation is carried into the Islamicist literature in English by Sachedina on al-Zamakhsharī, and by McAuliffe and, much as I regret it, myself on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.[115]

In short, both Muʿtazilite interpretations have served to provide anchorage in Sunnism for the interpretation of Q. 2:256 as a universal declaration of religious tolerance. Their Muʿtazilite origins have clearly been forgotten, partly thanks to the old habit among Muslim scholars of quoting other people's statements as their own and partly as a result of the constant invocation of al-Bayḍāwī, Ibn Kathīr and other Sunni authorities in the same context.[116] It

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111   Sāʾis, Karsūn and Subkī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 283 f. They also use al-Bayḍāwī and al-Qāsimī without naming them.

112   Ḥamza, Barāniq and ʿAlwān, *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, pp. 10 f. The authors are not otherwise known to me.

113   Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, p. 26.

114   Ṭanṭāwī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 588 f.; Shiḥāta, *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, pp. 26 f.

115   A.A. Sachedina, "Freedom of conscience and religion in the Quran", in D. Little, J. Kelsay and A.A. Sachedina, *Human Rights and the Conflict of Cultures*, Columbia, SC, 1988, pp. 67 f.; above, note 23.

116   There is a neat example in Rahman, *Punishment of Apostasy*, p. 24; he cites Abū Muslim and Qaffāl from Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, not knowing that their *tafsīr*s were Muʿtazilite,

is undoubtedly as a timeless grant of universal tolerance that the vast majority of educated Muslims understand the verse today, especially when they write in English. One can read it on the web, and on bumper stickers.[117] Even the *mujāhid*s who kidnapped the American journalist Jill Carroll in Iraq in January 2006 kept insisting, during their attempts to convert her to Islam, that there was "no pressure" on her to follow their religion.[118] It was also as a timeless grant of universal tolerance that the Muslim response to the papal speech at Regensburg in September 2006 presented the verse, though the formulation seemed to make an alarmingly Muʿtazilite distinction between inner and outer man.[119]

151   The Imāmīs

Modernism took much longer to make its appearance in Imāmī than in Sunni commentaries on Q. 2:256.[120] The first break with tradition seems to come in the work of the Lebanese Mughniyya (or Maghniyya, published 1968). According to him, the verse proclaims that Islam does not force anyone to embrace it by force, as also shown by Q. 10:99 (*Will you force people to become believers?*). This is the standard modernist interpretation, presumably blown into Imāmī society by winds from the Sunni world around it. It is also what Mughniyya would like the verse to mean, but he is too well schooled in the tradition to find it unproblematic. He has the reader ask what the point of prohibiting the use of force would be, given that the heart is beyond the reach of compulsion, clearly a reference to the second Muʿtazilite interpretation. Unlike the Sunnis who simply rewrite the Muʿtazilite description as a prescription (human beings cannot,

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adding Zamakhsharī (who is probably also citing Abū Muslim) without giving a thought to his Muʿtazilism, and mentioning that the same reasoning is found in Ālūsī, not knowing that he too is summarizing Abū Muslim and al-Qaffāl (from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī). He caps it all by citing Ibn Kathīr on the uselessness of coercion.

117   Orit Bashkin directed my attention to the web (see, for example, the Islamic Supreme Council of America, "Democracy according to Traditional Islamic Sources", 2:2, http://www.islamicsupremecouncil.org/publications/articles/51-democracy-according-to-traditional-islamic-sources.html). Joseph Lowry saw a bumper sticker saying "No compulsion in Islam" in Philadelphia on 14th April, 2004.

118   "They'd kidnapped me, they all had guns ready to kill me, but oh no, no pressure there", as she comments (http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0816/p01s01-woiq.html; drawn to my attention by Karen Bauer).

119   Cf. below, p. [389 f.].

120   Cf. the traditional nature of al-Ḥāʾirī al-Tihrānī al-Mufassir (publ. 1337/1918 f.), *Muqtanayāt*, vol. 1, pp. 115 f.; Khālidī, *Ṣafwat al-ʿirfān* [in Persian], vol. 1, pp. 172 f.; Khūʾī, *Bayān*, vol. 1, pp. 326 ff. (publ. 1966); Najafābādī, *Furqān*, vol. 2, pp. 260, 263 (as late as the 80s?).

i.e. may not, force others to convert), Mughniyya sees that the Muʿtazilite and the modernist interpretations are actually at loggerheads: if human beings simply cannot be forced to convert, why bother to legislate against it? He replies by reiterating that if the verse is read as a negative command rather than a factual statement, it prohibits forced conversion. But he concedes that one of the aims of war in Islam was *iẓhār al-islām*, the external adoption of Islam. Only somebody infallible, i.e. the Imam, or his deputy can wage such war, he adds, but this does not of course disprove that it is enjoined. In sum, he leaves the problem unresolved.[121]

Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī (published 1970), on the other hand, takes the verse to state either that compulsion only affects external acts or that the use of compulsion is prohibited: either way, he is implicitly taking the issue to be human relations with other humans. According to him, the verse proves that Islam was not spread by the sword, though he makes no attempt to deny the religious nature of the fighting it prescribes: its purpose is not to spread religion by force, he says, but rather to revive the truth (*iḥyāʾ al-ḥaqq*) and defend monotheists, whose religion is that of human nature (*al-fiṭra*). Once all have been subjected to the religion of prophethood, there will be no problem about tolerating other monotheists, whether Jews and Christians. Whether human nature leaves room for Zoroastrians, Bahāʾīs, atheists or pagans he does not say.[122]

With some exceptions,[123] the works written over the next three decades take their cue from Ṭabāṭabāʾī: all proclaim Islam to be a religion of tolerance while at the same time endorsing the use of force; all angrily deny that Islam was spread by the sword, yet frequently justify coercion with reference to the distinction between inner and outer man and/or the idea of Islam (or monotheism in general) as the | inborn religion of mankind, and all tacitly or explicitly limit the grant of tolerance to Jews and Christians.

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Thus Makārim Shīrāzī (published 1974, in Persian) argues that there is no need to convert people by force, given the wealth of proofs in favour of Islam; it is not actually possible to do so either, given that compulsion does not reach the heart; and on top of that it is forbidden by Q. 2:256, revealed in response to the

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121 Mughniyya, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 396–398.

122 Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Mīzān*, vol. 2, pp. 342 ff.

123 Notably Sabzawārī, *Jadīd*, vol. 1, pp. 326 f. (cf. also below, note 150); Najafī, *Tafsīr-i āsān*, vol. 2, pp. 130 ff., who both read the verse as a straightforward affirmation of religious freedom, though the former starts by seeing it as about free will; and Dukhayyil, *Wajīz*, p. 53, still interpreting the verse as a proclamation of freedom from divine coercion.

Anṣārī who wanted to compel his two sons to become Muslims;[124] this Anṣārī behaved in the manner of tyrannical rulers, he says: to him as to Sayyid Quṭb, possibly his source of inspiration, it is secularist rulers who are guilty of trying to change people's convictions by force.[125] If even a father was not allowed to do so, *a fortiori* it was ruled out for others, he says. All this decisively refutes the poisoned propaganda of the Church (or, as the Arabic translation has it, the Crusaders) that Islam was spread by the sword. However, Shīrāzī adds, idolatry is not a religion from the point of view of Islam, so there is no contradiction between Q. 2:256 and the Qurʾānic verses ordering polytheists to be fought.[126] The Lebanese Faḍlallāh (published 1983) similarly declares that Islam does not consider polytheism or atheism (*ilḥād*) to be religions and so cannot coexist with their adherents, who must be forcibly made to live as Muslims as far as their external behaviour is concerned, whereas People of the Book can be offered freedom of religion if they accept the conditions of *dhimma*.[127] Both he and Dr al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ṣādiqī (published 1985 f.) observe that the use of force is enjoined by the duty of *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf*, thereby making it clear that the issue is the right to coerce other Muslims. But such use of force is not really coercion according to al-Ṣādiqī; rather it is bringing people into line with their own nature and sound rationality (*al-ʿaqliyya al-ṣāliha*); and in any case, what they believe in their hearts is not open to coercion at all.[128] Al-Karamī (published 1981 f.) similarly justifies coercing people to "return" to the truth on the grounds that there is no suspicion of force in the innermost heart,[129] while the Ayatollah ʿAbd al-Aʿlā Sabzawārī (published 1997) declares coercion to be unnecessary, impossible, and forbidden. Islam was not established by the sword, he says, for the Muslims were persecuted in Mecca. But Muslims fight in a defensive vein for the revival of the truth (*iḥyāʾ al-ḥaqq*) and the return of people to their original nature, and since Islam is in conformity with an intact original nature (*al-fiṭra al-salīma*), he who denies it is actually denying his own identity (*huwiyya*) and will (*irāda*). Besides, coercion only affects the external man. On top of that, compulsion can also be good, both for the public order

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124   He quotes the story from the *Tafsīr al-manār*, explicitly saying so.

125   See pp. [381 f.] below.

126   Shīrāzī, *Namūna*, vol. 2, pp. 204 ff.; Arabic tr. *Amthal*, vol. 2, pp. 181 ff. He probably owes the last point to Sayyid Quṭb too.

127   Faḍlallāh, *Min waḥy al-Qurʾān*, vol. 5, pp. 23 ff.

128   He makes much the same point, now as Dr Āyatullāh al-Ṣādiqī, in his short *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi'l-Qurʾān*, p. 42.

129   Karamī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 337 f.

and for the victim; indeed, what could be morally more repugnant than leaving somebody to work for his own eternal damnation? What the verse forbids, he says, is the use of compulsion without right (*bi-ghayr al-ḥaqq*), such as that employed by despots and tyrants (*al-ṭawāghīt wa'l-jabābira*), or maybe it forbids compelling believers | to adopt unbelief, in the same way as Q. 16:106 (*Anyone who utters unbelief after accepting belief in God, except under compulsion ...*).[130]

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All this is remarkably incoherent. If there had not been a religious revolution, the Imāmīs would presumably have used the first Muʿtazilite argument in the standard modernist way to prove that Islam prescribes religious freedom. But a revolution there was, and so it is the second Muʿtazilite argument that dominates their discussions, countering their modernist affirmations of religious freedom with what amounts to the traditional Muʿtazilite position on forced conversion: it is a good thing and no such thing exists. The incoherence arises from the fact that doctrines concerning two different aspects of life—the individual's relationship with God on the one hand and with fellow human beings on the other—have been collapsed into a single doctrine about the same reality: it is the same human beings who grant religious freedom, circumscribe it, and take it away again; God is not in the picture any more, except as the higher cause in the name of which the grant is made and revoked. In combination with the old doctrine that Islam is the religion of original human nature (*fiṭra*), this gives the modern Imāmī arguments a totalitarian intrusiveness all too familar from other twentieth-century ideologies. However self-serving the Muʿtazilite arguments may have been, they did at least have the merit of leaving the individual in control of his own inner self, responsible only to God. In the Imāmī arguments of the revolutionary period, by contrast, even inner man has been subjected to definition by the upholders of civic religion. Like the Marxist notion of false consciousness or the Freudian idea of the subconscious, the modern Imāmī concept of the *fiṭra* allows external authorities to identify the mental processes in the most private recesses of the individual's inner self, so that he has nowhere to retreat: others claim to know better than he does himself what his true nature is; humans have taken over the role of God (in this particular case in the name of God). What we encounter here is true modernity with its lack of sacred barriers, its flat reality shorn of metaphysics, its uniformly bureaucratic management of everything—the

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130   Sabzawārī, *Mawāhib*, vol. 4, pp. 247 ff. (tacitly citing Rashīd Riḍā at p. 250). Ṣādiqī also mentions that the verse forbids *al-ikrāh ʿalā tark lafẓ al-īmān*, citing the same verse (*Furqān*, vol. 3, pp. 223, 226). Cf. Ibn al-ʿArabī, above, note 56.

world in which most of us live. Nowhere is it more obvious that whatever Islamists may be up to, it is not the re-enchantment of the world.[131]

How far this style of argument continues today I do not know, but new tones are certainly heard as well. Mullahs who argue in favour of religious pluralism have appeared in Iran,[132] and Faḍlallāh has also changed his tune. In response to a question regarding the incompatibility of *lā ikrāha* and ideological coercion legalized by court jurists in the past, he now explains that some jurists understand Islamic concepts "in a partial and arbitrary way", perhaps unduly influenced by verses that call for toughness vis-à-vis unbelievers, so that they forget that in peacetime the dialogue (a word he now likes to use) should be friendly and based on | arguments that can find their way to the heart without any coercion.[133] Such views still do not seem to have found their way into verse-by-verse *tafsīr*.

The Three Further Questions

This completes the main assignment of this paper, bringing us to the three further questions. First, how do the Sunni Islamists cope with the verse? Secondly, how do modernists and many Islamists who read the verse as a grant of religious freedom cope with inconvenient parts of the tradition? (Under this heading I shall consider the subsidiary question why modern historians and believers so often find themselves at odds.) And finally, what might a modern historian take the meaning of the verse to be?

The Sunni Islamists
The term "Islamists" is here used to mean Muslims who want Islam to be the basis of public life again, to serve as the authoritative source in political and social affairs no less than in private ones, which makes them a species of reformists and distinguishes them from modernists, who typically adopt secu-

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131   For Weber's evocative view of modernity as disenchantment of the world, see H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds. and trs.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, New York 1946, p. 139; L.A. Schaff in S. Turner (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Weber*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 104 f.

132   Thus for example Kadivar, below, note 142.

133   http://english.bayynat.org.lb/Issues/coexistence.htm [Ed.: This URL is now defunct.]; cf. his words on dialogue and peaceful coexistence at http://english.bayynat.org.lb/islamicinsights/amro250922.htm; and http://english.bayynat.org.lb/Doctrines/book1.htm (I owe all these references to Karen Bauer).

lar ideologies (such as nationalism, socialism or liberalism) for the regulation of the public space. In the Shiʿite world modernism arrived late and Islamism triumphed early, so that for practical purposes they had to be treated together. But in the Sunni case they are distinct.

Like their Shiʿite counterparts, Sunni Islamists usually regard religious freedom as a characteristic so positive that it must be found in Islam, yet often want to legitimate religious coercion. They do not seem to make use of the idea that Islam is the religion of human nature, however, but rather reconcile their incompatible desires by identifying the religious freedom granted by Q. 2:256 as the right to live as a Muslim, in public no less than private affairs. This makes for a perfectly coherent stance, though only as long as the rights of non-Muslims are not considered too.

Mawdūdī barely comments on Q. 2:256 in his exegesis (written in 1942–1949),[134] and the Islamist interpretation is first encountered in Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966), who writes about the verse at length. Freedom of belief (*ḥurriyyat al-iʿtiqād*) is a fundamental human right, he says: take away that freedom and you have removed the very humanity of man; and if forced conversion to Islam is forbidden, *a fortiori* so is the forced imposition of harsh worldly decrees by the government. Here we have Q. 2:256 as a declaration of the right to live as a Muslim, an interpretation also found among Imāmī Islamists, as we have seen.[135] The freedom demanded includes the right to wage holy war. Contrary to what people think, Sayyid Quṭb says, there is no contradiction between Q. 2:256 and the duty to *fight them until there is no fitna and the religion is God's* (Q. 2:193). On the contrary, *jihād* is waged for the very freedom that the "no compulsion" verse enjoins, namely free|dom of religion (*ḥurriyyat al-ʿaqīda*), the right that the early Muslims had to fight for, and the freedom to proselytize (*ḥurriyyat al-daʿwa*). Well-intentioned people trying to eliminate *jihād* are actually enemies of Islam on a par with Orientalists, for Islam has fought throughout its long history (he consistently presents Islam as an agent in its own right); it has done so not to force people to convert, but rather to defend the believers, to establish freedom for the mission, and to establish its own order (*niẓām*). This is the only order in which the freedom of man can be realized because it eliminates service to other humans in favour of service to God and makes it impossible to humiliate others by means of legislation. Lawmaking is for God alone, man is only a servant and should not arrogate divine power to himself: this is the pillar (*qāʿida*) on which the divine order of Islam

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134   Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding the Qurʾān*, vol. 1, pp. 198 f.

135   Cf. above, p. [378].

is based. All human beings will benefit from this freedom, even those who do not embrace Islam, for within the Islamic order people will be free to have their own creeds (a point also made by Elmalılı).[136] Islam does not force people to convert, nor was it spread by the sword in the past, as its enemies claim, but it cannot exist without order (*niẓām*), power and *jihād*.[137]

Freedom of belief is also pitted against secularism by ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb (published 1967–1970), who identifies the verse as an absolute rejection of all forms of coercion, both material and conceptual, with which people are seduced *away from the truth*: without liberation of the individual conscience from error and blindness, all humans are mere slaves or animals.[138] The verse prohibits forced conversion *and* forced departure from religion, as al-Mawṣilī (published 1972) declares: in order to uphold this principle we need power, he says; we cannot protect religion without it, and this is why we wage *jihād*; Islam has not spread by the sword, as biased people say, but rather by its spiritual force and thanks to all the many proofs that make the use of force superfluous.[139]

What Sayyid Quṭb outlines is a new polity in which the public order would be Muslim and all other religions would be relegated to the private sphere, reversing the order which prevails in the West, where the public order is secular and all (other) religions are relegated to the private sphere. How non-Muslims could be participants in an Islamic state, as opposed to simple protégés of it, is not explained; and whether the freedom of belief without which one could not in his view be truly human would extend to polytheists and atheists he does not say. Nor does the *khaṭīb* ʿAbd al-Karīm. But Saʿīd Ḥawwā (wrote 1970s) makes it clear that the freedom in question would in any case only be that of *dhimmī*s, adding that this status is not available to Arab pagans, but whether he has modern pagans such as ʿAlawīs and atheists in mind one cannot tell (his treatment is surprisingly traditional).[140] Dr ʿAmīr ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (published 2000), editor with Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī and others of the *Journal of Islamic Jerusalem Studies*, is more explicit. He starts by rejec|ting forced conversion: "It is not permitted for Muslims to convert infidels to the faith by

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136   According to Elmalılı, Islam was the only religion under which people of all persuasions, idolaters included, could have religious freedom (Karamustafa, "Elmalılı", p. 278).

137   Sayyid Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, vol. 1, pp. 29 ff.; cf. S. Damir-Geilsdorf, *Herrschaft und Gesellschaft: der islamistische Wegbereiter Sayyid Quṭb und seine Rezeption*, Würzburg 2003, esp. pp. 78 ff. (drawn to my attention by Rainer Brunner).

138   ʿAbd al-Karīm, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, pp. 318 ff.

139   Mawṣilī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 242.

140   Ḥawwā, *Asās*, vol. 1, p. 601. Contrast Elmalılı (above, note 136).

force, for that kind of thing is no use, leads to no good, and does not bring about faith in the hearts of their own free will". It is not necessary to use force either, he adds, since Islam is a clear religion based on cogent arguments; on the contrary, that method is characteristic of vacuous, odious, self-absorbed egoists and oppressive authorities. But, he adds, the verse was revealed specifically about the People of the Book: idolaters and similar godless and permissive people (*mulḥidūn wa-ibāḥiyyūn*) are to be compelled to adopt Islam, since they cannot be accepted as *jizya*-payers and do not deserve any consideration because of their godlessness, stupidity, error and foolishness.[141] The modern wording and incoherence apart, it is not very different from al-Bayḍāwī.

The fact is that the modern concept of religious freedom and the *sharʿī* rules regarding infidels simply do not go together, so that there are only two ways of being coherent, namely to acknowledge that what worked in the past does not work today or to reject the whole notion of religious freedom as mistaken. Open recognition of the timebound nature of the tradition is still uncommon, at least in the material on the *lā ikrāha* verse that I have seen, but it is represented by at least one mullah in Iran, Kadivar, and some Muslims writing in English.[142] Outright rejection of religious freedom is also rare, if only in the sense that those who deride the concept, equating it with the freedom to live by any moral system that one likes, usually retain the label for the freedom to be a Muslim or, under Muslim sovereignty, a Christian or a Jew.[143] Thus construed, it is protected, or indeed spread, by force. When during the trial of the blind sheikh ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān for complicity in the assassination of Sadat in 1981, the judge adduced Q. 2:256 to show that Islam was not spread by fighting and cannot be imposed by force, the blind sheikh replied by citing the Andalusian Ibn al-ʿArabī: was the infidel fought for anything *other* than religion? The Prophet ordered the Muslims to fight people until they accepted the unity of God and Muḥammad's message; the verse was

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141 ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 390 ff. His Arabic has the stilted and pretentious character familiar from much contemporary English academic prose.

142 Mohsen Kadivar, a pupil of Ayatollah Montazeri, whose prodigious output includes a book on *plūrālizm-i dīnī*, squarely confronts the incompatibility between the *prima facie* meaning of the Qurʾānic tolerance verses (Q. 2:256 included) and the traditional interpretations in a paper on "freedom of thought" presented at the International Congress of Human Rights and the Dialog of Civilizations in Tehran, 6th May 2001 (available in a poor English translation at http://en.kadivar.com/2006/09/29/the-freedom-of-thought-and-religion-in-islam-2/; my thanks to Mohsen Ashtiany for drawing my attention to this paper).

143 Only the Saudi al-Ḥamd seems to find the very expression distasteful (*Tahdhīb*, vol. 2, p. 185).

abrogated, or it referred to People of the Book paying *jizya*, or it forbade the forced imposition of *falsehood*.[144] Some Saudi professors similarly reject the idea of religious freedom, thus finding themselves able simply to reaffirm the traditional rules regarding apostates and *dhimmī*s, and to declare that "those who have no religion other than polytheism and unbelief" must for their own good be fought until they adopt Islam.[145] In striking contrast to all this, the Sudanese Ḥasan al-Turābī (published 2004) gives us a modernist variation on the Muʿtazilite theme: | God does not force anyone to become a Muslim by innate nature, so nobody, not even the Messenger, is allowed to do so either.[146]

The Handling of the Tradition

If neither modernists nor Islamists like openly to confront the clash between the modern concept of religious freedom and the traditional rules, how do they cope with the points of incompatibility? There are four main topics to consider.

The Arab Idolaters

Tradition is unanimous that the Prophet gave the pagans of Arabia the choice between Islam and death. If Islam was spread by the sword in its homeland, how could it be said to endorse religious freedom?

One solution was to date the Qurʾānic grant of religious freedom to a late stage in the Prophet's career. The three traditional interpretations variously presuppose that the *lā ikrāha* verse was revealed in Mecca (if it was abrogated by the permission to fight), or in early Medina (if it concerned problems arising from the pre-Islamic history of the Anṣār, more precisely in 4 A.H. if it was revealed in connection with the expulsion of the Banū Naḍīr),[147] or in late Medina (if it regulated *dhimmī* status). If the pagan Arabs were forced to convert whereas other infidels (or some of them) qualified for tolerance on the basis of rules revealed in late Medina, it might seem natural to infer that Islam moved from a militant phase in which the Arabs were forced to convert to one of general tolerance which still prevails today. This is not what the pre-modern jurists normally argued. On the contrary, they presented Islam as moving from a period of tolerance in Mecca to one of militance in Medina which has lasted ever since, modified only by the *dhimma* rules. But there were Shāfiʿite scholars in fifth/eleventh-century Nishapur who understood the

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144   *Kalimat al-ḥaqq*, p. 125; cf. above, note 56.

145   Ḥamd, *Tahdhīb*, vol. 2, pp. 182 ff.; Jazāʾirī, *Aysar*, vol. 1, pp. 246 f. (with the statement quoted).

146   Ḥasan al-Turābī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 194 (my thanks to John Nawas for this reference).

147   The first to make this explicit seems to be Rashīd Riḍā.

contrast between the forced conversion of the Arab pagans and the tolerance extended to non-Arab Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians in chronological terms, postulating that the *lā ikrāha* verse had been revealed when not a single Arab pagan remained;[148] and as we have seen, the Ḥanbalite Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) argued that the Arab pagans had been given the choice between Islam and death for the simple reason that the *jizya* verse (not *lā ikrāha*) was revealed too late for them to benefit from it.[149] In the same way the modern Tunisian lawyer Ibn ʿĀshūr (d. 1970) explains the exceptional treatment of the Arabs by placing the revelation of Q. 2:256 after the conquest of Mecca. When the Prophet had completed the subjection of their land and purified the Kaʿba, he says, God abolished warfare aimed at conversion (*al-qitāl ʿalā ʾl-dīn*) | and endorsed (*abqā*) fighting aimed at the expansion of the sovereignty of Islam (*tawsīʿ sulṭānihi*).[150] In other words, missionary warfare prevailed till Arabia had been conquered, thereafter there was just political expansion of the normal type. This is the argument that Montgomery Watt propagated in the 1970s: "For many centuries most Europeans believed that Islam was a religion of violence which spread by the sword ... [but] the early wars of expansion of the Islamic state ... had political and materialistic ends and were not directed to the religious conversion of the conquered peoples".[151]

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Another solution was simply to omit all reference to the problem. This is the easy way out, which Ibn al-Qayyim also adopted in one of his works,[152] and which was followed by Rashīd Riḍā and the many others who counter the charge that Islam was spread by the sword with the observation that

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148   See the paraphrase of Qatāda in Thaʿlabī, *Kashf*, vol. 2, p. 235; Wāḥidī, *Wasīṭ*, vol. 1, p. 369; abbreviated in his *Wajīz*, p. 183 (none of the occasions of revelation he lists in his *Asbāb al-nuzūl*, pp. 45 f., is compatible with this view); Baghawī, *Maʿālim*, p. 124 (a work drawn from al-Thaʿlabī's, see C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, Supplementband, vol. 1, Leiden 1937, p. 622). Qatāda's statement does not itself have any chronological implications (cf. above, note 11), nor is it normally cited or paraphrased as having any in other works (see for example, al-Ḥaddād al-Yamanī, *Kashf*, vol. 1, p. 405; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, vol. 3, pp. 21 f.).

149   Above, note 58.

150   *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, pp. 26 f. The Iranian Sabzawārī also postulates a move from militance to tolerance, in a somewhat vaguer way (Sabzawārī, *Jadīd*, vol. 1, pp. 326 f.).

151   W.M. Watt, "The significance of the theory of jihād", in *Akten des VII. Kongresses für Arabistik und Islamwissenschaft*, ed. A. Dietrich, Göttingen 1976, p. 390; id., "Islamic conceptions of holy war", in T.P. Murphy (ed.), *The Holy War*, Columbus 1976, p. 149.

152   "He who looks carefully at the conduct of the Prophet will see that he did not ever force anyone to adopt his religion" (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Badāʾiʿ al-tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 414).

the Muslims were a persecuted minority in Mecca. That the Muslims were persecuted in Mecca had in fact been used against critics of holy war already by the philosopher al-ʿĀmirī (d. 381/992), but the latter had freely conceded that the Prophet used the sword in Medina, merely insisting that he had done so as a last resort and in the best interest of the victims.[153] Riḍā, by contrast, claims that Q. 2:256 was revealed so early in Medina that the Muslims never had time to use force, without a word about either the injunction to fight or the fate of the Arab pagans.[154] This interpretation has also entered the Islamicist literature in English: "It is well known that the Qurʾān formally and repeatedly forbids to coerce or compel anybody to embrace Islam. The whole life of the Prophet shows that he sought liberty to preach his message", as Hamidullah says.[155]

Jihād

If there is no compulsion in religion, how can *jihād* be an obligation? This is much more problematic, for whereas the pagans of Arabia can be forgotten, the expansion of Islam outside Arabia is not so easy to overlook, and to deny the ongoing duty to wage *jihād* is to risk defining oneself out of the Muslim community altogether.

a. A common response is to stress that *jihād* is not waged for forced conversion: thus al-Qāsimī, al-Ḥijāzī, Sayyid Quṭb, Saʿīd Ḥawwā, Ibn ʿĀshūr, al-Mawṣilī, Shiḥāta, al-Zuhaylī, Sāʾis and co-authors, Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Faḍlallāh and no doubt many others too. It has the advantage of being basically true. It is not wholly true, for according to the Shāfiʿites and most Ḥanbalites, all infidels other than Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians must be given the same choice between Islam and death as the pagan Arabs—this is the rule that the Saudi *salafī*s and modern radicals are reaffirming. But even without that rule *jihād* is a problem, for forcing non-Mus|lims to live as *dhimmī*s under Islamic law is obviously a form of religious coercion, as was generally admitted in pre-modern times. Forcing people to become Muslims and forcing them to become *dhimmī*s were different forms of *ikrāh ʿalā dīn al-ḥaqq*, as al-Khaṭṭābī said without the slightest embarrassment; was the infidel fought for anything *other* than religion, as Ibn al-ʿArabī so memorably asked?[156] Simply to show that conquered peoples could keep their religion as *dhimmī*s did not solve the problem.

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153   Cf. Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, pp. 382 f.

154   Cf. the reference given above, note 104.

155   M. Hamidullah, *Muslim Conduct of State*, Lahore 1977, p. 172, para. 326.

156   See the references given above, notes 15, 56.

b. A more drastic response, then, is to rewrite *jihād* as mere political expansionism. This is how Ibn 'Āshūr presented it (after the conquest of Mecca), as we have seen, and also how *jihād* was explained to students of Islamic studies in Britain in the sixties and seventies, thanks to Watt and others. In terms of Ḥanafī and Malikī law, it is half correct: it brought non-Muslims under the political rule of Islam while leaving them to practise their own religion. The half that is omitted is that it was God who ordered that they be conquered, that the purpose of the efforts was to "make God's word uppermost", that the long-term hope was that the victims would see the light and convert, and that the rewards for the participants were heavenly unless they fought for worldly purposes (in which case their efforts did not count *as jihād*). Characterising expansionism of this type as purely political is about as accurate as characterising British imperialism as purely religious on the grounds that the conquered peoples were often allowed to retain their own government under British control. In any case, nobody likes imperialism of any type any more, so this argument is not often heard these days.

c. A far more popular solution is to claim that *jihād* is purely defensive. This view, which seems to have originated in British India,[157] has enjoyed something close to dogmatic status among modern-educated Muslims till recent times, and it is well represented among the Islamists too, both Sunni and Imāmī. It enjoys a venerable ancestry inasmuch as both the tenth-century philosopher al-'Āmirī and the fourteenth-century traditionalists, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, presented *jihād* along these lines.[158] Al-'Āmirī found it impossible to go so far as to claim that the Prophet's warfare was defensive, but Ibn Taymiyya and his pupil were less pusillanimous, and the same is true of the modernists, who commonly cast the conquests as defensive or pre-emptive too.[159] The pre-emptive argument is also encountered as far back as the tenth century: the Muslims had to fight the infidels until they accepted either the truth or *dhimmī* status in order to have peace of mind and not to worry about being tricked or plundered by them, as the *Epistles of the Sincere Brethren* explained. Faḍlallāh agrees in his publication of 1983 (though clearly

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157 Cf. Cherágh Ali, *A Critical Exposition of the Popular "Jihad": Showing that all the Wars of Mohammad were Defensive, and that Aggressive War, or Compulsory Conversion, is not Allowed in the Koran*, Calcutta 1885 (reprinted Karachi 1977). For the context, see P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, Cambridge 1972, ch. IV.

