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7 The "Sunna of Our Messengers"

The Qur'ān's Paradigm for Messengers and Prophets; a Reading of Sūrat ash-Shu'arā' (26)

Sidney H. Griffith

I

In numerous books and articles, scholars have studied the role of the prophet in the Qur'ān and in Islamic tradition and have also explored the concept of prophetism in the works of the major Muslim religious thinkers and philosophers. Within this framework, the discussions of the Qur'ān's own prophetology have, for the most part, been conducted in dialogue with the larger scholarly literature on biblical notions of prophecy, by which the Qur'ān's views are assumed to have been inspired. But not much scholarly attention has been paid specifically to the Qur'ān's own presentation of the distinctive sunna of the messengers and prophets whose stories it so often recalls as the paradigm within which Muhammad is encouraged to consider his own vocation. In a recent study of the Bible in the Qur'ān, the opportunity presented itself for calling attention to the Islamic scripture's distinctive paradigm for understanding the mission and message of God's messengers and prophets.[1] God himself speaks to Muhammad in the Qur'ān of this distinctive paradigm when he says: "As for the *sunna* of those of Our Messengers whom We have sent before you [2ms], you [2ms] will not find any turning away from it" (Q 27:77). What is more, the present essay argues that this distinctive paradigm or sunna determines not only the guiding principle of the Qur'ān's reminiscences of the accounts of the earlier messengers and biblical prophets but that it also must be taken into account when one assesses the Qur'ān's critiques of the scriptural interpretations of the pre-qur'ānic "Scripture People" as well as its reproof of what the Qur'ān represents as the doctrinal excesses of Jews and Christians and particularly those of the latter community. Accordingly, it is useful to examine more closely this distinctive paradigm or "sunna of our messengers" in some detail. And it seems that the Qur'ān itself sets it out most clearly in Sūrat ash-Shu'arā' (Q 26), the close reading of which reveals the very pattern or sunna from which God assured Muhammad that there is no turning away.

II

It is not to the present purpose comprehensively to review the presentation of God's prophets and messengers in the Qur'ān and Islamic tradition, a topic that

has already been widely discussed by others.[2] Rather, the interest here is to study how the Qur'ān's view of their role among the peoples to whom they were sent, and its evocation of the memory of individual messengers and prophets prior to Muhammad, and particularly prophetic figures from the Bible, provides the interpretive framework not only for the Qur'ān's recall of biblical stories but also for its critique of contemporary Jewish and Christian beliefs and practices.

But first a word must be said about the seldom-discussed difference between the Qur'ān's view of the history of God's messengers and prophets and the biblical view of the function of the prophets in the Bible's unfolding history of salvation. For the difference of accent in the two overlapping narratives is a crucial one, marking the distinctive hermeneutical point of view of the Qur'ān vis-à-vis the perspective of the Jewish or Christian communities regarding prophetic history.[3] Simply put, the Qur'ān evokes the memory of the biblical patriarchs and prophets within the parameters of its own distinctive paradigm for messengers and prophets. For the Qur'ān, the historical series of God's prophets (*al-anbiyā'*) and messengers (*al-rusul*) from Adam to Muhammad – "God's messenger, and the seal of the prophets" (Q 33:40)[4] – is the history of God's renewed summons, in God's own words, to people to return to their neglected, but original state of awareness of the one God, the creator of all that is, and to the God-given rule of life. For the Qur'ān, the sequence of prophets envisions the end time, the resurrection of the dead, and the consequent reward of the garden for the just and the fire for the sinner. Whereas, for the Jews, Jewish Christians, Manichees, and the other Christians within the Qur'ān's purview, the divinely inspired, several accounts of the succession of almost the same list of prophets and messengers (without the Islamic distinction between prophets and messengers) present a succession of God's chosen spokespersons whose role was to speak God's word to particular historical situations and to summon God's chosen people to fidelity to their divine vocation and covenant obligations in service of a distinctive eschatology, in which the coming of the Messiah or the Prophet-Messiah would be the culmination of salvation history. Not only is there a different accent in the two conceptions of basically the same prophetic history, but the prophetic role is significantly different. In the Qur'ān's view, the prophets and messengers, who are the major figures in the scriptural salvation history, are all transmitting God's word in God's own words. In the biblical view, especially of the Christians, the prophets are specially chosen individuals who speak God's word in the human words God has inspired them to speak, usually addressed to specific persons and occasions. In the biblical view, not all of the major figures of salvation history from Adam to John the Baptist and Jesus are prophets or messengers in the Qur'ān's sense.[5] In the Qur'ān's view, the earlier prophets and messengers were reiterating an unchanging message, which in the subsequent histories of the communities to whom it was addressed, inevitably became distorted. In the biblical view, the prophets are bearing an often judgmental witness to current events in salvation history, often voiced along with a Messianic anticipation.[6] In the qur'ānic view, God always ultimately vindicates his prophets and messengers in their struggles with their adversaries. The different qur'ānic perspective, the distinctive "sunna of our messengers" that

it presents, exercises a determinative role in the choice of the elements of biblical history the Qur'ān's own author chooses to recall, and it provides a template for the critique of what the Qur'ān presents as the aberrant beliefs and practices of Jews and Christians.

III

The distinctive qur'ānic sunna of God's messengers and prophets, which is articulated in a number of places in the Qur'ān, is well schematized in a recurring, probably liturgical, pattern of recall, most clearly displayed in Sūrat ash-Shu'arā'.[7] In the text, God apparently addresses Muhammad's concerns about the reception of the message from God he had been called to deliver to his contemporaries, probably in the later Meccan phase of his public career. The sura provides the reader with a concentrated insight into the conceptual framework within which the Qur'ān recalls more particular moments of pre-Islamic and biblical prophetic history.[8] It provides a view of the typological horizon within which particular stories are told, and it exemplifies the features of prophetic experience that, according to the Qur'ān's "sunna of our messengers," determine which specific aspects of a given biblical story are selected for approving recollection throughout the Qur'ān. Several repeated phrases, as we shall see, intone the basic features of the apostolic, prophetic vocation, articulated in such a way as to assure Muhammad of his own heritage as God's messenger and prophet.[9]

God's Opening Address to Muhammad (Q 26:2–6)

The sura begins with God's address to Muhammad regarding the "signs (*āyāt*) of the clarifying scripture," that is, the Qur'ān, and the prophet's fretting over his hearers' disbelief in them (Q 26:3). God explains in regard to the hearers' reluctance to credit the "signs" that "no new recollection (*dhikr*) [of signs] from the Merciful One would ever come to them but they would turn their backs on them" (Q 26:5). The fact that Muhammad's hearers have "discredited" (*fa-qad kadhdhabū*, Q 26:6) the signs is presented as yet one more instance of a recurring feature in the Qur'ān's sunna of messengers and prophets, namely peoples' perverse tendency to discredit God's signs, as the sura goes on to document in a series of recollections from the history of the messengers and prophets, beginning with an allusion to the prophetic potential of the very earth itself.

