

STUDIES IN
LATE ANTIQUITY AND EARLY ISLAM

5

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

THE LIFE OF MUHAMMAD
AS VIEWED BY THE EARLY MUSLIMS

A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

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The Biblical Annunciation

THE EMERGENCE OF THE PROPHET of Islam as perceived by the Muslim believers is the focus and culmination of the world's sacred history (*tārīkh*). This history proceeds through a continuous series of divine revelations delivered by successive prophets of whom Muḥammad is the last. Each prophet is elected to his mission in accordance with a predestined divine scheme. Glimpses of this historical outlook, already found in the earliest biographies of Muḥammad, are marked by a clear apologetic trend. From the very beginning of their contacts with the *ahl al-kitāb*, the Muslims had to sustain the dogma that Muḥammad did indeed belong to the same exclusive predestined chain of prophets in whom the Jews and the Christians believed. In order to do so, the Muslims had to establish the story of Muḥammad's life on the same literary patterns as were used in the *vitae* of the other prophets. Since all of those prophets were biblical figures, Muḥammad's biography had to be shaped according to biblical models. This was supposed to convince the People of the Book who refused to recognize Muḥammad as a prophet like their own.¹

The shaping of the image of the prophet of Islam along biblical lines is typically exemplified in the theme of annunciation. Being regarded as a prophet whose election is predestined, Muḥammad's actual emergence in Arabia is announced by the previous prophets to whom the aim of God's historical scheme is revealed in advance, and whose task it is to pave the way for the emergence of Muḥammad. In their quest for literary evidence of the annunciation of their prophet, the Muslims used the same device as that used by the Christians for Jesus; they looked for attestation in previous sacred scriptures, and identified their own prophet with the messianic saviour whose emergence was believed to have been foretold in numerous biblical passages. These passages are quoted verbatim in Arabic translation in many polemical treatises by Muslim writers surveyed already by Goldziher and others.² One of the earliest writers of these

¹ The function of Jewish, Christian, and other materials in the *sīra* was noticed long ago. See e.g. Horowitz, "Zur Muḥammadlegende", 41–53; *idem*, "Biblische Nachwirkungen in der Sira", *Der Islam* 12 (1922), 184–89; Sellheim, "Prophet, Chalif und Geschichte", 53–71.

² Ignaz Goldziher, "Ueber muhammadanische Polemik gegen Aḥl al-kitāb", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 32 (1878), 341–87; reprinted in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, II (Hildesheim, 1968), 1–47. There is also a study in Hebrew by Eliyahu Straus [Ashtor], in *Sefer ha-zikkaron le-beit ha-midrash le-rabbanim be-vina*

monographs was 'Alī ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. ca. AH 250³), who devoted the bulk of his book *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla fī ithbāt nubuwwat al-nabī Muḥammad* to the biblical quotations which were believed to refer to the prophet of Islam. Later writers not discussed by Goldziher and the others adduced similar quotations,⁴ and even contemporary Muslims keep repeating them for the same apologetic purposes.⁵

In the present investigation, however, our attention will focus not so much on polemical writings of late Muslim theologians as on the early biographical sources and *ḥadīth* compilations. These sources seem to indicate that Muslim reliance on the Bible began much earlier than is usually assumed by Islamicists.⁶

I

The Quran already contains some explicit manifestations of the contention that the emergence of the prophet of Islam was prognosticated in the sacred scriptures of the Jews and the Christians. In 61:6 the Quran states that Jesus brought to his people the good tidings about a prophet who would come after him, whose name is "Aḥmad". It has already been noticed by Islamicists that "Aḥmad" could be related to the statements in the New Testament about the coming of the Paraclete, the "Comforter" (John 14:16 and 26; 15:26). It has been noted that "Aḥmad" reflects the perception of Paraclete in the sense of the Greek *periklutos*, "celebrated", hence "Aḥmad". Scholars are not convinced, however, whether the Quranic Aḥmad itself already draws on the New Testament.⁷

Whatever the case may be, the early biographies of Muḥammad do identify the Prophet with the Paraclete of the New Testament. Ibn Ishāq (d. AH 150)

(Jerusalem, 1946), 182–97. And see also M.J. Kister, "Ḥadīthū 'an banī isrā'īla wa-lā ḥaraja", *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972), 222–25; John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies* (Oxford, 1977), 63–65; also the recent study of Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible from Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm*, Ph.D. thesis (Nijmegen, 1993).

³ See on him, Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden, 1967–proceeding), III, 236–40.

⁴ E.g. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Wafā*, I, 61–73 (quoting Ibn Qutayba); Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 178–81.

⁵ See e.g. editor's note in Qiwām al-Sunna, *Dalā'il*, I, 336–39 (relying on Ibn Taymiyya's *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīh*).

⁶ E.g. Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 101.

⁷ See A. Guthrie and E.F.F. Bishop, "The Paraclete, Almunhamanna and Aḥmad", *The Muslim World* 41 (1951), 251–56; W. Montgomery Watt, "His Name is Aḥmad", *The Muslim World* 43 (1953), 110–17; Joseph Schacht, s.v. "Aḥmad", *El²*; Geoffrey Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qur'an* (London, 1977), 96–100.

1. The Biblical Annunciation

records in his *Sīra*⁸ a verbatim quotation from the Gospel of John, and renders the Paraclete as *al-Munḥamannā* (cf. the Hebrew *menaḥem*, "comforter"); he says that *al-Munḥamannā* in Syriac is "Muḥammad", and that in Greek it is *al-Baraqlītis* (Paraclete).⁹

The same identification of the Paraclete with the Prophet recurs in the earliest extant commentaries on Quran 61:6. Already Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. AH 150) says that "Aḥmad" in Syriac is *fāraqliṭā*.¹⁰ This indicates that the identification of the Quranic "Aḥmad" with the Paraclete of the New Testament is much earlier than is usually assumed by modern scholars. Later commentators like al-Rāzī (d. AH 607) adduced from the New Testament the verbatim quotations of the Paraclete passages in their commentary on the Quranic verse about Aḥmad.¹¹

But the Paraclete is not the only instance of biblical annunciation of the Islamic prophet. The Quran itself already utilises further biblical references for the same purpose. In Quran 7:156–58 God says to Moses that He will extend His compassion to those who will follow "the messenger, the prophet, the *ummī*, whom they find written with them, in the Torah and the Gospel...." This passage implies that Muḥammad is described in the scriptures of the Jews and the Christians as "the prophet, the *ummī*".

The significance of *ummī* has been much discussed in modern scholarship, and cannot be easily translated.¹² Some hitherto unnoticed aspects of its significance will, nevertheless, be revealed through the ensuing examination of the literary employment of the *ummī* idea in the early biographical traditions. This will bring to light other biblical passages which nourished the earliest traditions about the annunciation of Muḥammad.

The title *ummī* turns up in the early biographical traditions in the context of attestation, and is often produced as an epithet given to the prophet of Islam already in the Bible. Some such traditions were recorded by Ibn Sa'd (d. AH 230). According to one of them, the Prophet was called *ummī* already in the "book of Abraham" (i.e. Genesis). This tradition, transmitted by the Kūfan

⁸ Ibn Hishām, I, 248.

⁹ See further Alfred Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: a Translation of Ibn Ishāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* (Oxford, 1974), 104 n. 1.

¹⁰ Muqātil, II, fol. 195a.

¹¹ Rāzī, XXIX, 313. For the identification of the Quranic "Aḥmad" with the Paraclete, see also Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 181.

¹² Recent studies on *ummī* are Isaiah Goldfeld, "The Illiterate Prophet (*nabī ummī*): an Inquiry into the Development of a Dogma in Islamic Tradition", *Der Islam* 57 (1980), 58–67; Norman Calder, "The *Ummī* in Early Islamic Juridic Literature", *Der Islam* 67 (1990), 111–23; Khalil 'Athamina, "Al-Nabiyy al-Umiyy [sic.]...", *Der Islam* 69 (1992), 61–81.

Successor (*tābi'ī*) al-Sha'bī (d. AH 103), says that in the codex (*majalla*) of Abraham the following is written:

Many peoples shall come out of your son, till the *ummī* prophet comes, who will be the seal of the prophets.¹³

The passage employed here is, to all appearances, Genesis 17:20. There God promises Abraham to multiply his son Ishmael exceedingly, to bless him with twelve princes, and to turn him into a great nation. This is a key biblical prophecy in favour of the children of Ishmael, of which the Muslims seem to have made the utmost use. In the tradition of al-Sha'bī the twelve princes of Genesis 17:20 became the one Islamic prophet, with the biblical "nation" (in Hebrew, *goy*), becoming *ummī*, i.e. one of the *umma*, or "nation".

The parallelism between *goy* and *ummī* is indeed striking. In the Talmud the Hebrew *goy* means "gentile", i.e. not belonging to the Jewish people. *Ummī* seems to denote exactly the same, i.e. one who belongs to a non-Jewish *umma* (= one of *ummot ha-'olam*, the "nations of the world"). In its metaphorical sense, *goy* in Hebrew is also a Jew who is ignorant concerning the Torah and religious duties. This connotation also seems to have been condensed into the Arabic *ummī* (pl. *ummiyyūn*).¹⁴ Thus the biblical promise to make Ishmael into a great *goy* became in the tradition of al-Sha'bī a promise to transform Ishmael's seed into an *ummī* prophet. It may well be that already the *ummī* passage of Quran 7:156–58 alludes to this very biblical *goy* verse.

Genesis 17:20 was further exploited by later Muslim theologians who discovered that the numeric values of the letters of the Hebrew *bi-me'od me'od* ("exceedingly") add up to those of the Hebrew letters forming the name Muḥammad (92), and stated that Muḥammad's name in the "books of Abraham" was *Mūd Mūd*, or *Mād Mād*, etc.¹⁵

But let us return to Ibn Sa'd, who has yet another tradition about Abraham and the *ummī* prophet. This one has a Companion *isnād*, i.e. a list of successive transmitters concluding in a Companion of the Prophet, in this case, Ibn 'Abbās; he is quoted by the Meccan Successor 'Aṭā' ibn Abi Rabāḥ (d. AH

¹³ Ibn Sa'd, I, 163.

¹⁴ Nöldeke, in the original edition of his *Geschichte des Qorāns* (10 n. 3), already suggested the Hebrew *goyim* as the origin of the Quranic *ummiyyūn*. However, this has been left out in the Nöldeke-Schwally edition where 'am ha-areṣ is preferred (I, 14 n. 1). Most Islamicists since Horowitz have preferred the Hebrew *ummot ha-'olām*.

¹⁵ Khargūshī (MS Br. Lib.), fol. 74a. For other variations and interpretations see Khafājī, *Nasīm*, II, 406; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 178–79; Ṭabarsī, *A'lām al-warā*, 16, 21 (the entire biblical verse in Hebrew vocalization!); Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 131, 246. Cf. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, 64.

114).¹⁶ But the text is slightly distorted; its correct form has been preserved by al-Suyūṭī, who quotes Ibn Sa'd.¹⁷ It relates that when Abraham was ordered to expel Hagar, he set out with her to the wilderness, mounted on al-Burāq, the wonderful riding beast. When they reached Mecca, the angel Gabriel ordered him to dismount, because this was the place where *al-nabī al-ummī*¹⁸ was destined to come out of the seed of his son (i.e. Ishmael).

In yet another tradition of the Medinan Successor Muḥammad ibn Ka'b al-Qurazī, who was of Jewish descent (d. AH 117), the prediction about the *ummī* prophet is delivered directly to Hagar.¹⁹ When Hagar set out with her son, Ishmael, an unseen voice said to her:

...your son will be the father of many peoples, and out of his people will come the *ummī* prophet who will reside in the *ḥaram* [of Mecca].

This no doubt reflects Genesis 21:18, which, again, is a *goy* passage. It forms part of the address of the angel to Hagar when she and her son ran out of water in the wilderness of Beer-sheba:

...for I will make him a great nation (...*le-goy gadol*).