158 "He only fought those who fought him", as Ibn al-Qayyim says. For al-'Āmirī, see above, note 153.

159 E.g. Ḥijāzī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 8; Sayyid Quṭb, *Ẓilāl*, pp. 293 f.; Shiḥāṭa, *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, p. 29; Zuḥaylī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, pp. 21 f.

160   not today): if the Christians and Jews will not accept either *dhimmī* status | or
Islam, then they have in effect declared war on the Muslims, who must fight a
defensive war against them.[160]

The most interesting argument in favour of *jihād* as purely defensive is
by Maḥmūd Shaltūt (d. 1965), a rector of al-Azhar who wrote a well-known
treatise on the Qurʾān and *jihād*. He argued that the Qurʾān gives mankind
the freedom to choose between faith and unbelief, that it nowhere permits
coercion in matters of religion but on the contrary forbids it (in Q. 2:256 and
other verses) and that the permission to fight was revealed in response to the
persecution endured by the Muslims in Mecca. All this is squarely based on
the Qurʾān itself with almost complete disregard of traditional interpretations,
and his apologetic intent notwithstanding, he often seems to come much closer
to what a historian would consider likely to be the original meaning of the
verses than his traditionalist predecessors. He achieves his radical results by
refusing to write in the *musalsal* genre, which he declares to be based on
extra-Qurʾānic principles that cause verses to be explained "in ways completely
opposed to their real meanings", or "even considered to have been abrogated",
so that for example no less than seventy verses are declared to have been
abrogated because they are incompatible with the legitimacy of fighting; this,
he says, clashes with the fact that the Qurʾān is supposed to be the primary
source of Islam.[161] He could have added that commenting verse by verse makes
it almost impossible not to be swept away by the tradition (the only exegete
who has managed to be completely original in that genre seems to be Sayyid
Quṭb). Shaltūt's reluctance to invoke the theory of abrogation is characteristic
of all modern exegetes: not one of them, whether modernist or Islamist, holds
Q. 2:256 to be abrogated. But though thematic *tafsīr* has risen to prominence
since he wrote, the *musalsal* genre seems to be as popular as ever.

d. Another solution, particularly popular in the West today, is to imply that
jihād in the sense of holy war is an Orientalist misconception, usually on the
grounds that the word *jihād* does not really mean fighting and that true *jihād*
is spiritual battling against one's own evil inclinations, often known as the
Greater *Jihād*.[162] This is really more of a diversionary tactic than a solution

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160   Faḍlallāh, *Waḥy*, vol. 5, p. 27; *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, Beirut 1957, vol. 3, pp. 162 f.; compare
Shaltūt in Peters, *Jihad*, pp. 99 f.

161   M. Shaltūt, *al-Qurʾān waʾl-qitāl*, tr. Peters, *Jihad*, pp. 60 ff. and cf. the analysis, pp. 103 ff.
Cf. also K. Zebiri, *Maḥmūd Shaltūt and Islamic Modernism*, Oxford 1993, ch. VIII; his
reluctance "to evaluate the Qurʾān by any criterion except itself" is noted at p. 161.

162   For an example see A. Rahman, *Islam: Ideology and the Way of Life*, London 1980 (dis-
tributed by the Muslim Schools Trust), ch. XV, where *jihād* is declared the most misunder-

since spiritual *jihād* was never meant to replace the type enjoined in the law, however important it was deemed to be. One does not find this solution in *tafsīr*s.

All in all, it is probably fair to say that just as most educated Muslims today assume the *lā ikrāha* verse to be a declaration of universal tolerance, so most of them hold *jihād* to be defensive and dismiss Western-style historians who say otherwise as biased against Islam. It is of course up to the believers to decide what they want their Islamic institutions to be today, and most people are probably cheered by their definition of *jihād* as defensive, as also by the modernist unders|tanding of the *lā ikrāha* verse. What Western-style historians deny is simply that this is how either was understood in the past.

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Historians and believers tend to misunderstand each other because the believers typically reinterpret their doctrines without acknowledging that this is what they are doing, projecting their modern beliefs back into the past. Historians who show that Muslims held different views in the past are seen as trying to undermine the validity of beliefs prevailing today, sometimes because the believers find it impossible to distinguish past Muslims from themselves (unless they disagree with them) and sometimes because doctrinal change is not recognized as legitimate. There is an instructive example of such backprojection in the furore over Pope Benedict XVI's treatment of the *lā ikrāha* verse in his speech at Regensburg on 12th September, 2006. The Pope mentioned that according to some experts, Q. 2:256 probably dated from "the early period, when Mohammed was still powerless and under threat" and that other rules had later been added concerning holy war; in other words, he adopted the traditional interpretation according to which the verse had been revealed in Mecca and abrogated in Medina.[163] Thirty-eight Muslim scholars responded (as did an Islamicist) that he was wrong:[164] the verse had been revealed in Medina in con-

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stood Islamic concept: non-Muslims always take it to mean war and fighting, and many Orientalists take it to be a duty to propagate Islam by means of force. Like Shaltūt, he bases his account entirely on the Qurʾān (including Q. 2:256).

163   Zenit News Agency—The World Seen from Rome, at http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/papal-address-at-university-of-regensburg. The response of the thirty-eight Muslim scholars quotes the Pope as saying "according to the experts" rather than "according to some of the experts", which makes the claim unduly sweeping. What he actually said I do not know. The website identifies the version quoted as the version he read.

164   The Islamicist is Juan Cole, who thinks the Pope ought to apologize to the Muslims for getting his facts so wrong as to claim that the verse was revealed in Mecca and later abrogated, cf. his "Informed Comment" at http://www.juancole.com/2006/09/pope-gets-it-wrong-on-islam-pope.html.

nection with some Jews or Christians who had wanted to force their children to convert to Islam, as one could read in al-Ṭabarī and other early commentators; it did not date from the period when the Muslims were weak and powerless, but rather from their period of political ascendance, and it taught them that "they could not force another's heart to believe".[165]

The Pope's choice of the interpretation according to which the verse had been abrogated is unlikely to have been innocent. One can however read the interpretation he discussed in al-Ṭabarī, too, and the Pope did at least acknowledge that there were other views on the meaning. One might have expected the thirty-eight Muslim scholars to respond that he was out of date, and that he was about as right about modern Islam as a Muslim cleric citing Thomas Aquinas would be about modern Christianity. But this is not what they said. Instead, they wrote as if the interpretation adopted by the Pope was simply mistaken, and corrected him with reference to another traditional interpretation; and in so doing, they read the verse as a negative prohibition in connection with the Anṣārīs, but reformulated it in their presentation of its enduring message as a factual statement about the impossibility of coercing the inner man: it was this hybrid that they claimed to have read in al-Ṭabarī and other early exegetes. (Whether they were tacitly reserving the right to use force against outer man one cannot tell.) In other words, they engaged in what to a historian was misrepresentation of their own tradition, refusing to | acknowledge that past Muslims had subscribed to doctrines that they themselves no longer believed to be valid.

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Modern-educated Muslims who dismiss Western-style historians as biased against Islam are more often than not ignorant of their own tradition, but that certainly cannot be true of the thirty-eight scholars. They were writing as theologians staking out a position, not as historians, however; and to a historian they were guilty of traducing the past. Had one put this to them, however, they might have responded that historians are guilty of traducing the present, for by insisting that the past must be understood in its own light, historians remove the support of the tradition from the present; if change is a sign of falsehood, historians undermine the authority of current interpretations by showing them to be historically conditioned rather than perennial truths. The relationship between believers and historians would not be so tense if the possibility of legitimate doctrinal change were acknowledged, but it rarely is, in

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165   http://www.islamicamagazine.com/online-analysis/open-letter-to-his-holiness-pope
        -benedict-xvi.html [Ed.: The URL is now defunct, but the letter can be accessed at http://
        ammanmessage.com/media/openLetter/english.pdf.].

part no doubt because Muslims are feeling on the defensive. So the two parties tend to misunderstand each other, as one sees with depressing frequency in discussions of *jihād*.

Apostates and Heretics

If Q. 2:256 is a declaration of religious freedom, how can Islamic law decree death for apostates? The pre-modern exegetes do not often discuss this question. As we have seen, al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) explicitly notes that apostates are an exception to the grant of tolerance (they are not in the category of infidels from whom *jizya* can be taken, as the jurists will say). In the same vein the modern Saudi exegete al-Ḥamd presents the death penalty for apostasy as a given fact in the light of which the Qurʾānic verse has to be interpreted, and since he explicitly rejects the concept of religious freedom, this is perfectly coherent.[166] Others only discuss forced apostasy, i.e. the secularisation they see their governments as imposing on them: the verse shows that nobody can be forced to enter Islam or to leave it, al-Khaṭīb al-Mawṣilī says, deftly avoiding the question whether one can be forced to stay in it. There can be no *ikrāh ʿalā tarkihi*, as the Iranian Ṣādiqī says, again without a word about apostates.[167] There is much discussion of apostasy in English, often in the context of human rights and often on the web, almost always in a liberal vein. The website Religioustolerance.org, for example, tells us that "There is a very strong movement within Islam which argues *'Let there be no compulsion in the religion …'*. They also point out that there is no historical record which indicates that Muhammad (pbuh) or any of his companions ever sentenced anyone to death for apostasy. The hadiths (sayings of Muhammad) which seem to call for execution are very weak and suspect".[168] Even if all the reports were authentic, the fact that the infallible Imams are no longer with us means that we | cannot execute the penalty they call for, the Imāmī Kadivar observes.[169] "Islam does not punish departure from

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166 Ḥamd, *Tahdhīb*, vol. 2, p. 182.

167 Ṣādiqī, *Furqān*, vol. 3, p. 223.

168 http://www.religioustolerance.org/isl_apos.htm. It is a fair summary of the argument of Rahman, *Punishment of Apostasy*. Cf. also M.H. Kamali, *Freedom of Expression in Islam*, revised edition, Cambridge 1997, ch. IX, where Q. 2:256 is endorsed as the Qurʾānic norm and the traditional doctrine is rejected as politically motivated. Note also the objections of Radzuan Halim to the Islamic State Document issued by Parti Islam SeMalaysia which invokes Q. 2:256 for non-Muslims alone, insisting that Muslims must abide by their religion ("Radzuan's reasons: the Islamic State Document", *The Edge* (Singapore), 22nd December 2003, p. 4 of 6 in my ILL copy).

169 Kadivar, "Freedom of thought" (dismissing the traditions on the grounds that they are *āḥād*).

it (*al-khurūj ʿan al-islām*), only revolt against it" (*al-khurūj ʿalayhi*), as an article on Q. 2:256 in the Lebanese newspaper *al-Ḥayāt* declared in July 2006.[170] But the debate still comes across as subdued; and as might be expected, no *tafsīr musalsal* seems to voice such views.

Muslim Dissenters

If apostates are rarely mentioned in discussions of Q. 2:256 (at least in the works known to me), dissenters are completely absent, except, as has been seen, in Ismaili works. To this day the Ismailis remain the only Muslims to have interpreted "no compulsion in religion" as an affirmation of the right to hold dissident views without being outlawed. Other Muslims assumed the *lā ikrāha* verse to be about infidels alone, taking the verses on correcting wrong practices and beliefs (*al-amr bi'l-maʿruf wa'l-nahy ʿan al-munkar*) to be about fellow-Muslims. The two injunctions were rarely considered together, and this remains true today as well, even though it is common for *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf* to be considered in relation to modern freedoms of other kinds.[171] But a few attempts have been made to relate them, in the context of the enforcement of public morality rather than belief.

One pre-modern example seems to be known: the Damascene scholar ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī (d. 1143/1731) invoked *lā ikrāha* and other tolerance verses to forbid the use of force in the performance of the duty of *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf* by laymen.[172] Nowadays, people also seek protection in the *lā ikrāha* verse when they are tyrannized by Islamists. Thus the Lebanese Faḍlallāh complains in his publication of 1983 that some people have impugned the legitimacy of using force in the performance of the duty to correct "with the hand" on the grounds that coercion in religious matters is forbidden (his response is that there is no point in having a law if people are free to disobey it and that "Islam does not believe in this individual freedom, but rather legislates for the individual in his private as in his public life"). It is presumably in response to similar objections that the Iranian Imāmī al-Ṣādiqī claims that the use of force by way of *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf* is not really compulsion, given that people are being made to practise what they themselves believe.[173] On November 19th, 2005, the Lebanese newspaper *al-Ḥayāt* carried an article by a Lebanese professor of

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170   Al-Ṭayyib Bū ʿAzza, "Dalālat āyat 'lā ikrāha fi 'l-dīn' ... qirāʾa lughawiyya wa-ukhrā muʿāṣira", *al-Ḥayāt*, 15th July 2006, issue no. 15807 (drawn to my attention by Mona Zaki). Q. 10:99 is also cited.

171   Cf. Cook, *Commanding Right*, pp. 512 ff.

172   Cook, *Commanding Right*, p. 326.

173   Faḍlallāh, *Waḥy*, vol. 5, pp. 28 f.; Ṣādiqī, *Furqān*, p. 223.

Islamic studies suggesting that the *lā ikrāha* verse should be read as forbidding Muslims to compel fellow-Muslims in matters Islamic.[174] Explicitly directed against the use of *takfīr* and religious violence today, it argued that this was compatible with the duty of *al-amr bi'l-maʿruf on* the assumption that changing things "with the hand" did not mean using violence, but rather engaging | in any practical activity likely to change the world for the better; in the author's view, the duty of *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf* had so far been understood in too narrow a vein as concerned with alcohol, entertainment and women's clothing rather than moral issues. How this was received I do not know, but it seems likely that there will be further developments along these lines in the future.

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Late Antiquity and the Qurʾān

The reader who has got this far has now read some 17,000 words in explanation of a mere four. Just what did those four words mean when they were first uttered, he or she may wearily be asking. The short answer is that we do not know. The long answer is that while we do not know, some suggestions can be made.

The first point to note is that the words plainly are not meant in a lawgiving vein. They are preceded by the throne verse, a sublime description of God: "There is no god but He, the living, the everlasting. No slumber seizes Him, nor any sleep. His are all things in the heavens as on earth. Who can intercede with Him except with His permission? ..." (2:255). Our verse continues in the same exalted style: "No compulsion is there in religion. Right guidance has become clear from error. Whoever rejects idols (*al-ṭāghūt*) and places his faith in God, he has grasped the firm rope which cannot break ...". And 2:257 concludes, still in the same elevated style, that "God is the friend of those who have faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them into His light. Those who reject faith, their friends are idols (*al-ṭāghūt*), who will lead them from light into the depths of darkness ...". The pericope is a glorification of God intended to persuade the audience to join His side, not to introduce a new rule of conduct. That there is no place for compulsion in religion is mentioned as a well-known fact which serves to highlight the self-evident nature of what you must do: nobody is forcing you, choose what you like, but do you want to end up in Hell? The alternatives are presented in such a way that no sensible person could choose not to be on God's side, as many exegetes commented.

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174   Suʿād al-Ḥakīm, "ʿLā ikrāha fī ʾl-dīn' ... qirāʾa jadīda fī maʿnā ʾl-ḥurriyya al-dīniyya", *al-Ḥayāt*, 19th November 2005, issue no. 15571, supplement on *turāth*, 18 (drawn to my attention by Mona Zaki).

That this seemingly obvious reading of the verse is not standard in the Islam-icist literature reflects the fact that modern Islamicists tend to be remarkably faithful to the mediaeval method of *tafsīr*, which they imbibe as part of their training: they do not read the verse as part of the pericope in which it appears, but rather detach it from its context to interpret it in the light of the history of the early Muslim community as known from tradition.[175] That the throne verse and Q. 2:256 belong together is a common exegetical view, and that the entire passage from 2:255 to 2:257 should be read as a unit had been proposed by unknown exegetes already by the time of Ālūsī (d. 1270/1854).[176] The trend that they and others (such as Shaltūt) represent is important. In general, scholars who study the Qurʾān as historians, writing mainly in Western languages, seem to be lagging behind those who study | it as believers, writing mainly in Arabic: for purposes of understanding what the book originally meant, as opposed to what its readers later made of it, we too must read it independently of the tradition.

That still leaves us with the question whether it is God or humans whom the verse declares not to be forcing you. The Muʿtazilites could be right that it is God, but it is not the most obvious reading. For one thing, God is the subject of verses 255 and 257, but not of 256, suggesting that a different agent is envisaged. For another, the statement that coercion has no place in religion implies that it does have a place elsewhere, which would be an odd distinction to make with God in mind. Above all, there are several other "tolerance verses" in the Qurʾān, above all Q. 10:99, so often adduced as a parallel by the exegetes: *If your Lord had wanted it, every one on earth would believe, all of them; so will you force people* (a-fa-anta tukrihu 'l-nāsa) *to become believers?* Here it is explicitly *ikrāh* by humans as distinct from God which is being rejected. By contrast, Q. 2:256 would be the only verse in which God is said to abstain from *ikrāh*. One would thus be inclined to agree with the earliest exegetes that *lā ikrāha fī 'l-dīn* refers to the absence of human coercion.

If this is accepted, the pericope reflects a milieu in which everyone knew that one could not use compulsion in matters of religion, in the sense that it was wrong to do so (whether actually forbidden by the law or otherwise). This

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175   It is this method that Shaltūt rebelled against (cf. above, note 161), as did others in Pakistan about the same time (cf. M. Mir, *Coherence in the Qurʾān*, Indianapolis, IN, 1986, drawn to my attention by J. Witztum). For a good example, see R. Paret, "Sure 2, 256: *lā ikrāha fī d-dīni*. Toleranz oder Resignation?", *Der Islam* 45 (1969), pp. 299 f.; or id., *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz*, Stuttgart 1980, *ad* 2:256.

176   Ālūsī, *Rūḥ*, vol. 3, p. 18 (where the view is rejected). It is also reported in Aṭfayyish, *Taysīr*, vol. 1, p. 412. For its likely roots, compare M. Mir, *Coherence in the Qurʾān*, pp. 17 ff.

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in its turn tells us that we are within the orbit of Greco-Roman culture in its late antique phase. The concept of religious freedom was pioneered by the North African Christian Tertullian (d. after 220), who also gave the concept its name (*libertas religionis*). "It is ordained by both man-made and natural law that each person may worship whatever he wishes", he said. "It is not for religion to compel religion (*nec religionis est cogere religionem*), which is something taken up voluntarily, not under duress".[177] In the same vein another North African, Lactantius (wrote c. 300–317), merging prescription and description, said that "There is no need of force and injury, because religion cannot be forced …"; "religion ought to be defended, not by killing but by dying, not by fury but by patience, not by crime but by faith … There is nothing so voluntary as religion".[178] Thereafter we encounter the concept in Greek: "I do not consider it good practice to coerce people instead of persuading them", Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 389 or 90) said, gently chiding the emperor Theodosius while at the same time praising him for "winning over everybody gently and setting up voluntary action as the unwritten law of persuasion".[179] "Christians are not allowed to use force or violence to combat error. They must provide for the salvation of men by persuasion, reason, and gentleness", as John Chrysostom (d. 407) said.[180] By his time, the claim was widely out of step with actual practice, and indeed with his own recommendations elsewhere ("Slap them in the face, strike them around the mouth, sanctify your hand by the blow", as he famously told the Antiochenes with | reference to blasphemers).[181] None the less, the Christians continued to see themselves as people who converted and corrected others without recourse to force since this was how they were described in the Gospels and other foundational sources. That their religion had spread without use of the sword was a point they were to make time and again in polemics against Islam.[182]

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177 Tertullian (d. after 220), *Ad scapulam*, 2.2; cited in P. Garnsey, "Religious toleration in classical antiquity", in W.J. Sheils (ed.), *Persecution and Toleration*, Padstow 1984, pp. 14 f. and cf. p. 16.

178 Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, v. 19.11, 22 f. (tr. M.F. McDonald, Washington 1964, pp. 378, 379 f.).

179 Gregory Nazianzus, "Concerning his own life", tr. D.M. Meehan, *Three Poems*, Washington 1987, p. 113.

180 John Chrysostom, *Discours sur Babylas*, ed. and tr. M. Schatkin, Paris 1990, p. 13.

181 M. Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 2005, p. 15, citing his *Homilies on the Statues*, 1.32; cf. R. MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries*, New Haven and London 1997, p. 169, note 35.

182 See for example Abū Qurra and Abū Rā'iṭa in S.H. Griffith, "Faith and reason in Chris-

By the fourth century it was the turn of the pagans to stress the voluntary nature of religion: "There are things which escape constraint and are superior to threat and injunction, such as all the virtues and above all, reverence for the Divine", the philosopher Themistius (wrote 364) said, stressing that the emperor had provided legal freedom for every citizen to practise his own faith in imitation of God who "has decreed that the manner of worship be left to the decision of each individual: the man who applies force takes upon himself the authority which God has given up".[183] Libanius (d. c. 393) repeatedly pleaded with the authorities for tolerance of non-Christian religions (not just his own): "In such matters one must persuade, not compel".[184] The orator Symmachus (d. 402) goes so far as to endorse pluralism: "What does it matter by which wisdom each of us arrives at truth? It is not possible that only one road leads to so sublime a mystery".[185]

By the end of the fourth century, however, Theodosius I (379–395) had ordered the pagan temples to be closed and banned public and private sacrifices along with other pagan devotional acts, classifying them as treason punishable by death (though well over half the population of the Roman empire may still have been pagan at the time).[186] Thereafter life became increasingly

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tian Kalām: Theodore Abū Qurrah on discerning the true religion", in S.Kh. Samir and J.S. Nielsen (eds.), *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period*, Leiden 1994, pp. 21 f., 37; ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-burhān*, ed. M. Hayek, *Apologie et controverses*, Beirut 1977, pp. 33 ff.; Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq in Kh. Samir and P. Nwyia (eds. and trs.), *Une correspondance Islamo-Chrétienne entre Ibn al-Munağğim, Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq et Qusṭā ibn Lūqā* (Patrologia Orientalis 40, fasc. 4, no. 1850), Turnhout 1981, "Risāla" 4, no. 185; cf. ʿAbd al-Jabbār's summary of their arguments, *Tathbīt dalāʾil al-nubuwwa*, ed. ʿA.-K. ʿUthmān, Beirut 1966, pp. 173 f. For the charge that Islam had been spread by force, see also ʿAbd al-Masīḥ al-Kindī, *Risāla*, tr. G. Tartar, *Dialogue Islamo-chrétien sous le calife al-Maʾmūn*, Paris 1985, pp. 144, 167 ff., 227; Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, pp. 375 ff.

183　Themistius, *Oratio* 5, 67c, in L.J. Daly, "Themistius' plea for religious tolerance", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 12 (1971), p. 73 (slightly modified); also tr. P. Heather and D. Moncur, *Politics, Philosophy and Empire in the Fourth Century: Select Orations of Themistius*, Liverpool 2001, p. 166.

184　R. van Loy (tr.), "Le 'Pro Templis' de Libanius", *Byzantion* 8 (1933), 30 (§ 29). This speech was occasioned by the rampages of the fourth-century equivalent of the Taleban. Cf. also his letter in defence of Manichaeans (Ep. 1253) in S.N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in Mesopotamia and the Roman East*, Leiden 1994, p. 55.

185　Symmachus, *Relatio III*, 10, cited in MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism*, p. 169, note 35 (ed. and tr. in J. Wytzes, *Der letzte Kampf des Heidentums in Rom*, Leiden 1977, p. 207); cf. also Garnsey, "Religious toleration", p. 23.

186　K.W. Harl, "Sacrifice and pagan belief in fifth- and sixth-century Byzantium", *Past and Present* 126 (1990), pp. 7, 15.

difficult for pagans, and for Jews, Samaritans and dissident Christians too. Under Justinian (d. 565) even | pagans who had "decided to espouse in word the name of Christians" were persecuted along with Manichaeans, Samaritans, Jews, Sabbatians, Montanists, Arians and others.[187] ("These crucifiers of the son of God should not be allowed to live at all", as a sixth-century Syrian saint declared before setting fire to a synagogue.)[188] Tiberius II (d. 582) and Maurice (d. 602) also persecuted pagans;[189] and in 632, under Heraclius (d. 641), the Jews and Samaritans were forcibly converted.[190] Justinian's policies did strike some as excessively intolerant. "As the Deity allows various religions to exist, I do not dare impose one alone. For I remember reading that we should sacrifice to the Lord of our own will, not at the command of anyone who compels us. He who tries to do otherwise clearly opposes the heavenly decree", the Ostrogothic king Theodahad (d. 536) wrote to the emperor,[191] using much the same argument as Q. 10:99. The historian Procopius (d. after 562) also disapproved, though he obviously could not be so outspoken. According to him, when the rural people were compelled to abandon their ancestral faith, they rebelled, to be cut down by soldiers or to take their own lives, in the case of the Montanists by shutting themselves up in their churches and setting fire to them, or fleeing from their homelands, so that "the whole Roman empire was filled with murder and with exiled men", while the Samaritans, resenting being made to change the beliefs of their fathers, "not by their own free choice, but under compulsion of the law", instantly inclined to the Manichaeans and "the Polytheists, as they are called".[192] Procopius also deemed it folly to enquire into the precise nature of God when humans could not even

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187 Procopius, *Anecdota*, tr. H.B. Dewing, London and Cambridge, MA, 1969, vol. 11, p. 32; M. Meier, *Das andere Zeitalter Justinians*, Göttingen 2003, pp. 202 ff., 298 ff.

188 John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, ed. and tr. E.W. Brooks, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, ed. R. Graffin and F. Nau, vol. 17, Paris 1923, pp. 90 f.

189 Dionysius of Tell-Maḥré (reconstituted from the *Chronicle ad 1234* and Michael the Syrian) in A. Palmer, S. Brock and R. Hoyland (trs.), *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, Liverpool 1993, p. 114 (§ 5, on Ḥarrān); I. Rochow, "Die Heidenprozesse unter den Kaisern Tiberios II, Konstantinos und Maurikios", in H. Köpstein and F. Winkelmann (eds.), *Studien zum 7. Jahrhundert in Byzanz. Probleme der Herausbildung des Feudalismus*, Berlin 1976.

190 G. Dagron and V. Déroche, "Juifs et chrétiens dans l'orient du VIIe siècle", *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991), pp. 30 ff.

191 A. Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity*, Philadelphia 2004, p. 168, citing Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 10:26.

192 Procopius, *Anecdota*, vol. 11, pp. 21–27.

understand human things properly: "let each say about these things whatever he thinks he knows, both priest and layman".[193]

Sura 2:256 must be downstream of all this, for what it expresses is a principle inconceivable in a genuinely pagan world. There was no religious freedom in the pagan Near East and Mediterranean before the rise of Christianity because civic religion was separate from the pursuit of absolute truths and otherworldly salvation (if any). Each ethnic and political community had its own gods; with the partial exception of the Jews, no one claimed exclusive access to the divine or denied other people's gods, not because everybody was tolerant, but rather because what religion stood for was a particular a set of laws and customs to which one adhered by virtue of having been born into the community in question. Religion was the ways of the ancestors, the worship that had kept your community alive, not a set of | universally true beliefs.[194] It was in philosophy that universally valid tenets were to be found, and one was certainly free to choose one's own philosophy, just as one was free to seek individual salvation in mystery religions and additional cults of other kinds. But this freedom did not rest on a principle, merely on the fact that such pursuits were not a matter of public interest as long as the demands of civic religion were respected.

The rise of Christianity changed all this by postulating a God who was true for everyone, irrespective of who or where or what one was, and who had to be worshipped, not in addition to one's ancestral religion or imperial cult, but rather instead of them. The Christians behaved as if civic religion was a matter of choice, and it was in response to the persecutions that they thereby brought upon themselves that they stressed the freedom of the individual to choose his or her own beliefs. The rise of Christianity deeply affected the pagan concept of religion as well, not only in the sense that the pagans began to defend the diversity of religions that they had hitherto taken for granted, but also in the sense that they too came to see religion as a matter of individual choice. Themistius's claim that moral and religious matters lay outside the sphere of legislation is an astonishing one for a champion of Hellenism, as Garnsey remarks.[195]

Lā ikrāha fī 'l-dīn is closer in wording to the snappy formulations of Tertullian and Lactantius than to those of the Greek Christians, let alone the pagan philosophers (whose views on the many roads leading to the same truth reappear in the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*).[196] But what matters is that the concept of

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193   Kaldellis, *Procopius*, p. 170, citing Procopius, *Gothic Wars*, vol. 5, pp. 3, 6.

194   Garnsey, "Religious toleration", pp. 11, 13, 24.

195   Garnsey, "Religious toleration", p. 21 and cf. p. 23.

196   *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, vol. 3, pp. 30f.

religion reflected in the verse is that of late antiquity, not that of a genuinely pagan world beyond it. In Q. 2:256 as elsewhere in the Qurʾān, religion is a set of beliefs about a single universal God freely chosen by the individual, not communal ways centering on an ancestral god or gods. The Qurʾān nowhere addresses its message to an ethnic or political group in the manner of the Old Testament. It opens its statements with vocatives such as "O you who believe", never "O you Arabs" or "O you Quraysh" (*yā maʿshar al-ʿArab/Quraysh*); it never casts Allāh as the ancestral god of the Arabs, as opposed to of mankind at large; and though the *mushrikūn* frequently justify their beliefs as ancestral, they never charge the believers with treasonable neglect of the civic/tribal cult by failure to venerate the deity or deities of the forefathers, to perform the customary sacrifices, or to engage in other venerable rites. The issue between the believers and the polytheists (and Jews and Christians) in the Qurʾān is universal truths to do with God's relationship with lesser beings on the one hand and the reality and imminence of the judgement and resurrection on the other, not civic religion. Wherever exactly we are in Arabia, we are in a place that formed a cultural continuum with the Christian world around it, sharing its basic presuppositions and speaking the same cultural language, except that it formulated itself in a distinctive local idiom of its own and was somewhat out of date: Q. 2:256 articulates a norm which had come to be honoured more in the breach than in the observance in the region in which it had originated.