The Sequence of the Messengers and Prophets

Sūrat ash-Shu'arā' provides a sequence of nine instances of apostolic, prophetic witness, including Muhammad's, which was discredited in the past by those to whom it was addressed. Certain rhetorical features recur in the narrative that articulate the lessons the Qur'ān means to commend in its evocation of "the sunna of our messengers" in general, each instance in the present sura being characterized as an occasion when "a sign" (*āya*) was discredited by the adversaries of a given

messenger or prophet. In this connection, the "sign" involves not only the notion of "miracle," but it also becomes an instance of argument and evidentiary proof of the messenger's or the prophet's veracity and even a revelation in its own right, sometimes in an evidently polemical moment, as when God speaks to Muhammad of the Qur'ān's own verses recalling the story of the messenger/prophet Jesus: "This is what we are reciting to you of the signs and the wise remembrance" (Q 3:58).[10] And the Qur'ān expresses the hope that its audience will reflect (*tafakkur*) on the "signs" that God makes manifest and get the point of the message, as articulated in the repeated phrase, "Perhaps you/they will engage in reflection" (e.g., in Q 2:219 and Q 7:176). Those who do so are often said to be people "possessed of understanding" (*ulu l-albāb*), as in the phrase, "Only those possessed of understanding engage in reflection" (Q 13:19; Q 39:9). God is said to have given the scripture to the children of Israel "as guidance and a reminder (*dhikrā*) for those possessed of understanding" (Q 40:54).

The Earth (Q 26:7–9)

The sequence in Sūrat ash-Shuʿarāʾ begins with the rhetorical question, "Have they not considered the earth, how much We have caused every kind of noble pair to grow on it?" (Q 26:7), and the text goes on immediately to intone the refrain that will appear seven more times in the sura, after the recollection of each messenger's or prophet's mission, his adversaries' discrediting of it, and God's consequent vindication of the messenger or prophet and his message: "In this there is certainly a sign and most of them did not become believers; your Lord is the mighty one, the merciful one" (Q 26:8–9). This brief passage evokes the Qur'ān's much wider suggestion of the virtually prophetic witness of nature at large as being almost a "scripture" in its own right,[11] a notion the Arabic Qur'ān shares with Syriac-speaking Christian scholars of an earlier generation, who often spoke of how both nature and scripture together, as the biblically warranted two witnesses (Deut. 19:15; Jn. 8:17) bear witness to the creator, who is Lord of nature and Lord of scripture.[12]

Moses (Q 26:10–68)

The Moses pericope, the longest in the sura's recall of biblical history, begins with the invitatory phrase, "[Remember] when (*idh*) your Lord called on Moses";[13] and it proceeds to recount in some detail Moses' and Aaron's dealings with Pharaoh and the subsequent exodus from Egypt. As in the other parts of the Qur'ān where Moses is recalled, so here too there is a recollection of Bible history but no actual quotations from the Bible, albeit that scholars have been able to discover some features of the qur'ānic story also recorded in non-biblical Jewish and Christian texts.[14] At the end of the section, the text says: "We saved Moses and those with him altogether, and then We drowned the others" (Q 26:65–66). And the refrain follows immediately: "In this there is certainly a sign, and most of them did not become believers; your Lord is the mighty one the merciful one" (Q 26:67–68).

Abraham (Q 26:69–104)

The pericope begins with the instruction to Muhammad: "Recite to them the account of Abraham" (Q 26:69), and it continues immediately with the phrase, "[Remember] when (*idh*) he said to his father and his people, 'What are you worshipping?'" (Q 26:70). There follows the account of Abraham's rejection of the gods of his father and his ancestors, some of which is familiar from Jewish and Christian traditions, and other passages in the Qur'ān, but nowhere are there actual quotations from the Bible.[15] Abraham's prayer (vv. 83–102) is in itself a verbal icon of the qur'ānic prophet. But in the end, Abraham's people are recorded as saying, "If only we could have another chance; then we will be among the believers" (Q 26:102), and there follows immediately the refrain: "In this there is certainly a sign and most of them did not become believers; your Lord is the mighty one, the merciful one" (Q 26:103–4).

Noah (Q 26:105–22)

The recollection of Noah's story begins abruptly with the announcement: "Noah's people discredited the messengers" (Q 26:105) and carries on with the phrase, "[Remember] when (*idh*) their brother Noah said, 'Do you not fear?'" (Q 26:106). It is interesting that he straightaway identifies himself as "a trustworthy Messenger (*rasūl*) to you" (Q 26:107). In the brief sequel, Noah bids his people to "Fear God and obey me" (Q 26:108, 110), and he assures them, "I will not ask you for any wage; my wage is only on the Lord of the worlds" (Q 26:109). The people refused and, presuming that one knows the story of the flood and the ark, the text presents God as saying of Noah, "We saved him and those with him in the fully loaded ship. Then afterwards We drowned the rest" (Q 26:119–20).[16] The antiphonal refrain follows immediately: "In this there is certainly a sign and most of them did not become believers; your Lord is the mighty one, the merciful one" (Q 26:121–22).

Hūd (Q 26:123–40)

The story of the non-biblical messenger Hūd, like Noah's story, begins abruptly with the announcement that his people, ʿĀd, "discredited the messengers" (Q 26:123), and the reminiscence carries on with the conventional phrase, "[Remember] when (*idh*) their brother Hūd said, 'Do you not fear?'" (Q 26:124). And again, just as in the case of the reminiscence of Noah, Hūd said, "I am a trustworthy messenger (*rasūl*) to you, so fear God and obey me" (Q 26:125–26), and Hūd assures ʿĀd, "I will not ask you for any wage; my wage is only on the Lord of the worlds" (Q 26:127). In the end, his people discredited Hūd, and God says, "We destroyed them" (Q 26:129).[17] The refrain follows immediately: "In this there is certainly a sign and most of them did not become believers; your Lord is the mighty one, the merciful one" (Q 26:129–30).

Ṣāliḥ (Q 26:141–59)

Ṣāliḥ's story also begins with the abrupt announcement, "Thamūd discredited the messengers" (Q 26:141), and continues with the phrase, "[Remember] when (*idh*) their brother Ṣāliḥ said, 'Do you not fear?'" And again, like Noah and Hūd, Ṣāliḥ said, "I am a trustworthy messenger (*rasūl*) to you, so fear God and obey me" (Q 26:144), and he offers the same assurance: "I will not ask you for any wage; my wage is only on the Lord of the worlds" (Q 26:145). The text goes on to evoke the memory of the vicissitudes of the non-biblical messenger in his efforts to bring God's message to his people. In the end they disobeyed God's messenger, and the text says, "Punishment overtook them" (Q 26:158).[18] The refrain follows: "In this there is certainly a sign and most of them did not become believers; your Lord is the mighty one, the merciful one" (Q 26:158–59).

