

THE QUR'ĀN AND ITS DISBELIEVERS

Muzaffar Iqbal

According to the majority Muslim opinion, the first revelation of the Qur'ān occurred when the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, was in retreat at the cave of Ḥīrā', some fifteen kilometers from the Ka'ba, the ancient House of God, built by the Prophets Ibrāhīm and his son Ismā'īl, upon them peace, approximately twenty-five hundred years prior to this event; the last verses of the Qur'ān were revealed in 632, just a few days before the death of the Prophet in Madīna, the oasis town to which he had migrated in 622.

During the twenty-three year period of the descent of the Qur'ān and ever since then, it has drawn two fundamental responses from humanity: (i) belief in its Divine authorship, which simultaneously entails belief in the veracity of the Messenger to whom it was revealed, and (ii) disbelief in its Divine authorship and consequently the denying the prophethood of Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace.

This paper explores, in outline, a variety of responses of those who felt compelled to refute the Qur'ān. Dividing these responses into three broad categories based on their methodological distinctions, it examines certain facets of (i) polemical works on the Qur'ān; (ii) works by the Orientalists; and (iii) the academic discourse on the Qur'ān. It also points out inherent links between these three categories and provides historical background to their emergence.

Keywords: The Qur'ān and its disbelievers; Jewish and Christian responses to the Qur'ān; Polemical works on the Qur'ān; Orientalism; neo-Orientalism; the Qur'ān and Orientalism; teaching of Islam in the Academy; academic discourse on the Qur'ān.

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Introduction

The first responses to the Qurʾān came from those who lived in Makka and its environs. At that time, most residents of Makka were either polytheists or atheists, but there was also a small group of *ḥunafāʾ*, the monotheists who were neither Jew nor Christian. Small pockets of Jewish or Christian tribes in northern and southwestern Arabia also became aware of the arrival of the new Prophet soon after the descent of the first revelations. During the twelve and a half year period between the commencement of revelation and the Prophet's migration (Hijra) to Madina (610- 622), less than 500 people accepted the Qurʾān as a Divine Book and Muḥammad as God's final Messenger.¹ Most of Prophet's own relatives, the leaders of the powerful tribe of Quraysh, rejected it. During these harsh twelve and a half years, the Makkan disbelievers accused the Prophet of fabricating the Qurʾān although he did not know how to read or write; they called him a poet (*shāʿir*) even though he had never composed poetry; a soothsayer (*kāhin*) even though he had never learned that dark art; and a liar (*kādhīb*) even though they themselves had given him the title of *al-Amīn*, the honest, the trustworthy.²

Those who disbelieved were deeply troubled by the message of the Qurʾān, which demanded that they give up worshipping idols and, instead, worship only one God—Allah—the Creator and the Supreme Sovereign, the infinitely Merciful, the most Compassionate. The Qurʾānic message was simple and clear: everything has been created by an All-Knowing, Wise, and Clement Creator; all that exists will one day come to an end following which there will be Resurrection and Reckoning; everyone will receive a judgment based on what they have earned through their beliefs and deeds. The Qurʾān demands that its immediate addressees, the inhabitants of Makka, must stop their malevolent practice of killing their newborn daughters, that should they

1. This estimate is based on the number of Muslims who migrated to Abyssinia in the fifth year of *nubuwwa* (16); those who left Makka for Abyssinia in the second hijrah to Abyssinia (82 or 83); and those from Yathrib who accepted Islam before the hijrah (that is, 12 men at the first 'Aqaba which took place in Dhū'l-Hijjah, the 12th year of *nubuwwa*, and 73 men and two women who accepted Islam at the second 'Aqaba, which took place in the month of Dhū'l-Hijjah in the 13th year of *nubuwwa*). There were 82, 83, or, according to some reports, 86 emigrants (*muhājir*) present at the battle of Badr; counting the few men from among the emigrants who did not participate in this first major battle and taking into consideration women, children and other non-combatants from, "less than 500" is a generous estimate. For a list of participants of Badr, as well as emigrants to Abyssinia, see Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-Nabawīyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1424/2004); hereinafter *Sīra*.