What we encounter here seems to be a time-lag in the exchange of ideas between populations separated by linguistic, cultural and geographical distance, | yet close enough in all these terms to engage in polemics. We see it today too. Just as Westerners tend to envisage Muslims as embodiments of their pre-modern heritage (and, in the case of Islamicists, to interpret the Qurʾān in the light of pre-modern exegesis), so Muslims are given to presenting Islam as endorsing free will and casting its founder as unaffected by sexual desire, in both cases in response to ideas which emanated from the West, but which are now of dwindling significance in the West itself. Similarly, freedom of religion no longer prevailed in the Roman Empire, but among some people of Arabia it was still a live principle, as the many "tolerance verses" of the Qurʾān show: converts had to be won by persuasion; fighting over religion was regarded as morally wrong, so that war, when it came, required much justification.[197]

Both Christianity and Islam began as freely chosen systems of belief about the nature of ultimate reality, but both had strong implications for the social

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197   Cf. *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. J.D. McAuliffe, Leiden 2001–2006, s.v. "War" [Ed.: included as article 8 in the present volume], pp. 456 f.

and political order in which they had grown up, and both eventually became civic religions as well. One could still convert to Christianity and Islam after they had become state religions (whereas one could not in any real sense of the word convert to a pagan religion, as opposed to simply add a cult or a philosophy); but one was not free to abandon the religion again, for it now embraced the laws and customs to which all members of the polity were expected to adhere. Apostasy was treason; the only way to abandon the religion was to go and live elsewhere. Religion now performed the function of nationality in the modern world, that is to say it gave people their civic status: to be without a religion was to be stateless, an outlaw without rights or duties. Under these circumstances religious freedom became undesirable. You cannot be free to choose your own nationality while continuing to claim the rights and duties of a citizen, nor can you be free to adopt whatever definition you like of what being a citizen entails; and if you want to live in a country as a non-citizen, you cannot choose your own rules for foreign residents. A modern citizen can renounce his citizenship without being regarded as a traitor, but it would be strange for him to do so without going to live elsewhere. In the same way, people were not free to adopt any religion they liked while claiming status as members of a Christian or a Muslim polity, nor were they free to interpret the official religion in any way they liked; and if they wanted to live in these polities without adhering to the official religion, there were rules for protected peoples to be obeyed. In short, there cannot be religious freedom where the political community is based on religion. This was why the exegetes had to interpret the *lā ikrāha* verse by recourse to the postulates of abrogation and the far-fetched interpretations that Shaltūt spoke so scathingly about.

There were times in Islamic history when the tension between Islam as beliefs about ultimate reality and Islam as civic religion was strongly felt: the tenth and eleventh centuries are the most obvious example. But though the intellectual elite at the time began to go down the road that Europe was to take from the sixteenth century onwards, they only belittled the importance of the civic sphere; they never went so far as to define it out of the religion. Religious freedom was still something undesirable when the rise of a by now secularised Europe made it something so prestigious that Islam had to have it even though it contravened the principle of religion as nationality. Thus began the great rediscovery of the fact that there is | freedom of religion in the Qurʾān and the gradual dismemberment of the tradition. As the Islamists so clearly see, there is only one way to stop this dismemberment, namely to restore a political community based on religion. Whether they can do it is another question.

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This bibliography lists all the sources for Muslim interpretations of Q. 2:256 cited in this article, including *tafsīr*s mentioned only for their silence on the verse and non-*tafsīr* works in which interpretations were found. Only one death-date is given even when several are recorded. Further information about the exegetes and their works can be found in M.Ḥ. al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa'l-mufassirūn*, Cairo 1976–1989, and ʿĀ. Nuwayhiḍ, *Muʿjam al-mufassirīn*, Beirut 1983–1984, in addition to standard Islamicist reference works and editorial introductions.

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Islam and Religious Freedom[*]

Islam and religious freedom: that's a big topic. To deal with all of it in one lecture would be rather like excavating a whole city in one season. I shall have to make do with just digging a trench. My trench will take the form of an examination of the different interpretations, from the earliest times until today, of the Quranic statement, "There is no compulsion in religion" (2:256). Actually, I could not possibly cover all that in one lecture either, but that's not too much of a problem, for all the major pre-modern interpretations were in place by the tenth century. So first I shall deal with the interpretations up to the tenth century, then I shall jump to the twentieth century and deal with the modernists, the Islamists and the context in which you may all have heard about the verse recently, namely the controversy over the Pope's speech at Regensburg in September 2006.

The Pope was just one out of many people to talk about this verse. You hear a lot about it these days. When the American journalist Jill Carroll was kidnapped in Iraq in January 2006, her kidnappers tried to convert her to Islam, but insisted that there was "no pressure" (= "no compulsion") on her to convert. A friend of mine recently spotted the statement on a bumper sticker: "No compulsion in Islam", it said; and you can read a lot about the verse on many websites too.

So why is there so much fuss about this statement? Well, one reason is that it expresses a tolerant view that Westerners like to hear, so it is a good passage to dispel their prejudices about Islam with. But it is also a statement of great importance in connection with the question whether Islam can coexist with a secular sphere: is Islam | a belief system that you can combine with any political order that you like—as long as it is religiously neutral? Or is it a religion that dictates its own political order? That's a key issue today, and the "no compulsion" verse figures in the discussion. But you can't appreciate what people say about it today without knowing the traditional interpretations, so as I said, we have to look at the pre-modern exegetes. They start round about 720–750 AD.

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[*] This lecture is based on P. Crone, 'No Compulsion in Religion: Q. 2:256 in Medieval and Modern Interpretation', in M.A. Amir-Moezzi, M.M. Bar-Asher, and S. Hopkins (eds.), *Le shīʿisme imāmite quarante ans après*, Turnhout 2009, 131–178 [Ed.: included as article 13 in the present volume], to which the reader is referred for documentation.

The Six Interpretations

La ikrāha fī ʾl-dīn, "There's no compulsion in religion": to our modern ears it sounds like a declaration of unlimited religious freedom. It sounded that way to the earliest exegetes too, so in principle they could have said, this verse shows that Muslims must reject the use of compulsion in religious matters and that everyone must be free to choose his own religious beliefs. But in practice, they could not, and did not, say anything of the kind. Because if it is up to the individual to choose his own religion, then you can't have a polity based on religion; if religion is a private matter, then the public space is secular, in the sense of based on some non-religious principle, such as territory or nationality, or whatever else a large number of people can feel they have in common. The exegetes lived in a polity based on Islam. Islam had *created* the public space they shared. For as you know, Islam had not grown up *within* a state, the way Christianity had; rather, it had created its own state. You obviously can't have religious freedom in a community based on religion. You can't have religious freedom in a church. All you can have is freedom to *leave* the church, if you don't agree with it. But in a society based on shared religion you can't easily have that freedom either unless you remove yourself physically, to go to live somewhere else.

So the "no compulsion" verse was a problem to the earliest exegetes, and they reacted by interpreting it restrictively, in one of three ways.

One solution was to say that the verse had been abrogated. It was generally agreed that God sometimes repealed a verse in favour of another without removing the text of the old one from the book. So some exegetes said that the verse had been revealed in Mecca, when Muḥammad had no power: God was telling him that he could not and should not try to force the infidels to convert. But when he moved to Medina | and set up a state of his own, God ordered him to wage holy war against the infidels. So the proclamation of religious freedom to the infidels was abrogated. In short, religious freedom had come and gone.

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Another solution was to say that the verse had been revealed in Medina in connection with some problems of purely historical relevance, to do with children of the Medinese: there were people in Medina whose children had been brought up by Jews, and so had become Jewish, or there were some who had converted to Christianity back in the days before the coming of Islam. When Muḥammad came to Medina, the parents wanted these (by now adult) children to become Muslims and tried to force them, so this verse was revealed telling them to stop. This interpretation tied the verse to a unique historical situation. It hadn't been formally abrogated, it just had no relevance any more,

for no situation like that could arise again. For good measure some adherents of this scenario added that the verse had been abrogated. So this second solution was really a less drastic version of the first.

The third solution also said that the verse had been revealed in Medina, but it placed its revelation in a later context to do with defeated infidels. According to this third interpretation, the verse was about protected people (*dhimmī*s). *Dhimmī*s were Jews, Christians and other non-Muslims who had passed under Muslim rule and been allowed to retain their own religion in return for the payment of *jizya*, poll-tax. Legally, they were not members of the Muslim community, just protégés of it. The third interpretation was to the effect that the verse prohibited forced conversion of *dhimmī*s. Actually, all the jurists agreed anyway that *dhimmī*s could not be forced to convert, so this was really just a way of finding something for the verse to do, but it had the advantage of giving the rule a memorable formulation, and we actually know of real cases where the verse was invoked to protect the right of *dhimmī*s to retain their religion. So on the third interpretation the verse was indeed a proclamation of religious freedom, but only for *dhimmī*s, not for Muslims or mankind at large.

So these were the three positions advanced by the earliest exegetes: the verse had been abrogated, or it had lost relevance, or it applied only to *dhimmī*s. These are the canonical interpretations—the interpretations of the equivalent of the church fathers—and you'll find one, or two or all three of them in every commentary on the | Quran down to modern times, and quite often in modern ones as well. They all had the merit of making the verse compatible with the use of force for the maintenance and expansion of the Muslim community. It did not clash with the rule that apostates had to be executed, or with the use of force against internal dissenters, for it wasn't about Muslims. Nor did it clash with the duty to wage *jihād* to bring all mankind under Muslim sovereignty, for it only granted freedom to infidels after they'd been subjected.

So the problem had been solved. But you aren't going to get off that lightly. There are more interpretations that you need to know about.

The three canonical interpretations rest on the assumption that the verse should be understood as laying down a legal norm: it says that there is no compulsion in religion in the sense that it is morally *wrong* and legally *forbidden* to use force in religious matters. In other words, it is prescriptive. But from the ninth century onwards there were people who wanted to use the verse for purposes of theology rather than law. They included the theologians of the Muʿtazilite school, and according to them, the verse was not prescriptive, but descriptive. It did not condemn or prohibit anything; it was a straightforward factual statement. "There is no compulsion in religion" means just that: there *isn't* any, full stop.

What they meant by this was that when God says that there is no compulsion in the religion, He means that *He* does not practise compulsion. God does not force you to be a believer or an infidel—i.e. He does not predestine or determine it for you: you have free will. This may sound farfetched to you, but the word for determination was *jabr*, compulsion, and the word for free will, or one of them, was *qadar*, power. God was seen as refraining from using His power so that you could have your own; he was abstaining from compulsion—from determination—so that you could choose whether to be a believer or an unbeliever. That's what God was saying here, according to the Mu'tazilites: the verse was a declaration of unlimited freedom from *divine* coercion. God allows you to choose your own salvation. It is just humans who don't: the Mu'tazilites accepted that. They agreed that religious freedom was only for *dhimmī*s. But vis-à-vis God everybody was free to choose for himself.

You'll say, how could the Mu'tazilites hold that humans can use coercion where God won't? Well, they had a second interpretation here. They said that the verse could | also be read as declaring that there is not and cannot really be any such thing as human coercion in religious matters either, for it simply is not possible to force other people to believe. You can only force them to *act* as believers, i.e. to conform on the surface; you can't force them to believe in their innermost hearts. So on the first Mu'tazilite interpretation, God is saying that He won't force people to believe; and on the second Mu'tazilite interpretation, He is saying that you can't do it. In short, in your inner self, your private interior, you are free vis-à-vis humans and God alike.

But your external self was a different matter. You were free as a disembodied soul, not as an embodied social being. As a member of a human society you were subject to coercion in all kinds of ways. Social life is impossible without coercion. There was—still is—no way round that. And since the Muslim polity was based on religion, coercion had to be used in religious matters too. But that didn't contradict the verse according to the Mu'tazilites because the coercion was only applied to the external person: the inner person was free; there was no coercion in religion in the sense of inner conviction. So on their interpretation the verse was not contradicted by the duty to wage holy war or execute apostates either. It was even compatible with forced conversion. It was allowed to force people to become Muslims when they hadn't become *dhimmī*s yet or couldn't become *dhimmī*s, either because they were pagans rather than Christians, Jews or Zoroastrians or because they were slaves. In fact, one Mu'tazilite said that forcing people to convert was a good thing, because sooner or later they or their children would acquire genuine faith: so you would have saved them from eternal hellfire. And you hadn't forced them to accept the truth. In

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their inner hearts they had converted of their own accord. You had only forced them into the Muslim community which made it possible for them to see the truth.

You'll probably react by finding this a self-serving argument, and so it was, of course. It allowed the Muʿtazilites to legitimate the use of force in religious matters while at the same time claiming that there was no such thing. But they weren't *just* being self-serving. When the Muʿtazilites made their sharp distinction between inner conviction and external conformance, what they were saying was that individual salvation was one thing, civic religion was something else. Civic religion was all about keeping Muslim society together in the here and now, it was the religion you had for the public | space, the religion that was good for the social and political order. Your own wishes had to be subordinated to those of the community here. You could not and did not have complete freedom at that level. Here as in other societies, you had to obey the law, and the law happened to be religious. But you could choose your own innermost convictions, your own avenue to salvation. You could believe what you liked as long as you did not endanger the boat that everybody was sailing in.

This distinction between civic religion based on the law and individual conviction based on a freely chosen theology or philosophy or spirituality was quite a marked feature of Muslim thinking in the tenth and the eleventh centuries. Many people saw the law-based, collective religion of the community as something lower and more prosaic than individual spirituality or philosophy or esotericism. They had a strong sense that individuals had needs that went far beyond those served by communal worship. So they distinguished between the external and the internal, the lower and the higher: they saw these two as forming two distinct levels of religion. But they did not go so far as to secularise the lower level. They didn't say that the civic level should have nothing to do with religion at all. Some came close. The Ismāʿīlī Shīʿites initially denied that the civic religion—the law—had any saving power. You were saved by your inner convictions alone. But that put them beyond the pale, so they changed their mind. Being a good social being, a good citizen, did have saving value by common consent, that of the Ismāʿīlīs included. It just wasn't all there was to religion, or even the most important part.

What the Muʿtazilites were saying was that in the higher sphere of religion there was no compulsion. All human beings, not just *dhimmī*s or Muslims, had an inner sanctum that was controlled by themselves alone. They had what you would call freedom of conscience. But this freedom was wholly internal; you couldn't claim it as a social being. And it was deemed to exist as a matter of fact, so it was not protected by the law. It wasn't a right you could claim. All you

could do was to retreat into your inner self, where you were alone with God. Here again the Ismāʿīlīs were an exception: they did award legal protection to individual religiosity. But for everyone else it remains true to say that individual freedom of religion was never given legal expression; it was never allowed to prevail *against* the social order.

The two Muʿtazilite interpretations of the verse, as a statement that God will not and that humans cannot coerce in religious matters, were extremely long-lived. They went into both Shīʿism and Sunnism, where their Muʿtazilite origin was soon forgotten. You'll find those two interpretations along with the canonical three in a fair number of Sunnite and Shīʿite commentaries all the way down to modern times.

Now I've given you five interpretations. I'm sorry, but I have to add a sixth: it takes us back to the prescriptive interpretations. Some people said that the verse did indeed prohibit forced conversion, but not of *dhimmīs*: what it prohibited was forced conversion of *Muslims* to something false, i.e. it said that it was unlawful to force Muslims to renounce Islam. This interpretation was also in place by the tenth century, but it is much less common than the other five. In fact, there were more interpretations, but I shall leave them aside because practically all modern interpretations involve doing things with one or more of these six.

Modernism

So what happens in modern times? Well, what happens is that Europe becomes the dominant power, and the Europeans go around saying that Islam is a backward religion which established itself by force, which lacks the virtue of tolerance, and so on. So Muslims now have to rebut these charges, and the "no compulsion" verse is an obvious one to do it with. As I said, it voices a view that Westerners like. But as I also said, there's more to it. The dominance of the West doesn't just mean that Muslims have to cope with rude remarks from Westerners. It also means that their own traditional pattern of a society based on a religious law begins to looks outmoded. Modernism means *separating* religion from socio-political matters, it means draining law and war of religious significance and basing them instead on secular ideologies such as nationalism or communism, leaving religion as something optional for your private salvation. That's the European pattern; that's what allows for religious toleration; and that's what every self-respecting society now had to claim to have as well in order to count in an era of European dominance. So whereas the early exegetes had to interpret the "no compulsion" verse restrictively, the twentieth-century

exegetes have to widen its meaning again, to read it as a universal declaration
of religious freedom that would | both refute the European charges and provide
an impeccable Quranic basis for something like a separation between religious
and political matters in Islam. The religious scholars start working on the verse
in a modernist vein already around 1900, but it isn't really till the 1940s that they
get going.

So how could they widen the interpretation of the verse without declaring
all the earlier exegetes to be wrong, and so throwing out their entire exegetical
tradition? Well, for one thing they could stop talking about the verse being
abrogated: nobody, absolutely nobody says that it is abrogated anymore, not
even the most conservative Saudis. But then what? Well, the answer is they
could go to the Muʿtazilite strand which was embedded in both the Sunnite
and Shīʿite traditions. The Muʿtazilites had done *some* separation of the public
and the private spheres, the civic and the individual; and if you read them in
the light of modern preoccupations, you'll misunderstand them. You'll engage
in creative reinterpretation, as people will say these days. When a modern
person reads a pre-modern exegete explaining that there is no coercion in
religion because we have to choose for ourselves, he will not see that the
exegete means that *God* does not coerce you; he will take the exegete to be
saying that *we* should not do it. In other words, he will understand a *factual*
statement about the absence of *divine* coercion as a *prescriptive* statement
prohibiting *human* coercion—and that gives him the position he wants. Or
again, if he sees a statement to the effect that religion is confession by the
heart and therefore beyond compulsion, he will read that too as a prohibition
of compulsion, not as a claim that compulsion is all right because it only
affects outer man. From the 1940s onwards you see one exegete after another
adapt the two Muʿtazilite arguments along those modernist lines. Ṭanṭāwī,
the rector of al-Azhar in Cairo [Ed.: until his death in 2010], is among them.
He is actually perfectly familiar with the explanation of the verse as a factual
statement that God doesn't coerce us, but that doesn't stop him from having the
modernist adaptation as well. The modernist (mis)interpretation has become
an independent position in its own right. Countless exegetes have it. More often
than not, they'll tell you that the verse is a declaration of religious freedom
and that this shows Christians to be wrong when they claim that Islam was
spread by force. Along with this they'll often adduce the second canonical
interpretation, about how the verse was revealed when the Medinese wanted to
convert | their Jewish or Christian children to Islam by force: this interpretation
(which had changed already in the centuries not covered here) is now read
as a timeless account of how Islam respects religious differences, not as a
story trying to get rid of the verse by tying it to a bygone historical situation.

Modern exegetes will often add that it isn't possible to convert people by force, meaning that therefore it is prohibited, not that therefore no legal prohibition is necessary.

But of course forced conversion of Jews and Christians isn't the real issue any more. The big issue is Muslim society itself. The laws regulating modern Muslim states are mostly secular: should the civic sphere be wholly secularised? Can Muslims be fully integrated in secular societies in the West? In other words, should religion be something you have *along* with your citizenship rather than *as part of* it? And if yes, should this additional membership be wholly voluntary, so that Muslims would be free to convert to other religions, or to have no religion? The modernists tend to be rather unclear on this: they hide behind the bluster about forced conversion, feeling that if they assert the principle of religious freedom there, then they've paid their respects to modern values and can keep silent about the rest. For to say that people are free to leave Islam is officially to declare the public order to be secular, so that one could in principle be an atheist or a Buddhist or a Hindu along with being a full citizen of Egypt. And you are then half way to the situation where no religious community has privileged access to the state, where all religious associations are equally private. That is full secularism, and it would be a radical change. It is too radical for most modernists to contemplate it.

Islamism

Nowadays the modernists are under siege by the Islamists—people who want the public sphere to be fully based on Islam again. Some are militant and some are not, but all are convinced that secularism is a mistake. In their view, Islam should not be drained of authority, but on the contrary serve as the basis of it. As they see it, Islam prescribes its own social space and its own political agency, and religious freedom is nonsense unless Muslims are allowed to have this freedom within their *own* political organisation: religious freedom is the right to live as a Muslim, not just in private | affairs, but also in public ones. 10 You can read that in Sayyid Quṭb, the enormously influential Islamist who was hanged by Nasser in 1966. According to him, you must wage *jihād* to bring about that freedom now, for secularism is an oppressive system that doesn't allow you to practise what you believe. All this is directed against the Egyptian regime, Nasser's state, not against the infidel West. He wrote his exegesis in jail; it was a secularist regime that was persecuting him, and which eventually hanged him: secularism did not mean freedom to him, just as it didn't to the mullahs in the Shah's Iran. To them, as to the other victims of Middle

Eastern regimes, secularism did not stand for religious neutrality, as it does to Westerners, but rather the forced imposition of something false and foreign. They would adduce the "no compulsion" verse against these regimes. The verse forbids forced conversion to *falsehood*, as the blind shaykh ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān said during his trial for complicity in the assassination of Sadat in 1981. He was quoting the sixth interpretation I have given you, from an Andalusian scholar who'd written at the time of the Christian Reconquista. According to Sayyid Quṭb and others, true religious freedom can only obtain under Islamic rule, for it is only under Islamic rule that people will be allowed to follow their own creeds. It sounds great until you start thinking about the implications. How can Christians, Jews, Buddhists or atheists be full members of a state which is conceived as an expression of Islamic aims? They can't, of course. Several Islamists will explicitly tell you that actually, non-Muslims will have to resume the position of *dhimmī*s, protected people. And by non-Muslims they typically mean Jews and Christians, full stop. In the past, some jurists held that only Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians qualified for *dhimmī* status; others said that all infidels did, whoever they were. The Islamists always go for the restrictive view, and what they want to outlaw with it is atheism. Their position is quite clear: atheism is a form of paganism, or idolatry, and Islam does not recognize that as a religion. Religion means monotheism, and religious freedom does not include the freedom to have no religion, because in their view there can't be any morality without religion.

In actual fact, the Islamists don't really believe in religious freedom, except for themselves, because they believe that religion should form the basis of the social and political order; but the concept of religious freedom is so prestigious that even they | can't quite abandon it. Many of them are so torn between their desire to present Islam as a religion of tolerance and their determination to force their fellow-citizens back into the Islamic fold that they end up in complete incoherence. Take Ayatollah Sabzawārī, a Shīʿite cleric who published his exegesis in 1997. He starts by interpreting the "no compulsion" verse to mean that compulsion is unnecessary, impossible, *and* forbidden: it couldn't be clearer. He adds that Islam was not established by the sword: fine. But Muslims do have to fight, he says, not to convert people by force, only to restore them to their original nature, which is Islam. But this is not really compulsion, he says, because it only affects the external man, and sometimes it is actually a good thing for both the public order and the victim: indeed, what would be more repugnant in moral terms than leaving people to work for their own damnation? In short, forced conversion is unnecessary, impossible, forbidden, required, a good thing, and highly commendable.

Or for a Sunnite example, take Dr ʿĀmir ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, editor with Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī and others of the *Journal of Islamic Jerusalem Studies*, who published an exegetical work, in Arabic, in 2000. He too starts by affirming that the "no compulsion" verse rejects forced conversion. "It is not permitted for Muslims to convert infidels to the faith by force", he says, "for that kind of thing is no use, leads to no good, and does not bring about faith in the hearts of their own free will". He adds that it is not necessary to use force either, for Islam is a clear religion based on cogent arguments (many traditional exegetes say that too). On the contrary, he declares, the coercive method is characteristic of vacuous, odious, self-absorbed egoists and oppressive authorities. So there is no coercion. But, he says, the verse was revealed specifically about Christians and Jews. Idolaters and similar godless and permissive people have to be compelled to adopt Islam, since they cannot be accepted as *dhimmī*s and do not deserve any consideration because of their godlessness, stupidity, error and foolishness. In other words, Muslims are not permitted to convert anyone by force, but "anyone" really just means *dhimmī*s, as in traditional law. All others have to be forced, above all Muslim secularists. The Islamists tend to avoid discussing apostates, but some of them explicitly say that the verse does not grant freedom of religion to them. So all their talk about religious freedom is really designed to get rid of it.

Unclarity   12

In short, everybody is agreed that Islam goes in for religious freedom, but not on what it means, except that Christians and Jews shouldn't be forced to convert. Everything else is unclear. Unclarity is also the key impression left by the controversy over the Pope's speech at Regenburg last year, with which I shall conclude.

The Pope mentioned that according to some experts, the "no compulsion" verse probably dated from "the early period, when Mohammed was still powerless and under threat" and that other rules had later been added concerning holy war; in other words, the Pope adopted the first canonical interpretation, according to which the verse had been revealed in Mecca and abrogated in Medina. Thirty-eight Muslim scholars responded that the Pope was wrong: the verse had been revealed in Medina in connection with some Jews or Christians who had wanted to force their children to convert to Islam, as one could read in al-Ṭabarī and other early commentators; it did not date from the period when the Muslims were weak and powerless, but rather from their period of political ascendance, and it taught them that "they could not force another's heart to believe".

Well, to a historian, that was an odd reaction. One can read the Pope's interpretation in al-Ṭabarī and other early commentators too. One might have expected the thirty-eight scholars to respond that the Pope was out of date, and that the interpretation he went for no longer carried any weight: that is certainly true. But that is not what they said. They said that he was mistaken; and they corrected him with reference to a hybrid interpretation of their own: the Medinese were forbidden to convert their children by force, they said. Fine, that's the second canonical interpretation, as dusted off by modernists. The verse taught them that they *could not force another's heart to believe*. That's the second Muʿtazilite interpretation, the verse as a factual statement about the impossibility of coercing inner man. Traditionally, that goes with the view that coercing outer man is all right, though it doesn't usually do so in modern works, so what did they mean? Were they reserving the right to coerce outer man, the social being? I don't know. I suspect that the formulation was a compromise designed to paper over the cracks between different positions.

13   Here the interpreters of the "no compulsion" verse show us another aspect of the clash between secularism and Islam. To a historian, the thirty-eight scholars were being somewhat less than frank. They told the Pope that he was wrong instead of freely admitting that the view he had selected is indeed part of the Islamic tradition. One Islamicist professor in America happily followed suit and publicly said that the Pope should apologize for getting his facts wrong. But the Pope didn't get his facts wrong; he just selected the most illiberal view available, which is out of date. The reason why the thirty-eight scholars did not simply say this outright is partly that they were not writing as historians, but rather as theologians, and partly that it saying so would have been to acknowledge that doctrines *change*. That is something that Muslim clerics are still reluctant to do.

To a historian, the thirty-eight clerics were guilty of traducing the past: they knowingly misrepresented it. But what the thirty-eight clerics would reply, I imagine, is that we historians are guilty of traducing the present: for we knowingly show people's convictions to be historically conditioned rather than perennial truths. By insisting that the past must be understood in its own light, we remove the support of the tradition from the present; we undermine its authority. This is true, and it is all the worse if you think that change is a sign of falsehood. We historians do not equate change with falsehood, but there is no way around the fact that we are secularisers: we are secularising history, because we separate the past we are studying from our own and other people's modern convictions; we do not allow the past to be rewritten as mere support for these modern convictions. That's a problem to all traditional believers, and perhaps to Muslims more than most. Muslims tend not to have a problem

with modern science: the Quran does not have a mythological account of the creation, it is not incompatible with any modern scientific views. But history is a different matter because the truths of Islam are tied to history. So whether they want to or not, historians also find themselves as actors in the debate whether, or to what extent, Islam should coexist with a secular sphere. Where will it all end? Well, there at least even the most modern of historians can give the most traditional of answers: God knows best.

Tribes without Saints*

In 1965 the ethologist Simonds reported with puzzlement the strange position, in a community of South Indian bonnet macaques, of an old male who had lost his canines. Though the old macaque was subordinate to the males of the central hierarchy, his presence would put an end to threat sequences as if he were a dominant one; and though other males of limited dominance were regularly threatened by subadult males, no such threats were ever directed at him: yet he was far less able to defend himself. The only explanation Simonds could think of was that the old macaque was a former member of the central hierarchy whose prestige had somehow survived his demotion.[1] By 1969 readers of Simonds who were also readers of Gellner knew this explanation to be wrong.[2] The old macaque was authoritative *because* he had lost his canines, not despite his unarmed state; having laid down his weapons and relinquished the competition for power, he had become a venerable figure to whom the competitors could defer. The old macaque, in short, was a saint.

Gellner's work has made saints marvellously recognizable, as this example should suffice to show. By the same token, it has made them problematic. Now that they have become visible they seem to turn up in the most unlikely places while at the same time remaining absent from societies in which one would confidently have predicted their presence. According to Gellner, they ought to be present among all the pastoralist tribes of the Middle East, but they are not. Though macaques with saints seem a more interesting phenomenon than pastoralists without them, it is to the latter problem that this paper is devoted.

Gellner's argument may be summarized as follows.[3] Pastoralism in the arid zone engenders segmentary societies characterized by a more or less even

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1 P.E. Simonds, 'The Bonnet Macaque in South India' in I. de Vore (ed.), *Primate Behaviour*, New York 1965, p. 185.

2 E. Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas*, London 1969.

3 In addition to his *Saints*, see his *Muslim Society*, Cambridge 1981, especially chs. 1 and 4, and the bibliography of his North African articles in the same work.

distribution of power and wealth among their members. Since power is not concentrated in one man, lineage, stratum or institution with any degree of permanency, no order can be imposed, and feuding predominates. Such societies are in need of arbitrators to maintain a modicum of peace. The saints possess three characteristics which enable them to fulfil this need. First, they identify themselves as outsiders to the society in which violent relations prevail. Like the old macaque they are typically unarmed, or at any rate expected to behave in a peaceful manner; and no feuding or other violence is allowed in their settlements, which usually grow up around the grave of an ancestral saint, occasionally around some other shrine such as a (real or nominal) Sufi lodge; and they may be genealogically defined as outsiders too, many of them being credited with descent from the Prophet. Secondly, their sanctity is hereditary. Saints form holy lineages from which new saints are recruited, so that holy men are permanent fixtures, not virtuoso performers making unpredictable appearances. And thirdly, they are credited with religious knowledge over and above that possessed by the tribesmen themselves, usually, though not invariably, on the basis of their descent from the Prophet. Their religious expertise enables them to perform a wide variety of medical and prognosticating services (typically including sundry miracles), and above all to act as mediators. Thus their shrines are often located on boundaries between tribal groups where disputes are most likely to arise; the tribesmen will submit major disputes to them for resolution; traders, artisans and other non-tribesmen will visit their settlements, or settle there themselves to enjoy the inviolability they afford; and the saints may facilitate local traffic by providing escorts for caravans and other travellers. Being representatives of the divine, they also help to bestow Islamic status on societies in which there is little knowledge of, or need for, genuine Islamic learning and in which the resources for the maintenance of scholars are in any case absent. All in all, saints are thus indispensable: "the faith of the tribesmen needs to be mediated by special and distinct holy personnel, rather than to be egalitarian; it needs to be joyous and festival-worthy, not puritanical and scholarly; it requires hierarchy and incarnation in persons, not in script".[4] Gellner incorporates this view in an overall model of Islamic history which need not concern us here.