Lot (Q 26:160–75)

The same formula introduces the biblical messenger Lot's story as it appears in the accounts of Noah, Hūd, and Ṣāliḥ: "Lot's people discredited the messengers" (Q 26:160), and again there is the phrase, "[Remember] when (*idh*) their brother Lot said to them, 'Do you not fear? I am a trustworthy messenger to you, so fear God and obey me'" (Q 26:161–63), and he offers the assurance: "I will not ask you for any wage; my wage is only on the Lord of the worlds" (Q 26:164). Very briefly, with a succinct dialogue, the Qurʾān recalls the biblical story of Lot; there are no biblical quotations, and one would already have to have known the story for its full impact to occur. It concludes with God's remark, "We sent a rain down upon them; wretched is the rain of those who have been warned" (Q 26:173).[19] The refrain follows straightaway: "In this there is certainly a sign and most of them did not become believers; your Lord is the mighty one, the merciful one" (Q 26:174–75).

Shuʿayb (Q 26:176–91)

Like the three previous recollections of the careers of the messengers and prophets, the same formula brings up the story of the non-biblical Shuʿayb: "The companions of the forest discredited the messengers," introducing the recollection of "When (*idh*) Shuʿayb said to them, 'Do you not fear?'" (Q 26:177). It continues, "I am a trustworthy messenger to you, so fear God and obey me" (Q 26:178–79). Here too is the repeated assurance: "I will not ask you for any wage; my wage is only on the Lord of the worlds" (Q 26:180). Shuʿayb's admonition to upright behavior on the part of his people earns him only their ire, and they discredit him, for which rebuff God's punishment overtakes them.[20] There follows the refrain: "In this there is certainly a sign and most of them did not become believers; your Lord is the mighty one, the merciful one" (Q 26:190–91).

God's Closing Address to Muhammad (Q 26:192–227)

God's reassuring words to Muhammad about his vocation as messenger and prophet at the end of the sura offer insight not only into the mode of qur'ānic revelation in general but also refer to the social and inter-religious situation in which the prophet found himself. Referring to the verses that have gone before, the Qur'ān says here:

> This is surely a 'sending-down' (*tanzīl*) on the part of the Lord of the worlds; the trustworthy Spirit has brought it down upon your heart so that you might be one of the warners, with a clarifying Arabic tongue. It was already in the texts (*zubur*) of the ancients. Was it not a 'sign' (*āyatan*) for them that the learned men of the Sons of Israel would know it? Had we sent it down to a non-Arabic speaker, and he recited it to them, they would not have become believers in it.
>
> (Q 26:192–99)

On the face of it, this passage assures Muhammad that with his experience of the disbelief of his own audience, his situation is in line with that of the earlier messengers and prophets, recorded already in ancient texts, and suggests the knowledge of the contents of such texts in his environs. Moreover, the fact that specifically the learned men of Israel would recognize Muhammad's experience serves both as a sign of authenticity for him and presupposes the presence of these same "People of the Book," "Scripture People," in Muhammad's milieu. Finally, the reference to a nonnative Arabic speaker both implies the actual presence of such persons in the Qur'ān's ambience and at the same time bespeaks the practical necessity for their message to be translated into Arabic if it is to be accepted in the Arabic-speaking community. The purpose of highlighting the painful fate of those who discredited the message of the prophets in the past is expressed in the verse that says that the people of those days, as in Muhammad's own day, "would not believe in it until they would see the dire punishment" (Q 26:201). The final verses explain how the prophetic message could never come from demons, nor could it come from wandering poets who do not practice what they preach.[21] In the end, the situation in the past and the present is that the believers are "only those who do good works, remember God often, and overcome after having been wronged. The ones who have done wrong will know what sort of turmoil they will encounter" (Q 26:227).

IV

Many other suras offer insights into the Qur'ān's "sunna of our messengers" and even provide fuller lists of the pre-Islamic messengers and prophets, including the biblical ones. In this connection, consider the following long passage from Sūrat al-An'ām (Q 6:83–90), which like Sūrat ash-Shu'arā', is addressed by God

to Muhammad in view of the opposition to his admonitions that Muhammad was receiving from his contemporaries:

> This is our argument that we brought to Abraham against his people. We raise in rank whomever we wish. Indeed, your [2ms] Lord is all-wise, all-knowing. And we gave him Isaac and Jacob and guided each of them. And Noah we guided before, and from his offspring, David and Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron – thus do we reward the virtuous – and Zechariah, John, Jesus and Ilyās – each of them among the righteous – and Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot – each we graced over all the nations – and from among their fathers, their descendants and brethren – we chose them and guided them to a straight path. That is God's guidance: with it he guides whomever he wishes of his servants. But were they to ascribe any partners [to God], what they used to do would not avail them. They are the ones whom we gave the scripture, the judgment and prophethood (*al-nubuwwah*). So if these disbelieve in them, we have certainly entrusted them to a people who will never disbelieve in them. They are the ones whom God has guided, so follow (sing.) their guidance. Say (sing.), "*I do not ask of you [2mp] any wage for that.*" It is but a recollection (*dhikrā*) for the worlds.
>
> (Q 6:83–90)[22]

But when all is said and done, Sūrat ash-Shu'arā', with its highly structured format and ritualistically repeated refrains, puts the basic features of prophetic recall in the Qur'ān into high relief. And the presence of three non-biblical messengers, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, and Shu'ayb, in this short list of messengers and prophets immediately calls attention to the fact that for the Qur'ān, God's sunna of messengers and prophets is more than a biblical phenomenon, albeit that the high profile of the recollections of biblical prophets in the Qur'ān can seem to dominate the others. The fact remains that in the Qur'ān, the recollection of biblical prophets does not determine the full parameters of "the sunna of our messengers." Rather, it is the sunna that structures the biblical reminiscences; memories of biblical prophets are folded into a sequence that extends beyond the Bible's reach. Some figures who do appear in the Bible, but who are not normally considered prophets in the biblical tradition, are included among the messengers in the Qur'ān, for example, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, Joseph, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, Solomon, and David, among others. Consider the following passage addressed to Muhammad:

> We have indeed revealed to you [2ms] as we revealed to Noah and the prophets (*an-nabiyyīn*) after him, and [as] we revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, Jesus and Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon – and we brought David the Psalms – and messengers (*rusulan*) we have recounted to you [2ms] earlier and messengers (*rusulan*) we have not recounted to you [2ms] – and to Moses God spoke directly – messengers (*rusulan*), as bearers

of good news and warners so that men may not have any argument against God, after the [sending of] messengers (*ar-rusul*); and God is mighty and wise.

(Q 4:163–65)[23]

From the Qur'ān's point of view, these figures are among those sent (*mursalīn*) by God to be, like Muhammad, among the "warners" (*mundhirīn*) of their own people; and the long, recurrent sequence stops with Muhammad. In the recurring sequence, as Sūrat ash-Shu'arā' makes clear, the pattern is always the same: the prophet or messenger arises within his own people ("their brother," *akhūhum,* Q 26:106, 124, 142, 161); he delivers his message; he is discredited by his audience but is vindicated by the divine punishment visited upon his adversaries, the retelling of which events becomes a "sign" (*āya*) for those who will believe. This pattern can be seen to determine the shape of the recall of even the most familiar of biblical figures and their stories in the Qur'ān. For this reason, the Qur'ān does not simply quote or copy earlier biblical or other narratives; it presumes its audience's familiarity with the patriarchs, prophets, and their stories as well as with those of the non-biblical messengers. And it recalls them within the pattern of its own distinctive "sunna of our messengers" so as to weave the recollections, echoes, and allusions to them into the patterns of discourse the close reading of Sūrat ash-Shu'arā' has highlighted.