2. All of these accusations are mentioned in the Qurʾān along with Divine responses (cf. Q 69:4151).

deal justly with orphans, be kind to others, give charity, and treat the weak with respect and kindness. It invited them to reflect on their own creation and on the creation of the heavens and the earth, on the alternation of the day and the night, on the movement of the planets and stars, on the clouds carrying water and numerous other observable phenomenon of the physical cosmos in order to ascertain for themselves that this vast cosmos with all its complexity and interdependence could not have come into existence without a Creator and it could not exist without Him. It invited them to reflect on their own existence and its purpose. It asked profound questions about the human condition and provided eloquent responses to them. It warned disbelievers of a grave punishment in the Hereafter and gave glad tidings to the believers. For the disbelievers, the ultimate consequence of their disbelief was an everlasting abode of fire in the Hereafter. For the believers, there was the promise of an everlasting life of bliss, happiness and felicity.

Early Jewish and Christian Contacts

With his migration to Madina in the summer of 622, the Prophet and the first Muslim community came in direct contact with Banū Qaynuqā', Banū Naḍīr, and Banū Qurayzah—the three Jewish tribes then resident in the oasis—and, later, with the Arab Christians of Najrān, a city in southwestern Arabia near the frontier with Yemen who sent a delegation to Madina in the ninth year after hijrah and who engaged in a debate with the Prophet.³ The *sīra* literature has also preserved records of the Prophet's two trips to Syria before the commencement of revelation where he encountered curious Christian monks who recognized his Prophethood.⁴

One of the first things the Prophet did upon his arrival in Madina was to sign an agreement with the three Jewish tribes as well as with Banū Aws and Banū Khazraj—the two tribes of Helpers (al-Anṣār) who lived in Madina. This agreement—known as the Constitution of Madina (*Mithāq Madina*)—outlined the respective rights and duties of all parties.⁵ The geographical region of first impact of the Qurʾān expanded to include the entire Arabian Peninsula within the lifetime of the Prophet. The Qurʾān confirmed all previous revelations even as it pointed out that the followers of these earlier revelations had broken their covenant with God and had falsified their Scripture. It accorded a special status to the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*) despite their falsification (*tahrīf*) of the Scripture, and demanded that they accept the final revelation

3. This event is mentioned in all exegetical works in connection with the “Verses of *Mubāhalah*” in Sūrah *Āl ʿImrān*: 3:61-2.

4. *Sīra*, 121-23.

5. *Sīra*, 306-10; also see Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Prophet's Establishing a State and His Succession* (Islamabad: Pakistan Hijrah Council, 1408/1988).

being sent in the form of the Qurʾān. The historical evidence suggests that except for some individuals, who accepted the Qurʾān as the final revelation and Prophet Muḥammad as the last Messenger, most of the Jews and Christians who came to know about the Qurʾān during the lifetime of the Prophet refused to accept it as a revealed Book. This refusal by Jews and Christians to accept Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, as the final Messenger in the line of Messengers sent by God to guide humanity—a chain that included their own Prophets, Mūsā and ʿĪsā, upon them peace—in time led to the emergence of various Jewish and Christian polemical works against the Prophet the Qurʾān. This literature can be divided into three periods: (I) polemical works, written mostly by Christians, until the emergence of Orientalism; (II) works by Orientalists; (III) post-nineteenth century academic writings on the Qurʾān.

I. Polemical Works on the Qurʾān

The earliest known polemical work is by John of Damascus (d. ca. 749), whose *Liber de haeresibus* exerted a great deal of influence on the subsequent works written by Christians. He is perhaps the first polemical writer to use material from the Qurʾān itself for his refutation of the Qurʾān and the prophethood of the Prophet. Several aspects of the specific content of his polemical work relating to charges of forgery and the moral conduct of the Prophet, especially in reference to his marriage with Zaynab bt. Jahsh, the former wife of his adopted son Zayd, would become a permanent theme of numerous subsequent works both in the East as well as in the West down to our own times.