Now few would wish to deny that Middle Eastern pastoralism engenders egalitarian societies in which violence prevails, and it seems reasonable enough to infer that such societies stand in need of arbitrators. The trouble with Gellner's theory is that in practice a great many tribes would seem to leave their

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4 Gellner, *Muslim Society*, p. 41.

needs, if such they are, unfulfilled. Gellner's views are based on observations in Morocco, and holy men are well attested for North Africa altogether;[5] they exist in other parts of the Middle East as well.[6] But as Gellner himself observes, some pastoralist tribes of the Middle East are reported to be poor in ritual and holy personnel alike; the desert generally conjures up images of puritanism rather than of holy persons and ritual riches; and even in North Africa, living saints seem to be associated with settled and semi-settled tribesmen rather than nomadic camel-breeders: perhaps, as Gellner notes, the argument needs to be refined by the insertion of a further step.[7] In what follows I shall add to his misgivings by adducing the evidence relating to Arabia and consider what this further step might be.

Modern Arabia: Settled and Semi-Settled

There are well-known counterparts to Gellner's Moroccan saints in South Arabia, especially in the Ḥaḍramawt (including Ẓufār), where descendants of the Prophet (*sayyid*s and *sharīf*s)[8] and holy men of local origin (*mashāyikh*) reside, or at any rate resided until recently, in sanctuaries known as *ḥawṭa*s. The *sayyid*s were unarmed, as were most of the *maskhāyikh*, and the *ḥawṭa*s were inviolable: not even plants could be cut in them.[9] Some would acquire a non-tribal population and develop into sanctuary towns governed by the *sayyid*s. The sanctity of the *ḥawṭa* would be formally acknowledged by the neighbouring tribesmen, who would use it as their market, arrange for truces and the payment of blood-

5   E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, Oxford 1949, esp. pp. 26, 67 f., 73 ff.; E.L. Peters, 'The Tied and the Free' in J.-G. Peristiany (ed.), *Contributions to Mediterranean Sociology*, Paris 1968, p. 168 (also Cyrenaica); C.C. Stewart, *Islam and Social Order in Mauritania*, Oxford 1973; É. Dermenghem, *Le culte des saints dans l'Islam maghrébin*, Paris 1954; cf. also I.M. Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, London 1961; id., *The Modern History of Somaliland*, London 1965, pp. 15 f., 63 ff.

6   Certainly in South Arabia and probably (in the past) in north-western Iran. For a disputed case, see F. Berth, *Political Leadership among the Swat Pathans*, London 1959; A.S. Ahmed, *Millennium and Charisma among the Pathans*, London 1976.

7   Gellner, *Muslim Society*, pp. 81 f.

8   The terms *sayyid* (pl. *sāda*) and *sharīf* (pl. *ashrāf*) are basically synonymous, both meaning descendant of the Prophet through ʿAlī and Fāṭima, but they are often used to distinguish Ḥusaynids from Ḥasanids. Usually, Ḥusaynids are *sayyid*s, Ḥasanids *sharīf*s, but local usage varies.

9   R.B. Serjeant, 'Ḥaram and Ḥawṭah, the Sacred Enclave in Arabia' in 'A.-R. Badawī (ed.), *Mélanges Taha Husain*, Cairo 1962, p. 43.

money there, submit their disputes to the saints in charge of it and avail them-
selves of saintly services in other ways. Many were objects of annual visits from
far afield. This pattern is known from twentieth-century accounts,[10] but it can
be traced back to the tenth century, when the *sayyid*s arrived from Iraq and
began to establish themselves at the expense of the local *mashāyikh*; and it
is often assumed to perpetuate a pre-Islamic arrangement.[11] At all events, the
role of the Ḥadramī saints was identical with that of Gellner's *shurfa* in that
they defused tension within and between tribes, and between tribesmen and
non-tribesmen (and within the non-tribal population, too). They did not by any
means enjoy a monopoly on dispute settlement: the tribesmen had an elabo-
rate legal system of their own administered by chiefs and other judges,[12] and
holy men seem commonly to have limited their own contribution to that of
providing a venue for, and presiding over, the process of adjudication[13] (though
the division of labour between tribal judges and saints is somewhat unclear).[14]

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10   Th. and Mrs. Th. Bent, *Southern Arabia*, London 1900, pp. 80 f., 96, 104, cf. also 131 ff.,
      144, 171, 283; W.H. Ingrams, *A Report on the Social, Economic and Political Conditions of
      the Hadhramaut*, London 1936, pp. 36 ff.; D. Ingrams, *A Survey of Social and Economic
      Conditions in the Aden Protectorate*, Eritrea 1949, pp. 43, 48 f.; R.B. Serjeant, *The Saiyids
      of Hadramawt* (Inaugucal lecture), London 1957; id., 'Ḥaram and Ḥawṭah'; id., 'Société
      et gouvernement en Arabie du Sud', *Arabica* 1967, reprinted in English translation with
      additional material under the title 'South Arabia' in C.A.O. van Nieuwenhuijze (ed.),
      Commoners, Climbers and Notables, Leiden 1977; A.S. Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification,
      a Study of Political Change in a South Arabian Town*, Oxford 1971, chs. 1–2. For Ẓufār, see
      B. Thomas, *Arabia Felix*, London 1932, pp. 44, 85 f., 144; S.B. al-Tabūkī, 'Tribal Structures in
      South Oman', *Arabian Studies* 4 (1982).
11   Evidence for the pre-Islamic pattern is scant, but for the arrival of the *sayyid*s, see Serjeant,
      Saiyids, pp. 8 ff. and the (also somewhat scanty) references given there.
12   Cf. Ingrams, *Survey*, pp. 49 f.; J.G. Hartley, 'The Political Organization of an Arab Tribe of
      the Hadhramaut', London PhD, 1961, esp. pp. 87 ff.
13   Thus R.B. Serjeant, 'Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam, Misconceptions and Flawed
      Polemics', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110 (1990), p. 477.
14   Until 1990 one inferred from Hartley that disputes were normally settled by tribal chiefs
      (cf. note 12) and from other authors that they were overwhelmingly settled by holy men (cf.
      note 10). In 1990 Serjeant explained that holy men do not normally settle disputes in the
      sense of adjudicating, merely in that of providing a venue and presiding over adjudication
      done by chiefs and tribal leaders (cf. note 13). But on the one hand, he himself describes
      them as judges, both directly and indirectly (R.B. Serjeant, 'Customary Law as a Source
      for History' in *Studies in the History of Arabia*, edited under the supervision of 'A.-R.Ṭ. al-
      Anṣārī, vol. i, part 2, Riyadh 1979, p. 100; P. Crone, 'Serjeant and Meccan Trade', *Arabica*
      39 (1992)); and on the other hand, Bujra's information also suggests that they, or some of
      them, were adjudicators: he tells us that the senior *manṣab* (i.e. leader of a *sayyid* family)

They also differed from Gellner's *shurfa* in that many of them had genuine learning. But even so, they are as good an example of Gellner's saintly model as one can hope to get. The tribesmen they served were not however nomadic pastoralists, but rather semi-nomadic pastoralists (on the plateau) who would cultivate when they could on the one hand, and settled agriculturalists (in the wadis) on the other, vicious feuds being characteristic of both.[15]

Descendants of the Prophet and *mashāyikh* were also numerous in the Yemen. Their presence here goes back to the late ninth century, when the townsmen of Ṣaʿda invited a Medinese Ḥasanid by the name of Yaḥyā to restore order among them.[16] Yaḥyā, who assumed the regnal name of al-Hādī, went on to found the Zaydī imamate of the Yemen; and the Ḥasanids and Ḥusaynids who subsequently migrated and multiplied there established themselves as experts in religious law, doctrine and ritual and as arbitrators in tribal disputes,[17] once more, it would appear, at the cost of the local *mashāyikh*.[18] Their settlements were normally inviolable[19] and sometimes had the same interstitial function as the *ḥawṭa*s of the Ḥaḍramawt: here as there, in short, holy men acted as 'grease in the wheel of the segmentary system'.[20] The pattern is similar also in that the tribes had their own legal system administered by chiefs and other judges,[21] while at the same time many holy men had genuine learn-

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of Ḥurayḍa specialized in settling disputes within Ḥurayḍa, whereas the junior *manṣab* specialized mainly in external relations, which surely does not mean that they simply provided the venue for the settlement of such disputes, and that people used to take their disputes for settlement by the Bāsahl family, who were *mashāyikh* claiming descent from a *qāḍī*, which surely means that the Bāsahl acted as *qāḍī*s themselves (*Politics*, pp. 20, 32 f.). When do holy men preside, when do they adjudicate and why do some tribes apparently never use them at all?

15   Bujra, *Politics*, pp. 1 f., 7. For Ẓufār, see Thomas, *Arabia Felix*, pp. 8 f., 80, 142 f.

16   C. van Arendonk, *Les débuts de l'imāmat zaidite au Yemen*, Leiden 1960, pp. 134 ff.

17   C. Rathjens, 'Tâghût gegen scherîʿa', *Jahrbuch des Lindenmuseums* (Hamburg), NF 1, 1951, pp. 175 ff.; cf. *Handbook of the Yemen*, prepared by the Arab Bureau, Cairo 1917, p. 84.

18   The *mashāyikh* enjoyed less prestige than the *sayyid*s, cf. H. Freiherr von Maltzan, *Reise nach Südarabien*, Braunschweig 1873, p. 217.

19   Cf. G.-R. Puin, 'The Yemeni *Hijrah* Concept of Tribal Protection' in T. Khalidi (ed.), *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, Beirut 1984.

20   Cf. P. Dresch, *Tribes, Government and History in Yemen*, Oxford 1989, p. 164 (where the formulation is guarded).

21   J. Chelhod, 'Le droit intertribal dans les hauts plateaux du Yémen' in *Al-Bāḥith: Festschrift Joseph Henninger*, Bonn 1976; P. Dresch, 'Tribal Relations and Political History in Upper Yemen' in B.R. Pridham (ed.), *Contemporary Yemen, Politics and Historical Background*, London 1984, pp. 161 ff.; id., *Tribes*.

ing, the resources for the maintenance of scholars being available in the towns. For the rest, however, the system seems to have been different. Though *sayyid* settlements were typically inviolable and some were tombs guarded by *sayyid* families,[22] neither *sayyid*s nor holy men of other kinds seem regularly to have been associated with sanctuaries; nor were they usually unarmed, or at any rate not in the highlands.[23] Being Zaydīs, the highlanders subscribed to a creed which required the imam to be both a descendant of the Prophet *and* a wielder of swords: an imam without canines would not do at all.[24] The imam's relatives were also a militant lot. They engaged in feuds, supplied commanders to the imam's army, impressed the British with their fighting qualities[25] and supplied chiefly houses to the local tribes.[26] In the Yemeni mountains, tribal and holy leadership thus had a tendency to fuse rather than to exhibit the remarkable separation of powers observed by Gellner in the Atlas.[27] And once more it should be stressed that the tribesmen were not nomadic pastoralists, but rather settled cultivators, the bedouin element among them being insignificant.[28]

An armed saint is still a saint. Indeed, he might be thought to be the paradigmatic saint of the Muslim world inasmuch as he exemplifies the norm created by Muḥammad: holy men fight holy war. But in the present context saints are people who are elevated above local society by their special relationship with the divine and who use that position to mediate among the locals; and the notion of an armed saint is problematic in that weapons are normally incompatible with neutrality. This is not the case in confrontation with infidels, however: whether the saint limits himself to stirring up his followers or actually takes up arms himself, his militancy is directed against the outsiders, and his

22   Cf. Dresch, *Tribes*, p. 158, on the tomb of al-Qāsim al-Iyānī; compare the *sayyid*s who guarded the shrine of ʿAlī b. ʿUmar al-Ahdal (*Handbook of the Yemen*, pp. 84–86).

23   The *mashāyikh* are described as unarmed by von Maltzan, *Reise*, p. 217, with reference to southern Yemen; the *sayyid*s are similarly described in Ingrams, *Survey*, p. 49, with reference to all tribal areas of the British protectorate. But that excludes the highlands, and Zaydī *sayyid*s were armed according to Serjeant ('Société', p. 290 = 'South Arabia', p. 238); both they and other men of religion wear daggers, tilting them to the right in contradistinction to the habit of tribesmen, according to others (T. Gerholm, *Market, Mosque and Mafraj*, Stockholm 1977, p. 128; Dresch, *Tribes*, pp. 117, 136, cf. 144).

24   Cf. for example van Arendonk, *Débuts*, pp. 37 f.

25   *Handbook of the Yemen*, pp. 71, 85, 87, 97; cf. Serjeant, 'Société', p. 290.

26   *Handbook of the Yemen*, pp. 48, 55, 60, 79, cf. 85 f. (compare the Yām who were ruled by a Makramī representative of the Ismāʿīlī imam, ibid., p. 58); cf. also Grohmann, *Südarabien*, p. 79.

27   Gellner, *Saints*, p. 64.

28   See for example *Handbook of the Yemen*, pp. 6, 9, 18, 20 ff.; Dresch, *Tribes*, pp. 3, 14.

neutrality in local feuds and other quarrels is crucial for his ability to unite his followers against the intruders. But if he is armed under normal conditions, his weapons are intended for local use and amount to a statement that his honour rests on his ability to defend himself by forcible means, or in other words they identify him as a full participant in tribal relations. Such a person is close to being an ordinary tribesman, or (given his holy descent) a tribesman endowed with special nobility; and he can actually develop into a tribal chief by using his superior descent as a bid for political leadership without stressing his religious expertise. It was in fact as glorified chiefs rather than as saints that the descendants of the Prophet were prone to acquire political roles in Arabia.

The areas in which they exhibited this tendency were once more settled rather than nomadic. They include Mecca, for the *sharīf*s of Mecca were certainly military rulers rather than militant saints.[29] Though they governed a sanctuary, or indeed *the* sanctuary, and were respected for their holy descent, they did not habitually settle tribal disputes, heal diseases, write amulets, raise miracles or otherwise display their special relationship with the divine, nor did they claim to be experts on law, ritual or doctrine: in Mecca a *sharīf* was by definition a soldier as opposed to a scholar, scholarly descendants of the Prophet being known as *sayyid*s.[30] "The sharifs have never claimed or been accorded personal sanctity of the Shiite imam type. So far as the basis of their power is religious, it rests on reverence for their descent, not innate divine qualities in their persons or supposed esoteric knowledge", as the British observed.[31] The *sharīf*s did have a following among the local bedouin, who looked upon them "in the same light as one of their own Sheikhs" and fought with them as they would would with their own chiefs;[32] but the point is precisely that they saw them as their chiefs. Their power among the bedouin was scarcely greater than that of, say, the *amīr* of Ḥāʾil, a ruler of bedouin origin;[33] and they certainly

29   For a general account of a semi-popular kind, see G. de Gaury, *Rulers of Mecca*, London 1951; for a historical survey, see C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka*, The Hague 1888–1889, vol. i, pp. 57 ff. For the militancy of the *sharīf*s, see also J.L. Burckhardt, *Travels in Arabia*, London 1829, vol. i, pp. 409 ff. They were always armed with daggers (C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century*, Leiden and London 1931, p. 9).

30   Burckhardt, *Travels*, vol. i, p. 332. Differently Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century*, p. 9n (= id., *Mekka*, vol. i, p. 57n), where the usual definition of the terms is given (cf. above, note 8).

31   *Handbook of Arabia*, vol. i, London 1916, p. 34.

32   Burckhardt, *Travels*, vol. i, pp. 421 f.

33   Cf. H. Rosenfeld, 'The Social Composition of the Military in the Process of State Formation in the Arabian Desert', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 95 (1965).

could not mobilize the bedouin on the scale of the puritan Wahhābīs. One might have expected the descendants of the Prophet to conform more closely to the Ḥaḍramī pattern in Medina, given that here they had the grave of the Prophet himself to guard; but if they ever did conform to that pattern, it is not on record, and by the nineteenth century they had no political role at all.[34] In central Arabia, too, it is as glorified chiefs rather than holy men that the descendants of the Prophet meet us. A branch of Ḥasanids from the Ḥijāz established a dynasty by the name of Banū ʾl-Ukhayḍir in the Yamāma, where they held sway between the ninth and eleventh centuries and made themselves thoroughly unpopular: their role was not apparently saintly in either the technical or the everyday sense of the word.[35] The oases of central Arabia were still full of *sharīf*s, some of them hailing from south Arabia, in the early twentieth century; but they were simply landowners lording it over black tenants and slaves.[36] In one locality they also supplied the *amīr*,[37] but we do not hear anything of sanctuaries or saintly roles. In the rest of Arabia *sharīf*s and *sayyid*s were less prominent or disappear altogether, to reappear as urban notables in the Middle East outside the peninsula.

Modern Arabia: Nomadic

As far as settled and semi-settled Arabia is concerned, there is thus a distinct tendency for saintliness to fall off as one moves north. Let us turn to the bedouin, then. Of true bedouin (as opposed to semi-nomads) there are not many in the south; and though the Empty Quarter is not empty, it does not appear to have been a propitious environment for holy men.[38] That leaves us with the deserts of central and northern Arabia, and here Musil comes to our help with some wonderfully emphatic statements. "The Bedouins know of no communication with the saints. In the whole inner desert there is not

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34   Burckhardt, *Travels*, vol. ii, p. 287.

35   Ḥ. al-Jāsir, *Madīnat al-Riyāḍ ʿabr aṭwār al-taʾrīkh*, Riyadh 1966, pp. 69 ff.; M. Cook, 'The Expansion of the First Saudi State: the Case of Washm' in C.E. Bosworth and others (eds.), *The Islamic World, Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, Princeton 1989, p. 662.

36   H.St.J. Philby, *The Heart of Arabia*, London 1822, vol. i, pp. 171, 180; vol. ii, pp. 84, 97; id., *Southern Nejd*, Cairo 1919, pp. 28 f.; compare F.D. Champault, *Une oasis du Sahara nord-occidental, Tabebala*, Paris 1969, p. 371, for *merabtin* in the same role.

37   Philby, *Heart*, vol. i, p. 171.

38   Cf. D.P. Cole, *Nomads of the Nomads, the Al Murra Bedouin of the Empty Quarter*, Arlington Heights, Ill., 1975, ch. 6, which is not however a searching analysis.

a single holy grave or shrine erected in honor of a saint. In fact they have no saints whatever".[39] The bedouin did not, according to him, pay any attention to the shrines of the villagers and oasis-dwellers, dismissing them as "not of our kin";[40] they only worshipped their ancestors.[41] Musil clearly thought of saints as dead (given that he identies them with graves), and since the notion of living saints barely seems to have suggested itself to him, he can hardly have encountered them. For good measure, however, he elsewhere adds that "the camel breeders have no holy places, no sacred objects, no intermediaries between man and God".[42] Musil's claim is tacitly corroborated by Doughty, who makes no reference to saintly tombs or living saints in the inner desert;[43] and the collective silence of other observers may also be invoked in Musil's support.[44]

Musil's first statement was taken up by Meeker in his *Literature and Violence in North Arabia*, which was reviewed by Amal Rassam. She took him to task for accepting it on the grounds that "segmentary organization and the manipulation of personal charisma (saint worship) are features basic to Arabo-Islamic rural societies"; the Rwala, she argued, only rejected saints because they had come within the orbit of the Wahhābīs.[45] But in the first place, Musil's statements refer to the north Arabian bedouin at large, not just the Rwala, and he merely makes explicit what is implicit in the literature at large; it does not however seem likely that the Wahhabis should have been able completely to eradicate an institution supposed to be of fundamental importance to the maintenance of tribal order. In the second place, the elimination of saints would have been the *only* effect of the Wahhābīs, for the bedouin in question did not pray or otherwise observe Islamic precepts; as Musil saw it, they were Muslims only

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39   A. Musil, *The Manners and Customs of the Rwala Bedouins*, New York 1928, p. 417; cf. id., *Arabia Deserta*, New York 1927, pp. 428 f.: the Rwala deride the custom, practised by another tribe familiar with veneration of graves, of placing a cup of coffee on the grave of a chief renowned for his hospitality.

40   Musil, *Rwala*, pp. 417 f.

41   Musil, *Northern Neǧd*, New York 1928, p. 257. On ancestor worship, see the details in id., *Arabia Petraea*, Vienna 1907–1908, vol. iii, pp. 329 ff.

42   A. Musil, *Northern Neǧd*, p. 257.

43   C.M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, London 1936 (first published 1888).

44   Many travellers, of course, were passers-by whose silence carries no weight; but this cannot be said of C.R. Raswan, *The Black Tents of Arabia*, London 1935 (on the Rwala) or H.R.P. Dickson, *The Arab of the Desert*, second edition, London 1951 (Kuwait and Saudi Arabia).

45   M. Meeker, *Literature and Violence in North Arabia*, Cambridge 1979; A. Rassam, review, *The Muslim World* 72 (1982), p. 54.

in name.[46] He observed the startling effect of Wahhabism on their behaviour when he revisited them in 1914: now many of them had "converted to Islam" and begun to pray.[47] But they had rejected saints even in their days of ignorance, on grounds that plainly had nothing to do with Wahhabism. Finally, the saints they had rejected were *dead* saints: even if we accept Rassam's argument that they must once have been devotees of the cult they ridiculed in Musil's time, we do not thereby make them devotees of the holy men that Rassam has in mind. In short, Musil's information cannot be explained away.

The sheep- and goat-rearing bedouin and semi-nomads along the periphery of the desert, on the other hand, were generally inclined to share the peasants' view of holy things. Saintly tombs and sacred trees (both isolated and conjoined to tombs) are well attested in Palestine,[48] Sinai and the Egyptian desert,[49] the Balqāʾ,[50] the vicinity of al-Ḥijr,[51] Ḥāʾil and other parts of the Najd (where it is not however clear that the bedouin venerated them),[52] and in the Ḥijāz.[53] When Burckhardt states that "there are few bedouin tribes within whose territory, or at least within a little distance from it, the tomb of some saint or revered shaykh is not found", it is presumably the bedouin along the periphery he has in mind: he did not travel in the inner desert.[54] The same is true of Snouck Hurgronje, who likewise credits the bedouin with veneration of graves.[55] But at all events, the saints (*walī*s) were always dead. Their tombs and trees formed inviolable areas in which flora and fauna were protected,[56] in which objects

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46   Musil, *Rwala*, p. 389; id., *Northern Neğd*, p. 257.

47   Musil, *Arabia Deserta*, p. 427 (contrasting the Rwala of 1914 with those of 1908–1909).

48   T. Canaan, 'Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine', *The Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 4–5, 7 (1924–1925, 1927); T. Ashkenazi, *Tribus semi-nomades de la Palestine du Nord*, Paris 1958, pp. 84, 102 ff.

49   G.W. Murray, *Sons of Ishmael, a Study of the Egyptian Bedouin*, London 1935, pp. 150 ff. (here too some bedouin derided the cult).

50   A. Jaussen, *Coutumes des arabes du pays de Moab*, Paris 1948, pp. 330 ff.

51   Doughty, *Travels*, vol. i, pp. 411, 496 f. (with the observation that sacred trees are found "in field and town, in the Arabic border-countries ... in the open lands from Syria to Morocco").

52   W.G. Palgrave, *Narrative of a Year's Journey Through Central and Eastern Arabia (1862–1863)*, London 1965, vol. i, p. 100 (branded a peasant custom); R.B. Winder, *Saudi Arabia in the Nineteenth Century*, London 1965, p. 12 (an urban phenomenon).

53   A. Rihani, *Around the Coasts of Arabia*, London 1930, p. 73.

54   J.L. Burckhardt, *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahábys*, London 1830, pp. 259 f. (vol. i/ii, p. 147).

55   Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka*, vol. i, p. 38.

56   Murray, *Sons of Ishmael*, p. 160, cf. p. 152; Jaussen, *Coutumes*, pp. 311, 331. The trees were often identified with saints and often decorated à la Christmas trees. In Doughty, *Arabia*

could be safely deposited, and in which vows were made, diseases cured and offspring and cattle requested;[57] saintly tombs were also much used for the taking of solemn oaths, the idea being that a man who perjured himself in such a place would be stricken by divine punishment.[58] In all these respects they functioned much as did sanctuaries elsewhere.[59] But a *walī* was "a virtuous man whose sanctity it has pleased God to let shine forth after his death", as a bedouin of Maʿān told Jaussen,[60] and their graves had no guardians. No living person is mentioned in the numerous accounts of saintly tombs in Palestine and north-west Arabia;[61] and the Wahhābī catalogue of Najdī sins only lists worship of trees, stones and tombs, plus the habit of swearing by people other than God (presumably *walī*s), apparently even absolving the bedouin from participation in such sins and accusing them of quackery instead; veneration of living persons is not mentioned at all.[62] Though dead saints had plenty of followers at the intersection between the desert and the town, living ones seem to have been absent from the normal religious landscape *thoroughout* northern Arabia.

A few did nonetheless appear here and there. Bedouin *sharīf*s were numerous in the vicinity of Mecca; and though they did not normally differ from other bedouin except by being of superior descent, and thus greatly respected and more expensive to kill,[63] a sharifian tribe south of Jedda did put its genealogy to saintly use in the early twentieth century: they would provide escorts

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Deserta, vol. i, pp. 496 f., they are also decorated, but not identified with saints, the areas they marked being "lighting places of the power of the air". Others were associated with *jinn* (Canaan, 'Saints and Sanctuaries' (1924), pp. 36 ff.).

57   Doughty, *Arabia Deserts*, vol. i, p. 496; Jaussen, *Coutumes*, pp. 311, 332; Murray, *Sons of Ishmael*, pp. 151, 155; Canaan, 'Saints and Sanctuaries' (1924), p. 36; (1925), pp. 180 f., 184 ff.; (1926), pp. 6 ff.; Ashkenazi, *Tribus semi-nomades*, pp. 103 ff.

58   Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*, vol. i, pp. 496 f.; Murray, *Sons of Ishmael*, pp. 151, 160; Jaussen, *Coutumes*, p. 332; Canaan, 'Saints and Sanctuaries' (1926), pp. 1 ff.; Ashkenazi, *Tribus semi-nomades*, p. 84.

59   Compare Barth, *Swat Pathans*, pp. 58 f.

60   Jaussen, *Coutumes*, p. 298.

61   In Murray, *Sons of Ishmael*, living saints are first encountered west of Alexandria (p. 152).

62   Winder, *Saudi Arabia*, pp. 12 f. Gellner, who cites the summary of J.S. Habib, *Ibn Saʾud's Warriors of Islam*, Leiden 1978, p. 1, does not notice that living saints are absent from it (cf. his *Muslim Society*, p. 51).

63   Doughty, *Travels*, vol. i, pp. 519, 523, 537, 547, 556 f., 568; *Handbook of Arabia*, vol. i, p. 100. The Ḥuwayṭāt of the Syrian desert (?) and the chief of the Muntafiq confederation in Iraq also claimed to be *sharīf*s (*Handbook of Arabia*, vol. i, p. 61; Dixon, *Arab of the Desert*, p. 549).

to travellers by sea, one *sharīf* on board being sufficient to purchase immunity from pirates.[64] In the early eighteenth century an island off Yanbuʿ, some 200 miles further north, was graced with the tomb of shaykh Ḥasan al-Murābiṭ, regarded by the sailors as the patron of the local seas; and this tomb was guarded by a family of the despised tribe of Hutaym who would receive scraps from passing ships.[65] Two Hutaymī groups of the Balqāʾ area also claimed status as marabouts in the 1860s, with some success among the ʿAdwān and other local tribes who respected their escort service though these Hutaymīs were not unarmed, and not apparently associated with a sanctuary either.[66] Obviously, if three examples can be found, there must have been more;[67] but it is not an impressive harvest, and two of the examples involve seafarers. The Hutaym who operated among pastoralists were pariahs,[68] and the dividing line between saints and excluded groups was often perilously thin elsewhere, which is hardly surprising: none of them counted as tribesmen, and all had or tended to acquire functions that the tribesmen could not or did not want to perform themselves.[69] But the Hutaymīs who tried to convert their outcast status into sanctity did not generate a distinction between saintly Hutaym and ordinary ones to match that between saintly clients and ordinary ones in Cyrenaica.[70] Like the maritime saints, they are simply curiosities. They show that candidates for the saintly role were available; it was apparently the customers who were in short supply.

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64 Murray, *Sons of Ishmael*, pp. 39 f.

65 Burckhardt, *Travels*, vol. ii, pp. 346 f.

66 C. Guarmani, *Northern Najd, a Journey from Jerusalem to Anaiza in Qasim*, London 1938 (first published 1866), pp. 108 f.

67 Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, vol. iii, p. 329, mentions a saint who could cure and work miracles already when he was alive. But he is not relevant here in that he seems only to have been a doctor.

68 J. Henninger, 'Pariastämme in Arabien', *Sankt Gabrieler Studien* 1939, pp. 515 ff.

69 Cf. Gellner, *Muslim Society*, p. 29, on the ambivalent attitude of tribesmen towards religious specialists. It is hardly accidental that they had client status in both Cyrenaica (cf. the following note) and Mauritania (where they had supposedly renounced the use of arms after defeat in wars against Arab tribes, Stewart, *Islam and Social Order*, p. 15). Compare also the non-Arab tribe of Balḥāf in Ẓufār, who wore no arms other than knives, and who functioned as escorts and supplied servants to a shrine visited by their Mahrī masters (Thomas, *Arabia Felix*, p. 143n).

70 Cf. Peters, 'The Tied and the Free', p. 168, on the *marabṭīn biʾl-baraka* and *marabṭīn al-sadgān*. All *marabṭīn* were unarmed before the Italo-Turkish war (E. Savarese, *La terre della Cirenaica*, part ii, Benghazi 1928, p. 57).

The bedouin did venerate and fear persons who had knowledge which they lacked themselves, be it supernatural or derived from books (the contents of which were seen as supernatural too), and live religious specialists were by no means absent from northern Arabia. Leaving aside the scholars of the cities, there were sorcerers (sometimes known as *aṣḥāb al-islām*!) and sooth-sayers (sometimes known as *fuqarāʾ* or *ahl al-sirr*) who worked among the bedouin. They might be men or women,[71] and their status might be heredi-tary or acquired through temporary withdrawal from human society.[72] Either way, they owed their knowledge to God, whose friends they were, and/or to angels, saints, *jinn* or other supernatural beings.[73] Some would work them-selves into a frenzy, of which the Rwala disapproved;[74] others used divinatory tools such as pebbles, shells, glass or burning coal;[75] only laymen seem to have divined by means of drawings in the sand.[76] They could answer questions such as when it would rain, what the sex of a child would be, where animals had strayed or objects been lost, who had stolen one's property and whether or not a raid would succeed.[77] They could also cure, apparently always by exorcism.[78] Some could interpret dreams;[79] some were itinerant and others had fixed res-idences to which their customers would come, but *faqīr*s of the hereditary type might form kin groups amounting to minor tribes, and chiefs of ordinary tribes might be regarded as *faqīr*s of the hereditary type too.[80] But here as else-where, there was a tendency for supernatural knowledge to be claimed by and ascribed to outsiders. Non-chiefly diviners commonly practised among tribes

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71   Musil, *Arabia Deserta*, p. 46; id., *Rwala*, p. 400; id., *Arabia Petraea*, vol. iii, pp. 317 f. (where other appellations are also given); G.A. Wallin, *Reseanteckningar från Orienten*, ed. S.G. Elmgren, vol. iv, Helsingfors 1866, pp. 69 f.