V

On the basis of the passages thus far considered, the Qur'ān's distinctive "prophetology," its *sunna* as the Qur'ān itself speaks of it,[24] has a certain paradigmatic profile; it features a paradigm shift from earlier descriptions of prophecy among the "Scripture People." The Qur'ān's "prophetology" is characterized by the following attributes:

- *catholic (God's messengers have come to both biblical and non-biblical people; "There is a *rasūl* speaking their own language for every people," Q 10:47).
- * recurrent (the pattern [sunna] of the experience of messengership and prophecy recurs in the sequence of messengers and prophets).
- *dialogical (the messengers and prophets interact in admonitory dialogue with the people to whom they are sent).
- *singular in its message (the one God, who rewards good and punishes evil on "the Day of Judgment"; no divinizing of creatures; no talk of God having offspring).
- *vindicated (God vindicates His messengers and prophets in their struggles, i.e., the so called punishment stories).[25] In this connection one must take cognizance of the fact that the several passages in the Qur'ān that charge the Jews with being killers of the prophets (e.g., Q 2:61; Q 3:21) do not

contradict this feature of "the sunna of our messengers," whereby the messenger or prophet is vindicated over his adversaries in the end. Rather, the polemical charge against the Jews of having killed the prophets echoes a theme in earlier Jewish and Christian polemical lore, finding a place already in the New Testament in the Christian instance (e.g., Mt. 23:37; Lk. 13:34). It is noteworthy in this connection that none of the prophets whose names are mentioned in these Jewish and Christian traditions as having been killed by their adversaries are ever named in the Qur'ān.[26] In the case of John the Baptist, who is named in the Qur'ān (e.g., Q 2:39–41; Q 19:7, 12–15), his execution at the hands of Herod Antipas as reported in the Gospel (Mt. 14:1–12; Mk. 6:14–29; Lk. 9:7–9) is also never mentioned in the Islamic scripture.

In addition to these just-mentioned five qualities of the Qur'ān's paradigm for messengers and prophets, there is also a notable corrective, even polemical dimension to this scripture's recollection of the biblical and other narratives of the Jews and Christians in its milieu. The Qur'ān means not to retell the biblical stories but to recall them and to recollect them within the corrective framework of its own discourse. For this reason, with the exception of the quotation of a portion of Psalms 37:29 in Q 21:105, the Qur'ān does not quote the Bible. Rather, the Qur'ān re-presents the stories of many of the Bible's major figures within the parameters of its own, distinctive "prophetology," "the *sunna* of our messengers," which in effect functions rhetorically as an apologetic typology in support of the veracity of Muhammad's mission.

A quick recall of the presentations of biblical patriarchs and prophets in the Qur'ān would make three things fairly clear: the biblical personalities and their stories are recalled according to the paradigm of the Qur'ān's own distinctive "prophetology" or sunna and not according to Jewish or Christian narrative patterns; the narratives are sometimes hauntingly close to the biblical narratives but frequently incorporate non-biblical, Jewish or Christian, apocryphal and traditional lore; and there are almost never any actual quotations from a known biblical or other text in the Qur'ān's biblical reminiscences. These observations in turn give rise to three preliminary conclusions: the sources of the Qur'ān's biblical and traditional reminiscences were oral; the Qur'ān's recollections of the biblical patriarchs and prophets according to the paradigm of its own "prophetology" or the sunna of messengers bespeaks the Arabic scripture's corrective, even polemical stance toward Jewish and Christian scriptures and traditional lore; and given the lack of actual quotations from the Bible, the presence of the Bible in the Qur'ān is not textual, in its own words, but by way of allusion, recollection, and re-presentation. In short, the Qur'ān mirrors first in oral proclamation and then in writing the unwritten modes of transmission of the biblical and traditional Jewish and Christian lore circulating among the Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians in Arabia prior to the rise of Islam.[27]

Within the context of Late Antiquity in the first half of the seventh century, the Arabic Qur'ān's "prophetology," which is expressed in an idiom indebted largely

to traditions previously circulating in its milieu in Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, and most immediately Syriac, presents monotheistic belief over against polytheism within a new and original confessional horizon that sets it off from its Jewish and Christian predecessors, with whom and with whose scriptures it nevertheless remains in conversation. In due course the Islamic *shahāda* came to provide a confessional formula fit to express the Qur'ān's original construal of previously existing language and lore. But within the Qur'ān's own Late Antique ambience, the elements of the new vision were already at hand.

By the time of the Qur'ān, the central creedal profession of *al-tawḥīd*, with its emphasis on right and wrong, reward and punishment, had already been spreading in the Arabic-speaking milieu.[28] But from the point of view of the Qur'ān's "prophetology," the previous proponents of monotheism were mostly Jews and Christians, who according to the Qur'ān, had already distorted it by means of a creeping tendency to associate creatures on a par with the creator (cf. Q 9:28–35). The sequence of messengers and prophets was meant to warn against this development, a mission that the Qur'ān presents as the preeminent, paradigmatic role of God's messengers and prophets.

By the time of the Qur'ān, Jews, Christians, and others had also long spoken of a sequential series of spokesmen who under divine inspiration summoned people to the worship of the one God and to right religion. The distinctiveness of the Qur'ān's "prophetology" was not so much in the idea of prophecy or messengership as such, or even in the idea of a sequence of messengers and prophets, but in the structure of the sequence and in the comprehension of the message, identical in each instance, along with the paradigmatic pattern according to which the messengers and prophets delivered warnings and summonses to fear the one God, and did so in the face of opposition, resulting in their eventual vindication by God. This paradigm pares down the prophetic profile familiar to Jews and Christians and focuses it more intensely on the Qur'ān's own message and its phenomenological template for the behavior of God's messengers and prophets. It has analogues with other Late Antique prophetic profiles, such as that to be found in the sequence of the prophets featured in certain Judeo-Christian texts, like the Pseudo-Clementine literature, or in the sequence of messengers culminating in Mani that appears in Manichean thought.

Judeo-Christian prophetology, not unlike that of the Qur'ān, envisions a sequence of prophets, usually seven, which would culminate in the coming of the True Prophet, the Messianic Prophet, who is said to have come in the person of Jesus, to lead the Gentiles to the reformed Covenant of Sinai (in this view, Moses and Jesus are related as type to antitype). According to the Pseudo-Clementines, the sequence included: Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Jesus the Messiah, in whom the spirit of revelation became incarnate.[29] Hans Joachim Schoeps and others have seen Judeo-Christian prophetology as an ancestor to the Qur'ān's prophetology,[30] but it should be already clear from the present exposition that the idea of a succession of prophets bearing the same idea of a primordial religion (*Urreligion*) is the limit of the comparability; the qur'ānic paradigm shares only the names of some of the prophet messengers with Judeo-Christian

prophetology. For the Qur'ān, the messenger is not more important than the message.