Other early works include the little-known *Tafrīd al-Qurʾān* (*Refutation of the Qurʾān*) by the Nestorian scribe Abū Nūḥ al-Anbārī written in the third/ninth century; ʿAbd al-Masīḥ b. Ishāq al-Kindī's enormously influential *Risālat ʿAbd al-Masīḥ al-Kindī ilā ʿAbdallāh al-Hāshimī* (*Apology of al-Kindī*),⁶ which alleged that a Christian monk by the name of Sergius, alias Nestorius, had helped the Prophet in the composition of the Qurʾān. This was a variation on a theme which first appeared during the Makkan period of the Prophet. It was the Quraysh—and not the Jews or Christians—who first accused the

6. Hartmut Bobzin, "Pre-1800 Preoccupations" in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, (Leiden: Brill, 2001-2006), IV, 235-53 at 236a. I have relied heavily on Bobzin's excellent survey for the construction of the account of the reception of the Qurʾān in the Latin West in this section. His article is one of the few entries in *The Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*; hereinafter *EQ*, which are not methodologically flawed and ideologically tainted. For details these flaws and other aspects of *EQ*, see my two reviews: "The Qurʾān, Orientalism, and the *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*," *Journal of Qurʾānic Research and Studies*, 3 (2008) 5, 5-45; and "Western Academia and the Qurʾān: Some Enduring Prejudices," *The Muslim World Book Review*, 30 (2009) 1, 6-18.

Prophet of receiving instructions from a Christian who lived in Makka.⁷ After the death of its author, two Jews, ‘Abdallāh b. Salām and Ka‘b al-Aḥbār, added material to the *Risāla* from Jewish sources.

With the advent of the Crusades in 1095, Christian responses to the Qurʾān gained a new dimension. What started as an appeal by Pope Urban II to liberate Jerusalem and the Holy Land from Muslims brought thousands of knights and peasants from Western Europe into direct contact with Muslims. Jerusalem was captured by Crusaders in July 1099, whereupon they established the Kingdom of Jerusalem and other Crusader states. In 1187, Muslims regained Jerusalem under the leadership of Ṣalāḥuddīn Ayyūbī, but Crusades continued for another eighty-five years, with the ninth and last Crusade ending in 1272. A consequence of this religiously motivated armed confrontation was the rise of a new kind of interest in Islam among influential Christian circles. The imperative, “know thy enemy,” produced the will, procedures, and resources to tap into the primary sources of Islam.

One of the key Church figures to answer the call of this new imperative was the abbot of the Benedictine abbey of Cluny, Peter the Venerable (1092-1156). He forcefully advocated the cause of studying Islam from its own sources and himself travelled to Spain in 1142, where he gathered a team of translators to produce Latin translations of a number of key Arabic texts. This “momentous event in the intellectual history of Europe”⁸ produced the *Corpus Toletanum*, a collection of texts which included the aforementioned *Risāla* of al-Kindī and,

7. Ibn Kathīr reports on the authority of Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Yassār, with additions by Ibn Hishām: “The Messenger of Allah often used to sit near al-Marwah, near the booth of a young Christian called Jabr, a slave of the Banū al-Ḥaḍramī, and [the Quraysh] used to say: ‘the one who teaches Muḥammad most of what he brings is Jabr the Christian, the slave of Banū al-Ḥaḍramī.’ Then Allah, the Most High, revealed in reference to their saying: ‘We well know that they say, ‘only a mortal teaches him;’ [whereas] the tongue of him at whom they hint is foreign and this [Qurʾān] is in clear Arabic.’” ‘Imād al-Dīn Ismā‘īl b. ‘Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-‘Azīm*, ed. Sāmī b. Muḥammad al-Salāma, 8 vols, 2nd edition, (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayba lil-Nashr wal-Tawzī‘, 1425/2004), sub Q 16:103. Several centuries later, Nöldeke was to advance his theory about this Christian slave on the basis of etymology of his name. He was of the opinion that Jabr was an Abyssinian slave because the word Jabr comes from Gabrū or Gabr^{جبر}, which means “slave of” in Ethiopian; see *Der Islam*, v (1914), 163. Nöldeke repeated this charge of forgery in more general terms in his influential essay on the Qurʾān, “The Koran”, originally published in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th ed. vol. xvi, 597 sqq, and later included in his *Sketches from Eastern History*, translated by John Sutherland Black and revised by the author (Beirut: Khayats, 1963), 21-59.