The Hebrew *goy* in this passage seems to have prompted the allusion to the *ummī* prophet of the Arabs.

Ibn Sa'd has one more tradition of Muḥammad ibn Ka'b al-Qurazī, containing God's revelation to Jacob:

I shall send out of your loins kings and prophets till I send the prophet, the *ḥaramī*, whose nation shall build the Temple, and he will be the seal of the prophets, and his name is Aḥmad.²⁰

Here Muḥammad is nicknamed not *ummī*, but rather *ḥaramī*, i.e. of the sacred territory of Mecca. Nevertheless, this passage is also based on a biblical *goy* clause, Genesis 35:11, where God addresses Jacob in Beth-el with the following promise:

...a nation (*goy*) and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins.

¹⁶ Ibn Sa'd, I, 163–64.

¹⁷ Suyūṭī, *Khaṣā'iṣ*, I, 24.

¹⁸ Ibn Sa'd has *al-nabiyy allādhī*, instead of the correct reading.

¹⁹ Ibn Sa'd, I, 164.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 163. See also Suyūṭī, *Khaṣā'iṣ*, I, 25.

In another tradition recorded by Ibn Sa'd, the locution *nabī ummī* is mentioned in a prophecy to an unnamed prophet of the Children of Israel. This is a Baṣran tradition traced back to Ibn 'Abbās in which God says:²¹

My anger at you has become great, for you did not keep My word. Therefore I have sworn, the wind of holiness shall not come to you till I send the *ummī* prophet from the land of the Arabs; the wind of holiness shall come upon him.

The biblical passage which seems to be echoed here is Jeremiah 5:12–15, where the people of Israel is thus reproached:

12. They have belied the Lord.... 13. And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them.... 15. Lo, I will bring a nation (*goy*) upon you from afar, O house of Israel, saith the Lord: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation....

This very passage of Jeremiah was interpreted by the theologian Ibn Rabban as foretelling the emergence of the Muslims. The word *goy* was conceived in his translation in its strict collective biblical sense, and was rendered as *umma*, "nation".²² In the tradition of Ibn 'Abbās, however, *goy* is perceived as "gentile", and has accordingly become the *ummī* prophet. The phrase "from afar" is rephrased in the tradition as "from the land of the Arabs".

Later sources abound in further traditions in which God foretells the *ummī* prophet to various biblical prophets. These accounts also seem to draw on biblical *goy* passages. In one of them, Exodus 32:10–14, Moses hears God's scheme to destroy the sinful children of Israel, and to make Moses into a great *goy* instead of the Israelites. Moses, however, prays for mercy on their behalf. In Muslim tradition a similar situation seems to have been duplicated in a prophetic tradition (i.e. one uttered by the Prophet himself) circulated by the Syrian Companion Abū Umāma al-Bāhili (d. ca. AH 81). The children of Israel are slain in the wilderness by an ancient Arab tribe (Ma'add), and Moses prays for God's help against the Arabs. God tells Moses not to pray, because *al-nabī al-ummī* is destined to emerge from them.²³

Prophecies about the *ummī* prophet were not only searched for in biblical *goy* passages, but also read into other apocalyptic visions of the Bible. Daniel's apocalypse about "a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44)

²¹ The *isnād*: Maslama ibn 'Alqama (Baṣran) ← Dāwūd ibn Abī Hind (Baṣran d. AH 139) ← Ibn 'Abbās. See Ibn Sa'd, I, 166.

²² Ibn Rabban, *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, 174. Cf. Goldziher, "Polemik", 379 (no. 50).

²³ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, VIII, no. 7629; Suyūṭī, *Khaṣā'is*, I, 25. The *isnād*: Shaddād ibn 'Abdallāh (Abū 'Ammār, Syrian) ← Abū Umāma ← Muḥammad.

was interpreted in a tradition of Ka'b al-Aḥbār (d. AH 32), a Jewish convert to Islam, as foretelling the emergence of the *ummī* prophet.²⁴

Statements about the biblical origin of the epithet *ummī* are also included in traditions without specific references to the biblical text. A tradition of the Yemeni Successor Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. AH 110) merely mentions the Prophet's epithet *ummī* as a part of what is said to be his biblical description.²⁵ In a tradition of Muqātil ibn Ḥayyān (d. ca. AH 150), Jesus is said to have been told by God about the need to believe in the *ummī* prophet.²⁶

That *ummī* is a biblical epithet of Muḥammad is also stated in the realm of Quranic exegesis, relating to 29:48. This verse reads:

You could neither read a book before this one [was revealed], nor write it with your right hand; had you done so, the unbelievers would have doubted [you].

This verse was believed to convey the idea that Muḥammad was illiterate, and therefore unaware of previous scriptures, which proved the authenticity of his own revelation. The idea that the sincerity of any prophet is proven through his illiteracy is, indeed, very early, and it emerges already in the earliest Christian sources.²⁷ The verse just quoted indicates that Islam has applied it to its own prophet since the Quran itself. In Quranic exegesis (*tafsīr*), the illiteracy of the Prophet was made part of the theme of annunciation. Muḥammad's biblical descriptions were said to have included illiteracy; this is already stated in a tradition of Mujāhid (Meccan d. AH 104),²⁸ and other early exegetes say the same.²⁹

The concept of Muḥammad's illiteracy as part of his biblical description was actually combined with his biblical description as *ummī*. In this context, *ummī* means illiterate, again in accordance with the Hebrew *goy*. Already Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. AH 150) states that Quran 29:48 refers to the Jews. If the Prophet could read and write, they would have said: "The one whose description we

²⁴ Abū Nu'aym, *Dalā'il*, no. 44. For the Islamic interpretation of this passage in Daniel, see also Ibn Rabban, *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, 181; Goldziher, "Polemik", 379 (no. 46).

²⁵ Abū Nu'aym, *Dalā'il*, no. 33. See also Suyūṭī, *Khaṣā'is*, I, 33–36; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, III, 496–97. For further prophecies attributed to Wahb about *al-nabī al-ummī*, see Khargūshī (MS Tübingen), fol 69b–70a; Zurqānī, VI, 204.

²⁶ Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 378. See also Ṭabarsī, *A'lām al-warā*, 21–22; Ibn 'Asakir, II, 45–46.

²⁷ A.J. Wensinck, "Muhammed und die Propheten", *Acta Orientalia* 2 (1924), 192; Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, 63.

²⁸ The *isnād*: Abū Usāma (Kūfan d. AH 201) ← Idrīs ibn Yazīd al-Awdī ← al-Hakam ← Mujāhid. See Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXI, 4–5. See also Ibn 'Aṭīyya, XII, 231; Qurṭubī, XIII, 351; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, V, 147–48.

²⁹ Farrā', II, 317; Zajjāj, IV, 171; Wāḥidī, *Wasīf*, fol. 141b.

find in the Torah is *ummī*, being able neither to read a book nor to write it with his right hand."³⁰ Al-Ṭabarī has recorded similar traditions which are of still earlier authorities: Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Muzāḥim (Khurāsānī d. AH 102) is said to have stated that the prophet of God could neither read nor write, and God described him thus in the Torah and the Gospel, namely, that he is *nabī ummī*, who neither reads nor writes.³¹ The same is repeated in other *tafsīrs*.³² It follows that the term *ummī* acquired the meaning of illiteracy considerably earlier than some Islamicists have assumed.³³

The annunciation of the *ummī* prophet as treated by Muslim tradition is not always confined to textual reports about the Bible. In other traditions, the anticipation of the emergence of the *ummī* prophet is conveyed through stories about conditions in Arabia on the eve of Islam. The idea of the *ummī* prophet is made part of the messianic hopes of the Jews of Arabia (most of them living in Medina). These are polemical stories aimed at showing that the Jews should have recognized the Prophet, and that their failure to do so contradicted the prescriptions of their own scriptures. This forms part of the accusation against the Jews of concealing (*kitmān*), or deleting the textual evidence of the Bible, or denying the identification of Muḥammad with the prophet of their books.³⁴ The word *ummī*, like Aḥmad, became a label denoting the Prophet whom the Jews originally expected, but later denied.

The stories about the Jews utilize some Quranic verses. The early biography of Ibn Ishāq (d. AH 150), as preserved in the recension of Yūnus ibn Bukayr (d. AH 199),³⁵ contains a chapter describing conditions in Arabia on the eve of Islam. Ibn Ishāq says that Jewish and Christian scholars knew better than the

³⁰ Muqātil, printed edition, III, 386: *inna llādhī najidu fī l-Tawrāt na'tuhu huwa ummī lā yaqra'u l-kitāba wa-lā yakhḥuḥu bi-yadihi*. This statement is quoted verbatim from Muqātil in Baghawī, *Ma'ālim*, IV, 381. And see also the same formulation in Zamakhsharī, III, 208; Qurṭubī, XIII, 351 (without naming Muqātil). But cf. Muqātil, MS II, fol. 73b–74a: *inna llādhī najidu fī l-Tawrāt ba'athahu llāhu 'azza wa-jalla lā yaqra'u l-kitāba wa-lā yakhḥuḥu* (*ummī* does not occur).

³¹ The *isnād*: Abū Mu'adh (al-Faḍl ibn Khālīd, of Marw d. AH 211) ← 'Ubayd ibn Sulaymān (of Marw) ← Ḍaḥḥāk. See Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXI, 5. Cf. Māwardī, *Nukat*, IV, 287; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, V, 148; Ṭabarsī, *Majma'*, XX, 370.

³² Ibn Qutayba, *Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 338: *hum yajidūnaka ummiyyan fī kutubihim, fa-law kunta taktubu la-rtābū*. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masir*, VI, 277, 278; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, III, 417.

³³ Goldfeld, "The Illiterate Prophet", 67: "...the noun acquired this sense during the third century of the Hijra." See also Calder, "The Ummī", 116.

³⁴ Cf. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, 189–90.

³⁵ Ibn Bukayr, 83. See also Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, II, 74–75. The parallel passage in Ibn Hishām (I, 217) is abridged.

1. The Biblical Annunciation

Arabs about the imminent emergence of Muḥammad, because they had found his description in their scriptures. They used to pray in his name for victory over the Arab idolaters, and told them that a prophet holding the religion of Abraham, whose name was Aḥmad, was about to come. This was the description which they had found in their books. Then Ibn Ishāq adduces the Quranic *ummī* passage (7:157), which is followed by 61:6 (Aḥmad). He also cites Quran 2:89, where it is stated that the People of the Book used to pray for victory (*yastaftihūna*) over the infidels.

The latter Quranic verse (2:89) is alluded to in other traditions about the Jews' anticipation of a messianic saviour. In these traditions they warn their Arab neighbours in Medina of the coming prophet, telling them that under his leadership they would defeat them (i.e. the Arabs). But when he appears as the Arabian Muḥammad, the frustrated Jews do not believe in him, whereas the Arabs are those who make haste to follow him. Quran 2:89 is said to refer to this, and a tradition to that effect is quoted by Ibn Ishāq from 'Āṣim ibn 'Umar ibn Qatāda (Medinan d. AH 120).³⁶ Ibn Ishāq has one more tradition (of Ibn 'Abbās) in which, after the appearance of Muḥammad, the Arab Muslims of Medina urge the Jews to embrace Islam, reminding them that Muḥammad is the very prophet in whose name the Jews used to pray for victory. But a Jew from the tribe of Banū l-Naḍir (Salām ibn Mishkam) replies that Muḥammad is not the prophet whom they anticipated. Thereupon God reveals Quran 2:89.³⁷

In other traditions of the same setting, the *ummī* notion is added to the presentation. The anticipated prophet is designated as *al-nabī al-ummī*, the gentile messianic saviour awaited by the Jews. For example, a tradition of Sa'id ibn Jubayr (Kūfan d. AH 95) from Ibn 'Abbās relates that the Jews of Khaybar used to fight against the Arabs of Ghaṭafān. Whenever the Jews were defeated, they asked God to give them victory in the name of *al-nabī al-ummī*, whom God had promised to send to them at the end of days. When they uttered this prayer, the Arabs of Ghaṭafān were defeated. However, when Muḥammad appeared, the Jews did not believe in him.³⁸ This tradition was also recorded in the *tafsīr* of 2:89.³⁹ Indeed, many other stories of the same kind may be found in the *tafsīr* compilations, on the same Quranic verse.⁴⁰ This implies that *sīra*

³⁶ Ibn Hishām, I, 225. See also Ibn Bukayr, 84; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, II, 75–76.