Manicheism, which was inaugurated by Mani (c. 216–76) in the third century, who was raised in the Judeo-Christian community of the Elkasaites in lower Mesopotamia, also features a succession of messengers and prophets with a universal message. And it is clear that Manichean ideas were widespread in the Greek- and Aramaic-speaking worlds of the first half of the seventh century and later, and they had long been familiar to the Arabs on the Arabian periphery.[31] In all likelihood, Manichean lore circulated along with Jewish and Christian religious thought and practice throughout Late Antiquity and particularly within the Aramaic- and Syriac-speaking communities that were channels of so much religious culture into the Arabic-speaking milieu. It is entirely possible, even likely, that Manicheism was known in the immediate surroundings of Muhammad and the Qur'ān. But once again, the Qur'ān's distinctive "prophetology" has a different profile than that of the Manichees, albeit that one can find common features in the two scenarios.

As one recent scholar has put it:

> Mani located himself and his teachings at the final point in a line of divinely-commissioned apostles (*apostoloi*, *shlîḥê*); a tradition that formed part of the theology of the community in which Mani was raised, the so-called Elchasaites, who looked to a cast of biblical forefathers as the divine revealers of teachings to their ancestors. . . . Mani, possibly as a reaction against his Elchasaite upbringing, extended the range of his succession to include figures who were unlikely to have been acknowledged by his former Jewish-Christian coreligionists as apostles or prophets. "Wisdom and deeds have always from time to time been brought to mankind by the messengers of God. So in one age they have been brought by the messenger, called Buddha, to India, in another by [Zoroaster] to Persia, in another by Jesus to the West. Thereupon this revelation has come down, this prophecy in this last age through me, Mani, the messenger of the God of truth to Babylonia."[32]

Mani's sequence of apostles and messengers according to most sources included: Adam, Seth, (Enoch), Noah, (Abraham), Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, (Paul), and finally Mani, the Paraclete, and the "the seal of the prophets."[33] Notably absent from the lists are Moses and the Hebrew prophets. The sequence clearly indicates "a genealogy of divinely-sanctioned prophets and apostles."[34] And it is clear that "the role of prophetic personalities was essential to the overall meaning of the religion's teachings."[35] Mani may well have been inspired by the Judeo-Christian idea of the "True Prophet" coming at the end of a sequence of seven predecessors, a concern that was probably on the minds of his native community of Elchasaites in Babylonia. It has also been noted that the biblical messengers on the list, that is, Adam, Seth, Enosh, Shem, and Enoch, are figures who are "all drawn from apocalyptic texts which had been presented as if composed by these primeval, legendary figures."[36]

One readily recognizes the parallels between the Manichean prophetic genealogy and the Qur'ān's "prophetology." And as Arthur Jeffery remarked years ago, there are "striking coincidences" to be seen in "how Mani, who had had no human teacher or Master, was called to his mission by an angelic visitant who brought him Divine wisdom, and of how Elchasai was called to his preaching of the One God and an imminent Day of Judgment by an enormous angelic visitant who filled the horizon and brought him sheets of a heavenly book."[37] These matters will sound very familiar to readers of the biographic traditions of Muhammad. But these biographical narratives all come from well after the time of the Qur'ān. As for the features of the story that actually appear in the Qur'ān, one might best think that they supply evidence that the author of the Arabic scripture was consciously addressing an audience known to be familiar with the concept of prophetic genealogy. It was presumably this realization that prompted Arthur Jeffery further to say that Muhammad was convinced that "he was called to bring to the Arabs, who had had no prophet sent them, the same religion which the prophets had brought to those other religious communities whom he referred to as the People of the Book."[38] But the matter is not so simple. The Qur'ān's "prophetology," "the sunna of our messengers," suggests that the composer of this Arabic scripture has employed the readily available vocabulary and syntax of messengership and prophethood both to critique and to correct current ideas about the messages of the earlier messengers and prophets and clearly to present its own teaching about the one God, with whom other contemporary communities persisted in associating creatures as divine equals, principally those who said that God has a son.

When one considers the lists of messengers and prophets that circulated among the so-called Judeo-Christian groups, principally the Ebionites and Elchasaites, and the Manichees, it is clear that the Qur'ān rejects any hint of a Judeo-Christian or Marcionite view of earlier scriptures and the prophets whose message they transmit. The Qur'ān says, "God chose Adam, and Noah, and the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imrān over the peoples (*'alā l-'ālamīn*)" (Q 3:33). So Moses and the Hebrew patriarchs and prophets down to John the Baptist and Jesus are included in the Qur'ān's sequence, right along with earlier biblical messengers as well as a selection of non-biblical messengers who were sent to those whom the Qur'ān calls *mushrikūn*, those known within its own presumably Arabic-speaking milieu who associated other beings with God. Notably absent from the Qur'ān's list of messengers are Zoroaster, Buddha, Paul, and Mani himself. And Muhammad is notably present as the culminant prophetic figure, indeed as "the messenger of God and the seal of the prophets" (Q 33:40).

It is clear in the Qur'ān that the dominant personal profile for those sent by God to warn the peoples is that of the "messenger" (*rasūl*, pl. *rusul*), the "apostle," a designation that altogether occurs some 331 times in the Arabic scripture, whereas with the exception of Muhammad himself, only those who are mentioned in the Jewish and Christian biblical traditions are called "prophet," a designation occurring some seventy-five times all told, sometimes as a title accorded to those who are also called "messenger." Muhammad, who is said to be the "seal of the prophets," seems, again like Mani,[39] to have preferred the title "messenger." But

his mission also has prophetic overtones, and Muhammad is a number of times called simply "prophet" (*nabī*) in the Qur'ān.[40] The Arabic scripture seems to enroll him as one among the "messengers" who had also taken on the role of a biblical prophet. In the Qur'ān, God says of the Jews and Christians: "As for those who follow the Messenger, the *ummī* Prophet,[41] whom they find inscribed among them in the Torah and the Gospel, he bids them to do good and to forbid evil" (Q 7:157). Muhammad is thus the "messenger" whose status the Qur'ān is affirming by enrolling him in its sequence of messengers and prophets, recognized by this scripture's distinctive "prophetology."[42] What is more, the Qur'ān presents Muhammad and his mission within the horizon of the larger history of the prophets and messengers who came before him to the "Scripture People" as the paradigmatic "messenger" of God, whose message critiques and corrects the distorted beliefs and practices of those communities, Jews, Christians, and *mushrikūn*, among other Arabic speakers, who had lapsed from the right guidance they had previously received.