8. James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 14.

most importantly, the first-ever Latin translation of the Qurʾān with the telling title of *Lex Mahumet pseudoprophete* (*The Law of the Pseudo Prophet Mahumet*). Abbot Peter was able to persuade Robert of Ketton (d. ca. 1160), an Englishman known for his translations of Arabic scientific works,⁹ “to set aside for a time his principal study of astronomy and geometry in order to join a team of translators that Peter was forming to produce Latin versions of the Qurʾān and other Arabic works that might be useful to Latin Christians attempting to convert Muslims.”¹⁰ The translation project was completed in June or July 1143, establishing “a landmark in Islamic Studies”, for with this translation, “the West had for the first time an instrument for the serious study of Islam.”¹¹

This Latin translation of the Qurʾān “consisted of one hundred folios in the earliest manuscript and 180 pages in an early-modern printed edition. After finishing his work for Peter the Venerable, Robert went back to his scientific translations and died at an unknown date. Meanwhile his Latin Qurʾān was becoming a best-seller...all the evidence suggests that it was the standard version of the Qurʾān for European readers from the time of its translation down to the eighteenth century,”¹² even though it was severely criticized as early as the fifteenth century for its inexact paraphrasing of the original.¹³

Abbot Peter himself used the newly translated material for his writings on Islam, of which the most important are the *Summa totius heresis Saracenorum* (*The Summary of the Entire Heresy of the Saracens*) and the *Liber contra sectam sive heresim Saracenorum* (*The Refutation of the Sect or Heresy of the Saracens*). Peter’s understanding of Islam as a Christian heresy approaching paganism was to influence the field of Qurʾānic studies in Europe for quite some time, but his more immediate purpose, as he explained to St. Bernard, was “following the custom of the Fathers, who not once in their time, not in the slightest, refrained from silencing heresy (as I shall call it), but rather resisted it with all the strength of their faith, and showed it, through writings and arguments, to be detestable and damnable.”¹⁴ Reprinted in Basel in 1543 and 1550, Robert’s

9. His best known translation of Arabic scientific works is al-Khwarazmī’s *al-Kitāb al-mukhtaṣar fī ḥisāb al-jabr wa’l-muqābalah*, which he translated as *Liber algebrae et Almuçabola*.

10. Thomas E. Burman, “Tafsīr and Translation: Traditional Arabic Qurʾān Exegesis and the Latin Qurʾāns of Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo” in *Speculum*, 73 (July 1998) 3, 703-32, at 704; hereinafter Burman (1998).

11. Richard William Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 37.

12. Burman (1998), 704.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Giles Constable, *Letters of Peter the Venerable*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), Letter 111.

inexact Latin translation became the basis of the first Italian (1547), German (1616; 1623) and Dutch (1641) translations.

In 1210-11, Mark of Toledo (d. after 1234), another translator of Arabic scientific works, produced the second complete Latin translation of the Qurʾān. He was lured into undertaking this project by Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, the archbishop of Toledo (1208-47) “as part of the mobilization of arms and opinion preceding the campaign of Las Navas de Tolosa that would see the Christian kingdoms of Spain destroy the Almohad army and set the stage for the Christian conquests of the following four decades.”¹⁵ Both Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo used extensive Islamic exegetical literature—including the monumental *tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī (838-923)—as well *aḥādīth* for their translations, glosses, and comments; this brought into Latin new source material and imparted a ring of authenticity to the translated works. Since their works were undertaken to “prove the heresy of the Saracens”, the questions they raised about the Qurʾān became the standard stock of numerous subsequent works written in Europe.