³⁷ Ibn Hishām, II, 196. The *isnād*: 'Ikrima (Medinan d. AH 105), or Sa'id ibn Jubayr (Kūfan d. AH 95) ← Ibn 'Abbās.

³⁸ Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, II, 76–77.

³⁹ *Mustadrak*, II, 263 (*Tafsīr*); Suyūṭī, *Durr*, I, 88.

⁴⁰ For example, Mujāhid, I, 83; Muqātil, I, fol. 16b–17a; 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, I, 52; Huwwārī, I, 125; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, I, 325–27; Samarqandī, *Tafsīr*, I, 136; Māwardī, *Nukat*, I, 158; Wāḥidī, *Asbāb*, 15; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, II, 124–25; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, I, 87–88.

traditions alluding to Quranic verses eventually became appropriate exegetic material which was gladly taken up by the compilers of the books of *tafsir* for the interpretation of the relevant Quranic passages.

II

Apart from the Paraclete and the *goy* passages already employed in the Quran, there are further biblical references which can be traced in Muslim tradition, where they fulfil the requirements of attestation.

In the biography of Ibn Ishāq (in the recension of Yūnus ibn Bukayr) there is a tradition attributed to Ka'b al-Aḥbār alluding to a passage in the Old Testament.⁴¹ It is related that Ka'b was once asked by Umm al-Dardā' in what manner the messenger of God was described in the Bible (*Tawrāt*). Ka'b said: "We find his description as follows."

Muḥammad the apostle of God, his name is al-Mutawakkil; he is not crude nor coarse, and he does not raise his voice in the streets (*aswāq*). He has been entrusted with the keys, that by him God may make blind eyes see, and deaf ears hear, and stammering tongues speak rightly, that they may testify that there is no God but Allāh....⁴²

As already observed by Guillaume,⁴³ Ka'b's description is an elaboration on Isaiah 42:2, which forms part of the description of God's servant:

He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street....

The Muslims were attracted to this passage, due to the fact that in the previous verse (42:1) Isaiah mentions the gentile nations (*goyim*) among which the servant of God will spread his justice.

Various versions which elaborate on the same passage of Isaiah, identifying the biblical servant of God as Muḥammad, are available in other traditions which are likewise traced back to Ka'b al-Aḥbār. All of them contain the "streets" (*aswāq*) clause, and were recorded by Ibn Sa'd. In one, which has a Syrian *isnād*, Ka'b communicates the "biblical" description of the Prophet to the Companion Ibn 'Abbās. It contains not only Muḥammad's description, but also the name of his birthplace (Mecca), and the destination of his *hijra*

⁴¹ The *isnād*: Ibn Ishāq—Muḥammad ibn Thabit ibn Shurāḥbīl (Hijāzī)—Umm al-Dardā' (Syrian)—Ka'b al-Aḥbār.

⁴² Ibn Bukayr, 141–42. See also Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 376–77; Dhahabī, *Sīra*, 50; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 61.

⁴³ Guillaume, "New Light", 32.

1. The Biblical Annunciation

(Medina).⁴⁴ Two Iraqi (Kūfan) traditions have a similar description by Ka'b; one of them mentions Muḥammad's kingdom (*mulk*) in Syria.⁴⁵ Sometimes Ka'b's statement opens with the words *qāla llāhu* ("God said"), which is another way of indicating that the ensuing text is an extract from a holy scripture.⁴⁶ Another well-known authority on the scriptures of the People of the Book, namely, the Successor Wāḥb ibn Munabbih (Yemeni d. AH 110), appears as "quoting" a similar description of Muḥammad from Isaiah.⁴⁷ There is also a tradition of the Baṣran Successor Qatāda (d. AH 117) which is not traced back to any earlier authority.⁴⁸

But the "streets" passage of the Bible was circulated under the names of other Islamic figures who were neither Jewish nor associated with Jewish scriptures, but rather were trustworthy Companions, and hence, more authoritative sources. One of them is Muḥammad's wife, 'Ā'isha. In a Kūfan tradition recorded by Ibn Sa'd she says that Muḥammad is described in the *Injīl* (!), i.e. the New Testament, as follows:

He is not crude nor coarse, and he does not raise his voice in the streets....⁴⁹

Moreover, the same description was circulated as an utterance of the Prophet himself, related on the authority of the Medinan/Kūfan Companion 'Abdallāh ibn Mas'ūd (d. AH 32). The Prophet reportedly stated: "My description is: 'Aḥmad, al-Mutawakkil, neither crude nor coarse....'"⁵⁰ It should be noted that in this particular version there is no indication of the biblical origin of the description.

⁴⁴ The *isnād*: Mu'āwiya ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn Hudayr (Himṣi d. AH 158)—Abū Farwā—Ibn 'Abbās—Ka'b. See Ibn Sa'd, I, 360. Cf. Qiwām al-Sunna, *Dalā'il*, IV, 1335–36 (no. 220); Dhahabī, *Sīra*, 50. Cf. Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 11.

⁴⁵ Ibn Sa'd, I, 360. One has the *isnād*: 'Āṣim ibn Bahdala (Kūfan d. AH 128)—Abū l-Duḥā (Muslim ibn Ṣubayḥ, Kūfan d. AH 100)—Abū 'Abdallāh al-Jadālī (Kūfan)—Ka'b. Another has the *isnād*: 'Āṣim ibn Bahdala—Abū Ṣāliḥ al-Sammān (Dhakhwān, Medinan d. AH 101)—Ka'b. For the latter tradition, see also Ibn Shabba, II, 635.

⁴⁶ See Ibn Shabba, II, 634–35; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, V, 387; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 377, 160. The *isnād*: al-'Alā' ibn al-Musayyab and Ibrāhīm ibn Maymūn—al-Musayyab ibn Rāfi' (Kūfan d. AH 105)—Ka'b.

⁴⁷ Abū Nu'aym, *Dalā'il*, no. 33. See also Suyūṭi, *Khaṣā'is*, I, 34–36.

⁴⁸ See Ibn Sa'd, I, 362.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 363. The *isnād*: Yūnus ibn Abī Ishāq (Kūfan d. AH 152)—'Ayzār ibn Hurayth (Kūfan)—'Ā'isha. See also Ibn Bukayr, 142; Ibn Shabba, II, 632–33; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 377–78; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 61.

⁵⁰ The *isnād*: Ibrāhīm ibn Yazīd al-Nakha'i (Kūfan d. AH 96)—'Alqama ibn Qays (Kūfan d. AH 62)—'Abdallāh ibn Mas'ūd. See Tabarāni, *Kabīr*, X, no. 10046. See also Suyūṭi, *Khaṣā'is*, I, 29.

During the third century AH, the most important *muṣannaf* compilations came into being. Out of the early biographical material, their authors selected traditions which conformed to their own ideas of what Muslims should know and believe about the life and person of their Prophet. It is most significant that in the authoritative *muṣannaf* compilations, such as those of al-Bukhārī (d. AH 256) and Muslim (d. AH 261), not even one of the above traditions may be found. A few of them were only recorded in the more peripheral collections of al-Dārimī (d. AH 255) and al-Ḥakīm (d. AH 404). The former selected one of the above Syrian traditions of Ka'b al-Aḥbār, in which the latter transmits his information to the Companion Ibn 'Abbās, and included it in the Introduction of his compilation.⁵¹ Al-Ḥakīm recorded the above tradition of 'A'isha.⁵² This means that the representatives of the mainstream of Islamic thinking were reluctant to acknowledge the merit of the scriptures of the People of the Book as sources of attestation, and were therefore inclined to dismiss traditions in which total reliance on those scriptures was implied, even though some of the *isnāds* could be regarded as "sound" (*ṣaḥīḥ*).

The compilers rather preferred traditions in which the attestation of the Prophet was based on more specifically Islamic documents, namely, the Quran itself. Such traditions were indeed available to them in the pool of early biographical material. To begin with, there is a tradition in Ibn Sa'd in which the source of information about Muhammad's biblical description is not Ka'b al-Aḥbār, but rather the Medinan 'Abdallāh ibn Salām (d. AH 43). Although a Jew by birth, he enjoys a more authoritative position in Islam than that of Ka'b al-Aḥbār; he was a Companion of Muhammad who acknowledged his message from the very outset. Ibn Salām's own report about Muhammad's biblical description is similar to the above description of Ka'b, but it opens with a new element, an extract from the Quran. According to the tradition of Ibn Sa'd, the Medinan Zayd ibn Aslam (d. AH 136) reported that Ibn Salām used to say: "The description of the apostle of God in the *Tawrāt* is as follows:"

Yā ayyuhā l-nabiyyu innā arsalnāka shāhidan wa-mubashshiran wa-nadhīran wa-ḥirzan li-l-ummiyyina....: "Oh prophet, We have sent you to bear witness and good tidings, and to warn, and to safeguard the people...."

This is followed by the familiar statement that the apostle is neither crude nor coarse, and does not raise his voice in the streets. The tradition goes on to say

⁵¹ Dārimī, I, 17 (*Muqaddima*, 2). Dārimī (I, 16, 17) also has two additional versions where Ka'b is quoted by Abū Ṣāliḥ (Dhakwān, Medinan d. AH 101). See also Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, V, 387; Qiwām al-Sunna, *Dalā'il*, IV, 1332–33 (no. 219).

⁵² *Mustadrak*, II, 614.

1. The Biblical Annunciation

that when Ka'b heard the words of Ibn Salām, he asserted that they were true,⁵³ thus reducing Ka'b's role to a confirmatory one. The description itself opens with a verbatim quotation of Quran 33:45 (cf. 48:8), which was interpolated into the biblical framework, thus becoming supposedly a part of the Bible.⁵⁴ Another tradition of this kind, with a Medinan *isnād* likewise concluding with 'Abdallāh ibn Salām, was recorded by al-Dārimī.⁵⁵

But for the authors of the more authoritative *muṣannaf* compilations this was still not good enough: the authority of the tradition was still a Jew. The version which they preferred was traced back neither to Ka'b nor to Ibn Salām, but rather to an indigenous Arab Muslim, 'Abdallāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ (d. AH 63), a Qurashi Companion of the Prophet who is said to have been well versed in the Quran as well as in the Bible.⁵⁶ His version too was recorded by Ibn Sa'd. 'Abdallāh ibn 'Amr is asked by the Medinan story-teller 'Aḡā' ibn Yasār (d. AH 103) about Muhammad's description in the Bible, and the latter responds: "Indeed, he is described in the *Tawrāt* by some of his descriptions in the Quran." Then he recites Quran 33:45, followed by the familiar elaboration on Isaiah, in which the Prophet is one who does not raise his voice in the streets, etc. Afterwards Aḡā' asks Ka'b al-Aḥbār about it, and the latter corroborates the words of 'Abdallāh ibn 'Amr.⁵⁷ This is the version which al-Bukhārī selected for his *Ṣaḥīḥ*; but in his version the corroboration of Ka'b has been omitted, leaving 'Abdallāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ as the sole authority. Al-Bukhārī recorded it in *Kitāb al-buyū'* (34:50), under the heading: "The Interdiction to Raise One's Voice in the Market".⁵⁸ The word *aswāq* ("streets"), of the biblical description of the Prophet was obviously taken by him in its literary sense ("markets").

The interpolation of a Quranic extract into the above traditions reveals an aspect of the literary role of the Quranic text in Muslim *ḥadīth*. In this specific case, the Quranic passage was added to the traditions in order to lend the bibli-

⁵³ Ibn Sa'd, I, 360–61. See also Qiwām al-Sunna, *Dalā'il*, III, 835 (no. 128).