VI

God is presented in Sūrat ash-Shu'arā' as voicing the paradigmatic profile of the Qur'ān's distinctive "sunna of our messengers" in a highly structured sequence of verbal icons of qur'ānic messengership and prophethood to reassure and encourage Muhammad about his own place in the sequence of messengers and prophets. The full profile is enhanced by reference to many other suras and verses in the Qur'ān, and in referring to them, one notices the many ways in which the Qur'ān's language and message reflect the vocabulary, thought patterns, and theological constructions of earlier Jewish, Christian, Jewish-Christian, and Manichean discourses. Their religious idiom came naturally into the Arabic-speaking milieu from the largely Greek, Aramaic/Syriac, and Ethiopic-speaking communities on the Arabian periphery in the seventh century and by the natural processes of inter-communal intercourse. This religious lexicon was absorbed into Arabic and became the vocabulary in which the Arabic Qur'ān announced its own distinctive message to the monotheist communities of the "Scripture People" and others within its frame of reference. It was a reforming, corrective, admonitory message that in the very biblical and religious terms of the target audience critiqued from a strictly monotheistic perspective particular beliefs and practices of Jews, Christians, and *mushrikūn* that seemed to compromise *al-tawḥīd*. Otherwise the Qur'ān was largely in agreement with the religion of the "Scripture People." The major difference, the one that makes the Qur'ān's message distinctive and that puts previous discourse into a new horizon of meaning, is precisely the Arabic scripture's novel "prophetology," articulated as it is in Arabized terms and concepts and characterized by an original construal of the familiar style of the mission of messengers and prophets and its recurrent patterns, all focused on absolute monotheism and the mission to warn those who, in the Qur'ān's judgment, have fallen short of it.

The two most prominent verbal icons of qur'ānic "messengership" and "prophethood" presented in Sūrat ash-Shu'arā' are those featuring Moses, "a

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Messenger and a Prophet" (Q 19:51), and Abraham, the prophet, the two most often mentioned by name in the whole Qur'ān; Moses 137 times and Abraham sixty-nine times. Their prophetic profiles are recalled at greater length in other suras. Here, in Sūra 26, the stories of these two iconic, biblical figures are recalled in a style reminiscent of the recollections of them and other biblical patriarchal and prophetic figures elsewhere in the Qur'ān. It is a narrative style that presumes the audience is familiar with the stories, both biblical and traditional, and with the customary teachings and practices of other communities. The Qur'ān recalls the exploits of the scriptural personae, highlighting their roles as monotheistic "warners" against idolatry and polytheism, often in the dramatic form of a dialogue between the messengers or prophets and the representatives of their peoples. We find such a style of biblical recollection, coupled with admonitions to an audience regarding right belief and right practice, elsewhere in near contemporary Syriac *mêmrê* written by Christian authors. In both the Qur'ān and the Syriac *mêmrê*, the audience is bidden by the speaker in cadenced language to heed the "signs" disclosed in the scriptural narratives, and to discern in the encrypted symbols and images the revelation of God's messages embedded in the familiar stories of the patriarchs and prophets as well as in the wide world of created nature.

VII

The recognition of the Qur'ān's distinctive paradigm for God's messengers and prophets highlights the underlying unity and integrity of the Qur'ān's message as a whole. It clarifies the paradigm within which the Qur'ān evokes the recollection of the accounts of earlier messengers and prophets. The recognition of this profile of messengership and prophecy that controls the Islamic scripture's recollection of earlier biblical patriarchs and prophets helps prevent the hermeneutical mistake of measuring the authenticity of the Qur'ān's presentation of the exploits of these biblical figures against the accounts of them found in the Bible on the grounds that the scriptures of the Jews and Christians are the master narratives, the original accounts from which the Qur'ān is thought mistakenly to deviate. In most contexts within the Qur'ān, where the recollection of the sunna of the earlier messengers and prophets appears, the purpose is to assure Muhammad himself and his audience of the authenticity of his prophetic messengership. The style and the wording of the Qur'ān's recollections of the lore of the earlier messengers and prophets bespeak the oral circulation of these accounts in the Arabic-speaking milieu in which Muhammad proclaimed the texts that came to him. Even when the Qur'ān refers to an earlier scripture by name, for example, the Torah, the Gospel, or the Psalms, the recollection of the accounts said to be contained within them is not recited from a written text. The earlier scriptures are named as witnesses to the veracity of the Qur'ān's own revelations, often without any reference to a particular passage in the earlier scriptures. Given the Qur'ān's distinctive paradigm for recalling the messengers and prophets of the Bible, it would be a hermeneutical and exegetical mistake

simply to claim that in its own wording, the Qur'ān has distorted or misunderstood the Bible. Rather, the Qur'ān depends on the familiarity of the stories of the biblical messengers and prophets, circulating orally in Arabic, to commend its own message. But it features its own interpretive framework, i.e., that is, distinctive "sunna of our messengers."

When the Qur'ān insists that it brings nothing new, that it confirms what was sent down before it in the earlier scriptures (e.g., Q 3:3–4), and bids Muhammad, "if you [2ms] are in doubt about what We have sent down to you, ask those who were reading the scripture before you" (Q 10:94), the recognition of the Qur'ān's own paradigm for messengers and prophets enables one more readily to understand that in fact the Islamic scripture effectively commends a distinctive hermeneutical lens through which to understand the earlier scriptures. Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to think that in passages in which the Qur'ān speaks of itself as providing a confirmation (*taṣdīq*) of the revelations that were before it and an explanation (*tafṣīl*) of scripture (Q 10:37), or an explanation of everything, a guidance and a mercy for people who believe (Q 12:111), the explanation (*tafṣīl*) envisions following the interpretive framework that unfolds precisely within the horizon of "the sunna of our messengers." In other words, the Qur'ān proposes its own distinctive, exegetical model for reading the scriptures that came before it, one that sees them as providing a kind of *praeparatio coranica* for anyone who would understand them aright, from the Qur'ān's point of view. Correlatively, if one ignores or fails to follow the Qur'ān's model for understanding the mission of the pre-Islamic messengers and prophets, then one is open to the charge of distorting God's speech, of concealing its meanings, of following one's own conjectures about it, and of being someone who in effect writes a scripture of his own (cf. Q 2:75–79). Such are those of the "Scripture People" who "twist their tongues with the scripture so you would think it to be of the scripture, but it is not of the scripture" (Q 3:78).

In the end, one recognizes that the Qur'ān's paradigm for understanding the mission of the messengers and prophets, although presented in the religious idiom of the earlier "Scripture People" in its milieu, actually makes a statement all its own. It is not reducible to the interpretive parameters of any of the earlier communities. "We know they say a man teaches him; the language of the one to whom they point is foreign. This is a clarifying, Arabic language" (Q 16:103).