72   Jaussen, *Coutumes*, pp. 387 f.

73   Musil, *Arabia Deserta*, pp. 46 f.; id., *Arabia Petraea*, vol. iii, pp. 317 ff.; id., *Rwala*, p. 400; Jaussen, *Coutumes*, pp. 386, 388 f.; Wallin, *Reseanteckningar*, vol. iv, pp. 69 f. It was *faqīr*s who were seen as having access to saints, and trees guarding the tombs of saints, or otherwise representing them, might be known as *al-faqīra* (Murray, *Sons of Ishmael*, p. 160).

74   Musil, *Arabia Deserta*, pp. 46 f.; id., *Rwala*, pp. 400 f. The bedouin of Cyrenaica were also unimpressed with ecstatic performances (Peters, 'The Tied and the Free', p. 168n).

75   Musil, *Rwala*, p. 404; id., *Arabia Petraea*, vol. iii, p. 317; Jaussen, *Coutumes*, p. 386.

76   Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*, vol. i, p. 205.

77   Musil, *Rwala*, pp. 402, 404; id., *Arabia Petraea*, vol. iii, pp. 318 f.

78   Musil, *Rwala*, p. 403; Jaussen, *Coutumes*, pp. 386 f.; Wallin, *Reseanteckningar*, vol. iv, pp. 69 f.; cf. Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*, vol. i, p. 301.

79   Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, vol. iii, p. 319.

80   Jaussen, *Coutumes*, pp. 386 ff.

other than their own, and sorceresses were often Ṣulubbīs, non-Arab pariahs,[81] while Doughty unwittingly cast himself as a diviner by being a foreigner who travelled with books, so that he was asked to read palms, study physionomy, write spells and look in his books for answers to pressing questions such as what had become of a child, whether a husband would return or where the enemy might be.[82] But the possessors of supernatural knowledge did not congregate in sacred areas, nor were they involved in dispute settlement, except in the sense that some could tell whether persons accused of robbery or murder were guilty or not;[83] and though they might be consulted on the outcome of raids and sometimes enjoyed great respect, at least on the fringes,[84] there is nothing in the literature to suggest that they played a significant role in tribal politics unless they were chiefs as well. They were mere 'scientists': everyone was keen to benefit from their ability to manipulate the hidden universe, not to entrust socio-political affairs to them. Socio-political affairs, above all dispute settlement, were in the hands of chiefs and experts in tribal law. The former rarely and the latter apparently never claimed supernatural knowledge or validation. Tribal law was ancestral, secular and openly identified as an alternative to the Sharīʿa.[85]

Pre-Islamic Arabia

Thus far modern Arabia. The only period of Arabian history for which there is a comparable cluster of evidence is pre-Islamic Arabia, or more precisely the last century before the rise of Islam. The information on this period has the advantage of going back to insiders rather than to travellers, but it exhibits all signs of having been thoroughly scrambled by the rise of Islam, to which,

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81   Musil, *Rwala*, pp. 405; Dickson, *Arab of the Desert*, pp. 534 f.

82   Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*, vol. i, pp. 301, 347, 511.

83   Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, vol. iii, p. 318.

84   *Faqīr*s were greatly respected among Jaussen's tribes (*Coutumes*, pp. 361, 386, 389), but Musil's Rwala did not apparently know of *faqīr*s (linked to the belief in saints which they rejected) and viewed *aṣḥāb al-islām* and *ahl al-sirr* with reserve.

85   Musil, *Rwala*, pp. 426 f.; id., *Arabia Petraea*, vol. iii, pp. 334 ff. For further references, see F. Stewart, 'Tribal Law in the Arab World: a Review of the Literature', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19 (1987); cf. also id., *Texts in Sinai Bedouin Law*, Wiesbaden 1988–1990; id., *A Bedouin Tribe and Its Law*, forthcoming. For bedouin contrasting their own law with the Sharīʿa, see Wallin, *Reseanteckningar*, vol. iv, p. 48; Lady Anne Blunt, *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates*, London 1968 (first published 1879), vol. ii, p. 106.

of course, we also owe its existence. Most of it is legendary, but this is not a major problem given that we are interested in patterns rather than events: one would assume legends normally to exemplify genuine patterns correctly associated with the areas in which they are set. Most of the legends pertain to sacred history, however, and this does give rise to major perturbations: the alleged patterns are not always historical, as opposed to what one may broadly call theological, and they all tend to be set in Mecca, with the result that our pictures are sometimes composite.[86] For what it is worth, however, the tradition depicts the pre-Islamic pattern as similar to, though not identical with, that attested by the modern travellers.

(a)   *Sanctuaries*

The evidence is both too fragmentary and too tangled for southern, northern, settled and nomadic Arabia to be reviewed separately, so we shall have to shift rubrics. We may begin by noting that in pre-Islamic as in modern Arabia, sanctuaries devoid of living personnel were common.

Sanctuaries were known as *ḥimā*s or *ḥaram*s, both terms being translatable as 'prohibited areas'. In a *ḥimā*, the pasture was reserved for somebody (usually a human being) and thus forbidden to everyone else; in a *ḥaram*, all living things were protected, presumably because they too were seen as belonging to someone or something else (a deity, the divine): vegetation could not be cut, animals could not be hunted and humans could not be killed within its precincts.[87] Both were marked off with sacrificial stones (*anṣāb*), and they are sometimes hard to distinguish.

*Ḥimā*s could be reserved for dead persons, for we are explicitly told that the grave of a famous chief was turned into one: nobody was allowed to ride or pasture there.[88] The grave of another famous chief, too, was marked off with sacrificial stones,[89] and sacrifices at graves are attested in other contexts.[90] But

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86   Cf. P. Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*, Princeton 1987, ch. 9.

87   Yāqūt, *Kitāb muʿjam al-buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Leipzig 1866–1873, vol. ii, p. 343, s.v. 'ḥimā'; J. Chelhod in *Encyclopaedia of Islam²*, s.v. 'ḥimā'; J. Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, Berlin 1961, pp. 101 f., 106; H. Lammens, *Le berceau de l'Islam*, Rome 1914, pp. 62 f. (the documentation is entirely about *ḥaram*s in both works, the text notwithstanding).

88   Abū 'l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, Cairo 1927–1974 (hereafter *Aghānī*), vol. xvii, p. 61, on ʿĀmir b. Ṭufayl; cf. I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, Halle 1889–1890, vol. i, p. 235.

89   *Aghānī*, vol. vii, p. 374, on Ḥātim Ṭayyiʾ; cf. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, vol. i, p. 234.

90   Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, vol. i, pp. 242 f. (but cf. Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-*

most *ḥimā*s seem to have been distinguished by special vegetation or other physical peculiarities rather than (or without the addition of) graves.[91] As a rule, *ḥimā*s seem to have been devoid of guardians, being placed directly under the protection of the tribe to which they belonged: there is poetry in which tribesmen boast of grazing their flocks in other people's *ḥimā*s while defending their own.[92] But some were attached to the shrines of named deities, who always had guardians and whose flocks would pasture in the *ḥimā* exempt from work and the threat of slaughter; any beast that strayed into the *ḥimā* would fall into the ownership of the deity, a rule that apparently caused some guardians to help other people's beasts along.[93] Chiefs, too, might set up *ḥimā*s reserved for their own flocks for as long as they camped in the area, as we are told in accounts of a famous war provoked by zealous use of this right; and *ḥimā*s of this type survived the rise of Islam in the form of pastures reserved for the state.[94] Given that the areas were often clumps of dense vegetation, their withdrawal from ordinary use could be construed as a way of eliminating potential conflict, or so at least when the benefactor was the divine rather than a chief.[95] But *ḥimā*s attached to shrines of deities played no role

ʿIqd al-farīd, ed. A. Amīn, A. al-Zayn and I. al-Abyārī, Cairo 1940–1949, vol. v, p. 174). There is also some evidence on graves as asylums, but it is mostly about people seeking refuge with an ancestor of the enemy: invoking the protection of a live kinsman of the enemy's would have had the same effect, while the grave of an unrelated person would not have helped at all (Goldziher, *op. cit.*, pp. 236 f.; Wellhausen, *Reste*, p. 184, both adducing Umayyad rather than pre-Islamic evidence). The dead persons are not credited with supernatural powers. (The verse adduced by H. Lammens, 'Le culte des bétyles' in his *L'Arabie occidentale avant l'hégire*, Beirut 1928, p. 167, from Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, p. 36, could be, but need not be, an exception.)

91 Wellhausen, *Reste*, pp. 105 f.; Lammens, *Berceau*, p. 61.

92 *Naqāʾiḍ Jarīr wa 'l-Farazdaq*, ed. A.A. Bevan, Leiden 1905–1912, vol. i, p. 300, last verse, cited in Lammens, *Berceau*, p. 63; *Aghānī*, vol. xii, p. 193; Nābigha, 2, 2; cf. Wellhausen, *Reste*, p. 108.

93 Wellhausen, *Reste*, pp. 49, 52 f., 53 ff., 107, 112 ff.

94 Wellhausen, *Reste*, pp. 107 f.; Lammens, *Berceau*, pp. 60 ff.; cf. Yāqūt, *Buldān*, vol. ii, p. 344, s.v. 'ḥimā' (for the claim that chiefly *ḥimā*s were temporary); *EI²*, svv. 'al-Basūs', 'Kulayb b. Rabīʿa'. Kulayb provoked the war of Basūs when he shot a camel that had strayed into one of the many *ḥimā*s he was in the habit of reserving for himself: unlike a guardian, he was not apparently allowed simply to claim ownership of it.

95 Chiefly *ḥimā*s could have had the same function if Lammens is right that they were meant as reserves for the tribe in case of drought (*Berceau*, pp. 60 ff.; compare F. Stewart, 'The Individual and the Group in Sinai Bedouin Law' [in Hebrew], *ha-Mizrah he-Hadash* 33 (1991), where an elder of one clan habitually places certain areas of pasture under his own protection to prevent them from being grazed prematurely). But in the Kulayb story, they

distinct from the latter, and no peace-keeping functions are attested for the rest.[96] For our present purposes, then, *ḥimā*s can be ignored.

*Ḥaram*s, too, might be devoid of religious personnel. The most celebrated examples are ʿUkāẓ, Dhū ʾl-Majāz, Majanna and ʿArafa, which were located near Mecca and which formed a single complex of desert sanctuaries visited by pilgrims from a wide variety of tribes in the holy months. They provided an annual venue for trade, the settlement of debts, the payment of tribute,[97] the composition of feuds,[98] the recitation of poetry and other entertainment.[99] No violence was allowed within their precincts; the pilgrims setting out for them would don special outfits to signal that ordinary tribal relations were suspended and would deposit their arms on arrival;[100] they also used to wear veils to prevent parties at feud from recognizing each other, but this custom was abandoned some time before the rise of Islam.[101] The desert sanctuaries had the same function as the modern Ḥaḍramī *ḥawṭa*s, but they owed their inviolability to the holy months, not to holy men.

The desert sanctuaries suggest that in pre-Islamic Arabia the suspension of tribal hostilities was achieved by recourse to sanctity shorn of links with human groups, not by sanctity incarnate in a special set of people to whom everyone else could defer, and this makes sense. Once Arabia had become Muslim, it is obvious that descent from the Prophet and Islamic learning could be employed to elevate some lineages above others in both local and wider terms, but what religion was sufficiently widespread in pre-Islamic Arabia for the sanctity it conferred to be generally recognized? The answer given in the Islamic tradition

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are sources of conflict in that they are established for the benefit of the chief himself (cf. *EI*², s.v. 'ḥimā', where the author harmonizes by claiming that chiefs would establish them to insure *themselves* against drought).

96   According to Wellhausen, *Reste*, p. 108, they could serve as neutral ground between different tribes; but of the two examples adduced in the note, one is about meeting-places for lovers and the other about Musaylima's *ḥaram*, which was not a *ḥimā*. Two tribes made peace at a *ḥimā*, but they had arrived with the intention of fighting (Yāqūt, *Buldān*, vol. ii, p. 472, s.v. 'Ḍariyya').

97   ʿAbdallāh b. Jaʿda collected his *itāwa* from Azdī and other tribal groups at ʿUkāẓ (*Aghānī*, vol. v, p. 23).

98   For an example (the *ṣulḥ* between Bakr and Taghlib at Dhū ʾl-Majāz), see below, note 241.

99   Wellhausen, *Reste*, pp. 88 ff.

100   Crone, *Meccan Trade*, pp. 173, 156, 183 f.

101   Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, vol. v, p. 208, citing Abū ʿUbayda; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, ed. M.T. Houtsma, Leiden 1883, vol. i, p. 315; Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān waʾl-tabyīn*, ed. ʿA.-S.M. Hārūn, Cairo 1964–1950, vol. iii, p. 101. Compare *Aghānī*, vol. vi, p. 211, where two Yemenis set off for *mawāsim al-ʿarab* wearing veils, here to hide their beauty from women and the evil eye.

is Abrahamic monotheism: the Arabs, we are told, had inherited monotheism from their ancestor Abraham and most of them deferred to Quraysh, who were the guardians of this religion and from whose ranks Muḥammad eventually emerged to revive the ancestral faith in a purified form. But this is obviously a statement of doctrine, not of historical recollection.[102] In historical fact, there may well have been a widespread concept of a high god over and above other deities, but the key characteristic of such a deity would have been precisely his lack of particularist ties, not his special relations with a city such as Mecca or a tribe such as Quraysh.[103] The desert sanctuaries were not apparently devoted to any one deity: "most of the Saracens … consider as sacred a place dedicated to I do not know what god", as the sixth-century Byzantine envoy Nonnosus said with reference to an unidentified sanctuary visited in the holy months; modern scholars might say the same with reference to the sanctuaries near Mecca.[104] The desert sanctuaries were not normally inhabited, and though they were located in the territories of known tribes, the latter did not have any special rights to them in the pilgrim season.[105] Conversely, the groups endowed with special functions at the ḥarams were outsiders; and if they were endowed with sanctity (which is by no means clear), they owed it to their relationship with minor deities located in other places: thus the Tamīmīs who acted as hereditary judges at ʿUkāẓ may have been related to guardians of the Tamīmī deity by the name of Shams,[106] while the Qurashīs with whom weapons were deposited are said to have been guardians of the Meccan sanctuary which accommodated Hubal.[107] But the ḥarams owed their status to inter-tribal recognition of the holy months (whatever the ultimate source of their holiness was seen to be), not to a deity with human representatives; and it is hardly accidental that when a deity endowed with a messenger gained universal recognition in

102   Cf. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, pp. 190 ff.

103   Cf. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, p. 194.

104   Nonnosus in Photius, *Bibliothèque*, ed. and tr. R. Henry, Paris 1959, 1, 5 f.; cf. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, p. 197.

105   ʿUkāẓ was located in the territory of Naṣr of Qays ʿAylān, Majanna in that of Kināna and Dhū ʾl-Majāz apparently in that of Hudhayl (Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka*, in *Die Chroniken der Stadt Mekka*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, vol. i, Leipzig 1858, p. 131). Ibn Ḥabīb claims that the idol venerated by Hawāzin and guarded by the Naṣrid family of ʿAwf (along with others of Muḥārib) was located at ʿUkāẓ (*Muḥabbar*, ed. I. Lichtenstaedter, Hyderabad 1942, p. 315), but the mountain at the bottom of which he places it was Meccan rather than ʿUkāẓī according to Yāqūt (*Buldān*, s.v. 'Aṭhal').

106   Cf. below, note 216.

107   Cf. *Aghānī*, vol. xxii, p. 59.

Arabia, the holy months disappeared. Pilgrimages continued to be undertaken at certain times as opposed to others, of course; but the places to which they went invariably owed their sanctity to persons, be they pre-Muḥammadan messengers of God (such as Hūd), descendants of Muḥammad himself (*sharīf*s and *sayyid*s), other friends of God (*walī*s) or persons knowledgeable about His ways (*mashāyikh*). Sanctity no longer arose from time itself.

Pre-Islamic Arabia however also abounded in *ḥaram*s devoted to named deities which were represented in stones or images and sometimes provided with housing too, and such deities (or idols, as the Islamic tradition calls them) seem always to have been provided with guardians (*sādin*s, *ḥājib*s), or, as Wellhausen calls them, priests.[108] But these sanctuaries come across as different from those of modern Ḥaḍramawt.

With the exception of Mecca, no sanctuary endowed with a guardian is described as having attracted pilgrims from a variety of tribes on the scale of the desert sanctuaries; and in the case of Mecca, it is simply the pilgrimage to the desert sanctuaries which is presented as having continued to the future shrine of Islam. One is entitled to doubt the historical truth of this contention, but even if one accepts it, the pilgrimage to Mecca was shorn of socio-political functions: all the buying, selling, settlement of debts, negotiation of truces, ransoming of prisoners and so on had been completed at the desert *ḥaram*s.[109] This does not of course rule out the possibility that such sanctuaries had intertribal functions of a more modest kind, and some clearly did attract visitors from different tribal groups,[110] while others could have served to defuse tension between segments of the same tribe. But we can only postulate that they did if their guardians are presented as regularly engaging in the settlement of disputes; and what they are actually presented as engaging in is divination.

(b) *Diviners*

The diviner comes across as the only religious expert in pre-Islamic Arabia[111] and thus as our only candidate for the role of saint. What sort of person was he then, what services did he perform, and how far is he associated with dispute settlement?

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108 Wellhausen, *Reste*, pp. 13 ff. Cf. also the definition of idols in Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, ed. M. Saqqā, Cairo 1955, vol. i, p. 83.

109 Crone, *Meccan Trade*, pp. 170 ff.

110 Thus for example al-ʿUzzā at Nakhla or the idol Buwāna (see the references in Crone, *Meccan Trade*, p. 195).

111 Wellhausen, *Reste*, p. 134; similarly T. Fahd, *La divination arabe*, Leiden 1966, pp. 91, 109 f.

Diviners were known as *kāhin*s, 'soothsayers' (the term most commonly met), *ʿarrāf*s, 'knowers', *ḥāzī*s, 'seers', and the like, but the terminological differences are not of interest here.[112] Some were guardians of sanctuaries (*sādin*s, *ḥājib*s) and some were not. Let us start with the former.

Guardians are invariably described as men, and their sanctuaries are always depicted as stationary.[113] Their office was hereditary, and their lineages are regularly credited with chiefly origins: thus in connection with Kalb and other tribes of the Syrian desert,[114] Ghaṭafān,[115] Aws and Khazraj,[116] Quraysh,[117] Thaqīf[118] and other tribes of northern Arabia,[119] as well as a few in the south.[120] Presumably, then, guardians were normally of noble origin, and this goes well

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112 Fahd, *Divination*, pp. 91 ff. *EI²*, s.vv. "ʿarrāf', 'kāhin'.

113 Cf. Wellhausen, *Reste*, p. 131.

114 The first guardian of the deity Wadd was the chief of Kalb, in whose family the position remained hereditary (Bakrī, *Muʿjam mā istaʿjama min asmāʾ al-bilād waʾl-mawāḍiʿ*, ed. M. al-Saqqā, Cairo 1945–1951, vol. i, p. 34). Later (?) his guardians were Banū ʾl-Farāṣifa b. al-Aḥwaṣ b. al-Kalb (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 316; disputed by Wellhausen on the grounds that Farāṣifa was a Christian, *Reste*, p. 17); Farāṣifa was chief of a branch of Kalb (thus Ibn al-Kalbī/W. Caskel, *Ǧamharat al-nasab*, Leiden 1966, s.v.). Compare also Jadhīma b. al-Abrash, the king of pre-Lakhmid Ḥīra who *tanabbaʾa wa-takahhana wa-ʾttakhadha ṣanamayn* (Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, ser. i, p. 752; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 237).

115 B. Ṣirma b. Murra were guardians of al-ʿUzzā in Nakhla when that deity was worshipped by Ghaṭafān; they belonged to the clan of the Ghaṭafānī chief (M. Lecker, *The Banū Sulaym*, Jerusalem 1989, p. 42).

116 Manāt, the favourite idol of the future Anṣār, was guarded by the Ghaṭārīf, members of a famous chiefly clan of Azd Sarāt; the Anṣār are supposed to be of Azdī origin (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 316; *Aghānī*, vol. xiii, pp. 211, 220).

117 Quṣayy.

118 The guardians of al-Lāt in Ṭāʾif were B. ʿAttāb (or ʿAjlān b. ʿAttāb, or Shubayl b. ʿAjlān b. ʿAttāb) or B. Muʿattib or Āl Abī ʾl-ʿĀṣ (Ibn al-Kalbī, *Aṣnām*, ed. A. Zakī, Cairo 1914, p. 16; id./Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, s.v. 'Šubail b. al-Aǧlān'; Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, ed. M. Jones, London 1966, vol. iii, p. 972; Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. i, p. 85; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 315). The ʿAttāb and Muʿattib clans belonged to the Aḥlāf, whom Wellhausen deems not to be nobles (*Reste*, p. 31; cf. Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, chart 118); but Masʿūd b. Muʿattib is presented as the chief of Ṭāʾif in the days of Abraha's invasion and the leader of Thaqīf, along with his brother, in the Fijār wars (Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. i, p. 46; *Aghānī*, vol. xxii, p. 63); and the Abū ʾl-ʿAys belonged to the other branch of Thaqīf that Wellhausen counts as noble.

119 Cf. Ẓālim b. al-Ghaḍbān, an influential person who was the guardian of the idol of Banū Ḍabba in the Jāhiliyya (Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, ed. ʿA.-S.M. Hārūn, Beirut 1991, p. 193).

120 The Hamdānī deity Yaʿūq guarded by Mālik b. Marthad (Ibn al-Kalbī, *Aṣnām*, p. 57); the family of Marthad were once rulers of Bakīl (Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, s.v. 'Hamdān'). Cf. also below, note 125, on Anʿum.

with the fact that they seem to have been armed and warlike.[121] There are however examples of guardians who were not members of the tribes they served, let alone related to their chiefs,[122] and one might take this to be suggestive of a saintly pattern: for if there was a positive premium on foreign origin, the guardians must surely have had mediating functions. But the examples are fewer than Wellhausen would have it, some his attestations being wrong[123] and others doubtful;[124] and though some are indisputable,[125] foreign origins

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121 ‘Amr b. Luḥayy, the guardian of the Meccan sanctuary who transformed the aboriginal Abrahamic monotheism of the Arabs into idol worship, lived for 340 years and had 1,000 sons fighting with him (Sijistānī, *Mu‘ammarūn*, Cairo 1905, p. 35); the Jurhumite guardians of Mecca also had troops (*Aghānī*, vol. xv, p. 13); the Qurashī clan of ‘Abd al-Dār, who were the guardians of the Ka‘ba on the eve of Islam, participated in the Fijār war and other (?) military encounters (*Aghānī*, vol. xxii, p. 62; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, ed. K.A. Fāriq, Hyderabad 1964, pp. 170, 441; Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol. i, ed. M. Hamidullah, Cairo 1959, p. 102). Mas‘ūd and Wahb b. Mu‘attib, whose clan provided the guardians of the Thaqafī sanctuary at Ṭā’if according to some, were leaders of Thaqīf in the Fijār wars (*Aghānī*, vol. xxii, p. 63; cf. above, note 118). One hundred guardians were killed in battle over Dhū ’l-Khalaṣa (Ibn al-Kalbī, *Aṣnām*, p. 36), but this was a battle fought for control of the deity itself and so perhaps does not count; the same may be said of guardians killed in battle against representatives of the Prophet.

122 Wellhausen, *Reste*, pp. 130 f.

123 The ‘Abd al-Qays did not provide the Murād with guardians. The reference is to ‘Amr b. al-Ju‘ayd al-‘Abdī, the *kāhin* of ‘Abd al-Qays, who did not officiate among the Murādīs inasmuch as he was chief of his own tribe (below, note 164). He mistakenly appears as ‘Amr b. al-Ju‘ayd al-Murādī and falls on the Murādī side in *Aghānī*, vol. xvi, p. 332, to which Wellhausen refers (cf. also Caskel, *Register*, s.v. “Amr b. al-Ǧu‘ayd’).

124 According to Ibn al-Kalbī, Dhū ’l-Khalaṣa at Tabāla was guarded by B. Umāma of Bāhila, a tribe not among the worshippers (*Aṣnām*, p. 35). But he mentions Khath‘amīs among the hundred guardians killed in battle over the idol (ibid., p. 36; he has no entry on the Umāma in his *Ǧamhara*). According to Ibn Ḥabīb, the guardians were B. Hilāl b. ‘Āmir (*Muḥabbar*, p. 317), who were of Bajīla, a tribe prominent among the worshippers (cf. Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, where the family is listed without comment). Wellhausen also adduces Manāt at Qudayd. This deity was worshipped by Aws and Khazraj (Ibn al-Kalbī, *Aṣnām*, p. 13; Ibn Hishām, *Das Leben Muhammed's*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen 1858–1860, p. 55) and guarded by Ghaṭārīf of Azd. But this is not a real example since the Anṣār were supposedly of Azdī origin, and we are explicitly told that the worshippers included Azd (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 316; cf. Wellhausen, *Reste*, pp. 26, 130; above, note 116).

125 The worshippers of Sa‘īda (al-‘Uzzā?) at Uḥud were Azd (Anṣār?), but the guardians were B. al-‘Ajlān, presumably identical with the B. al-‘Ajlān b. Ḥāritha listed as proteges of a branch of Aws (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 317; Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, s.v.).

are depicted as a disadvantage in a story in which a South Arabian tribe tries to oust its foreign guardians on the grounds that they do not belong to the nobility.[126] Wellhausen himself explained the phenomenon as the outcome of population shifts, the guardians having stayed behind by their sanctuaries after their fellow-tribesmen had abandoned the area; and though anthropologists may be disdainful of so historical, as opposed to structural, an explanation, it does seem to be the only one to fit the evidence. Native or foreign, guardians practised divination by lending voices to oracular deities,[127] or by means of divinatory arrows (*qiḍāḥ, azlām*), which seem to have been very popular even though they could only answer questions posed in the form of alternatives.[128] Their customers sometimes came from far afield.[129] One would have expected them also to supply medical services and other assistance, including sundry miracles, as other diviners and Christian holy men with Arab followings are said to have done;[130] but if they did, it failed to be recorded.

Diviners who were not in charge of sanctuaries were self-made. Their office was not hereditary, they are not described as nobles, and they were women as often as men. They communicated with spirits (*jinn*) rather than with deities,[131] insofar as they did not simply read their answers in pebbles, signs

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Yaghūth was worshipped by Murād and others, but guarded by Anʿum and (sometimes omitted) Aʿlā. Anʿum is given the *nisba* of Murādī in Ibn al-Kalbī, *Aṣnām*, p. 57; but apparently they were Murādīs by adoption, for Anʿum and Aʿlā b. Amr are listed as Ṭāʾīs in Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, chart 252; Anʿum is explicitly Ṭāʾī in Ibn Hishām. See also J. Wellhausen, 'Zu E. Glaser's "Skizze"', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 44 (1890), p. 172, where the Liḥyānī guardians of Ruhāṭ at Yanbuʿ are added. The Khuzāʿa in Qurashī Mecca may turn out to be another example (cf. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, pp. 187 f.).

126 Yāqūt; Wellhausen, *Reste*, pp. 19 f.

127 Wellhausen, *Reste*, pp. 34, 65, 66 (al-ʿUzzā, al-Ḥumām, Ḍamār); Fahd, *Divination*, pp. 171 ff.; add Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *ʿUyūn al-athar*, Cairo 1937 f., vol. i, pp. 75, 76 f., 79 f.; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, vol. iii, p. 100; vol. iv, pp. 337, 665 (= Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 318); vol. ix, p. 48.

128 Wellhausen, *Reste*, pp. 132 f.

129 Cf. Imruʿ al-Qays' consultation of the oracle at Tabāla (Ibn al-Kalbī, *Aṣnām*, p. 47; Wellhausen, *Reste*, pp. 46 f.).

130 Cf. below, note 147.

131 See, among countless examples, Ibn Hishām, *Leben*, pp. 98 f. (*ʿarrafa lahā tābiʿ*); Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, vol. v, p. 228 (*kāhin* and *tābiʿ*); Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, ed. ʿA.-S.M. Hārūn, Cairo 1938–1958, vol. vi, p. 203; id., *Bayān*, vol. i, p. 289 (*raʾī min al-jinn*; cf. also id., *al-Tarbīʿ wa'l-tadwīr*, ed. C. Pellat, Damascus 1955, §§ 68, 70, 183); Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, Cairo 1923–, vol. iii, p. 128 (*atbāʿ min al-shayāṭīn*); below, note 160. In Ibn al-

in the sand, physiognomy and the like,[132] and they delivered their communications in rhymed prose (*sajʿ*, which was probably used by oracular deities as well).[133] Then as later, they typically acquired their status through temporary withdrawal from human society.[134] Most of them were probably itinerant;[135] a few were attached to such courts as existed,[136] but some had fixed residences to which their customers would come.[137] One Yemeni *kāhin* resided on a mountain top, presumably because it was sacred,[138] but they are not otherwise associated with holy places. Practically all the stories in which we see them in action have them serve customers from tribes other than their own, and the latter often travel considerable distances in order to reach them.[139]

The guardian-diviners and their self-made counterparts correspond well enough to the hereditary and non-hereditary soothsayers of modern Arabia (except, of course, that the hereditary ones are no longer attached to sanctuaries); and they answered very much the same questions too. They could tell whether it was advisable to marry or travel at a particular time,[140] or to engage in military action,[141] where animals had strayed, or who had killed them,[142] who

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Athīr, *Usd al-ghāba fī maʿrifat al-ṣaḥāba*, Cairo 1869–1871, vol. ii, p. 136 (s.v. ʿDhibāb b. al-Ḥārith'), the guardian of an idol is said to have *raʾī min al-jinn*, though it should be of the deity.

132   Fahd, *Divination*, pp. 195 ff.

133   Fahd; predictions of the prophet by oracular deities are also in *sajʿ*, though obviously late (Ibn Sayyid al-Nās).

134   Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, ed. C. Pellat, Beirut 1966–1979, vol. ii, §1240. The passage is about diviners in general, but the information only fits this particular type.

135   Thus presumably the diviners who practised at the pilgrim fairs (Crone, *Meccan Trade*, p. 219).

136   Thus the diviners attached to the court of the Yemeni *tubbaʿ*, and those from whom al-Zabbāʾ (Zenobia) sought advice (*Aghānī*, vol. xv, pp. 46, 318).

137   Thus all the diviners below.

138   Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd*, vol. v, p. 7, bottom; Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *ʿUyūn*, vol. i, p. 80; cf. C. Robin, *Les hautes-terres du Nord Yemen avant l'Islam*, Leiden 1982.