⁵⁴ For more examples of Quranic passages regarded as part of the Torah, see Kister, "Ḥadīthi", 226.

⁵⁵ Dārimī, I, 16 (*Muqaddima*, 2). The *isnād*: Sa'id ibn Abī Hilāl (Egyptian d. AH 135) ← Hilāl ibn Usāma (Medinan) ← 'Aḡā' ibn Yasār (Medinan story-teller, d. AH 103) ← 'Abdallāh ibn Salām. See also Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 376; Qiwām al-Sunna, *Dalā'il*, IV, 1337–38 (no. 221); Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 60–61.

⁵⁶ Ahmad, *Musnad*, II, 222. See also Kister, "Ḥadīthi", 231.

⁵⁷ Ibn Sa'd, I, 362. The *isnād*: Hilāl ibn Abī Hilāl (Medinan) ← 'Aḡā' ibn Yasār ← 'Abdallāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ. See also Ibn Shabba, II, 633–34; Bukhārī, *Adab mufrad*, I, no. 246; Ahmad, *Musnad*, II, 174; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 374, 375; *idem*, *Shu'ab*, II, 147 (no. 1410); Dhahabī, *Sīra*, 49; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 60.

⁵⁸ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, III, 87.

cal description some of the authority of the Islamic scripture. No exegetic consideration was involved in this process. However, as soon as Quranic extracts became part of a tradition, the tradition itself became exegesis, for the simple reason that it contained reference to a Quranic verse. The exegetes of the Quran composed the *tafsir* of the canon by assembling any available traditions they could lay hands on, provided they contained Quranic excerpts. The above traditions formed no exception: the authors spotted some of them and made them part of the *tafsir* of the relevant Quranic passages. Thus the tradition of 'Abdallāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ was picked up and recorded by al-Bukhārī in the exegesis of 48:8, in the *Kitāb al-tafsir* (65) of his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.⁵⁹ The same tradition was recorded by Ibn Kathir in the *tafsir* of 33:45.⁶⁰ But the majority of the commentators recorded this tradition in the *tafsir* of the Quranic *ummī* passage (7:156–58), to illustrate Muḥammad's biblical description.⁶¹

The process of Islamisation of the biblical description of Muḥammad did not cease with the interpolation of a Quranic extract into it. The downgrading of the Bible as a document of attestation is indicated in other versions, where the Prophet's description has been entirely detached from the biblical sphere, being incorporated instead into existing literary portraits displaying Muḥammad's outer appearance and morals. Such "historical" descriptions of Muḥammad's moral conduct, which, of course, the believers are supposed to adopt as their model, are widely current. The most prevailing one is again that of the Companion 'Abdallāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, who is made to state that Muḥammad never behaved indecently (*lam yakun fāḥishan*...). His statement has a Kufan *isnād*⁶² and is recorded in the biographical sources,⁶³ as well as in several *muṣannaf* compilations, including al-Bukhārī and Muslim.⁶⁴ A similar statement is attributed to the Companion Anas ibn Malik, who reportedly said that the Prophet was neither in the habit of abusing (*sabbab*), nor of offending (*fāḥḥāsh*), or cursing (*la'ān*). His statement was circulated with a Medinan

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, VI, 169–70.

⁶⁰ Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, III, 496. Ibn Kathir (*ibid.*, III, 496–97) has also recorded another similar tradition on the authority of Waḥb ibn Munabbih (Yemeni d. AH 110).

⁶¹ Ṭabarī, *Tafsir*, IX, 57; Baghawī, *Ma'ālim*, II, 553; Ibn al-'Arabī, *Aḥkām*, II, 794; Ibn 'Aṭīyya, VII, 178–79; Qurṭubī, VII, 299; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, II, 253; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, III, 131. The version of Ka'b al-Aḥbār was recorded in Baghawī, *Ma'ālim*, II, 553–54; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, III, 132.

⁶² A'mash (Kūfan d. AH 148) ← Shāfi'ī ibn Salama (Abū Wā'il, Kūfan d. AH 82) ← Masrūq ibn al-Ajda' (Kūfan d. AH 63) ← 'Abdallāh ibn 'Amr.

⁶³ Ibn Sa'd, I, 377; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 161, 189, 193; Baghawī, *Shamā'il*, I, no. 204; Ibn Kathir, *Bidāya*, VI, 36.

⁶⁴ Ibn Abī Shayba, VIII, no. 5369 (*Adab*); Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IV, 230 (61:23); V, 34 (62:27); VIII, 15, 16 (78:38, 39); Muslim, VII, 78 (43:68); Tirmidhi/*Tuḥfa*, VI, no. 2041 (25:47).

I. The Biblical Annunciation

*isnād*⁶⁵ and was recorded in biographical sources,⁶⁶ as well as in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*.⁶⁷

The statement that the Prophet did not let his voice be heard in the streets (*aswāq*) was incorporated into this portrait of his, and was thus transformed from a biblical prophecy about him into an historical account of his actual conduct. This appears in its "historical" form in the description attributed to 'Ā'isha, where she is being made to say that Muḥammad's morals were the best of all people. He was neither crude, nor did he raise his voice in the streets. He was never vindictive, but always forgiving. Her statement was also circulated with a Kufan *isnād*⁶⁸ and was recorded in biographical sources,⁶⁹ as well as in some *muṣannaf* compilations, like that of al-Tirmidhi.⁷⁰ A similar "historical" description, including the "streets" clause, was transmitted on the authority of the Companion Abū Hurayra; it includes a depiction of Muḥammad's external appearance.⁷¹

III

To lend the biblical attestation more genuinely Islamic authority, some quotations were cast in the form of a prophetic *ḥadīth*.⁷² In these *ḥadīths* the Prophet himself gives in the first person his own biblical description. The utterances represent what we may call the "self-attestation" of the prophet, and they are part of his self-portrait. In these *ḥadīths* Muḥammad identifies himself in various biblical prophecies.

One biblical quotation which was to become prophetic *ḥadīth* appears in its assumed biblical form in Muḥammad's early biographies, where it is said to have been current among the Jews of Banū l-Naḍir.⁷³ It runs as follows:

⁶⁵ Fulayḥ ibn Sulaymān (Medinan d. AH 168) ← Hilāl ibn Abī Maymūna (Medinan) ← Anas.

⁶⁶ Ibn Sa'd, I, 369; Ibn Shabba, II, 636; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, III, 126, 144, 158; Baghawī, *Shamā'il*, I, no. 206; Ibn Kathir, *Bidāya*, VI, 36–37.

⁶⁷ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, VIII, 15 (78:38).

⁶⁸ Abū Ishāq al-Sabī'i (Kūfan Shi'i d. AH 126–29) ← Abū 'Abdallāh al-Jadālī (Kūfan) ← 'Ā'isha.

⁶⁹ Ibn Sa'd, I, 365; Ibn Shabba, II, 637; Tirmidhi, *Shamā'il*, 200; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, VI, 174, 236, 246; Ṭayālīsī, *Musnad*, no. 1520; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 315; Baghawī, *Shamā'il*, I, no. 205; Ibn Kathir, *Bidāya*, VI, 36.

⁷⁰ Ibn Abī Shayba, VIII, no. 5382 (*Adab*); Tirmidhi/*Tuḥfa*, VI, no. 2085 (25:69); Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XIV, no. 6443.

⁷¹ The *isnād*: Ibn Abī Dhī'b (Medinan d. AH 159) ← Abū Šāliḥ *nawlā* of al-Taw'ama (Medinan) ← Abū Hurayra. See Ibn Shabba, II, 607; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, II, 328, 448; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 316; Ibn Kathir, *Bidāya*, VI, 36.

⁷² See also Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, II, 148–49.

⁷³ Wāqidi, I, 367. See also Khargushī (MS Tübingen), fol. 65a.

Al-Daḥūk (the Laughing), al-Qatāl (the Slaying), Red Eyed, Arriving from the South, Riding a Camel, Wearing a Cloak, Partaking of a Slice, Carrying his Sword upon his Shoulder....

Some biblical extracts are indeed embedded in this description, occurring also in later polemical sources. As observed by Goldziher,⁷⁴ "Riding a Camel" is derived from Isaiah 21:7, where "riding an ass ['a chariot of asses']" and "riding a camel ['a chariot of camels']" were taken by Muslim writers to represent Jesus and Muḥammad respectively.⁷⁵ (But sometimes, Muḥammad was rather presented as Riding an Ass⁷⁶). As for Carrying his Sword upon his Shoulder, this is probably a reflection of Isaiah 9:5 ("and the government shall be upon his shoulder").⁷⁷

These biblical depictions later assumed the form of a prophetic *ḥadīth*, circulated on the authority of a Companion. Ibn 'Abbās is said to have heard the Prophet say:

My name in the Torah is Ahmad, al-Daḥūk, al-Qatāl, Riding a Camel, Wearing a Cloak, Partaking of a Slice, Carrying his Sword upon his Shoulder.⁷⁸

But the process of Islamisation through self-attestation affected not only the form of the biblical quotations, but their contents as well. Genuine Quranic material was incorporated into them. One prophetic statement of this kind combines the Bible and the Quran as equal sources of certification. Muḥammad states:

My name in the Torah is Aḥīd, because I divert (*aḥīdu*) my community from Hell. My name in the *Zabūr* (Psalms) is al-Māḥī; God wipes off idolatry through me. My name in the Gospels is Ahmad, and my name in the Quran is Muḥammad, because I am praised among the inhabitants of heaven and earth.

⁷⁴ Goldziher, "Polemik", 377 (no. 25).

⁷⁵ See e.g. Ibn Rabbān, 149–50; Khafājī, *Nasīm*, II, 404. And cf. the epithet Rider of the Camel also in Khargūshī (MS Br. Lib.), fol. 75a; Kulīnī, VIII, 43, 139; Ibn Shahrāshub, I, 134; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 62.

⁷⁶ Abu Nu'aym, *Dalā'il*, no. 40. Cf. Khargūshī (MS Br. Lib.), fol. 58a. On the tension between the camel and the ass as Muḥammad's riding beasts see Sulīman Bashīr, "Riding Beasts on Divine Missions: an Examination of the Ass and Camel Traditions", *Journal of Semitic Studies* 36 (1991), 37–75. Unfortunately, Goldziher's findings are not duly acknowledged in this study.

⁷⁷ For the messianic significance of Isaiah 9:5 in Muslim context, see Ibn Rabbān, 146–47. Cf. also Goldziher, "Polemik", 378 (no. 35).

⁷⁸ Suyūṭī, *Khawṣā'is*, I, 192–93 (from Ibn Fāris).

The tradition appears in some *tafsīrs* on Quran 61:6,⁷⁹ and recurs in some later sources.⁸⁰ The form Aḥīd (or Ahyad) is probably derived from Hebrew (*yahīd* = one and only), and seems to have already been known to Muqāṭil ibn Sulaymān (d. AH 150).⁸¹

The content of other prophetic utterances of self-attestation is purely Quranic, lacking any biblical allusions. All of them open with the declaration: *anā...*, "I am...." One of them consists of Quran 2:129, where Abraham prays:

Our Lord, send among them a messenger from amongst them, that he may recite to them Your signs, and teach them the book and the wisdom....