Appendix

Sūrat ash-Shuʿarāʾ (Q 26)

A Paradigm for Messengers and Prophets

I: Proemium, vv. 1–6

"These are the signs of the manifest scripture." (v. 2)
"No new remembrance comes to them from the Compassionate One that they do not spurn." (v. 5)

Qur'ān has distorted or misunder-
on the familiarity of the stories of
ting orally in Arabic, to commend
terpretive framework, i.e., that is,

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(e.g., Q 3:3–4), and bids Muham-
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pture." (v. 2)
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II: The Earth, vv. 7–9

"In that there is a sign; but most of them are not believers. Your [2ms] Lord is indeed mighty and merciful." (vv. 8–9)

III: Moses, vv. 10–68

"[Remember] when (*idh*) your [2ms] Lord called out to Moses" (v. 10)
Moses' dialogue with Pharaoh (vv. 16–62)
"In that there is a sign; but most of them are not believers. Your [2ms] Lord is indeed mighty and merciful." (vv. 67–68)

IV: Abraham, vv. 69–104

"Recite to them the account of Abraham, when (*idh*) he said to his father." (vv. 69–70)
Abraham's testimony (vv. 77–102)
"In that there is a sign; but most of them are not believers. Your [2ms] Lord is indeed mighty and merciful." (vv. 103–4)

V: Noah, vv. 105–22

"Noah's people called the messengers liars when (*idh*) their brother Noah said to them" (vv. 105–6)
"Indeed I am a trustworthy messenger (*rasūl*) to you, so fear God and obey me." (vv. 107–8)
"*I ask of you no wage for it; my wage is only on the Lord of the Worlds.*" (v. 109)
"In that there is a sign; but most of them are not believers. Your [2ms] Lord is indeed mighty and merciful." (vv. 121–22)

VI: Hūd > ʿĀd, vv. 123–40

"ʿĀd called the messengers liars when (*idh*) their brother Hūd said to them . . ." (vv. 123–24)
"Indeed I am a trustworthy messenger (*rasūl*) to you, so fear God and obey me." (vv. 125–26)
"*I ask of you no wage for it; my wage is only on the Lord of the Worlds.*" (v. 127)
"In that there is a sign; but most of them are not believers. Your [2ms] Lord is indeed mighty and merciful." (vv. 139–40)

VII: Ṣāliḥ > Thamūd, vv. 141–59

"Thamūd called the messengers liars when (*idh*) their brother Ṣāliḥ said to them . . ." (vv. 141–42)
"Indeed I am a trustworthy messenger (*rasūl*) to you, so fear God and obey me." (vv. 143–44)
"*I ask of you no wage for it; my wage is only on the Lord of the Worlds.*" (v. 145)
"In that there is a sign; but most of them are not believers. Your [2ms] Lord is indeed mighty and merciful." (vv. 158–59)

VIII: Lot, vv. 160–75

"Lot's People called the messengers liars when (*idh*) their brother Lot said to them" (v. 161)
"**Indeed I am a trustworthy messenger (*rasūl*) to you, so fear God and obey me.**" (vv. 162–63)
"*I ask of you no wage for it; my wage is only on the Lord of the Worlds.*" (v. 164)
"In that there is a sign; but most of them are not believers. Your [2ms] Lord is indeed mighty and merciful." (vv. 174–75)

IX: Shuʿayb > Aṣḥābu l-Ayka, vv. 176–91

"The companions of the forest called the messengers liars when (*idh*) Shuʿayb said to them . . ." (vv. 176–77)
"**Indeed I am a trustworthy messenger (*rasūl*) to you, so fear God and obey me.**" (vv. 178–79)
"*I ask of you no wage for it; my wage is only on the Lord of the Worlds.*" (v. 180)
"In that there is a sign; but most of them are not believers. Your [2ms] Lord is indeed mighty and merciful." (vv. 190–91)

X: Muhammad and the Qur'ān, vv. 192–217

"The trustworthy spirit has brought down (*nazala*) the revelation (*tanzīl*) of the Lord of the Worlds upon your [2ms] heart so that you might become one of those who warn with a clarifying Arabic tongue; it (i.e., the revelation) is indeed in the books (*zubur*) of the ancients." (vv. 192–96)
"Put your confidence in the Mighty One, the Merciful One, Who sees you [2ms] when you stand [for prayer] and your circulation among the worshippers (*as-sājidīn*); He is the All-Seeing, the All-Knowing One." (vv. 217–20)

XI: The Satans' Minions and the Poets, vv. 221–27

Of the Satans' minions: "Most of them are liars." (v. 223)
Of the poets: "They say what they do not do; except for those who believe and do good deeds and remember God much, and who are vindicated after having been wronged." (vv. 266–67)

Notes

1 See Sidney H. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the People of the Book in the Language of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); idem, "When Did the Bible Become an Arabic Scripture?" *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 1.1/2 (2013): 7–23.
2 See, for example, Brannon M. Wheeler, *Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis* (New York: Continuum, 2002); Roberto Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qur'ān and Muslim Literature* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2002).
3 See Jacques Jomier, "Prophétisme biblique et prophétisme coranique: Ressemblances et différences," *Revue Thomiste* 77 (1977): 600–9.

4 In reference to a passage in Q 22:52, which distinguishes between the messenger (*rasūl*) and the prophet (*nabī*), Uri Rubin remarks, "Muslim commentators say that in this verse *rasūl* stands for a prophet having a message, a book, which must be delivered, whereas a *nabī* has no such message or book. More specifically, al-Bayḍāwī . . . says that a *rasūl* is a prophet who establishes a new *sharī'a*, whereas a *nabī* is one who continues and old one"; *EQ*, s.v. "Prophets and Prophethood," by Uri Rubin.

5 For more on the expanding view of prophecy in the Second Temple period and thereafter, along with numerous further bibliography, see Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Pseudepigraphy and/as Prophecy: Continuity and Transformation in the Formation and Reception of Early Enochic Writings," in *Revelation, Literature, and Community in Late Antiquity*, ed. Philippa Townsend and Moulie Vidas (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 25–42.

6 For another view of this matter, see the very perceptive study by Felix Körner, "Das Prophetische am Islam," in *Mission und Prophetie in Zeiten der Interkulturalität*, ed. Mariano Delgado and Michael Sievemich (St. Ottilien: Eos Verlag, 2011), 230–44; Michael E. Pregill, "Ahab, Bar Kokhba, Muḥammad, and the Lying Spirit," in *Revelation, Literature, and Community in Late Antiquity*, ed. P. Townsend and M. Vidas (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 271–313.

7 See the schematic outline of the sura in Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren*, 276–77.

8 In this connection, see especially the very important, seldom-cited article by Michael Zwettler, "A Mantic Manifesto: The Sūra of 'The Poets' and the Qur'ānic Foundations of Prophetic Authority," in *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition*, ed. James L. Kugel (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 75–119, 205–31.

9 See the diagram of the sura that highlights the repeated phrases appended at the end of this essay.

10 For this wording, see *EQ*, s.v. "Signs," by Binyamin Abrahamov.

11 See *EQ*, s.v. "Nature as Signs," by Ian Richard Netton.

12 For example, Saint Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise*, trans. Sebastian Brock (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), 102. See also Sidney H. Griffith, *'Faith Adoring the Mystery': Reading the Bible with St. Ephraem the Syrian* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1997).

13 Throughout the Qur'ān, the recollection of the experiences of earlier messengers and prophets is regularly signaled by the summons to "remember when," expressed by a verbal form of the root *dh-k-r* followed by *idh*, *idhā*, or sometimes *lammā*; very often the verb is omitted, leaving only the *idh* or *idhā* to serve as the marker of *tadhakkur*. See the discussion in Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, ch. 2.