139   Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, pp. 105, 107, 110, 112 ff., 115 f. (Qurashīs seeking *kāhin*s and *kāhina*s in Syria and the Yemen); Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, vol. iii, pp. 132 f.; *Aghānī*, vol. iv, pp. 204 f. (al-Ẓarib al-ʿAdwānī consults Shiqq al-Bajalī *kāhin*, he being the nearest; next Saṭīḥ al-Dhiʾbī, of Ghassān); cf. *Munammaq* on having *ḥakam*s not related. The itinerant ones also served foreign customers.

140   Ibn Hishām, *Leben*, p. 97; Fahd, *Divination*, p. 181n (citing al-Azharī).

141   Cf. Imruʾ al-Qays at Tabāla, above, note 129.

142   Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, vol. v, p. 150; *Aghānī*, vol. xi, p. 118 (al-Khims al-Taghlibī); Wellhausen, *Reste*, p. 55 (= Yāqūt, *Buldān*, vol. ii, p. 100) (oracular deity Jalsad).

had stolen one's property,[143] what the descent of an unknown person might be,[144] what sort of future one's children would have,[145] or how one was going to die.[146] Some of the self-made diviners could cure,[147] and some could explain the meaning of dreams.[148] Both types, of course, predicted the arrival of the Prophet, who destroyed the idols and cut off communication between men and *jinn*, thus putting an end to divination altogether.[149]

We also hear about diviners who are difficult to classify, however, and at least some of them should probably be put in a third group of their own. Numerous male and female diviners operated largely or wholly within their own tribes, in which they put their prognosticating gifts to political use and often assumed politically leading roles. Thus a *kāhina* by the name of Ṭarīfa or Ṭarīqa predicted the collapse of the Maʾrib dam in the Yemen and led her people north, dispensing advice on the way;[150] another *kāhina* by the name of Zarqāʾ performed a similar role in the migrations of Tanūkh;[151] two *kāhina*s gave warning of enemies approaching;[152] a *kāhina* of Quraysh in Mecca

143 Wellhausen, *Reste*, p. 207 (on the *ʿarrāf*).

144 *Aghānī*, vol. iv, pp. 304 f.; Ibn Hishām, *Leben*, p. 97.

145 People would take their children to diviners at the pilgrim fairs to have their futures told, and Muḥammad was also taken to one, or several (see the references in Crone, *Meccan Trade*, p. 219, note 72).

146 *Aghānī*, vol. xv, p. 250; vol. xxi, ed. R.E. Brünnow, Leiden 1888, p. 275 (*kāhina*s); Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb al-shiʿr waʾl-shuʿarāʾ*, ed. M.J. de Goeje, Leiden 1904, p. 248 = my ed. vol. i, p. 421 (*kāhin*).

147 Cf. the verse on the *ʿarrāf* of al-Yamāma cited in Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, vol. vi, p. 205; Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. ii, §1239; Thaʿālibī, *Thimār al-qulūb*, ed. M.A.-F. Ibrāhīm, Cairo 1965, pp. 105 f. (§150). A Yemeni ruler consulted doctors, *kāhin*s and *ʿarrāf*s when he suffered from insomnia (Ibn Hishām, *Leben*, p. 19), or sorcerers, astrologers and *kāhin*s when his eyes were afflicted (*Aghānī*, vol. xv, p. 46). Compare T. Nöldeke, *Sketches from Eastern History*, Beirut 1963, pp. 208 f., 219 ff., on Ephraim; cf. also I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, Washington, D.C., 1984, p. 153.

148 Cf. Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. i, p. 35 (*kāhina*); Ibn Hishām, *Leben*, pp. 9 ff. (*kāhin*s).

149 Ibn Isḥāq, *Kitāb al-siyar waʾl-maghāzī*, ed. S. Zakkār, Beirut 1978, pp. 111 f.; Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd*, vol. v, p. 7, bottom; Abū Nuʿaym, *Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa*, ed. M.R. Qalʿahjī, Beirut 1986, vol. i, p. 108; Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *ʿUyūn*, vol. i, pp. 54, 72 ff., 75, 77 f., 80; Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, vol. iii, pp. 128, 130 f.; see also the references in Crone, *Meccan Trade*, p. 219.

150 Azraqī, *Makka*, pp. 53, 55; *Aghānī*, vol. xv, pp. 15 f.; Yāqūt, *Buldān*, vol. iv, p. 384; Fahd, *Divination*, pp. 163 ff.

151 *Aghānī*, vol. xiii, p. 81; Bakrī, *Muʿjam*, vol. i, p. 22.

152 A *kāhina* of Ḥadas warned her people of the advance of Prophet's army; they followed her advice (Ibn Hishām, *Leben*, p. 797; Fahd, *Divination*, p. 168); and a slavegirl endowed with

predicted the battles of Badr and Uḥud in language so obscure that the meaning was not understood at the time;[153] the *kāhin* of the Murād predicted the outcome of a proposed attack on Tamīm and advised against it, only to be ignored;[154] other male and female diviners also predicted the outcome of military encounters[155] and/or offered advice while they were taking place.[156] Male *kāhin*s of this type were armed and participated in the battles;[157] they also participated in raids.[158] Some were chiefs[159] (though the number of chiefly

divinatory gifts warned her people of an impending attack, though she was not believed (Qālī, *Amālī*, vol. i, pp. 126 f.; set between al-Shiḥr and Ḥaḍramawt).

153 *Kāhina* in Mecca: Ibn Isḥāq, *Siyar*, p. 112.

154 The *kāhin* was al-Maʾmūr al-Ḥārithī according to *Aghānī*, vol. xvi, p. 329, Salama b. Mughaffal al-Ḥārithī according to Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, ed. C.J. Tornberg, Leiden 1867, vol. i, p. 466 (both on Yawm al-Kulāb II).

155 The *kāhin* of Asad predicted the victory of Asad over Ḥujr b. ʿAdī, or returned to give a verdict on advisability, being thus engaged when they went ahead (*Aghānī*, vol. ix, pp. 84, 86; Ibn Qutayba, *Shiʿr*, pp. 37 f.; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. i, p. 377; Fahd, *Divination*, pp. 166 ff.). The *kāhina* of Iyād predicted the victory over the Persians at Dhū Qār (*Aghānī*; Fahd, *Divination*, p. 166). Advice in battle: *ḥuzāt* of B. Asad (*Naqāʾiḍ*, p. 661); Ḍamra b. Labīd at Kulāb II (Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, vol. v, p. 226); *kāhina kānat fī Iyād*, referred to above (Bakrī, *Muʿjam*, vol. i, p. 70; *Aghānī*, vol. xxii, pp. 355 f.).

156 Thus Ḍamra b. Labīd al-Himāsī, a *kāhin* who fell at Yawm al-Kulāb II (Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ğamhara*, register, s.v.; add Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, vol. v, pp. 226, 228), and ʿUtayba b. al-Ḥārith al-Yarbūʿī, a *kāhin* (according to Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, vol. vi, p. 203) who was a great warleader and who fell in battle against Asad (Abū ʾl-Baqāʾ, *Manāqib*, ed. Ṣ.M. Darādika and M.ʿA.-Q. Khuraysāt, Amman 1984, vol. i, pp. 163, 187 f., 196; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, pp. 225 f.; Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ğamhara*, s.v., all without reference to his *kihāna*). The militancy of *kāhin*s is also noted by Fahd, *Divination*, pp. 98 f., 119 f. (where the evidence adduced from Lammens is however of dubious value).

157 Cf. above, note 121.

158 Thus al-Maʾmūr al-Ḥārithī (note 154 above) raided Banū Dārim of Tamīm and captured two women, which caused the Dārim to raid Banū ʾl-Ḥārith in their turn (*Naqāʾiḍ*, p. 939; cf. p. 200). He was one of their well-known *fursān* (Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, p. 239 = ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen 1854, 400).

159 Thus ʿAmr b. al-Ḥumays al-Thawrī was a brave and generous *sayyid* and a *kāhin* (Sijistānī, *Muʿammarūn*, p. 30). Al-Ḥuṣayn b. Naḍla *al-kāhin* was *sayyid ahl Tihāma* (Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, ed. Hārūn, p. 474; cf. Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ğamhara*, register, s.v., according whom he was chief of Kaʿb of Khuzāʿa). ʿAmr b. al-Juʿayd al-Afkal may be another example, but he may also have been a guardian (above, note 123); the same applies to al-Dayyān b. ʿAbd al-Madān, *sharīf* and *kāhin* (Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. i, p. 362; cf. below, note 210). For another uncertain example, see Rabīʿa b. Ḥudhār, below, note 197.

kāhins has been grossly inflated by Lammens).[160] Of others we know little but their names.[161]

There is no question of identifying these soothsayers with the self-made diviners who operated independently of tribal ties,[162] but the sources never identify them as guardians either. Wellhausen nonetheless took some of them to have been priests,[163] and in some cases he is surely right: one *kāhin*, who was clearly a noble and whose divinatory gifts were hereditary, had the sobriquet of al-Afkal, 'priest' (a meaning unknown to the sources),[164] while another spoke in a manner suggesting that he was in communication with a deity rather than a

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160   Thus the Medinese Uḥayḥa b. al-Julāḥ was credited with a *tābi' min al-jinn* because of the
       frequency with which he was right (*Aghānī*, vol. xv, p. 39), while Zuhayr b. Janāb, the chief
       of Kalb, was known as a *kāhin* thanks to *shiddat/ṣiḥḥat raʾyihi* (ibid., vol. xxi, ed. Brünnow,
       p. 99; Sijistānī, *Muʿammarūn*, p. 25); Zuhayr b. Jadhīma and his *tābiʿa*. All three in other
       words had such insight that they were metaphorically known as diviners, but Lammens
       takes all three to have been diviners in the literal sense of the word (*Arabie occidentale*).
       Cf. also his handling of the Ghaṭārīf. And every chief with a *qubba* is *kāhin* and priest to
       Lammens, cf. the Imruʾ al-Qays story where Wellhausen is clearly right to construe the
       qubba as a Fürstenzelt: we are explicitly told that Imruʾ al-Qays slept in it (Wellhausen,
       Reste). Cf. also his handling of al-Afwah al-Awdī ('Bétyles', p. 159): the references say that
       he was *sayyid qawmihi*, their *qāʾid* in wars; they followed his *raʾy* and he was one of their
       wise men (specimens given) and a poet (*Aghānī*, vol. xii, p. 169).

161   Dhuʾayb b. Hilāl al-Khuzāʿī *al-kāhin* who had a famous horse and was known as a poet was
       presumably a *kāhin* of this type (cf. Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ansāb al-khayl*, ed. A. Zakī, Cairo 1946,
       p. 105; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, ed. Wüstenfeld, p. 282); likewise ʿAwf b. *al-kāhin* al-Sulamī, also
       known for a horse (Ibn al-Kalbī, *Khayl*, p. 74); cf. also ʿAmr b. al-Ḥamiq *al-kāhin* or *ibn al-*
       kāhin al-Khuzāʿī, a companion of the Prophet who participated in the murder of ʿUthmān
       and the revolt of Ḥujr b. ʿAdī (Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, ed. Hārūn, p. 279 = ed. Wüstenfeld,
       p. 474; Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, register).

162   Self-made diviners are never given full tribal names, but rather referred to as ʿUzzā Salama,
       Shiqq, Saṭīḥ *al-kāhin* and so on. No self-made *kāhin* is encountered in battle.

163   Wellhausen, *Reste*, p. 134.

164   The father of ʿAmr b. al-Juʿayd al-Afkal, the *kāhin* mentioned above, note 159, figures in a
       list of *ḥukkām* (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, pp. 135 f.; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 300); and since we
       are told that ʿAmr's divinatory gifts passed to his descendants, his father may have been a
       diviner too. But whether he was a real judge or simply an umpire in a merit competition is
       impossible to tell (see below, p. 451). Afkal, whose *kihāna* was hereditary (*Aghānī*, vol. xvi,
       p. 337), was also a chief (*Aghānī*, vol. xxi, ed. Brünnow, p. 186; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, ed.
       Hārūn, p. 325). Compare the second-century Šaʿdat who was *ʾfkl* (priest) of Ilāhā and the
       builder of his shrine (*byt'*) (J.T. Milik, 'Inscriptions grecques et nabatéennes de Rawwafah',
       appended to P.J. Parr and others, 'Preliminary Survey in N.W. Arabia, 1968', *Bulletin of the
       Institute of Archaeology* 10 (1971), p. 58); cf. also Fahd, *Divination*, pp. 102 ff.

mere spirit.[165] Possibly, they were guardians of mobile sanctuaries (*qubba*s);[166] and possibly, women could also occupy that role.[167] But if noble origin suffices to establish priestly status, as Wellhausen seems to have reasoned,[168] and if sheer political influence suffices to establish the same, as one of his references suggests,[169] then practically all the men and women mentioned must have been guardians, which is hardly what Wellhausen meant and which certainly does not seem likely: many of them plainly were not full-time diviners.[170] Lay

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165   Cf. Wellhausen, *Reste*, p. 134, with reference, inter alia, to the *kāhin* of Asad who addressed his tribesmen as 'my servants' and was himself addressed as 'lord', suggesting that he represented an authrithy greater than a *jinnī* (*Aghānī*, vol. ix, p. 84; Ibn Qutayba, *Shiʿr*, p. 37).

166   Cf. Lammens, 'Bétyles', pp. 102 f. He is annoyed by Wellhausen's claim that deities were always stationary, though they are invariably described as such in Ibn al-Kalbī and Ibn Ḥabīb. His response is as erratic as everything else he wrote, but one must agree with him that deities could be portable.

167   Fahd adduces a woman referred to as *rabbat al-bayt*, 'mistress of the house [of the deity?]' (*Divination*, p. 101n, with reference to Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd*, vol. v, p. 17, s.v. 'Nusayb'; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, vol. i, p. 195, line 5—no indication of edition; the third reference is wrong). His understanding of the expression is influenced by Lammens, 'Bétyles', where every *rabbat al-bayt* is a priestess even when the expression clearly means mistress of the tent/household. But some of the evidence is certainly suggestive.

168   In addition to the two examples mentioned in the preceding notes, Wellhausen adduced al-Maʾmūr al-Ḥārithī, presumably because he was a *sharīf* (in the pre-Islamic sense of the word, i.e. a noble) (Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. i, p. 326) and highly influential in his tribe (Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, ed. Hārūn, p. 239 = ed. Wüstenfeld, p. 400—hyperbolically the whole of Madhḥij; see also id., *Ḥayawān*, vol. vi, p. 203, and the references in id., *Tarbīʿ*, p. 26n; Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, s.v. 'al-Ḥariṯ b. Muʿāwiya al-Maʾmūr'; above, notes 154 and 158). Wellhausen also adduced Zuhayr b. Janāb, the Kalbī chief who was known as a *kāhin*, which seems particularly awkward given that he is said to have owed the label to the fact that he was usually right (cf. above, note 160).

169   Wellhausen also adduced Ibn Hishām, *Leben*, p. 797, on the *kāhina* of Ḥadas (above, note 152), which is hardly explicable in other terms.

170   One *kāhina* in South Arabia was a slavegirl (note 152). Mecca produced a whole spate of *kāhina*s whose supernatural powers are not presented as arising from the supposed priestly status of Quraysh: cf. the *kāhina* of Sahm who predicted battles (above, note 153), the *kāhina* who advised on the propriety of washing one's hands in perfume or blood on the conclusion of alliances (and who may not even have been a Qurashiyya; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, pp. 20 f.), and the *kāhina*s who predicted the Prophet, one of them of B. Zuhra, the other a maternal aunt of ʿUthmān (Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *ʿUyūn*, vol. i, p. 75 (Sawdāʾ); Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, vol. iii, p. 130 (Suʿdā)). These women can at the most have been guardians of household deities. The *ḥuzāt* of Asad who dispensed military advice can hardly have been guardians either since the guardian would be the man who addressed his followers as his *ʿibād* (above, note 165).

tribesmen and tribeswomen must have engaged in divination on behalf of their tribes on a scale unknown in later times. This is intriguing in that it provides a clue to the Arabian 'queens' who appear in Assyrian sources and the Bible[171] and of whom there were still a few in the centuries before the rise of Islam:[172] female diviners such as Ṭarīfa and Zarqāʾ, who may or may not have been guardians of mobile sanctuaries but who certainly rose to leadership of their tribes thanks to their knowledge of the unknown, would undoubtedly have been classified as queens by foreign observers. It was also via divination that a woman rose to the status of 'false prophet' when Muḥammad began to acquire imitators.[173] There is a suggestion of the saintly pattern here in that the women were outsiders by virtue of their sex and rose to political influence by means of supernatural knowledge; but they were militant representatives of their own tribes, not neutral go-betweens or defusers of tribal tension.

We may now turn to the question how far diviners participated in dispute settlement. The secondary literature frequently describes them as ḥakams, judges or arbitrators depending on one's understanding of these words. (The pre-Islamic ḥakam was an arbitrator in the sense that he was chosen by the parties themselves, not provided by authorities, and also in that he could not enforce his decision;[174] but he was a judge in the sense that his task was to give a verdict,[175] not to mediate and bring about a reconciliation.[176]) The

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171 T.W. Rosmarin, 'Aribi und Arabien in den babylonisch-assyrischen Quellen', *Journal of the Society of Oriental Research* 16 (1932), pp. 29 ff. The Queen of Sheba is probably another example, cf. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, pp. 14 f. and the literature cited there.

172 Thus al-Zabbāʾ (= Zenobia) and Mavia. Both were widows of kings, but Mavia led her troops in battle, as would a *kāhina*, and the fact that she was a Christian would not prevent her from adopting that role (cf. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, ch. 4, on Mavia, with references to literature on Zenobia at p. 141n).

173 Sajāḥ: Jāḥiẓ. According to Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-badʾ waʾl-taʾrīkh*, Paris 1899–1919, vol. v, p. 164, she was a sorcerer married to Abū Kuḥayla, the *kāhin* of Yamāma. This must be embroidery, for although she eventually came to Yamāma (where she is said to have married Musaylima), she and her kinsmen of ʿUqfān lived among the Taghlib of the Jazīra until she began her prophetic career (Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, ser. i, p. 1911).

174 It was for this reason that Tyan insisted he was an arbitrator, not a judge (*Organisation judiciaire²*, pp. 41 f., 48 f.).

175 For examples, see below, notes 204 (al-Afʿā), 223 (ʿĀmir b. al-Ẓarib) and 240 (Sumayr feud). Though the judge is never known as a *qāḍī* (Tyan, *Organisation judiciaire²*, p. 48), his decisions are frequently referred to by words of that root (*qaḍāʾ, qaḍā*, e.g. *Aghānī* on Sumayr feud; cf. also Salama b. al-Khuraysh's verse to Subayʿ al-Taghlabī in Ibn Qutayba, *Shiʿr*, p. 89).

176 Naturally mediation and reconciliation are attested too. Al-Aslaʿ b. ʿAbdallāh mediated

secondary literature is not wrong, but it is nonetheless misleading. Lay diviners (i.e. those of the third type) do not appear as ḥakams at all, one apparent exception notwithstanding;[177] and though professional diviners certainly do, we may begin by noting that most of them are associated with dispute settlements of a rather unusual kind.

The pre-Islamic Arabs were much addicted to one might call 'boasting competitions' or 'merit duels' (*mufākhara*s, *munāfara*s), in which two parties would recite their claims to superiority before a judge selected by themselves and the winner would walk off with glory and a large number of camels previously set aside as stakes.[178] The judge in these competitions was known as a ḥakam on a par with the adjudicator of legal disputes, and apparently some people would adjudicate disputes of both kinds,[179] but for purposes of clarity I shall henceforth refer to the ḥakam in merit duels as an umpire. The umpire could be any prestigious tribesman (not tribeswoman);[180] but *kāhin*s are also attested in this role,[181] and maybe it was once exclusively theirs, for even ordinary tribesmen

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between ʿAbs and Dhubyān (*mashā fī ʾl-ṣulḥ*, cf. *Aghānī*, vol. xvii, pp. 201 f.). When Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr appointed ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ their ḥakam in a dispute over a Medinese wadi, ʿAmr encouraged them to settle their dispute instead, which they did (*iṣṭalaḥā*, Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*, ed. C. Brockelmann, Berlin 1900, vol. i, pp. 92 f.). But the claim that "der Ḥakam ist durchaus kein Richter, sondern ein Schiedsmann" is wrong (W. Reinert, *Das Recht in der altarabischen Poesie*, Cologne 1963, p. 42). Reinert adduces Ṭarafa, 3:16, *thumma dānā baynanā ḥakamuh* and translates it "dann brachte uns ein ḥakam zueinander", but the line surely means "then a ḥakam judged between us" (cf. *dayyān*, 'judge').

177   For the exception, which is probably to be dismissed, see below, note 197 (Rabīʿa b. Ḥudhār).

178   On the various kinds of boasting competitions, see I. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, ed. S.M. Stern, vol. i, London 1967, pp. 57 ff. [orig. 54 ff.]. Cf. also Tyan, *Organisation judiciaire*², pp. 39 f., 52 ff. (where different procedures are mixed up).

179   Cf. Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, p. 483, citing al-Kalbī: there were four men among Quraysh whom people would seek out as judges in cases concerning blood-money and who would judge among people in disputes over merit; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 299: the Arabs had ḥakams in *munāfarāt*, inheritance, water rights, blood-money.

180   Cf. the judges sought by the parties in *Aghānī*, vol. xvi, pp. 283 ff.: Abū Sufyān and Abū Jahl, two influential Qurashīs; ʿUyayna b. Ḥiṣn, the Fazārī chief; Ghaylān b. Salama, a Thaqafī chief and judge (below, note 228); and Ḥarmala b. Ashʿar, all of whom refuse to act whereupon Harim b. Quṭba (on whom see below, note 184) accepts. Cf. also ibid., vol. v, p. 23. Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, Cairo 1905–1907, vol. i, p. 32; vol. ii, p. 172 (svv. ʿAsʿad b. Zurāra'; 'Dhakwān b. ʿAbd Qays'): ʿUtba b. Rabīʿa acted as judge for two Khazrajīs. Cf. also W. Raven, 'Some Early Islamic Texts on the Negus of Abyssinia', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 33 (1988), p. 198.

181   Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, pp. 105, 107, 110, 112 ff., 115 f.; Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, vol. iii, pp. 132 f.

would make use of *saj'*, the rhymed prose characteristic of diviners, when they enacted it.[182] Presumably, the verdict was once seen as supernatural.

Much of the material on *ḥakam*s in the sources relates to boasting competitions rather than legal or political disputes, and the secondary literature is misleading in that it fails to bring this out.[183] The lists of pre-Islamic *ḥakam*s, for example, do include some genuine judges, but most of the names are of men who acted as umpires in famous merit competitions and who are not known to have adjudicated in any other context;[184] lists of people who spoke in *saj'* similarly include people who acted as umpires and who are not otherwise known to have acted as diviners.[185] Merit competitions were certainly disputes; indeed, they could be described as ritual warfare;[186] they were public events in which a great deal of honour was at stake over and on top of the camels, and the umpire

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(the Khuzāʿī *kāhin* in the *munāfara* of Umayya and Hāshim); cf. also the verse in *Aghānī*, vol. xvi, p. 285 (*ḥakam-kāhin*).

182   *Saj'*: Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. i, pp. 365, 290. Tyan, *Organisation judiciaire¹*, p. 59, wrongly thinks that all *ḥakam*s spoke in *saj'*.

183   Cf. Wellhausen, *Reste*, p. 136, where the sole reference is to *Aghānī*, vol. xvi, p. 291 on *ḥakam-kāhin*, on a famous merit duel. Fahd, *Divination*, p. 118; id., 'kāhin' in *EI²* (where the examples include one legal dispute, all the rest being merit duels). Tyan (*Organisation judiciaire²*, pp. 44 f.) is so sure that all judges were *kāhin*s that he asserts we can assume them to have been *kāhin*s even when this is not said; he alleges that the judges at ʿUkāẓ were *kāhin*s, completely gratuitously; he calls Abū ʾl-Sayyār a *kāhin* but offers no documentation; and he says *ḥakam*s were "especially" *kāhin*s, p. 47, whence Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, Oxford 1964, p. 7 f. (without references).

184   Thus Ḍamra b. Ḍamra al-Tamīmī (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 134; *Naqāʾiḍ*, p. 139; Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. i, p. 290, cf. below, note 231); Harim b. Quṭba al-Fazārī (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 135; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 299; Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. i, p. 290; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, ed. Hārūn, pp. 283 ff.; Abū ʾl-Baqāʾ, *Manāqib*, vol. i, p. 171); Nufayl b. ʿAbd al-ʿUzzā (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 133; Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. i, p. 290); and probably also Rabīʿa b. Ḥudhār (below, note 197).

185   cf. Jāḥiẓ. Al-Aqraʿ b. Ḥābis was one of the Tamīmī judges at ʿUkāẓ (*Naqāʾiḍ*, pp. 438, 700), but it was for his verdict in a celebrated merit duel at ʿUkāẓ that he received the sobriquet *ḥakam al-ʿarab* (ibid., pp. 139 ff., 265; cf. Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 134; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 299), and al-Jāḥiẓ duly includes him in his list of people who delivered their verdicts in *saj'* (*Bayān*, vol. i, p. 290). The legendary Aktham b. Ṣayfī al-Tamīmī should perhaps also be envisaged as a judge, though he may belong in note 160 in that his main image is that of a wise man (*ḥakīm*) (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 134; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 299; *Naqāʾiḍ*, p. 139; Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. i, p. 365; Sijistānī, *Muʿammarūn*, p. 15). Only Tyan has him as *kāhin* (*Organisation judiciaire²*, p. 44). He was the ancestor of two judges (Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, chart 83; below, note 235).

186   *Aghānī*, vol. xvi, pp. 283 ff.

was to that extent a peacemaker. When the chiefs of two different branches of Kilāb decided on a merit duel, nobody wanted to act as umpire because the verdict was guaranteed to cause bloodshed whoever was pronounced the victor; but the man who eventually accepted the job (and who was not a diviner) kept the peace by pronouncing the contestants equal, which was not apparently a valid verdict under normal circumstances, but which he cleverly contrived to have accepted.[187] Even so, one could hardly classify the umpire as a holy man. He was not an institutionalized peacemaker operating among the same customers year in and year out; he was not regularly associated with a sanctuary, and he did not even have to be in regular communication with the divine.

However, there are also stories in which *kāhin*s are consulted in legal disputes. The diviners here are sometimes male, sometimes female and always of the self-made type. Thus a Meccan who denied murdering his brother was taken to Saṭīḥ al-Dhiʾbī, a legendary *kāhin* who correctly divined that the brother had in fact been been killed by a viper.[188] A married woman in Mecca who refused to confess to accusations of adultery was taken to a Yemeni *kāhin*, who pronounced her innocent and for good measure foretold that she would bear a future ruler.[189] In both cases the *kāhin's* task was to divine whether the defendant was lying or telling the truth, a question which the tribesmen of later times might resolve by asking the parties, or at any rate the defendant, to swear an oath by a saintly tomb or by subjecting them to the fire-ordeal,[190] or indeed by consulting a diviner.[191] The diviner was credited with knowledge of hidden things, not with knowledge of the law, a point well taken by Ibn Khaldūn.[192] This is why their potential customers would always test them, before submitting their case to them, by asking them abstruse questions to which they themselves

187   Cf. Tyan, *Organisation judiciaire²*, pp. 39 f.

188   Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, pp. 117 f. (why does he call this and the next case a *munāfara*?). Cf. Tyan, *Organisation judiciaire²*, p. 39n; Fahd, *Divination*, p. 118.

189   Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, pp. 118 ff.; *Aghānī*, vol. ix, p. 53; Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, vol. iii, pp. 131 f. The future ruler was Muʿāwiya.

190   For references, see Stewart, 'Tribal Law', pp. 476 f. and the notes thereto; P. Crone, 'Jāhili and Jewish Law: the *Qasāma*', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 4 (1984), note 22; add Aref el-Aref, *Bedouin Love, Law and Legend*, Jerusalem 1944, pp. 116 ff.

191   Cf. above, note 83 (Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, vol. iii, p. 318, with reference to the semi-nomads of what is now southern Jordan).

192   Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, vol. i, p. 196/224; cited in Fahd, *Divination*, p. 118. Point taken by Tyan too (*Organisation judiciaire²*, p. 44), but he still thinks this enabled them to act as ordinary judges. Wellhausen wrongly thinks that diviners were used when the cases were intricate (*Reste*, p. 136; similarly C.A. Nallino, 'Sulla constituzione delle tribù arabe prima dell' islamismo', in his *Raccolta di scritti editi e inediti*, vol. iii, Rome 1941, p. 717).

knew the answers, but which the diviner could not possibly answer correctly by other than supernatural means.[193] (This procedure is also attested in connection with the administrator of the fire-ordeal in modern times.)[194] In another story a female diviner is consulted on the punishment of a man whose guilt was already established: here the need for a supernatural decision arose from the fact that he had violated the sanctity of the Kaʿba by stealing its treasure.[195] Yet another story, of which there are many variants, informs us that ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, Muḥammad's grandfather, had a well in Ṭāʾif or Mecca, but that his ownership was disputed by Thaqafīs or Qurashīs or by two tribes of Qays ʿAylān, whereupon the case was submitted to a *kāhin* or *kāhina* in Syria who found in his favour,[196] or (implausibly) to an Asadī chief and *kāhin* who found in his favour too;[197] a female diviner also resolved a dispute over camels which is not further described.[198] Here too the task of the diviners is presumably to make known the unknown, though the nature of the disputes makes it less obvious.

The religious literature is however fond of presenting the diviner as bearer of pagan law (abusively known as *ṭāghūt*) by way of edifying contrast with Muḥammad and Islamic law. Thus the Qurʾānic verse "Don't you see those who claim that they believe … [and yet] want to seek judgement from *ṭāghūt*" (4:64) was supposedly revealed about some Jews in Medina, insincerely converted to Islam, who wanted to take a homicide case to a *kāhin* whereas others wanted to take it to the Prophet.[199] Or else it was revealed about some insincerely converted Arabs in Medina who wanted to take a dispute to *kāhin*s, "the judges of the pagans" (*ḥukkām ahl al-jāhiliyya*), whereas their opponents wanted to take

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193   Tyan, *Organisation judiciaire²*, p. 56.

194   Serjeant, 'Customary Law', p. 102.

195   Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, ser. i, p. 1135.

196   Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, p. 98 f.; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, pp. 288; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. i, pp. 74 f.; Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. i, p. 144; Azraqī, *Makka*, pp. 282 ff.; Kalāʿī, *Iktifāʾ*, ed. H. Massé, Algiers 1931, pp. 216 f.; Yāqūt, *Buldān*, vol. iv, p. 965.