A prophetic statement using this verse for self-attestation was recorded by Ibn Sa'd. It has a Kūfan *isnād*, lacking a Companion (*mursal*).⁸² The Prophet states: "I am the [subject of] the prayer of my father Abraham." This is followed by a verbatim quotation of Quran 2:129. This tradition implies, of course, that the Quranic prayer of Abraham is a prophecy about Muḥammad. An extended statement of the Prophet, referring also to the good tidings of Jesus about Ahmad (Quran 61:6), is included in a Medinan tradition quoted by Ibn Sa'd from al-Wāqidi. This is related on the authority of some Medinan Successors, and in it the Prophet says: "I am the prayer of my father Abraham, and Jesus Son of Mary announced the good tidings about me."⁸³

There are more versions, all of Syrian provenance, of the same statement of Muḥammad. In all of them an additional prediction is included which is derived not from the Quran, but rather from an episode of the Prophet's infancy legends. The episode takes place during the pregnancy of his mother, Āmina. Ibn Ishāq relates that while pregnant with Muḥammad, she had a vision in which she saw light spreading out of her, reaching as far as the forts of Buṣrā in Syria.⁸⁴ Light (*nūr*) is a prevalent symbol of Muḥammad's prophethood,⁸⁵ and the glorious role of Syria as the future abode of Islam is forecast here by mak-

⁷⁹ Māwardī, *Nukat*, V, 529; Qurṭubī, XVIII, 84.

⁸⁰ Khafājī, *Nasīm*, II, 408; Suyūṭī, *Khawṣā'is*, I, 192 (on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās).

⁸¹ Muqāṭil, I, fol. 22a (in *tafsīr* of 2:130). 'Abdallāh ibn Salām): ...*yūqālu lahu Ahyad* [MS: *Aḥmad*] *yahīdu ummatahu 'anī l-nār* (in prophecy to Moses).

⁸² Ibn Sa'd, I, 149. The *isnād*: Juwaybir ibn Sa'id al-Balkhī (Kūfan d. AH 140–50) ← Daḥḥāk ibn Muzāḥim (Khurāsānī d. AH 102) ← Muḥammad.

⁸³ Ibn Sa'd, I, 149 (Wāqidi). The Successors are 'Umar ibn Abi Anas and 'Abdallāh ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Ma'mar (Abū Tūwāla, Medinan d. AH 134).

⁸⁴ Ibn Hishām, I, 166; Ibn Bukayr, 45.

⁸⁵ See Uri Rubin, "Pre-Existence and Light: Aspects of the Concept of Nūr Muḥammad", *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975), 62–119.

ing it the final destination of that light. Syrian traditionists incorporated Āmina's vision into the above self-portrait of Muḥammad. The vision is included, to begin with, in a tradition of the Syrian Companion Abū Umāma al-Bāḥilī (d. ca. AH 81), who is said to have asked the Prophet: "What marked the beginning of your affair?" Muḥammad replied: "The prayer of my father Abraham, the good tidings of Jesus, and my mother saw light come out of her, which illuminated the forts of Syria."⁸⁶ In another Syrian tradition one more element is included, which reflects the concept of Muḥammad's pre-existence.⁸⁷ This is by the Syrian Companion 'Irbād ibn Sāriya (Himṣī d. AH 75), and in it Muḥammad provides his eternal prophetic profile:

I already was the servant of God and the seal of prophets when Adam was still rolling in his clay. I shall tell you more about it: the prayer of my father Abraham, the announcement of Jesus about me, and the vision my mother saw....

This was a widely current tradition,⁸⁸ which was also accepted into a few *muṣannaf* compilations, where it was recorded to illustrate various aspects of Muḥammad's prophetic status.⁸⁹

As seen above, traditions with Quranic verses embedded in them were readily taken up by the commentators of the Quran, who were always looking for relevant material for their *tafsīr* compilations. Indeed, some of the traditions about the prayer of Abraham and the announcement of Jesus were recorded by the exegetes in the *tafsīr* of the respective Quranic verses. The tradition of 'Irbād ibn Sāriya was recorded by al-Ṭabarī in the *tafsīr* of 2:129,⁹⁰ as well as in that of 61:6.⁹¹ Moreover, in spite of its non-biblical character, the same tradition was included by some in the *tafsīr* of 33:45, which, as seen above, was believed to be a replica of a biblical profile of Muḥammad.⁹²

⁸⁶ Ahmad, *Musnad*, V, 262. The *isnād*: Faraj ibn Fuḍāla (Himṣī d. AH 177) ← Luqmān ibn 'Amir (Himṣī) ← Abū Umāma. Cf. Ibn Sa'd, I, 102, 149. And see Ṭayālisi, *Musnad*, no. 1140; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 84; Ṭabarānī, *Kabir*, VIII, no. 7729; Qiṣām al-Sunna, *Dalā'il*, I, 239 (no. 1).

⁸⁷ For which see Rubin, "Pre-Existence", 67–71.

⁸⁸ Ibn Sa'd, I, 149. The *isnād*: Sa'd ibn Suwayd (Syrian) ← 'Abd al-'A'lā ibn Hilāl al-Sulamī ← 'Irbād ibn Sāriya. See also Ibn Shabba, II, 636; Bukhārī, *Tārīkh kabir*, VI, 68–69; *idem*, *Tārīkh ṣaḡhir*, I, 39; Ahmad, *Musnad*, IV, 127, 128; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 80, 83; II, 130; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, VI, 89–90; Ṭabarānī, *Kabir*, XVIII, nos. 629–631; Baghawī, *Shamā'il*, I, 6 (no. 4).

⁸⁹ Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XIV, no. 6404; *Mustadrak*, II, 600.

⁹⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, I, 435.

⁹¹ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXVIII, 57. See also Suyūṭī, *Durr*, VI, 213–14; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, IV, 360 (including the tradition of Abū Umāma).

⁹² *Mustadrak*, II, 418 (*Tafsīr*); Suyūṭī, *Durr*, V, 207.

In other prophetic statements opening with *anā*, "I am", no historical reference is made. Self-attestation is achieved by simply recounting lists of the various Arab names of the prophet. Most of them do not occur in the Quran in their actual form, but they nevertheless rest on Quranic vocabulary and imagery, each of the names attesting to a different aspect of his prophetic role. One of these traditions is Syrian, and is circulated on the authority of the Companion 'Awf ibn Mālik al-Ashja'i (d. AH 73).⁹³ Muḥammad's statement is as follows: "I am al-Ḥāshir, and I am al-'Aqib, and I am al-Muqaḥfi (var. al-Muṣṭafā)." These names signify his position as the ultimate prophet before the day of resurrection (Ḥāshir), being the last of all prophets, who was sent in their footsteps ('Aqib, Muqaḥfi). This specific list is recorded as part of a story about the refusal of the Jews of Medina to recognize Muḥammad as their messianic deliverer. The Prophet makes this statement in their synagogue, where he is said to have come on a Jewish holiday and asked the Jews to produce twelve people who would testify that he is God's messenger, so that He would forgive them their sins. When they refuse, Muḥammad announces his four names. As he is about to leave the synagogue, one of the Jews calls him back. This Jew, who proves to be 'Abdallāh ibn Salam, swears by God that Muḥammad is indeed the prophet whose description the Jews have found in the Torah. His fellow Jews call him a liar, so he joins Muḥammad, and they both leave the synagogue together. Thereupon God reveals Quran 46:10 ("... and a witness from among the children of Israel bears witness to its like, and believes...."). The tradition was recorded by Ahmad ibn Hanbal and al-Ṭabarānī,⁹⁴ and it recurs in some *muṣannaf* compilations in the chapter about the virtues of 'Abdallāh ibn Salam.⁹⁵

More such *anā* statements of Muḥammad were recorded by Ibn Sa'd in his chapter about the names of the Prophet. All of them open with the two best-known Quranic names, Muḥammad (e.g. 48:29) and Ahmad, followed by other names which signify his eschatological role. One of the traditions is of the Meccan Mujāhid (d. AH 104), who does not mention a Companion as his source.⁹⁶ Apart from Ahmad and Muḥammad, the Prophet is here named Messenger of Mercy, Messenger of War, Muqaḥfi, and Ḥāshir. A similar prophetic statement recorded by Ibn Sa'd was circulated on the authority of the Companion

⁹³ The *isnād*: Saḥwān ibn 'Amr (Himṣī d. AH 100) ← 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Jubayr ibn Nufayr ← Jubayr ibn Nufayr (Himṣī d. AH 75) ← 'Awf ibn Mālik.

⁹⁴ Ahmad, *Musnad*, VI, 25; Ṭabarānī, *Kabir*, XVIII, no. 83. And see also Suyūṭī, *Durr*, VI, 39 (on Quran 46:10).

⁹⁵ Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XVI, no. 7162; *Mustadrak*, III, 415.

⁹⁶ The *isnād*: Malik ibn Mighwal (Kufan d. AH 159) ← Abū Ḥuṣayn ('Uthmān ibn 'Āshim, Kufan d. AH 128) ← Mujāhid. See Ibn Sa'd, I, 105. Cf. Ibn Shabba, II, 632 (+ Nabī al-Tawba).

Hudhayfa ibn al-Yamān (d. AH 36).⁹⁷ Ibn Sa'd has another tradition of the Companion Jubayr ibn Mu't'im (Medinan d. AH 58), quoted by his son Nāfi' ibn Jubayr (Medinan d. AH 99);⁹⁸ it was also recorded by al-Ḥakīm.⁹⁹ The tradition of the same Companion was circulated by another son of his as well, namely, Muḥammad ibn Jubayr. This Muḥammad was quoted by al-Zuhri (Medinan d. AH 124), and the tradition recurs in many sources other than Ibn Sa'd,¹⁰⁰ as well as in the *muṣannaf* compilations,¹⁰¹ where it was recorded in special chapters dedicated to lists of Muḥammad's names and appellations. It was also included in the *tafsir* of 61:6, to illustrate the function of the name Aḥmad.¹⁰²

As for Ibn Sa'd, he recorded a similar prophetic statement on the authority of the Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (d. ca. AH 42–53).¹⁰³ This was accepted into several *muṣannaf* compilations,¹⁰⁴ and *tafsir* books.¹⁰⁵ More prophetic statements containing similar lists of names are found in sources other than Ibn

⁹⁷ The *isnād*: 'Āṣim ibn Bahdala (Kūfan d. AH 128) ← Zirr ibn Ḥubaysh (Kūfan d. AH 83) ← Hudhayfa. See Ibn Sa'd, I, 104; Tirmidhi, *Shamā'il*, 212; Bukhārī, *Tārīkh ṣaḡhīr*, I, 36; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 405; Dhahabī, *Sīra*, 10–11. See also *Kashf al-asīār*, III, no. 2379. Another *isnād*: Abū Bakr ibn 'Ayyāsh ← 'Āṣim ← Abū Wā'il ← Hudhayfa. See Tirmidhi, *Shamā'il*, 211; Baghawī, *Shamā'il*, I, no. 151. See also *Kashf al-asīār*, III, no. 2378. And see also Ibn Abī Shayba, XI, no. 11738.

⁹⁸ The *isnād*: Ja'far ibn Abī Wahshiyya (= Ibn Iyās, Baṣran d. AH 125) ← Nāfi' ← Jubayr. See Ibn Sa'd, I, 104; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 155; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 81, 83–84; Tabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1563; Dhahabī, *Sīra*, 9. See also Ṭayālsī, *Musnad*, no. 942. Another *isnād*: Ṣafwan ibn Sulaym (Medinan d. AH 132) ← Abū l-Ḥuwayrith ('Abd al-Rahmān ibn Mu'āwīya, Medinan d. AH 128) ← Nāfi' ibn Jubayr ← Jubayr ibn Mu't'im. See Tabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1564.

⁹⁹ *Mustadrak*, II, 604.

¹⁰⁰ See Ibn Shabba, II, 631; Tirmidhi, *Shamā'il*, 210–11; Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 1788 (III, 178–79); Humaydī, I, no. 555; Bukhārī, *Tārīkh ṣaḡhīr*, I, 35; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 80, 84; Abū Ya'la, XIII, no. 7395; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 152–54; Abū Nu'aym, *Dalā'il*, no. 19; Tabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, nos. 1520, 1522–28; Baghawī, *Shamā'il*, I, no. 150; Dhahabī, *Sīra*, 8.

¹⁰¹ See 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, X, no. 19657; Muslim, VII, 89 (43:124–25); Tirmidhi, *Tuhfa*, VIII, no. 2996; Ibn Abī Shayba, XI, no. 11737; Dārimī, II, no. 2775; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḡhīh*, XIV, no. 6313.