14 See Roberto Tottoli, *Vita di Mosè secondo le tradizioni islamiche* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1992); Brannon Wheeler, *Moses in the Quran and Islamic Exegesis* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2002).

15 See Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); *EQ*, s.v. "Abraham," by *idem*.

16 See Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qur'ān*, 5–9, 21–3; *EQ*, s.v. "Noah," by William M. Brinner.

17 See R.B. Serjeant, "Hūd and Other Pre-Islamic Prophets of Ḥadramawt," *Le Muséon* 46 (1954): 121–79; *EQ*, s.v. "Hūd," by Paul M. Cobb.

18 B.M. Wheeler, *Prophets in the Quran*, 74–82; *EQ*, s.v. "Ṣāliḥ," by R. Tottoli.

19 D. Künstlinger, "Christliche Herkunft der kurānischen Lōt-Legende," *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 7 (1929–1930): 281–95; *EQ*, s.v. "Lot," by Heribert Busse.

20 C.E. Bosworth, "The Qur'ānic Prophet Shu'aib and Ibn Taimiyya's Epistle Concerning Him," *Le Muséon* 87 (1974): 425–40; idem, "Madyan Shu'ayb in Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Lore," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 29 (1984): 53–64; *EQ*, s.v. "Shu'ayb," by R. Tottoli.

21 For more on the Qur'ān's view of the poets, see Irfan Shahid, "A Contribution to Koranic Exegesis," in *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb*, ed. G. Makdisi (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 563–80; idem, "Another Contribution to Koranic Exegesis: The *Sūra* of the Poets (XXVI)," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 14.1 (1983): 1–21.

22 Translation adapted from Sayyid 'Ali Quli Qara'i, *The Qur'ān: With a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation*, 2nd U.S. ed. (Elmhurst, NY: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'ān, 2011), 186–87 (emphasis added).

23 Translation adapted from 'Ali Quli Qara'i, *The Qur'ān*, 140–41.

24 In reference to the messengers prior to Muhammad, God speaks of "the sunna of our messengers whom We have sent before you; you will not find that our sunna has any turning away" (Q 17, al-Isrā', v. 77). In other places the Qur'ān refers to this sunna of the prophets and the "sunna of the ancients" (*sunnat al-awwalīn*), as in Q 15, al-Hijr, v. 13; Q 35, Fāṭir, v. 43. See Zwettler, "A Mantic Manifesto," 106–9.

25 See *EQ*, s.v. "Punishment Stories," by David Marshall; idem, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers: A Qur'ānic Study* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1999).

26 One recent scholar has remarked in this connection with regard to God's messengers, whom he calls "apostles" that "prophets have been killed but the Apostle must triumph in order to manifest on the earth the triumph of God." Willem A. Bijlefeld, "'A Prophet and More than a Prophet'? Some Observations on the Qur'ānic Use of the Terms 'Prophet' and 'Apostle,'" *The Muslim World* 59 (1969): 22 n. 97. For more on the Qur'ān's polemical charge against the Jews as killers of the prophets, and its background in Jewish and Christian traditions, see Gabriel Said Reynolds, "On the Qur'ān and the Theme of Jews as Killers of the Prophets," *Al-Bayān: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 10 (2012): 9–32.

27 In support of these conclusions, see Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, ch. 2; idem, "When Did the Bible Become an Arabic Scripture?"

28 See in this connection the fascinating study by Patricia Crone, "The Religion of the Qur'ānic Pagans: God and the Lesser Deities," *Arabica* 57.2/3 (2010): 151–200.

29 Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1949), 87–116; idem, *Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church*, trans. Douglas R.A. Hare (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 61–73.

30 Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*, 334–42; idem, *Jewish Christianity*, 136–40; Tor Andrae, *Mohammed: The Man and His Faith*, trans. T. Menzel (New York: Scribner, 1936), esp. 99–113. See also Samuel Zinner, *The Abrahamic Archetype: Conceptual and Historical Relationships between Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Bartlow, Cambridge: Archetype, 2011).

31 Moshe Gil, "The Creed of Abū 'Amīr," *Israel Oriental Studies* 12 (1992): 9–57; Robert Simon, "Mānī and Muḥammad," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 21 (1997): 118–41; François de Blois, "Elchasai – Manes – Muḥammad: Manichäismus und Islam in religionshistorischen Vergleich," *Der Islam* 81 (2004): 31–48.

32 Nicholas Baker-Brian, *Manichaeism: An Ancient Faith Rediscovered* (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 27, including a quotation from *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, trans. C.E. Sachau (1879), 207, (Frankfurt: Minerva-Verl., 1969), 190.

33 See the lists in the several sources discussed by Michel Tardieu, *Manichaeism*, trans. M.B. De Bevoise (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 13–9. On the epithet, "seal of the prophets," see Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, "'Seal of the Prophets': The Nature of a Manichaean Metaphor," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986): 61–74; Yohanan Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood in Sunnī Islam," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986): 177–215.

34 Baker-Brian, *Manichaeism*, 42.

35 Ibid., 34.

36 Ibid., 50.

37 Arthur Jeffery, *The Qur'ān as Scripture* (New York: Russell F. Moore Company, 1952), 8.

38 Ibid., 9.

39 See the remark c
only, or mainly, a
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40 For example, the
(al-Aḥzāb) includ
men, but he is the
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41 See the important
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"A Prophet and M
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about the *mushrik*
Qur'ānic Pagans."

38 Ibid., 9.

39 See the remark of G. Stroumsa, "Mani does not seem to have considered himself only, or mainly, a prophet. In his own eyes, he was, more than a prophet, an apostle." Stroumsa, "Seal of the Prophets," 74.

40 For example, the dozen times the title "prophet" is accorded to Muhammad in Q 33 (al-Aḥzāb) including the famous verse, "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of God and the 'seal of the prophets'" (v. 40). See also the interesting sequence in Q 76: 1–9 (at-Taḥrīm).

41 See the important study by Sebastian Günther, "Muḥammad, the Illiterate Prophet: An Islamic Creed in the Qur'ān and Qur'ānic Exegesis," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 4.1 (2002): 1–26.

42 See in this connection the aforementioned, important article by Willem A. Bijlefeld, "A Prophet and More than a Prophet? Some Observations on the Qur'ānic Use of the Terms 'Prophet' and 'Apostle,'" *The Muslim World* 59 (1969): 1–28. See too Patricia Crone, "Angels versus Humans as Messengers of God," in *Revelation, Literature, and Community in Late Antiquity*, 315–36, who proposes that the *mushrikūn*, whose thought lay behind Muhammad's, had aligned the messengers with angels who brought down God's admonitions from heaven to men and thought of the prophets as men who ascended to heaven to receive from God a message for humankind. For her thoughts about the *mushrikūn*, see the earlier referenced article, Crone, "The Religion of the Qur'ānic Pagans."