197   Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, vol. iii, p. 133. The chief was Rabīʿa b. Ḥudhār al-Asadī, who is identified as a *kāhin* by Ibn al-Kalbī (*Ǧamhara*, s.v.; cf. Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. i, p. 290, where he is listed among the users of rhymed prose). He was also known as a *ḥakam* because he had acted as umpire in a famous merit competition (Marzūqī, *Kitāb al-azmina waʾl-amkina*, Hyderabad 1913 f., vol. ii, pp. 273 f.; cf. also Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, ed. Hārūn, p. 237; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 299). Indeed, he had also adjudicated in an artistic merit competition between four poets (using ordinary prose, *Aghānī*, vol. xiii, p. 197; vol. xxi, ed. Brünnow, p. 174). One suspects that these stories lie behind his appearance as a judge and *kāhin* here.

198   Ibn Hishām, *Leben*, p. 284 = 196.

199   Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-nuzūl*, Cairo 1897 f., pp. 120 f., citing al-Suddī.

it to the Prophet (the judge of the Muslims).[200] The *kāhin* also appears as the representative of pre-Islamic law superseded by the Prophet in a Prophetic tradition.[201] This presentation passed into *adab* literature[202] and from there into modern works: diviners are *ḥukkām al-jāhiliyya* in the works of Schacht and Tyan too.[203] Perhaps it also influenced al-Hamdānī. The tradition is familiar with a legendary judge of Najrān by the name of al-Afʿā, who is usually said to have been a Jurhumite and to whom the Arabs would submit their disputes; the four sons of Nizār, the ancestor of the northern Arabs, turned to him when they disagreed over the division of their father's estate.[204] He was a *kāhin* according to al-Hamdānī,[205] not according to anyone else, and al-Hamdānī is clearly wrong, for al-Afʿā was not submitted to the usual test of divinatory abilities when he was consulted by the sons of Nizār,[206] nor did he deliver his verdict in rhymed prose. Unlike the diviners, he was famed for his legal skills, not for his knowledge of the unknown. The vast majority of legal disputes in pre-Islamic Arabia were settled by judges like al-Afʿā.

That leaves the question whether guardian-diviners were regularly called upon to settle disputes. The evidence in favour of a positive answer is limited and, as might be expected, strongly South Arabian in orientation.[207] Thus a thirteenth-century biography of the Prophet has members of the South Arabian tribe of Khawlān explain to the Prophet that they used to submit their disputes to their idol, who would reply with a voice which the Prophet naturally dismissed as satanic.[208] Once upon a time, we are told, Mecca was ruled by the South Arabian tribe of Jurhum, who were guardians of the sanctuary *and* judges (*wulāt al-bayt waʾl-ḥukkām*).[209] This is our best evidence. In a more conjectural vein, the noble South Arabian family of al-Dayyān b. ʿAbd al-Madān

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200   Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. i, p. 526.

201   Cf. Wellhausen, *Reste*, p. 136.

202   Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. i, p. 289 (the exaggeration).

203   Cf. above, note 183.

204   Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. i, pp. 9 ff.; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 299; Abū ʾl-Baqāʾ, *Manāqib*, vol. i, pp. 344 ff.; Fāsī, *Shafāʾ al-gharām fī akhbār al-balad al-ḥarām*, in Wüstenfeld, Chroniken, vol. ii, Leipzig 1859, p. 135; Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, s.v. and the references given there.

205   Hamdānī, *Iklīl*, book x, ed. M.-D. al-Khaṭīb, Cairo 1948, p. 2.

206   The sons of Nizār do notice traces left by a grazing camel on the way to al-Afʿā, but it is they themselves who divine what sort of camel it was.

207   In addition to the material cited here, Tyan, *Organisation judiciaire*², p. 35n, cites a bishop of Najrān with reference to Cheikho, *Naṣrāniyya*, p. 369. But the reference is wrong and I cannot find the passage.

208   Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *ʿUyūn*, vol. ii, p. 254.

209   Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. i, p. 113; similarly the version in *Aghānī*, vol. xv, p. 12.

should perhaps be construed as guardians of a deity known as Madān;[210] at all events, al-Dayyān is described as a *kāhin*;[211] his name means 'judge', and he appears as a potential judge in a story of a war between Khuzāʿa and Quraysh:[212] maybe, then, we have here a diviner from a family of guardians who regularly engaged in adjudication. Or again, the Ṭayyiʾ of Jabal Ṭayyiʾ (the area later occupied by the Shammar) are said to have been of South Arabian origin;[213] their deity Fals was associated with an inviolable *ḥaram* and/or *ḥimā* and guarded by a family of whom the last representative was Ṣayfī b. ʿAmr;[214] the genealogists identify this man as the uncle of Qilṭif b. Saʿtara b. ʿAmr, a *kāhin* who also functioned as *ḥakam*:[215] once again, then, there is a suggestion that guardians, diviners and judges (or just umpires?) were related. Three further pieces of evidence are equally vague, but more interesting in that they have no southern bearing. First, as noted already, the genealogists present the Tamīmī judges at ʿUkāẓ as related to the Tamīmī guardians of the idol Shams.[216] Secondly, a primordial guardian of Mecca by the name of Wakīʿ al-Iyādī is said to have been

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210 On Madān as an idol, cf. Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, ed. Hārūn, p. 398. Compare ʿAbd al-Dār, actual guardians of Mecca. Lammens, of course, has no doubt they were guardians ('Bétyles', p. 161). On the family, see Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ğamhara*.

211 Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. i, p. 362.

212 Abū ʾl-Baqāʾ, *Manāqib*, vol. i, p. 315.

213 Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ğamhara*. They were among those who had left guardians behind in the south, cf. above, p. 443 (Wellhausen, *Reste*, p. 21).

214 Wellhausen, *Reste*, p. 59.

215 Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, ed. Hārūn, p. 397; Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ğamhara*, s.v. and chart.

216 Cf. above, note 106. The eponymous ancestor of B. Jurwa b. Usayyid/Tamīm is presented as a Tamīmī judge at ʿUkāẓ, where his grandson Muʿāwiya b. Shurayf was also judge (*Naqāʾiḍ*, p. 438; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 182). The latter's son Mukhāshin b. Muʿāwiya is also listed as a judge (though no longer at ʿUkāẓ) and as the ancestor of a line of judges via his son Rabīʿa b. Mukhāshin (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 134; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 299; *Naqāʾiḍ*, p. 139) and the ancestor of guardians of the Tamīmī idol Shams, guarded by Banū Aws b. Mukhāshin (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, pp. 136 f.; cf. Wellhausen, *Reste*, pp. 60 f. Aws is listed as the father of three sons in Ibn al-Kalbī, who knows nothing about their guardianship (Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ğamhara*, chart 83 and register). But one of them, Ṣulṣul/Ṣalṣal/Ṣilṣil b. Aws, figures as a Tamīmī judge at ʿUkāẓ, where he is also in charge of the *ijāza* (*Naqāʾiḍ*, p. 438; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, pp. 182 f.) and the dispenser of a verdict on ritual matters (fighting *muḥillūn*—i.e. those who didn't recognize the sanctity of desert sanctuaries (Yaʿqūbī) or Mecca (standard view); Marzūqī, *Azmina*, vol. ii, p. 166; cf. Kister, 'Mecca and Tamīm (Aspects of Their Relations)', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 8 (1965), pp. 142 f.). Banū Jurwa resided in Yamāma among *aḥālif* of Banū Ḥanīfa; their villages were included in Musaylima's *ḥaram* (Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, ser. i, p. 1932).

a diviner and a *ḥakam* (but perhaps he was only an umpire).[217] And thirdly, the Qurashī guardians of the Meccan Kaʿba are said to have been in demand as umpires in merit competitions,[218] though there is no suggestion that outsiders used them for the settlement of ordinary disputes.[219] It is not easy to cast Quraysh as holy men, and the hypothesis that Muḥammad established himself as a holy man in Medina is not convincing.[220] All in all, it does not add up to much, but there is just enough to rule out a categorical answer. Given that the tradition only emerges late (c. 800 onwards), one never knows whether isolated statements represent genuine recollection in a pool of pseudo-history or on the contrary mere confusion and retrojection in a pool of correctly remembered patterns. One does sense a vague familiarity with the saintly pattern of South Arabia behind it, in the sense that some guardians of local deities seem to have been called upon to settle disputes among devotees of the same cult; and though the places are overwhelmingly South Arabian, the Ṭāʾī example could be taken to suggest that South Arabian tribes had diffused the pattern in the north. But one certainly would not wish to claim that holy men were a normal feature of pastoralist Arabia on the basis of this information.

In pre-Islamic as in modern Arabia, dispute settlement was normally the task of tribesmen endowed with legal and/or political skills as distinct from religious expertise. Judges were chosen from "people of nobility, integrity, trustworthiness, leadership, age, glory and experience";[221] and many were chiefs, though Tyan denied it.[222] This is clear partly from stories of legendary figures who lived for centuries, commanded huge confederacies and acted as judges to most or

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217 Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 300.

218 *Aghānī*, vol. xvi, p. 287 (*qad kānat al-ʿarab taḥākama ilā Quraysh*). The merit duel was between ʿAlqama b. ʿUlātha and ʿĀmir b. Ṭufayl.

219 Crone, *Meccan Trade*, p. 188n. The Qurashī judges listed in Fāsī, *Shafāʾ*, pp. 142 f., are envisaged as judges in internal disputes ("not one of them had any power over the rest of Quraysh, they only acted because Quraysh agreed on them"). For an example set shortly after the rise of Islam, see Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn*, vol. i, pp. 92 f., where Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr quarrel over a wadi in Medina and take the dispute to ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ (who responds by mediating instead of adjudicating). The passage cited above, note 179, does not imply that the four Qurashī judges were sought out by non-Qurashīs.

220 Cf. Crone, 'Serjeant and Meccan Trade', and the literature cited there. Quraysh were not *ḥakam*s and were not sought out by others.

221 Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 299.

222 Tyan, *Organization judiciaire*², p. 41; cf. p. 45, where it is correctly pointed out that judges are sometimes described as chiefs (*sayyid, raʾīs*) by virtue of the fact that they were great judges, not because they were chiefs. But the examples cannot be thus explained.

all of the Arabs, such as ʿĀmir b. al-Ẓarib al-ʿAdwānī,[223] ʿAmr b. Ḥumama al-Dawsī,[224] ʿĀmir al-Ḍaḥyān al-Namarī[225] and Ḥanẓala b. Nahd al-Kalbī,[226] and partly from accounts of chiefs of a less super-human kind, such as Sinān b. Abī Ḥāritha al-Murrī and his son,[227] Ghaylān b. Salama al-Thaqafī,[228] Bishr b. ʿAmr al-Bakrī,[229] various members of a Kinānī lineage,[230] and others.[231] Nobles such

223   ʿĀmir b. al-Ẓarib al-ʿAdwānī was the chief of his people or of all Qays, and the judge of Qays or of all the Arabs (Bakrī, *Muʿjam*, vol. i, p. 65, where his father too is said to have been chief and judge of Qays; Sijistānī, *Muʿammarūn*, pp. 44 ff.; *Aghānī*, vol. iii, p. 90; cf. vol. iv, p. 305, where he is said to have led Qays in war against Iyād; vol. v, p. 3, where his brother is consulted on a question of tribal affiliation; Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, vol. v, p. 213, where he leads all Maʿadd in war; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 135; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 299; Marzūqī, *Azmina*, vol. ii, p. 274; Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, vol. i, pp. 122 f.).

224   ʿAmr b. Ḥumama al-Dawsī was the head of a leading Azdī family who judged the Arabs for 300 years (Sijistānī, *Muʿammarūn*, p. 45; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 300; Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, s.v.).

225   ʿĀmir al-Ḍaḥyān, the chief of al-Namir b. Qāsiṭ and the leading man of Rabīʿa altogether, was *sayyid qawmihi wa-ḥākimuhum*; he used to sit and judge among them in the morning (*Aghānī*, vol. xiii, p. 140; vol. xxi, ed. Brünnow, p. 186; cf. Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 135; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 300; Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, s.v.; Muʾarrij al-Sadūsī, *Kitāb ḥadhf min nasab Quraysh*, ed. Ṣ.-D. al-Munajjid, Cairo 1960, p. 5).

226   Ḥanẓala b. Nahd, the chief of all Quḍāʿa, was both their warleader and their "*ḥakam* who judged between them" (Bakrī, *Muʿjam*, vol. i, p. 34; cf. also Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, pp. 136 f.; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 300).

227   Sinān b. Abī Ḥāritha, the Murrī chief, was one of the *ḥukkām al-ʿarab* (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 135; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 299; Marzūqī, *Azmina*, vol. ii, p. 274; Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, s.v.); the reference is hardly to merit duels, for his son Harim b. Sinān, who was chief of Murra too, is also listed as a judge and may have been instrumental in putting an end to the Dāḥis war (Abū ʾl-Baqāʾ, *Manāqib*, vol. i, p. 171; Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, s.v. ʿHarim b. Sinānʾ).

228   Ghaylān b. Salama al-Thaqafī, the chief of the Aḥlāf, would judge for three days a week (Marzūqī, *Azmina*, vol. ii, p. 274; cf. Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 299; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 135; Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, s.v.).

229   Bishr b. ʿAmr was a *ḥakam* (though of what kind is not clear), and a descendant of his was chief of Saʿd, of Qays b. Thaʿlaba (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 135; Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, s.v. ʿĠaḍbān b. Bišrʾ).

230   Ṣakhr b. Yaʿmar was one of the *ḥukkām al-ʿarab*; his grandson appears as the leader of Duʾil/Kināna in the Fijār war; his great-grandson was the chief of Duʾil; his great-great grandson, Salama b. Nawfal, is also listed among the ʿjudges of the Arabsʾ (Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 299; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 133; Marzūqī, *Azmina*, vol. ii, p. 273; Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, chart 83 and register, s.vv. ʿMuʿāwiya b. ʿUrwaʾ; ʿNawfal b. Muʿā-wiyaʾ).

231   Cf. the story of the *ʿaẓīm* and *shaykh* of B. Daws, then in a relationship of clientage to

as al-Ḥārith b. ʿUbād al-Bakrī[232] and Imruʾ al-Qays b. Abān al-Taghlabī[233] also figure as judges, and the terms *ḥukkām*, *fawāris* (horsemen) and *sāda* (chiefs) are practically synonymous in poetry.[234] Some judges were members of families in which adjudicating skills were hereditary.[235] Others appear as *ḥakam*

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another branch of Azd: when two men of the dominant tribe decided to kill him, they pretended to have a dispute they wanted him to resolve (*Aghānī*, vol. xiii, p. 220). Ḥajib b. Zurāra, a chief and noble of B. Dārim/Tamīm, is also listed among the *ḥukkām al-ʿarab* (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 134; cf. Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. i, p. 238; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, ed. Wüstenfeld, p. 144; *EI*, s.v. 'Ḥadjib b. Zurāra'), but he was probably just an umpire. The same goes for Ḍamra b. Ḍamra al-Dārimī, who was one of the judges of Tamīm (*Naqāʾiḍ*, p. 139), indeed of the Arabs (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 134), who was *min rijāl banī Tamīm … lisānan wa-bayānan* (Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, ed. Wüstenfeld, p. 149; cf. also Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, vol. ii, pp. 287 f.), and *fārisan shāʿiran sharīfan sayyidan* (Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. i, p. 238, cf. also p. 171), but who is explicitly said to have given judgement in rhymed prose in a *munāfara* (ibid., p. 290).

232   Al-Ḥārith b. ʿUbād was appointed judge of Bakr b. Wāʾil at Yawm Qidda in the Basūs war; others say he was the *raʾīs* (*Aghānī*, vol. v, p. 48). He is also described as a judge (*Ḥamāsa*, p. 251; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 135; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 299), as a warleader (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 255), and as a warleader in other contexts (*Aghānī*, vol. v, p. 42).

233   Imruʾ al-Qays b. Abān al-Taghlabī, one of the judges of Bakr b. Wāʾil, the other being the above-mentioned al-Ḥārith b. ʿUbād (*Ḥamāsa*, p. 251, in O. Procksch, *Über die Blutrache bei den vorislamischen Arabern und Mohammeds Stellung zu ihr*, Leipzig 1899, p. 55n; cf. Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 135: one of *ḥukkām*); hero of Basūs war (Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, s.v. and references given there).

234   Cf. the poetry cited in Procksch, *Blutrache*, pp. 54f.

235   Cf. ʿĀmir b. al-Ẓarib, whose father was also a chief and a judge (above, note 223); Sinān b. Abī Ḥāritha and his son Harim (above, note 227); Mukhāshin b. Muʿāwiya al-Tamīmī and his son Rabīʿa, the descendants of Aktham b. Ṣayfī (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 134; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 299; above, note 216); and perhaps Zurāra. See also the Tamīmī judges at ʿUkāẓ. Saʿd b. Zayd-Manāt (a tribe), the first to combine *qaḍāʾ* and *mawsim*; Ḥanẓala b. Zayd-Manāt (or b. Mālik); Thaʿlaba b. Yarbūʿ (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 182; *Naqāʾiḍ*, p. 438); Māzin b. Mālik b. ʿAmr (loci cit. al-Aḍbaṭ b. Qurayʿ); names mostly stand for tribal groups within which, one assumes, the office was hereditary (*Naqāʾiḍ*, p. 438); explicitly said of Muḥammad b. Sufyān b. Mujāshiʿ b. Dārim, the last to combine judgeship with *mawsim*; the judgeship *fa-sārat mīrāthan lahum* (Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 182 f.). Tyan also adduces ʿĀmir b. al-Ẓarib (*Organisation judiciaire*[2], p. 47) with reference to Ibn Hishām, *Leben*, p. 77 (*yatawārathūna dhālika kabīran ʿan kabīr*), but it refers to the Ṣūfa, not to ʿĀmir. Other Tamīmī judges include those of B. Jurwa, originally at ʿUkāẓ; Mukhāshin b. Muʿāwiya of B. Jurwa b. Usayyid/Tamīm was a judge; so was his son Rabīʿ b. Mukhāshin, nicknamed Dhū ʾl-Aʿwād because he used to sit on a wooden throne (but Dhū ʾl-Aʿwād is a Yemeni judge in *Aghānī*, vol. iii, p. 90); ancestors of Ṣayfī b. Riyāḥ and his son Aktham b. Ṣayfī, both judges (*Naqāʾiḍ*, p. 139; Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, chart 83; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*,

in particular disputes, both legal and political, without it being possible to say whether they regularly engaged in such acts.[236] Many were insiders, even when the disputes were political.[237] Thus the war between Khuzāʿa and Quraysh was stopped by Yaʿmar b. ʿAwf, whom the Khuzāʿa had initially refused to accept as judge on the grounds that he was a Kinānī (and thus related to Quraysh), proposing the above-mentioned al-Dayyān b. ʿAbd al-Madān (to whom they were themselves related) instead; but they eventually gave in, and Yaʿmar's verdict proved acceptable.[238] A Qurashī acted as judge in a feud between Quraysh and Banū Layth, also successfully.[239] The Aws and Khazraj of Yathrib/Medina twice tried to compose their feuds by choosing a *ḥakam* from among themselves; the first failed to have his verdict accepted, but the second succeeded, though the feuds eventually broke out again.[240] Of wars or feuds composed by a guardian or other *kāhin* there does not seem to be a single example (the possible member of a guardian family, Dayyān, being the nearest we get to it). We do however hear of mediation by ʿAmr b. Hind, the king of Ḥīra, who was a mighty ruler in Arab eyes and under whose auspices Bakr and Taghlib concluded peace at the desert sanctuary of Dhū ʾl-Majāz.[241] It certainly could not be argued that minor disputes were referred to tribal judges and major ones to

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p. 134; Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 299; *Naqāʾiḍ*, p. 139); Aktham was also a *ḥakīm*, wise man (Sijistānī, *Muʿammarūn*, pp. 10 ff.; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, ed. Hārūn, p. 207). Banū Ḥimyarī seem to have been hereditary judges among Banū Riyāḥ b. Yarbūʿ/Tamīm (*Naqāʾiḍ*, p. 438).

236   The ʿUqayl and Qushayr agreed on Muʿāwiya b. Mālik al-Kilābī to resolve a dispute between them; he was known as *muʿawwiḍ al-ḥukkām* and famed as one of the *ḥukkām al-ʿarab*, presumably with reference to this case (Abū ʾl-Baqāʾ, *Manāqib*, pp. 171 f.). Bisṭām b. Qays al-Shaybānī and B. Ribāb made ʿImrān b. Murra their judge in a dispute over captives; ʿImrān was the chief of Murra b. Dhuhl b. Shaybān and a participant in the expedition (*Naqāʾiḍ*, pp. 680 f.; cf. Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, s.v.). Cf. also the next three notes.

237   That judges could be insiders was also noted by Procksch, *Blutrache*, p. 55. This was true of poetic disputes too, cf. *Aghānī*, vol. xxi, ed. Brünnow, p. 173, on Imruʾ al-Qays and ʿAlqama b. ʿAbada: they quarreled over who was the best poet and agreed to let the former's wife be judge; she found against her husband, who divorced her, whereupon she married the winner!

238   Abū ʾl-Baqāʾ, *Manāqib*, vol. i, pp. 315, 324; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, pp. 133 f.; Ibn Hishām, *Leben*, pp. 79 f.; cf. also Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. i, p. 299; Marzūqī, *Azmina*, vol. ii, p. 273; Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, s.v. ʿYaʿmar b. Aufʾ.

239   Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, pp. 137 f. The judge was Saʿīd b. al-ʿĀṣ.

240   *Aghānī*, vol. iii, pp. 20 f., 25 f. (ʿAmr b. Imruʾ al-Qays and Thābit b. al-Mundhir in Sumayr feud).

241   *Aghānī*, vol. xi, pp. 42 ff. (where ʿAmr b. Hind is described as *jabbāran ʿaẓīm al-shaʾn waʾl-mulk*); cf. also Procksch, *Blutrache*, p. 54.

representatives of the divine, on a par with Gellner's Morocco.[242] It could be argued that recourse to representatives of the divine was optional, as it is in modern Yemen, but we would have to conclude that the option was not often exercised.[243] The sources dwell on the warlike exploits of judges,[244] occasionally on their poetic contributions[245] and their general wisdom,[246] but not on their religious insight. The most striking feature of dispute settlement in pre-Islamic Arabia, and indeed in later north Arabia too, is precisely that it had so little to do with the supernatural.

Tribal Puritanism

Gellner sees holy men as one indication among many that Middle Eastern tribesmen are 'catholics' (in the generic sense of that word). His argument is that a truth recorded in a book is equally accessible to everyone who can read; where everyone is a religious expert, nobody can claim knowledge hidden from the rest, meaning that a sober and egalitarian outlook is likely to prevail. Islam is a scripturalist religion, and literacy flourished in towns, so urban Islam tends

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242   Cf. Gellner, *Saints*, p. 129.

243   Cf. Dresch, *Tribes*, p. 144. Procksch correctly observes that "Religiöse Bedeutung scheint das Schiedsrichteramt meist nicht mehr gehabt zu haben" (where the 'nicht mehr' presumably reflects the author's evolutionary assumptions, *Blutrache*, p. 54).

244   Cf. Saʿd b. Malik b. Ḍubayʿa, a branch of Qays b. Thaʿlaba, the eponymous leader of which appears as a pan-Arab judge (*Aghānī*, vol. xxi, ed. Brünnow, p. 204) and in the Basūs war (Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, s.v.); Dhuʿayb b. Kaʿb al-Tamīmī, one of the judges at ʿUkāẓ who appears in battle at Tiyās (*Naqāʾiḍ*, pp. 438, 1025; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, p. 182; Ibn al-Kalbī/Caskel, *Ǧamhara*, register); also a poet (Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, ed. Hārūn, pp. 201 f. = ed. Wüstenfeld, p. 124). Cf. Labīd, *Muʿallaqa*, p. 87: *humu fawārisuhā wa-humu ḥukkāmuhā* (cited in Procksch, *Blutrache*, p. 54). Cf. also above, notes 223, 226, 232–234.

245   Cf. preceding note. According to I. Goldziher, *Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie*, Leiden 1896, p. 21, it is likely that poets were used as arbiters on a par with diviners because they too had special knowledge; but the one (Muslim) example he adduces hardly supports him. The *Aghānī*, vol. viii, p. 303, does say that *kānat Bakr b. Wāʾil idhā tashājarat bi-shayʾ raḍiyat biʾl-Akhṭal*, but the the continuation shows us al-Akhṭal beating, shrieking at and pulling the beard of a priest in the Jazīra against whom a complaint had been lodged, i.e. they used him as their henchman for the enforcement of obligations. (Tyan, *Organisation judiciaire*², pp. 35, 42, follows Goldziher, adding a dud reference to Lammens, *Berceau*, p. 257; Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. i, p. 365, on Labīd is too vague.) This is as might be expected, given that diviners were not in fact used as peacemakers either.

246   *Ḥikma*: Aktham b. Ṣayfī; Sijistānī, *Muʿammarūn*, pp. 10 ff.

to be puritanical. But pastoralists are usually illiterate. The truth is not equally accessible to everyone, but on the contrary incarnate only in experts who do indeed have knowledge (real or supposed) which is hidden from the rest: here, then, neither egalitarianism nor sobriety is likely to prevail. Since segmentation creates a positive need for persons endowed with special access to the divine, the overall result is of the 'catholic' type. To repeat, "The faith of the tribesmen needs to be mediated by special and distinct holy personnel, rather than to be egalitarian; it needs to be joyous and festival-worthy, not puritanical and scholarly; it requires hierarchy and incarnation in persons, not in script".[247] But this characterization of tribal religion does not fit the bedouin, or for that matter any tribesmen of Arabia; one wonders whether it fits any Middle Eastern tribes at all.

The bedouin had no holy personnel worth speaking of. They did not defer to holy men, as seen already; they did not generally maintain religious scholars either;[248] and their use of diviners and sorcerers was limited, though it may have been more widespread in pre-Islamic than in later times. They did not require the services of religious specialists for marriage, birth, burial or other rites of passage, nor for ritual acts such as sacrifice, and they come across as every bit as egalitarian in religious matters as they were in other respects: knowledge, or the lack thereof, was evenly distributed on a par with power and wealth. Further, they did not indulge in elaborate ritual with music, dancing, masks, images, holy objects or ecstatic excesses. They hardly had any myths.[249] They may have been more given to visiting sacred places in pre-Islamic times than they were when Musil wrote, given that they participated in the pre-Islamic pilgrimage to desert sanctuaries whereas they did not participate in the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca and, as far as the bedouin of the inner desert are concerned, positively despised the saintly graves of the peasants. But even with reference to pre-Islamic times it would be difficult to claim that bedouin

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247　Cf. above, note 4; cf. also his 'A Pendulum Swing Theory of Islam' in R. Robertson (ed.), *Sociology of Religion*, Harmondsworth 1969.

248　Cf. Doughty, *Travels*, vol. i, p. 55 (the bedouin of the Perean region have no religious elders or learned men); Blunt, *Bedouin of the Euphrates*, vol. ii, p. 217 (only the Shammar have mullas, no doubt thanks to the semi-Turkish character of their chief); Wallin, 'Narrative of a Journey from Cairo to Medina and Mecca, by Suez, Arabá, Tawilá, al-Jauf, Jubbé, Háil, and Nejd, in 1845', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* 24 (1854), p. 134.

249　Cf. the verdict of T. Nöldeke in his review of Wellhausen's *Reste, Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 41 (1887), p. 714: the pre-Islamic Arabs had genuine myths, but they surely did not have a developed mythology. The myths of the modern bedouin do not add up to much either (cf. Musil, *Rwala*, pp. 1 f., on the sun and moon).

religion was "highly Durkheimian, concerned with the social punctuation of time and space, with season-making and group-boundary marking festivals".[250] The major ritual act seems always to have been sacrifice, performed frequently in daily life and on solemn occasions, but not in the collective and boundary-marking manner suggested. Obviously, bedouin religion was not puritanical in the scripture-orientated manner that the religion of people living in a literate environment can be, nor does it seem to have been particularly glum; but it does come across as sober and down-to-earth in the extreme.[251] If puritanism stands for reluctance to venerate living persons, paucity of festivals and other ritual, minimal use of holy objects and a general disinclination to enchant the world, then bedouin religion must indeed be described as puritan.

So far the discussion has been about normal religion, which Gellner rightly proposes to distinguish from extraordinary or revolutionary religion, the former being about the maintenance of well-established social and political patterns and the latter about the creation of alternatives.[252] It goes without saying that ideas designed to smooth the operation of an existing machinery cannot be identical with those intended drastically to alter or replace such machinery (though they cannot be wholly unrelated to them either). Gellner's argument is that normal religion in a pastoralist context is always of the type associated with holy men, whereas revolutionary religion may well be puritan, something different being required to make it revolutionary (or 'reformist') and the usual source of novel ideas being towns. This is acceptable in the sense that saint-ridden tribes can apparently be swayed by puritan reformists (though whether they actually give up, as opposed to replace, their holy men is another question). But it is precisely normal religion that comes across as puritan in pastoralist Arabia; and for what it is worth, revolutionary religion was puritan too. The bedouin of inner Arabia seem only to have been swayed by revolutionary religion in a major way on three occasions in their history, the first being the rise of Islam in the seventh century, the second the Khārijite revolts of the eighth century (in which settled tribesmen are however likely to have predominated),

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250   Gellner, *Muslim Society*, p. 81.

251   Cf. F. Stewart, 'Schuld and Haftung in Bedouin Law', *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte*, Germanistische Abteilung, 107 (1990), p. 406, citing E. Sachau, *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien*, Leipzig 1883, p. 308 ("Sie sind das nüchternste Volk, das man sich denken kann", on the Shammar). See also the wonderful examples of down-to-earth bedouin thinking in Murray, *Sons of Ishmael*, pp. 150, 156.

252   Gellner, *Muslim Society*, p. 52. Gellner does not specify the difference, but I assume this is what he has in mind.

and the third the rise of the Wahhābī Ikhwān in the twentieth century.[253] All three movements were puritanical. The Ismāʿīlīs, who were committed to a hierarchy of holy persons and whose message was strongly millenarian, did gain adherents in the Syrian desert and eastern Arabia in the tenth century; but their attempts to mobilize tribesmen were far more successful among mountain agriculturalists (be it in Arabia or North Africa) than they were among bedouin.[254]

Gellner dismisses the notion of bedouin puritanism as the outcome of attempts by modern scholars to imagine how they would react to the desert,[255] and he is undoubtedly right that thought experiments of this kind have played a role in its genesis. It used to be thought that so simple, so bare and so grand an environment as the desert must reflect itself in a religion endowed with the same characteristics and that desert dwellers were inclined towards a puritanism so austere that every now and again it culminated in monotheism.[256] But though arguments of this kind carry little conviction these days, it does not follow that the notion of desert puritanism is wrong.