¹⁰² Bukhārī, *Ṣaḡhīh*, VI, 188 (65. Sūra 61); Wāḥidī, *Wasīl*, fol. 278b; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, IV, 359–60; Tabarī, *Majma'*, XXVIII, 61.

¹⁰³ The *isnād*: 'Amr ibn Murra ibn 'Abdallāh (Kūfan d. AH 118) ← Abū 'Ubayda ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Mas'ūd (Kūfan) ← Abū Mūsā. See Ibn Sa'd, I, 104–105. See also Ibn Bukayr, 142; Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 1788 (III, 178); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, IV, 404; Ibn Shabba, II, 632; Bukhārī, *Tārīkh ṣaḡhīr*, I, 36; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 156–57; Ṭahāwī, *Mushkil*, II, 51; Daylamī, *Firdaws*, I, no. 96; Tabarānī, *Ṣaḡhīr*, I, 80; Dhahabī, *Sīra*, 9.

¹⁰⁴ Ibn Abī Shayba, XI, no. 11739; Muslim, VII, 90 (43. *Bāb fī asmā'ihī*); *Mustadrak*, II, 604; Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab*, II, no. 1400.

¹⁰⁵ In *tafsīr* of 61:6: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, IV, 360. In *tafsīr* of 33:45: Qurṭubī, XIV, 200.

I. The Biblical Annunciation

Sa'd, and are traced back to the Companions Jābir ibn 'Abdallāh (Medinan d. AH 77),¹⁰⁶ Ibn 'Umar,¹⁰⁷ and Ibn 'Abbās.¹⁰⁸

Such wide circulation of prophetic self-attestation points to the extent of interest the Muslims took in the subject. In fact, their preoccupation with the names and epithets of their Prophet¹⁰⁹ was as compelling as their preoccupation with the names and epithets of God. In both cases they circulated traditions containing lists of those names, discussed the significance of each of them, and tried to systematize this field of knowledge by fixing the exact number of names. In one more version, a number is appended to the list. This is a tradition of the Meccan Companion Abū l-Ṭufayl 'Āmir ibn Wāḥila (d. AH 110)¹¹⁰ in which Muḥammad states: "I have with God ten names: Muḥammad, Aḥmad, Abū l-Qāsim, al-Fāṭih, al-Khātam, al-'Āqib, al-Ḥāshir, al-Māḥi." Abū l-Ṭufayl could only remember eight out of the ten. Another version of Abū l-Ṭufayl contains the total ten, including Yāsīn and Ṭāhā.¹¹¹

The idea of awarding prophets a fixed number of names is very early, and is already known in Jewish *midrash*, where it is stated that a prophet is called by ten names. The variety of names adduced (Emissary, Trustee, Servant, Messenger, Seer, Scout, Beholder, Angel, Prophet, Man of God), reflects the various aspects of the prophet's person and mission.¹¹²

But the number which the early Muslims seem to have preferred for their own prophet was five. This number appears in the *Sīra* of Ibn Ishāq in one more version of the above tradition of Zuhri—Muḥammad ibn Jubayr—Jubayr ibn Mu't'im. In the present version Muḥammad states: "I have five names: I am Muḥammad, Aḥmad, al-Māḥi—by whom God wipes off disbelief, al-'Āqib, al-Ḥāshir—in whose footsteps people will be resurrected."¹¹³ In one of the versions with the same *isnād*, the Prophet is said to have uttered this statement as a kind of battle cry against the polytheists of Quraysh.¹¹⁴ The tradition recurs in

¹⁰⁶ Tabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1750. The *isnād*: 'Ubaydallāh ibn 'Amr (Jazīran d. AH 180) ← 'Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Aqīl (Medinan d. AH 142) ← Jābir.

¹⁰⁷ Huwwārī, IV, 347 (in *tafsīr* of 61:6).

¹⁰⁸ The *isnād*: Salama ibn Nubayṭ (Kūfan) ← al-Daḥḥāk ibn Muzāḥim (Khurasānī, d. AH 102) ← Ibn 'Abbās. See Tabarānī, *Ṣaḡhīr*, I, 58–59; *idem*, *Awsaf*, III, no. 2301.

¹⁰⁹ For which see already André, *Person*, 272–76.

¹¹⁰ The *isnād*: Ismā'il ibn Ibrāhīm al-Taymī (Kūfan) ← Sayf ibn Wahb (Baṣran) ← Abū l-Ṭufayl. See Abū Nu'aym, *Dalā'il*, no. 20.

¹¹¹ See Daylamī, *Firdaws*, I, no. 97; Mālik/Zurqānī, V, 515; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, IV, 289; *idem*, *Khaṣā'is*, I, 191–92.

¹¹² *Bereshit Rabba*, XLIV; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, XXXIV.

¹¹³ Ibn Bukayr, 142. Cf. Ibn Sa'd, I, 105; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 154; Ṭahāwī, *Mushkil*, II, 50; Tabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, nos. 1521, 1529–30.

¹¹⁴ Tabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1532.

some *muṣannaf* compilations,¹¹⁵ as well as in *tafsīr* books.¹¹⁶ It was reportedly discussed in the court of the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik, who asked Jubayr's son, Nāfi', what was the number of names included in his father's tradition. Nāfi' claimed that they were six (including Khātam).¹¹⁷

However, the above versions of Jubayr's tradition where the list of names is unnumbered gained much wider circulation, which indicates that the Muslims chose not to limit the names of Muḥammad to any specific small number. In fact, they preferred to point to the largest number possible. Some of them stated that Muḥammad's names were 99, like those of God, while others maintained that they amounted to 300.¹¹⁸ Some Ṣūfīs stated that God and Muḥammad had 1000 names each.¹¹⁹

Later sources reveal an increased interest in gleaning from the Quran names and epithets of the Prophet for the purpose of attestation. Forms which were extracted verbatim from the scripture were systematically arranged in long lists.¹²⁰ Scholarly discussions were devoted to the significance of Muḥammad's Quranic names, and it was observed that some of them were derived from the names of God (Muḥammad and Aḥmad from Ḥamid, etc.).¹²¹ The idea of such divine derivation (Muḥammad from Maḥmūd) already appears in a poetic verse attributed to Muḥammad's poet, Ḥassān ibn Thābit.¹²² The same verse is ascribed to Abū Ṭalīb as well.¹²³

The issue of the number of Muḥammad's Quranic names was also tackled, and even assumed the form of a prophetic statement. The prophet is said to have declared: "I have seven names in the Quran: Muḥammad, Aḥmad, Yāsīn, Ṭāhā,

¹¹⁵ Mālik/Zurqānī, V, 510; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IV, 225 (61:17); Nasā'ī, *Kubrā*, VI, 489 (no. 11590 [82, Sūra 61:6]); Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab*, II, no. 1397.

¹¹⁶ In *tafsīr* of 61:6: Suyūṭī, *Diwān*, VI, 214. In *tafsīr* of 33:45: Qurṭubī, XIV, 200.

¹¹⁷ See Ibn Sa'd, I, 105; Bukhārī, *Tārīkh ṣaḥīḥ*, I, 36; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 156; Ṭahāwī, *Musḥkil*, II, 50; Dhahabī, *Sīra*, 9. See also *Mustadrak*, IV, 273-74; Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab*, II, no. 1398. This report was circulated with the *isnād*: Sa'd ibn Abī Hilāl (Egyptian d. AH 135) ← 'Uṭba ibn Muslim (Medinan) ← Nāfi' ibn Jubayr.

¹¹⁸ *Faṭḥ al-bārī*, VI, 406.

¹¹⁹ Ibn al-'Arabī, *Aḥkām*, III, 1546 (on Quran 33:45); *Faṭḥ al-bārī*, VI, 407.

¹²⁰ E.g. Khargūshī (MS Br. Lib.), fol. 73a-b; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 159; Tabarsī, *A'lām al-warā*, 15. And see on the role of these names in everyday Muslim life and in mystical thought, Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muḥammad is His Messenger: the Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (Chapel Hill, 1985), 105-22, 257-59.

¹²¹ Khafāji, *Nasīm*, II, 413-14.

¹²² Ḥassān, *Diwān*, 306 (no. 152). See also Māwardī, *Nukat*, V, 529. And see Andrae, *Person*, 274.

¹²³ Bukhārī, *Tārīkh ṣaḥīḥ*, I, 38; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 161; *Faṭḥ al-bārī*, VI, 404; Mālik/Zurqānī, V, 512.

Muddaththir, Muzzammil, 'Abdallāh."¹²⁴ Some writers maintained that the Quranic names were only five (Muḥammad, Aḥmad, 'Abdallāh, Ṭāhā, Yāsīn),¹²⁵ while others were able to transmit no less than 400 such names.¹²⁶

With Muḥammad's own self-attestation, which draws heavily on the Quran, the process of the Islamisation of his originally biblical attestation was completed.

¹²⁴ Khafāji, *Nasīm*, II, 392 (from al-Naqqāsh).

¹²⁵ Abū Zakariyyā, in Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, I, 159. See also Dhahabī, *Sīra*, 9-10.

¹²⁶ Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 130-31.

The Khadija-Waraqah Story

THE GOAL OF INITIATION and guidance is revelation. Already in the previous chapters reference has been made to traditions describing the actual beginning of Muhammad's prophetic revelations. We have seen that in some versions the event is linked to the opening of Muhammad's breast (Chapter 3). Some models of the same scene recur in the story of guidance (Chapter 4). The present chapter is dedicated to a more concentrated study of additional versions of the beginning of Muhammad's prophetic revelations. This moment has drawn the attention of numerous Islamicists, but all have tried to unveil the factual background of the story, not the textual history of the story itself.¹

I

The moment of first revelation, which is so crucial in stories about many prophets, is attached with no less importance when retold about Muhammad. It contains the usual components, such as visions of voices and light, startling appearance of a supernatural figure (mostly an angel), the inexperienced prophet's fear, address of the angel, etc. These elements were built into the private case of Muhammad, the prophet that emerged in Mecca. His story is set, of course, in a Meccan scene, and the plot revolves round two figures of his closest family—his first wife Khadija, and her cousin Waraqah ibn Nawfal, an Arabian Christian scholar. The latter is mentioned in the sources alongside Zayd ibn 'Amr and other *hanifs* who abandoned Meccan polytheism and searched for the true religion of Abraham.² His role links the story to the theme of biblical attestation (Chapter 1); his knowledge of the sacred scriptures enables him to assert that the first vision experienced by Muhammad is indeed a genuine prophetic one,

¹ See e.g. Nöldeke-Schwally, I, 74–89; Richard Bell, "Mohammed's Call", *The Muslim World* 24 (1934), 13–19; *idem*, "Muhammad's Visions", *The Muslim World* 24 (1934), 145–54; Frantz Buhl, *Das Leben Muhammads*, trans. Hans H. Schäder (Heidelberg, 1961), 134–38; Rudi Paret, *Mohammed und der Koran* (Stuttgart, 1966), 46–48; Theodor Lohmann, "Sure 96 und die Berufung Muhammads", *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientalforschung* 14 (1968), 249–302, 416–69; Watt, *M/Mecca*, 39–52; Rudolf Sellheim, "Muhammads erste Offenbarungserlebnis", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 10 (1987), 1–16.

² E.g. Ibn Hishām, I, 237–38.

and that Muhammad is indeed the prophet referred to in the biblical announcements. In fact, Waraqa plays the same role of attestation on an earlier occasion as well, just before Khadija decides to marry Muhammad. On that instance he recites some poetic verses in which he states his belief in the Prophet.³ Khadija's role in the story of revelation is to give the startled Muhammad moral assistance and provide the link between him and Waraqa, thus making it possible for the attestation to take place. Indeed, the meeting between the Prophet and Waraqa marks the culmination of the events described in the story.

The theme of revelation was adapted not only to local Arabian surroundings, but also to Quranic models. The belief that the Quranic scripture contains Muhammad's prophetic revelations made this document the most apt material for the literary shaping of the scene of his first prophetic visions. Various Quranic passages and ideas were used for the cultivation of the story, thus crediting it with Quranic authority. The actual Quranic process of revelation through an angel named Gabriel (Quran 2:97) was also fitted into the stories.

Let us begin with those traditions in which the process of "Quranisation" is already completed, then go back to those traditions in which the scene of revelation is still devoid of Quranic materials.

For the study of the "Quranised" versions we have to begin with the *muṣannaf* compilations. The story of the first revelation usually occurs in them under the heading of "The Beginning of Revelation". The story itself is available in various versions. In some of them the passage which the angel brings to Muhammad first is the entire Sūrat al-Fātiḥa (1). This *sūra* was chosen to represent Gabriel's first Quranic revelation for the simple reason that it is placed at the very beginning of the canon.⁴

The tradition about the revelation of Sūrat al-Fātiḥa was transmitted on the authority of the Kūfan Companion Abū Maysara 'Amr ibn Shurahbīl (d. AH 63). It has been recorded by Ibn Abī Shayba in the *Maghāzī* section of his compilation,⁵ and appears in the biographical sources as well.⁶ The story is that whenever Muhammad went out he would hear a call (*nida'*) addressing him: "Oh Muhammad!" This frightened him, and when he returned home he told Khadija that he feared he was losing his mind. She said: "Nay, God will never do this to you. I know you as an honest person; you deliver whatever is put in

³ *Ibid.*, I, 203–204. See also *Mustadrak*, II, 609–10.

⁴ There were other Quranic passages which were made part of Muhammad's first prophetic vision, but no detailed narratives are available; *al-Tin* (95): Halabī, I, 261 (from "one of the exegetes"); *al-Qalam* (68): *Faṭḥ al-bārī*, VIII, 521 (Mujāhid); Zurqānī, I, 222; Halabī, I, 244.

⁵ Ibn Abī Shayba, XIV, no. 18404. The *isnād*: Isrā'il ibn Yūnus ibn Abī Ishāq al-Sabī'i (Kūfan d. AH 160)–Abū Ishāq al-Sabī'i (Kūfan Shī'i d. AH 126–29)–Abū Maysara.

⁶ Ibn Bukayr, 132–33. See also Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 105–106; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, II, 158.

5. The Khadija–Waraqa Story

your safekeeping, and you do good unto the kindred." Khadija disclosed the Prophet's secret to Abū Bakr, who was Muhammad's drinking companion (*ṣadīq*) in the Jāhiliyya. Abū Bakr brought Muhammad to Waraqa ibn Nawfal, who advised Muhammad to go out again and not to run away, should he hear the voice call him. Muhammad followed his advice, and when he went out, he was indeed addressed once more. He answered the call, and the voice commanded him to recite the entire text of the *Fātiḥa*. Afterwards Muhammad returned to Waraqa and told him what had befallen him. Waraqa said: "Rejoice, rejoice, I hereby declare that you are the messenger about whom Jesus said he would succeed him, and whose name is Ahmad. I confess that you are Ahmad and that you are Muhammad. In a short while you will be summoned to wage war, and if am still alive, I will join in with you"

Apart from Khadija and Waraqa, who belong to the basic narrative framework, the event is also attested in this version by Abū Bakr. As is the case in so many traditions about the attestation in its Arabian sphere (Chapter 2), here again a Companion has been interpolated into the story for the purpose of promoting his own virtues (*faḍā'il*). Abū Bakr's name was added to the story of Muhammad's meeting with Waraqa, just as his name was linked to the meeting of the Prophet with Bahīrā.

Another element which does not form part of the basic narrative is the Quranic passage. The *Fātiḥa* was only secondarily built into the basic tale, and in fact, there are other versions of the same Khadija–Waraqa narrative framework in which the angel brings to Muhammad an altogether different Quranic passage, the first verses of Sūrat al-'Alaq (96).

The opening passage of this *sūra* reads:

*iqra' bi-smi rabbika....: "recite in the name of your Lord...."*⁷

This extract was chosen to represent the first Quranic revelation, because it is the only passage in the Quran where the imperative *iqra'*, "recite", opens an entire *sūra*. Therefore, the passage seemed applicable to the story of the first address of the angel, in which he commands the Prophet to start declaring the glory of his Lord.

The traditions in which the Khadija–Waraqa narrative contains the *iqra'* passage gained wider circulation than those with the *Fātiḥa*. In the section assigned to the beginning of Muhammad's prophethood in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-

⁷ On this passage, see e.g. Uri Rubin, "*Iqra' bi-smi rabbika*", *Israel Oriental Studies* 13 (1993), 213–30.

released me and said: 'Recite in the name of your Lord who created....' The Prophet repeated it, his heart palpitating with terror. Then he returned home to Khadija, saying: "Cover me [with cloths]" (*zammilāni, zammilāni*), so they covered him till he overcame his anxiety. He told Khadija what had taken place, and said: "I fear for myself." Khadija said: "God will never disgrace thee...."¹⁶ Then Khadija took him to her cousin Waraqa, who had become a Christian in the Jāhiliyya, wrote Hebrew, and used to copy passages from the Gospels (*Injil*) in Hebrew.... The Prophet told him about the things he had seen, and Waraqa said to him: "This is the *nāmūs*¹⁷ which God sent down unto Moses...."

In this tradition the *iqra'* passage has been fitted into the basic narrative by means of what we may call a "linking word". This is contained in Muḥammad's utterance: *mā aqra'*, which has been derived from the Quranic *iqra'*. This repetitive line of Muḥammad has converted the repetitive Quranic *iqra'* into a divine response to Muḥammad's indisposition to recite. An additional linking word is the request *zammilāni* uttered by Muḥammad. This links the events to the opening passage of Sūrat al-Muzzammil (73), where the title *al-muzzammil* signifies the Quranic prophet. However, the actual revelation of this Quranic passage is not stated in the story, the *iqra'* passage remaining the only Quranic revelation.

A parallel version of the Zuhri-*Urwa*-*Ā'isha* tradition appears in the biographical sources.¹⁸ This version, transmitted from al-Zuhri by the Jazīran al-Nu'mān ibn Rāshid, contains some additional details not included in the version of the *muṣannaf* compilations. Gabriel visits Muḥammad twice, the first interview ending with Muḥammad's flight to Khadija. Only during the second encounter is the *iqra'* passage revealed. But before this takes place, Muḥammad is so frightened that he tries to take his own life by throwing himself off a cliff. The angel stops him, saying: "Oh Muḥammad, I am Gabriel and you are the messenger of God." The absence of the attempted suicide in the former version of the Zuhri-*Urwa*-*Ā'isha* tradition seems to have made it more acceptable to the *muṣannaf* compilers.

Another tradition with an attempted suicide, which likewise remained outside the *muṣannaf* compilations, is that of the Meccan story-teller 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr (d. AH 68), who relates his tale to 'Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr (Meccan d. AH 72). The first part of the story is related in the third person. At the point

¹⁶ On the significance of Khadija's words in this story, see M.J. Kister, "God Will Never Disgrace Thee", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1965, 27-32.

¹⁷ On the significance of this term, see Bell, "Mohammed's Call", 15-16.

¹⁸ Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 1147 (II, 298-99).

Bukhārī (no. 1),⁸ there are traditions dealing with the ways in which revelations generally used to come to Muḥammad, as well as traditions about the very first Quranic revelation. The latter all bear the *iqra'* passage. The story with the same passage was recorded in the relevant section about Muḥammad's prophetic revelation in the rearranged compilation of Ibn Hibbān,⁹ and was included in the *Musnad* of Abū 'Awāna in the section devoted to the first stages of the Prophet's career.¹⁰ Even compilers who did not devote separate sections to the subject of the first revelation did not fail to record the story. It occurs in the section named *Maghāzī* in 'Abd al-Razzāq's compilation,¹¹ in the section named *Īmān* in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*,¹² in the section named *Siyar* in al-Bayhaqī's *Sunan*,¹³ etc.

The tradition with the *iqra'* passage which al-Bukhārī and Muslim selected is the one with the notable Medinan *isnād* of al-Zuhri (d. AH 124)-*Urwa* ibn al-Zubayr (d. AH 94)-*Ā'isha*. The assumption is, of course, that *Ā'isha* only heard the story when she came of age, i.e. long after the actual event. The specific version recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim was circulated by Zuhri's disciple 'Uqayl ibn Khālid (d. AH 141), as well as by the Egyptian Yūnus ibn Yazid (d. AH 159).¹⁴ Rich in Quranic imagery, the tradition runs as follows:

The first prophetic experience of the messenger of God was "a true dream in sleep" (*al-rū'yā al-ṣādiqa* [var. *al-ṣāliha*] *fī l-nawm*; cf. Quran 37:105, 48:27). Each time he dreamt, it would seem to him like the "light of dawn" (*ḡalaq al-ṣubḥ*; cf. Quran 6:96). Then he began to find pleasure in solitude. He used to retire to a cave in the mountain Hira', where he practiced *tahannuth*....¹⁵ When he was thus engaged in the cave of Hira', the angel came to him, saying: "Recite!" (*iqra'*). Muḥammad said: "I am not reciting" (*nā anā bi-qārī*). The [Prophet] said: "The angel seized me and gripped my body till I could bear it no longer. Then he released me and said: 'Recite'. I said: 'I am not reciting.' The angel seized me again and gripped my body till I could bear it no longer. Then he released me and said: 'Recite'. I said: 'I am not reciting.' The angel seized me for the third time and gripped my body till I could bear it no longer. Then he

⁸ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, I, 2-22.

⁹ Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, I, 216-19 (no. 33).

¹⁰ Abū 'Awāna, I, 110-12.

¹¹ 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, V, no. 9719.

¹² Muslim, I, 97-98.

¹³ Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, IX, 6.

¹⁴ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, I, 3-4 (*Bad' al-waḥy*, 1); Muslim, I, 97-98 (*Īmān, Bāb bad' al-waḥy*).

¹⁵ For which see M.J. Kister, "'Al-Tahannuth': an Inquiry into the Meaning of a Term", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 31 (1968), 223-36; Norman Calder, "*Hith, birt*....: an Inquiry into the Arabic Vocabulary of Vows", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 51 (1988), 214-39.

The Prophet said: "Oh Khadija, I hear a voice and see light, and I am afraid the demon has taken possession of me." She said: "God will not do such a thing to you, oh son of 'Abdallāh." Then she came to Waraqa ibn Nawfal and told him about this, and he said: "If he is telling the truth, then this is an angel (*nāmūs*) like the one of Moses. If I am still alive when he is sent as a prophet, I shall support him and help him and believe in him."

There is a similar tradition of Hishām ibn 'Urwa (d. AH 146) on the authority of his father 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr (d. AH 94).²⁴ It too knows only of a non-verbal vision, and runs as follows:

The Prophet said: "Oh Khadija, I hear a voice and see light, and I am afraid I have become a *kāhin*." She said: "God will not do such a thing to you, Oh son of 'Abdallāh. You tell the truth, deliver whatever is entrusted with you, and support your needy kin-dred."

These versions, in which no verbatim extract from the Quran is used to describe Muḥammad's first revelation, seem to contain only the basic Khadija-Waraqa narrative framework, with the universal elements of revelation; it is essentially independent of the Quranic concept of revelation, for the very notion that the Prophet saw light and heard voices is alien to the Quran. Nowhere in the scripture is there any reference to visions of light (*ḍaw'*), or to the hearing of a voice (*ṣawt*). Neither is there in the Quran any reference to a terrifying encounter with the angel which causes the Prophet a critical state of anxiety. The fear with which Muḥammad reacts to his first prophetic experience in the story seems to have its origin in biblical conventions of the terror and fright with which prophets and other human beings react to the appearance of God (e.g. Judges 6:22-23; 13:22; Isaiah 6:5). Only the actual words with which the Prophet expresses to his wife Khadija his fear for himself reflect Quranic themes, and this indirectly. He fears for his mental integrity, or that he has become a *kāhin*, etc. The Quran itself (52:29, 68:2, 69:42, 81:22) states that the prophet is neither a sorcerer (*kāhin*) nor a madman (*majinūn*).