It might however be argued that the notion is unduly restrictive in that puritanism is not simply a desert phenomenon in Arabia, but rather characteristic of Arabian tribesmen at large. It was not only the bedouin who disapproved of the cult of saints, ecstatic excesses and millenarian longings: for all their commitment to the descendants of the Prophet, the Zaydī scholars of the Yemeni highlands did as well.[257] Their attitudes are typical of urban scholars, and they clearly had something to argue against,[258] but there must have been an affinity between their outlook and that of the tribesmen who supported them, for a sober religious style prevailed among the latter too.[259] The tribesmen of the Omani highlands also committed themselves to a sober creed, here in the form of Khārijism; and sobriety seems likewise to have been the dominant religious

253 Cf. J. Wellhausen, *Die religiös-politischen Oppositionsparteien im alten Islam*, Berlin 1901, pp. 29 ff. (Khārijites); Habib, *Ibn Saʾud's Warriors* (Ikhwān).

254 Van Arendonk, *Débuts* (Yemen); Talbi (North Africa); Halm (Syrian desert); *EI*², s.vv. ʿḲarmaṭīʾ, ʿal-Baḥraynʾ (eastern Arabia).

255 Gellner, *Muslim Society*, p. 81.

256 See also the references given in J. Henninger, 'La religion bédouine préislamique' in F. Gabrieli (ed.), *L'antica società beduina*, Rome 1959 (reprinted in J. Henninger, *Arabica Sacra*, Freiburg and Göttingen 1981), p. 124.

257 Dresch, *Tribes*, p. 11.

258 Cf. the Ismāʿīlīs of the Yemen (above, note 254), and the stray *mahdī* in Dresch, *Tribes*, p. 171.

259 Dresch, *Tribes*, p. 11.

style in north Arabia, both settled and bedouin, at all times in so far as one can tell.[260] The bedouin undoubtedly inhabited a barer religious universe than did settled tribes,[261] but puritanism nonetheless comes across as a pan-Arabian characteristic, though it was not a response to the grandeur of the desert, or a reflection of urban views, as Gellner would have it. Urban puritanism undoubtedly reinforced tribal attitudes in Arabia, but the tribal orientation was puritan too for reasons of its own.

It would perhaps be more correct to say that it was secular. The core of bedouin organization and attendant world view was customary and strikingly lacking in religious legitimation. Their code of honour, law and behaviour in general did not flow from religion,[262] and they raided, went to war, settled disputes and transmitted property in much the same manner whether they were pagans, Christians or Muslims, leaving behind much the same reflections of themselves in Genesis, Assyrian inscriptions, classical records, pre-Islamic poetry and nineteenth century travellers. Their behavioural patterns did change in the course of the two and a half millennia in which we can follow them,[263] but the durability of these patterns, and their detachability from prevailing religions, is nonetheless extraordinary. Religion did not suffuse or permeate bedouin institutions, extending legitimation and adding rituals to everything they did. The only ritual that really mattered to them was sacrifice, and that too was an ancestral practice in which they had engaged long before they became Muslims and which their conversion to Islam hardly affected at all.[264] Everything over and above the ancestral core was dispensable. The

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260   Henninger, 'Religion bédouine'; cf. also Fahd on the cultic poverty of pre-Islamic [north] Arabia (*Divination*, p. 91).

261   Musil, *Northern Neğd*, p. 257; Wallin, 'Narrative', p. 134 (but are their *fellāh*s tribesmen?); cf. the legends about saints (e.g. Bent and Bent, *Southern Arabia*).

262   Henninger, 'Religion bédouine', p. 19; G. von Grunebaum, 'The Nature of Arab Unity before Islam', *Arabica* 10 (1963).

263   The 'queens' had just about disappeared by the time of the rise of Islam; the holy months disappeared some time thereafter; so too did enslavement of fellow-Arabs (male or female) taken in battle; prisoners were not even held to ransom anymore (Doughty, *Travels*, vol. i, p. 380; vol. ii, p. 167; Dickson, *Arab of the Desert*, p. 124; cf. P. Crone, *Roman, Provincial and Islamic Law*, Cambridge 1987, p. 58).

264   J. Henninger, 'Le sacrifice chez les Arabes' in his *Arabica Sacra*; cf. also J. Chelhod, *Le Sacrifice chez les Arabes*. Peters presents sacrifice among the Cyrenaican bedouin as a quintessentially Islamic ritual: "For sacrifice is the core of Islam, as it is of other religions. When the bedouin sacrifice in their small camps, they are aware that all bedouin perform the same rites, and are motivated by the same beliefs" (E.L. Peters, 'The Paucity of Ritual among Middle Eastern Pastoralists' in A. Ahmed and D.M. Hart (eds.), *Islam in Tribal*

bedouin were traditionally 'bad' Muslims who had little, if any, knowledge of Islamic tenets, and who neither prayed nor observed any other Islamic ritual before they were affected by the Wahhābī movement;[265] they were 'indifferent' in matters of religion, as is often said,[266] or the ancestral core was their 'real' religion, as others put it.[267] They were not indifferent in the sense of lacking commitment to their faith, or at any rate not when they were Muslims;[268] on the contrary, all were 'fanatics', as Doughty saw it; God was endlessly invoked in all and sundry contexts, and Doughty's presence made religion a favourite topic of conversation. But Islam seems above all to have been an identity to them, and moreover one which they took for granted.[269] It did not require them to know or do anything, nor was it called upon to validate anything, except in the superficial sense that God was frequently mentioned; and the openly acknowledged fact that tribal law was un-Islamic does not seem to have caused them any anguish.

Settled and semi-settled tribes do not come across as fundamentally different. Though religion saturated their lives to a much greater extent, tribal organization, law and notions of honour were secular here too; and far from bestowing Islamic legitimacy on tribal law, the descendants of the Prophet who held sway in the south intensified the tribesmen's awareness of its un-Islamic nature to the point of making them embarrassed by it.[270] Here as in the north, the fact that tribal life rested on secular institutions caused outsiders to perceive the tribesmen as irreligious[271] and fostered a sober and de-mystified

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       Societies, London 1983, p. 214). How he can see sacrifice as the core of Islam is beyond me, and it plainly was not as a pan-Muslim ritual that the bedouin of Arabia performed it.

265   Wallin, 'Narrative', p. 134; id., 'Notes Taken during a Journey through Part of Northern Arabia, in 1848', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* 20 (1850), p. 311; Palgrave, *Narrative*, vol. i, pp. 10, 33; Burckhardt, *Notes*, pp. 57 f., 160 f.; Lady Anne Blunt, *A Pilgrimage to Nejd*, vol. ii, pp. 81 f.; ead., *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates*, vol. ii, pp. 216 ff.; Doughty, *Travels*, vol. i, pp. 55, 279, 282, 569; D. Carruthers, 'A Journey in North-Western Arabia', *The Geographical Journal* 35 (1910), p. 231; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, vol. iii, p. 227; id., *Rwala*, p. 389; id., *Northern Neǧd*, p. 257; Murray, *Sons of Ishmael*, p. 149.

266   Henninger, 'Religion bédouine', pp. 16, 19, and the references given there.

267   R. Dozy, *Histoire des musulmans en Espagne*², Leiden 1932, vol. 1, p. 7 (on tribal solidarity as the real religion); B. Farès, *L'honneur chez les arabes avant l'Islam*, Paris 1932, pp. 165, 184 (on honour as a substitute for religion); M. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, Oxford 1953, p. 24 (on 'tribal humanism' as the effective religion of the pre-Islamic Arabs).

268   Not much commitment to pagan gods (or *walī*s); cf. Crone, *Meccan Trade*.

269   Doughty, *Travels*, vol. ii, p. 53; cf. Crone, *Meccan Trade*, p. 239.

270   See for example Dresch, 'Tribal Relations', pp. 163 ff.

271   Dresch, *Tribes*, p. 29.

outlook among the tribesmen themselves, to which no doubt the tribal ethos predisposed them too; for a code of honour encouraging self-reliance, bravery and self-control is hardly conducive to ritual abandon or ecstatic pursuit.

Indeed, one might be tempted to stand Gellner's theory on its head and argue that a segmentary organization will breed puritanism everywhere, for an apparent poverty of ritual is also reported for Iranian pastoralists,[272] as well as for those of Cyrenaica,[273] and Gellner's portrayal of Berber religion as ecstatic, ritualistic and festival-addicted is not entirely convincing.[274] Some anthropologists may object that the very notion of ritual minimalism is impossible, all societies standing in need of the same amount of ritual enforcement; but if so, we must infer that among segmentary tribes it manifests itself in ways that one would not normally classify as ritualistic.[275] A more serious objection is that the supposed paucity of ritual is actually an absence of *big* ritual, small-scale ritual being plentiful. This is Peters' argument, and he supports it with the claim that "there can be no big rituals because bedouin groups do not congregate, either en masse or by representation, for any purpose".[276] But as far as Arabian bedouin are concerned, this would seem to be wrong. On the one hand, they did congregate *en masse* from time to time, now at watering places[277] and now for purposes of migration in times of tribal war;[278] and on the other hand, small-scale ritual can hardly be described as plentiful among them (with the exception of sacrifice), or at any rate not if we confine our attention to ritual with collective functions.[279] Warfare among the bedouin did trigger

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272 F. Barth, *Nomads of South Persia*, London 1964, p. 135; similarly R. Tapper, *Pasture and Politics: Economics, Conflict and Ritual among Shahsevan Nomads of Northwestern Iran*, New York 1979.

273 E.L. Peters, 'Aspects of the Family among the Bedouin of Cyrenaica' in N.F. Nimkoff (ed.), *Contemporary Family Systems*, Boston 1965, p. 125; cf. id., 'The Tied and the Free', p. 168n.

274 Cf. Hart.

275 Cf. Peters, 'Paucity', pp. 213 f., on Barth's approach.

276 Peters, 'Paucity', p. 210.

277 G.F. Sadleir, *Diary of a Journey across Arabia*, Cambridge 1977 (first published 1866, with reference to 1819), on an encampment of some 2,000 families of Subayʿ around seven wells in July; Raswan, *Black Tents*, photo facing p. 29 (some 7,000 tents at a watering place, one of the largest camps in Rwala history).

278 Blunt, *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates*, vol. ii, pp. 136, 230 (the Rwala migrating *en bloc*, some 20,000 [individuals] strong, because they were at war); Raswan, *Black Tents*, pp. 36, 100 (the Rwala migrating in a body, cf. the mention of guards at p. 60).

279 Sacrifice apart, most of the small-scale ritual adduced by Peters for the Cyrenaican bedouin involves holy men and has no Arabian equivalent (unless we are to include ritual so small that it becomes domestic).

ritual display in the form of the *ʿutfa* or *markab*, a tribal emblem hoisted on a camel and occupied by a maiden who served as the symbol of tribal honour: if captured, she might commit suicide.[280] But for a people so warlike, this was hardly an elaborate ritual, and its most striking feature is precisely its customary and non-religious nature: it was not linked with the supernatural in any way; no attempt was made to bestow Islamic legitimation on it.[281] Peters' original impression was that "the equalitarianism of the desert denudes the Bedouin of ritual riches",[282] and this seems to be closer to the mark. The more unitary, egalitarian and independent a tribal community was, the less religious validation and ritual it seems to have needed. The combination of segmentary organization and illiteracy breeds neither saints nor ritual abundance on its own; and even when saints do appear, the ritual remains too restrained for Gellner's characterization to be convincing. He is undoubtedly right that widespread illiteracy is a precondition for the growth of saints (both tribal and urban), and also that saints are symptomatic of a tendency to enchant the world; for one reason or another North African tribesmen come across as proner to this tendency than their Arabian counterparts. But if they were 'catholics', then so was everyone else in the Middle East, including the vast majority of the scholars, who after all had their rituals and festivals too and who were every bit as prone to venerating saints in North Africa as were the tribes. Tribes with saints were 'catholics' compared to tribes without them, and also in the eyes of puritan reformers, but the classification does not seem helpful in other ways.

The Whereabouts of Saints

Why then did the bedouin dispense with saints? They could easily have imported them from South Arabia or (via the pilgrimage) from North Africa;[283] local candidates were also available, as has been seen; and the oasis-dwellers would presumably have supported such candidates, given that their settlements were typically rent by vicious feuds and often under the dubious 'protection', or in the outright ownership of, the bedouin, to whom they passed a share

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280   Blunt, *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates*, vol. ii, p. 146; Musil, *Rwala*, pp. 571 ff.; Raswan, *Black Tents*, pp. 110 f., 150 ff. (with the suicide); Dickson, *Arab of the Desert*, pp. 104 ff.

281   Contrast the Islamized version of the institution in the Battle of the Camel, in which ʿĀʾisha plays the role of the tribal maiden (cf. *EI*², s.v. 'al-Djamal').

282   'Aspects of the Family', p. 125.

283   Though the men were local, the use of the term *murābiṭ* in connection with the Hutaymī saints suggests a North African inspiration (cf. above, notes 69 and 70).

of the harvest by way of protection money or rent: saintly arbitrators might have mitigated the feuds and eased bedouin domination, or (given that saints are imperfect peacemakers) at least held out the promise of doing so, provided of course that the bedouin too acknowledged their authority. But they did not.

Presumably they did not find the benefits worth the costs. Live saints did not come for free. Though they could apparently be cheap, they still consumed land, gifts and prestige that the bedouin were unlikely to forego unless their need for saintly services was pressing.[284] But neither their feuds nor their wars were as vicious as those of settled tribesmen, who might be forced to spend their lives in fortified turrets by their fields, to move to their fields in trenches, or even to stay inside their houses for years on end without being able to cultivate, and who regularly destroyed each others' palm trees and other sources of living in the course of their hostilities.[285] Unlike the agriculturalists, the bedouin could disperse instead of fighting on for ever; and unlike them, they derived their livelihood from extensive grazing grounds that could not be damaged, from mobile flocks that could be taken away (and retaken) instead of being cut down or burnt, and from other people's agriculture that could be exploited or destroyed in a variety of ways without greatly affecting themselves. In short, the break-down of order did not have the same destructive effect on bedouin society as it did on that of settled tribes.

Nor were bedouin tribes wholly devoid of internal authority. The chiefly office was hereditary within a chiefly family and held for life, not elective and held for a year as it was among Gellner's Ait ʿAtta.[286] The chief was usually in receipt of landed income, sometimes also of subsidies from external powers, and tribute levied from settled and other subordinate communities;[287] in pre-

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284   That saints are, or can be, cheap was suggested to me by Gellner in a seminar in Cambridge at which I presented a preliminary version of this paper. It would not be easy to quantify the costs, but the *sayyid*s of Ḥaḍramawt certainly owned a great deal of land that was elsewhere owned by chiefs and other tribesmen (Foreign Office, *Arabia*, London 1920, p. 81).

285   Palgrave, *Narrative*, vol. i, p. 62 (in Jawf there was such anarchy after Ibrāhīm Pasha's destruction of the Wahhābīs that a man might live his whole life without venturing out of his quarter), cf. pp. 100, 317; Doughty, *Travels*, vol. i, pp. 328 f. (on the turrets and walled plantations in which people might be besieged for years); W.H. Ingrams, *Arabia and the Isles*, London 1942, pp. 275 ff. (on the trenches in which people might move to their fields, people who had not been outside their houses for twenty years and the destruction of trees); cf. also Bujra, *Politics*, p. 7 (summarizing Ingrams and others).

286   Gellner, *Saints*, p. 81.

287   L. Stein, *Die Šammar-Ǧerba*, Berlin 1967, p. 133 (the *khuwwa* of the past went mostly to the paramount chief, though lesser chiefs also received a share); compare Doughty, *Travels*,

Islamic times he also took a quarter of all booty if he acted as warleader,[288] as indeed he did in parts of modern Arabia too[289] (though the offices of chief and warleader might also be distinct).[290] Most chiefs could thus afford to maintain a retinue of slaves.[291] This did not of course endow them with coercive power; they were still *primi inter pares* who formulated a consensus rather than imposed their will. But bedouin tribes were more sharply defined communities equipped with more in the way of political leadership than their North African counterparts, and their chiefs regularly settled disputes within their tribes in addition to representing them vis-à-vis outsiders.[292] The principle of 'divide so that ye need not be ruled' had not been taken to extremes. Bedouin society, in other words, was not only better placed to survive the breakdown of order than its settled counterpart, but also better placed to avoid it.

The pressing need for saintly services would seem to have arisen when the tribes which dominated militarily were internally weak and/or equipped with interests so complex that additional mechanisms were required to facilitate their pursuit. The most obvious source of both features is agriculture. Agriculture fragments the politicial community by tying small groups of people to small pieces of land, so that the tribe ceases to function as a political community; and at the same time it introduces more sharply defined property rights,

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      vol. i, p. 406, where it is a kinsman of the chief of the Fuqarāʾ who acts as 'brother' to the people of Taymāʾ and others, deriving his livelihood mainly from this activity.

288   I. Goldziher, 'Mirbāʿ', *Der Islam* 2 (1911), to which many other attestations could be added.

289   Cf. Doughty, *Travels*, vol. i, p. 293 ("The sheykh of the tribe is as well, agid, of his own right, conductor of the general ghrazzus; his is the fourth part of the booty"). Compare also Blunt, *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates*, vol. ii, p. 233 (the chief gets an extra share of the booty).

290   In Murray's Sinai, the office of ʿaqīd was hereditary in certain families and seldom united with that of chief (*Sons of Ishmael*, pp. 135 f.); compare also Musil, *Rwala*, pp. 50 f., 506 f., where the ʿaqīd need not be a chief, though he may be. In pre-Islamic times, too, the leader of raids was now a chief, now a qāʾid or raʾīs of another kind (Nallino, 'Tribù arabe', pp. 69 f.; Procksch, *Blutrache*, p. 8n). The right to a quarter of the booty was normally linked to *riyāsa* (cf. Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, ed. Hārūn, pp. 542, 544: *raʾasa fī ʾl-jāhiliyya wa-akhadha ʾl-mirbāʿ*), but of one chief we are explicitly told that he took the *mirbāʿ* even though he did not conduct raids (Muʾarrij al-Sadūsī, *Hadhf*, pp. 5 f., on ʿĀmir al-Ḍaḥyān, cf. above, note 225).

291   Musil, *Rwala*, p. 277. They scarcely amounted to actual bodyguards (cf. Blunt, *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates*, vol. ii, p. 233, where chiefs are explicitly said not to have them).

292   Musil, *Rwala*, pp. 50 ff., 76, 427; Blunt, *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates*, vol. ii, pp. 205, 232 f.; Doughty, *Travels*, vol. i, pp. 290 f.; Murray, *Sons of Ishmael*, pp. 41 f. Cf. Meeker, *Literature and Violence*, pp. 281 f.

reduces mobility and makes the tribesmen dependent for their livelihood on resources that can be destroyed. Feuds become endemic and highly destructive: agriculture means less warfare and more homicide, as Meeker puts it.[293] Where there is agriculture, moreover, there also tends to be a proliferation of specialists, such as labourers, weavers, smiths, entertainers and servants, who introduce ties of dependence and interdependence at odds with the even distribution of power which prevails among the tribesmen and who therefore have to be excluded: they form groups of their own, which rank lower because they are numerically smaller, militarily weaker and economically dependent. So now we have the situation in which segmentary tribes are called upon to administer economically complex and socially stratified societies, a task for which they are singularly ill equipped. This, we may postulate, is when saints are likely to make their appearance.

With this modification, Gellner's theory makes better sense of the evidence. Complexity was certainly a feature of South Arabia, for example. There were sultanates along the coast, where commercial revenues were available, and here the problems of complexity were dealt with in the normal way, that is to say by state structures of sorts, or in other words the concentration of power in a coercive agency. But no such concentration of power was possible inland, where the tribes held sway. The tribesmen were agriculturalists who lived in fragmented and feuding communities and who were badly equipped to run a complex society, but who nonetheless had an interest in the maintenance of that society, for the simple reason that they were part of it themselves. Hence they were strongly motivated to defer to professional peacemakers. In Mauritania, too, the element of complexity is obvious. Here the dominant tribes were camel-breeding pastoralists, not agriculturalists, but there was agriculture, pastoralism of other kinds, salt mining and gum extraction in the area, and the pastoralists benefited economically from all of these activities. They were not however well placed to organize these activities or to extract their own share of the profits, and they could hardly have acquired the requisite skills without losing the political unity, power and prestige which they enjoyed as camel-breeders. Hence they delegated the task to their clients, acknowledging the latter as 'people of the book' to equip them with the neutrality and authority they required for performance, thus creating arbiters for themselves as well, while at the same time ensuring that there was a locus for Islamic learning in Mauritania.[294] In Gellner's Atlas, the dominant tribes were also pas-

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293   Meeker, *Literature and Violence*, p. 207.

294   Stewart, *Islam and Social Order in Mauritania*.

toralists, but they engaged in some agriculture themselves and coexisted with agriculturalists and specialist groups, and their pastoralism was moreover of the transhumant type: their grazing grounds were sharply defined in terms of space and time alike; smooth interaction depended on the observance of complicated timetables, a feature which Gellner himself singles out as relevant.[295]

By contrast, the pastoralists of north Arabia were not transhumants; it is a moot point whether their grazing grounds were sharply defined in spatial terms,[296] but they certainly were not regulated by complicated timetables; and though there were areas where several tribes had rights of watering to the same wells, with the result that they would cross and recross each other's territories, tribal movements did not on the whole generate predictable tension at well-known places where saints could make a living by installing themselves as traffic lights.[297] Further, the bedouin of Arabia did not engage in agriculture themselves,[298] and they were not in charge of those who did. The peasants of whom they were neighbours in the north were protected by imperial powers or states of other kinds, while the large settlements of central and eastern Arabia were typically administered by amirs. The protection was often inadequate, but permanent bedouin domination of settled populations was usually limited to scattered oases such as Fadak, Taymāʾ or Khaybar on the one hand and villages on the edge of the Fertile Crescent on the other; and it was easy enough for the bedouin simply to collect tribute from them whenever they

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295 Gellner, *Saints*, pp. 31 ff.

296 The Aḥaywāt and other tribes of the Sinai would appear long to have thought in terms of sharply defined borders (F.H. Stewart, *Bedouin Boundaries in Central Sinai and the Southern Negev*, Wiesbaden 1986, pp. 26 f.); but the borders have no comparable sharpness in B. Ingham, *Bedouin of Northern Arabia: Traditions of the Āl-Ḍhafīr*, London and New York 1986, ch. 2, nor is the literature at large suggestive of it. The reviewer who described sharply defined borders as a 'well known' phenomenon among the bedouin was certainly being unappreciative of the significance of Stewart's discovery (*Bibliotheca Orientalis*). For a general discussion, see J. Henninger, 'Das Eigentumsrecht bei den heutigen Beduinen Arabiens', *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft* 61 (1959), pp. 13 ff.

297 *Handbook of Arabia*, vol. i, pp. 21 f., where this is explicitly said to have been a source of tension.

298 "No man ever grasps a plough-handle or cultivates a tree", as Ammianus Marcellinus said with reference to the tribes of the Syrian Desert (quoted in J.B. Segal, 'The Arabs in Syriac Literature', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 4 (1984), p. 102). The camel-rearing bedouin of Sinai and the Negev do practise some agriculture (E. Marx, *Bedouin of the Negev*, Manchester 1967, p. 5); but of other camel-rearers we are explicitly told that they did not (thus Palgrave, *Narrative*, vol. i, p. 30, on the Shararāt) or left to infer as much (thus for example Musil (cf. especially *Rwala*, p. 45), Doughty, Dickson or Cole).

passed by them in the course of their migrations, creaming off wealth in return for which no services had to be performed apart from making sure that other tribes were kept away. With the exception of itinerant traders and the occasional smith, specialists were concentrated in towns beyond bedouin control. In short, unlike the dominant tribes of South Arabia or Mauritania, the bedouin were not called upon to manage a complex and stratified society: they merely managed themselves and collected such protection money as they could from the rest. The same would seem to be true of the Saharan Tuaregs, who were also camel-breeding nomads and who likewise collected tribute from scattered oases without recourse to the services of saints.[299]

So far so good. The formula only works up to a point, however, for complexity may not be a necessary condition for the appearance of saints, and it certainly is not a sufficient one.

That saints may appear even when complexity is absent is suggested by the case of Somalia. The northern Somalis are camel-breeding nomads on a par with the bedouin; they are neatly separated from the agriculturalists of the south, and they do not seem to exhibit either the political fragmentation or the complexity of interests that the modified thesis requires; yet they make use of holy men as arbiters and generally entwine their religion with daily life on a scale unknown to their counterparts in pre-Wahhābī Arabia.[300] Whether they actually constitute an exception to the rule is however hard to judge on the basis of a single book, especially as it refers to recent (i.e. the equivalent of post-Wahhābī) conditions.[301] I shall leave the question open.

That complexity is not a sufficient condition for the emergence of saints is clear from several parts of Arabia. Thus the semi-nomads on the fringes of the desert only had sanctuaries devoid of personnel, not the saints that one would have expected also to flourish among them, as they did among their counterparts in Cyrenaica. One possibility is that this reflects the different natures of official Islam in the two regions. In North Africa, holy men penetrated the high culture to such an extent that they spread as part and parcel of Islamization, which was never the case in the central Islamic lands. Thus the advance of Mālikī Islam among the superficially Islamized Tuaregs meant that *murābiṭūn* appeared among them too, though there had not previously been any obvious

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299   Cf. J. Keenan, *The Tuareg, People of the Ahaggar*, London 1977; cf. below, note 302.

300   Lewis, *Pastoral Democracy*.

301   The Somalis were once reputed to be bad Muslims too (Lewis, *Pastoral Democracy*, p. 26). Lewis dismisses it as misrepresentation, but the fact that they are devout Muslims these days hardly means that they cannot have been unobservant in the past. Unlike the Rwala, however, they seem to have had saints even in their days of ignorance.

need for them; and once the men of religion had made their arrival, they did come to be used as arbiters in disputes as well.[302] By contrast, the advance of Wahhābī Islam in Arabia merely induced the bedouin to pray. The semi-nomads of north Arabia would perhaps also have taken to venerating living saints if everyone around them had been saint-addicted, while conversely those of Cyrenaica might have done without them if the general orientation had been puritanical, though another possibility is that subtle ecological differences are involved: for the bedouin on the fringes of the north-Arabian desert did venerate Christian saints when the high culture to which they had pledged their allegiances was Christian, but there is no evidence that they used them as arbiters.

Further, there were no saints in Oman, though the Omanis were mountain agriculturalists on a par with those of the Yemen. Both the Yemenis and the Omanis, in fact, come across as different from Gellner's Berbers in that they used religion to create political organization over and above the tribes rather to mediate between them, the former in the name of Zaydism, the latter in that of Khārijism. There is a difference between pledging oneself to imams and to saints, given that the former are committed to the creation of state structures whereas the latter thrive on their absence. It may be argued that this difference is greater in principle than in practice in that the one and the same organization (whether created by imams or saints) can be used for both centralizing and mediating purposes, or oscillate between these purposes; but there is a cut-off point, and this is where the question of arms-bearing is significant. The *sayyid*s of the Ḥaḍramawt renounced the use of arms, as did the Khārijite leaders of fifteenth-century Algeria.[303] In other words, the potential imams of the Ḥaḍramawt and Algeria renounced their political aspirations (or, as far as the *sayyid*s of Ḥaḍramawt are concerned, advertised the fact that they had never had any), whereas those of the Yemen and Oman retained their commitment to a super-tribal polity. Since complexity is a factor behind allegiances to saints and state structures alike, it cannot explain why one or the other pattern prevailed.

That complexity does not suffice to engender saints could in fact be argued even with reference to the Ḥaḍramawt itself. The Ḥaḍramawt is a star example of a saint-ridden society, yet the one Ḥaḍramī tribe to have received proper

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302 L. Cabot Briggs, *Tribes of the Sahara*, Cambridge, Mass., and Oxford 1960, p. 164, cf. pp. 95 ff.; Keenan, *The Tuareg*, pp. 94, 148. (Note that the men of religion were sometimes vassals here too, cf. above, note 69.)

303 T. Bierschenk, 'Remarks on Ibadism in Oman and the Mzab (Algeria)', *Studia Islamica* 68 (1988), p. 116.

anthropological attention made no use of saints at all: the Nahd, studied by Hartley, were agriculturalists who had a complex system of dual chieftainship and whose chiefs were simply judges; the chiefs did all the dispute settlement, and they did have a quasi-religious aura, but they were not descendants of the Prophet and they did not claim religious expertise; descendants of the Prophet were to be found close by, but they were not used, or not any more.[304] How is this to be explained? It is not easy to say, given that we do not know how typical the Nahd were and that Hartley did not consider the problem when he was there; by now it is presumably too late to find out. But it is plain that just as religious authority can be used for purposes other than dispute settlement, so dispute settlement can be facilitated by mechanisms other than saints. Even within the narrow confines of segmentary organization there are too many ways of doing things for predictions to be possible: complexity may generate identical problems, but they will not be identically solved.

It should be clear that no one theory can fully explain the whereabouts of saints. Too many factors are involved, too many are historical as opposed to structural, and too many are unknown; in so far as they are knowable, they will add up to separate explanations for each particular case. But this does not in itself mean that Gellner's theory should be abandoned, for one would hardly *expect* a theory pertaining to human societies to have precise predictive value. The relationship between abstract theory and concrete reality in the social sciences is not in fact unlike that in medicine. Medical textbooks describe the equivalent of ideal types. The causal connections they propose differ from those of the social sciences in that they can be tested by repeatable experiments, formulated with mathematical precision and based on examples so numerous that statistical predictions are possible; but like the theories of social scientists, they lose their precision when they are applied to individual cases: once again too many factors are involved, too many of them historical and too many of them unknown; in order fully to explain the disease patterns exhibited by individual patients one would need a separate account for every one of them. This does not however mean that the patients in question cannot be suffering from the same disease, or that the disease itself has been wrongly identified; it merely means that medicine is not a science. The social sciences are not sciences either, but one would not wish to abandon the search for regularities on that ground. Gellner is surely right that all the holy men of the tribal

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304   Hartley, 'Political Organization'. According to the Bents (*Southern Arabia*, pp. 96, 104), the saintly tomb at Qaydūn, "where dwells the very holy man so celebrated for his miracles and good works", was the centre of the Nahd tribe.

Middle East should be classified as manifestations of a single syndrome and that this syndrome arises from the dispersal of power characteristic of segmentary organization. Given the regularity with which holy men are associated with agriculture, he must be wrong to see it as arising from segmentary organization under pastoralist conditions, and he can also be accused of misrepresenting the nature of pastoralist religion, but these deficiencies can be remedied. In its modified form the theory accounts for so many cases that the loose ends can be taken as indicative of additional factors at work rather than of imperfections in the causal connections proposed (though the meaning of loose ends can of course always be disputed). In short, the theory unbares regularities and points to others still to be identified, which is all a theory can do.

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Index of Names and Terms

Note: The definite article (al- or 'l-) is ignored in alphabetisation.

Index of Qur'ānic Verses

Note: Long, undifferentiated verse ranges appear in bold type.