The basic tale of Muḥammad's first revelations therefore accords with biblical rather than Quranic conventions, and the story was initially designed to meet apologetic needs. The scene of the beginning of prophetic revelations was of vital importance to the *vita* with which Muḥammad had to be endowed in order to match the prophets of the "People of the Book". But Quranic elements had soon to be fitted into the basic narrative in order to provide it with a more au-

²⁴ See Ibn Sa'd, I, 195.

where the *iqra'* passage is revealed, the narration shifts to Muḥammad himself, who carries on the story in the first person and mentions the attempted suicide. The tradition abounds in Quranic material. Apart from the *iqra'* passage, it contains the idea that revelation of the Quran began in the month of Ramaḍān (Quran 2:185), as implied in the statement that our episode took place during the same month. Moreover, the appearance of Gabriel is said to have taken place at night (*laylan*), which echoes the Quranic verses about *laylat al-Qadr* (97:1) and "the blessed night" (44:2), both indicating the time when the scripture was first sent down to the Quranic prophet. The tradition was preserved by Ibn Ishāq (d. AH 150), and is quoted from him in al-Ṭabarī's *Tārikh*.¹⁹ In the version of Ibn Hishām, Muḥammad's attempted suicide is expunged.²⁰

The traditions with the *iqra'* passage were also picked up by the Quran exegetes in their quest for the "occasions of revelation" (*asbāb al-nuzūl*). Thus, in the *Tafsīrs* of 'Abd al-Razzāq (d. AH 211) and al-Ṭabarī (d. AH 310), some of the above traditions are recorded in the exegesis of the *iqra'* passage.²¹ But al-ready before them, exegetes like Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. AH 150) were aware of the same traditions, stating that the *iqra'* passage was Muḥammad's first revelation.²²

II

There are other traditions with the Khadija-Waraqa narrative framework which only survived in the biographical sources. All of them occur in Ibn Sa'd, and their *isnāds* indicate that they were first put into circulation in the Hijāz (Mecca and Medina). All of them delineate the chain of events which led to Muḥammad's interview with Waraqa ibn Nawfal, but none of them refer to any specific Quranic revelation. All the traditions mention only non-verbal visions of voices and light. The fact that these traditions lack the essential Quranic allusions seems to have made them of no interest to the compilers of the *muṣannaf* collections. In themselves these versions preserve the sheer universal elements of revelation adapted to Arabian surroundings, but not yet to Quranic models.

One of these traditions is of the Meccan 'Ammār ibn Abī 'Ammār (d. ca. AH 105), who quotes Ibn 'Abbās:²³

¹⁹ The *isnād*: Ibn Ishāq ← Wāḥib ibn Kaysān (Meccan d. AH 127) ← 'Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr ← 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr. See Ṭabarī, *Tārikh*, I, 1150 (II, 300-301). Cf. Ibn Bukayr, 121; Fakihī, IV, 86-89 (no. 2420); Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, II, 148.

²⁰ Ibn Hishām, I, 253.

²¹ 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, II, 384-85; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXX, 161.

²² Muqātil, II, fol. 244b.

²³ Ibn Sa'd, I, 195. See also Ahmad, *Musnad*, I, 312; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, XII, no. 12839.

* * *

thoritative status. After all, the Quran itself was the main manifestation of Muḥammad's inspiration, therefore a proper story about his inspiration should have apt Quranic links. Such links are only noticeable in another tradition recorded by Ibn Sa'd. In this tradition the non-Quranic visions of voices and light are replaced by the appearance of the angel himself, whose Quranic name is mentioned explicitly. The tradition has the Median *isnād* of Dāwūd ibn al-Ḥuṣayn (d. AH 135) ← 'Ikrima (d. AH 105) ← Ibn 'Abbās, and reads:²⁵

When the Messenger of God was staying like this on the mountain Ajyād, he saw an angel against the horizon, throwing one leg over the other. He heard him say: "Oh Muḥammad, I am Gabriel; oh Muḥammad, I am Gabriel!" This frightened Muḥammad, and whenever he looked up at the sky he saw him again. He returned hurriedly to Khadija and told her what had befallen him, saying: "Oh Khadija, there is nothing I hate more than these idols and the *kāhins*, and I am afraid I have become a *kālin*." She said: "No, oh husband, do not say such things; God will never do such a thing to you. You support your needy kindred and tell the truth and deliver whatever is entrusted to you, and your morals are honourable." Then she went to Waraqa ibn Nawfal, this being her first visit to him, and told him what the messenger of God had told her. Waraqa said: "By God, your husband tells the truth; this is the beginning of prophethood. The great *nabi* has come to him. Tell him to think only good of himself."

The "horizon" (*ufuq*) against which the angel is seen is the very place where the Quran locates the angel (53:7, 81:23),²⁶ and Khadija's statement that the morals (*khuluq*) of Muḥammad are honourable seems to echo Quran 68:4.

But in spite of the more massive presence of Quranic materials in this version, the vision itself still lacks a verbatim Quranic extract. Gabriel merely utters some words of introduction in which he presents himself to Muḥammad. Only the versions with the verbatim Quranic revelations—Sūrat al-Fātiha, and especially the *iqra'* passage—could gain access into the *muṣannaf* compilations. Of all the versions of the Khadija-Waraqqa story, only they could best serve the aim of illustrating the beginning of Muḥammad's prophetic revelations in its most authoritative setting.

The motif of non-Quranic visions of voices and light is present not only in some versions of the Khadija-Waraqqa tale, but also in traditions designed to fix the chronology of Muḥammad's first years of prophethood. These are harmonising traditions which try to squeeze the non-Quranic visions and the proper Quranic revelations into one progressive sequence of events. One of the traditions of this kind is recorded in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim.²⁷ Here it is said that the Prophet remained in Mecca fifteen years, during seven of which he used to hear voices and see light, and in the course of the other eight years he was receiving the *waḥy*, i.e. the proper revelation of the Quran. In Medina he spent ten years. This tradition was circulated with the *isnād* of the Meccan 'Ammār ibn Abi 'Ammār (d. ca. AH 105) from Ibn 'Abbās.²⁸ Another tradition recorded by al-Balādhurī says that Gabriel appeared to Muḥammad on Monday, 17 Ramaḍān, on the mountain Hira', when the Prophet was 40 years old. The tradition adds that earlier on, the prophet already heard [voices] and saw [light].²⁹

It is noteworthy that in yet another group of traditions, the visions which precede the revelations administered by Gabriel are also said to have been prompted by an angel, thus being elevated from simple voices and light to the rank of prophetic revelations. In one tradition the name of the angel is Michael, which is known from the Quran (2:98). The tradition has the Iraqi *isnād* of Dāwūd ibn Abi Hind (Baṣran d. AH 139) ← 'Āmir al-Sha'bī (Kūfan d. AH 103). It says that Michael was put in charge of Muḥammad, and that for three years he initiated him to the "modalities" (*asbāb*) of prophethood. When the Prophet was 43, Gabriel took over the role of Michael: he brought him the Quranic revelations for ten years in Mecca, and for ten more years in Medina. The Prophet died at the age of 63. This tradition was recorded by 'Abd al-Razzāq in his *Muṣannaf* in the section *Janā'iz*, i.e. funeral rites.³⁰ This somewhat bizarre classification arises from the fact that Muḥammad's age at death is provided here. A similar tradition is found in Ibn Sa'd.³¹ Its *isnād* is identical to the Iraqi *isnād* of the tradition of al-Sha'bī about Michael, and the only difference is in the name of the angel who precedes Gabriel. This time he is Isrāfīl, not

²⁷ Muslim, VII, 89 (43, *Bāb kam aqāma l-nabiyy (s) bi-Makka wa-l-Madina*).

²⁸ See the same tradition also in Ibn Sa'd, I, 224; Alimad, *Musnad*, I, 266, 279, 294, 312; Tabarānī, *Kabīr*, XII, no. 12840; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, VII, 240.

²⁹ Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 104 (no. 188). The *isnād*: Abū Bakr ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Abi Sabra (d. AH 162) ← Ishāq ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Abi Farwa (d. AH 144) ← Abū Ja'far (the Imām Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Bāqir, d. AH 114).

³⁰ 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, III, no. 6785.

³¹ Ibn Sa'd, I, 191. See also Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 1249 (II, 387); Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, II, 132;

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Isfī'āb*, I, 36; Ibn Kathīr, *Biḍāya*, III, 4. See also Ya'qūbī, II, 23.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 194–95. See also Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 104 (no. 190).

²⁶ See Bell, "Mohammed's Call", 15.

Michael. Isrāfīl is not mentioned in the Quran, for which reason the version with his name seems to have been left outside the *muṣannaf* compilations. The compilers (in this case, 'Abd al-Razzāq) preferred the version with the name of the Qurānic Michael to that with the non-Qurānic Isrāfīl.

In fact, the version with Isrāfīl provoked the objection of several scholars. Ibn Sa'd relates that he mentioned the tradition about Isrāfīl to his master al-Wāqidi, and the latter responded: "The scholars of our town (i.e. Medina) do not know that Isrāfīl attended the Prophet. The scholars and the *sīra* experts say that once the revelation had been sent down to Muḥammad, no angel associated with him till he died except Gabriel."³² In al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*,³³ where another version of the same Iraqi tradition about Isrāfīl is recorded, al-Wāqidi himself inquires of his own Medinan masters about this, and they reject it. Thus, for a tradition about the prophetic inspiration of Muḥammad to be accepted by all scholars, it had to fit Qurānic modes of revelation. Since Michael is the only angel mentioned in the Quran besides Gabriel, only traditions with him were recognised as sound.

6

The Lapse of Revelation

(Fatrat al-wahy)

I

THE LINK BETWEEN GOD AND MAN through prophetic revelation may sometimes be interrupted, which causes the recipient of revelation a serious crisis. The Bible has some examples of such crisis caused by the departure of the spirit of God (e.g. I Samuel 16:14). This traumatic aspect of revelation also emerges in the life of Muḥammad. In his case it was turned into the anti-climax of his meeting with Waraqa. But the lapse of revelation takes place only to end with the resumption of revelation, which reaffirms the God-prophet link. This event provides another angle of the trial which the Prophet had to endure before being fully initiated into the prophetic office.

The traditions refer to the lapse of revelation as *fatrat al-wahy*, "the interval in the prophetic inspiration" (lit. "the cooling down of the prophetic inspiration"). The story of the interval deserves examination, because here the process of adaptation was again not entirely successful, due to some dogmatic problems that it caused.

Let us again begin with the *muṣannaf* compilations. Here another version of the Zuhri←'Urwā←'Ā'isha tradition of the Khadija-Waraqa story is recorded, and relates an extended chain of events. This version was circulated by the Baṣran *sīra* expert Ma'mar ibn Rāshid (d. AH 154). The interview with Waraqa is followed by the *fatrat al-wahy*, during which Muḥammad does not meet the angel. The absence of the angel gives Muḥammad a fresh cause for agony: this time he is not in a state of fear of the angel, but of yearning to meet him again. In the version of Ma'mar, when the *fatra* takes place Muḥammad is distressed and tries to end his life by throwing himself from a cliff. This is only prevented by the angel, who resumes his visits at the last moment, saying to the desperate Prophet: "Oh Muḥammad, you are truly the messenger of God." But the angel disappears again into another *fatra*, so Muḥammad repeats his attempt to take his own life, only to be saved once more by the reappearance of the angel with more encouraging words.

³² Ibn Sa'd, I, 191.
³³ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 1249 (II, 386-87).

¹ There are various opinions concerning how long this *fatra* lasted. See Suhaylī, *Rawḍ*, I, 281; Shāmi, II, 363-64; Mughulīy, fol. 115b-116a.