I (a). The Rise of Philological Studies of the Qurʾān

In 1312, the Church Council of Vienne announced the establishment of chairs in Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac at Paris, Oxford, Bologna, Avignon, and Salamanca. This formally inaugurated the study of the Orient—Orientalism—an effort that would gather momentum over the course of the next several centuries and evolve into a vast academic discipline to study the history, languages, religions, geography, and culture of the Oriental people. At the time of the establishment of these chairs, there was a growing awareness in the Church circles that language was the key to understand Islam, which was considered an enemy for it posed challenges to Christian religious beliefs. The increased interest in Arabic, however, did not produce any difference in the writings on the Qurʾān and the previous trends of polemical literature continued during the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. One of the most important works of this period is *Contra legem sarracenorum* by the Florentine Dominican Ricoldo da Monte Croce (d. ca. 1320). Its importance is due to Ricoldo’s systematic summation of all previous polemical works by Christian writers. Ricoldo’s work is a storehouse of allegations which continue to echo in Western scholarship even after seven centuries. These have been summed up as:

15. Burman (1998), 706-7. Also important is Burman’s “quarrel” with the “scholarly consensus that Robert’s paraphrased Latin version is quite unreliable despite its wide-ranging influence” and his efforts to rehabilitate Robert’s reputation “on the basis of Robert’s extensive use of glosses, explanations, and other exegetical material drawn from one or several Arabic Qurʾānic *tafsīrs* or commentaries.”

The Qurʾān is nothing but a mixture of older Christian heresies that had already been denounced by earlier church authorities. Because it is predicted by neither the Hebrew Bible nor the New Testament, the Qurʾān cannot be accepted as divine law; for the rest, the Qurʾān refers in some cases specifically to the Bible as an authority. Similarly, the theory of the textual falsification (*tahrīf*) cannot be accepted, the Qurʾān does not correspond with any “holy” writing; above all, its many fantastic stories make it impossible to accept a divine origin for the Qurʾān. Some ethical concepts would contradict basic philosophical convictions. Above all, however, the Qurʾān contains numerous internal contradictions, apart from its entirely obvious lack of order. Furthermore, the Qurʾān was not witnessed by a miracle. The Qurʾān goes against reason; this is apparent both in Muḥammad’s life, which is branded as immoral, as well as in some blasphemous views on divine topics. The Qurʾān preaches force and allows injustice. The history of the text of the Qurʾān ultimately proves the uncertainty of the text.¹⁶

Three hundred and sixty-eight years after the launching of the Crusades, a second event affected the field of Qurʾānic studies in a substantial manner: the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453. It ended the Byzantine empire and sent shock waves throughout Europe which was quick to perceive the new Turkish threat. During the course of the fifteenth century, a number of Christian theologians were to produce works on the “Bible of the Turks”, the old *Corpus Toletanum* received a new lease of life and the linguistic sphere of polemical works expanded to embrace several European languages such as French, Italian, Dutch, English and German.

With the rapid advancement of printing in Europe during the sixteenth century, several attempts were made to print the Qurʾān in Arabic for wider availability. It was now possible for the writers of the polemics to see their works on the “Bible of the Turks” printed in various parts of Europe. As the century advanced, there appeared the first discernable silhouette of a Europe-wide philological activity concerned with the text and message of the Qurʾān. This century also saw the emergence of several works on Arabic grammar.

Those who produced works of some importance on the Qurʾān during this century were, however, still Christian theologians whose stated goal was to refute the Qurʾān. At the same time, internal discord of the Church, now

16. Hartmut Bobzin, “Pre-1800 Preoccupations”, 241b-242a. Translated into Greek in 1385 and into Spanish in 1502, the original was reprinted in 1500 in Seville as *Improbatio Alcorani*, in Toledo in 1502, and in Venice in 1607 under a different title, *Propugnaculum fidei*. The Greek version was reissued in a defective Latin translation in Rome in 1506 under the title *Confutatio Alcorani seulegis Sarcenorum*. It was on the basis of this text that Martin Luther (d. 1546) composed his *Verlegung des Alcoran Bruder Richardi*.

fully ripe with the emergence of various Protestant factions, split the efforts directed against the Qurʾān on two broad lines. The first used the Qurʾān and Islam to attack the new “heresy of the Lutherans,” the second attacked Islam and the Qurʾān to forcefully express its own disputed Christianity in the face of allegations from the older Church establishment. Guillaume Postel (d. 1581), who had published *Grammatica arabica* (Paris ca. 1539), for instance, published a polemical work *Alcorani seu legis Mahometi et Evangelistarum concordiac Liber* (*The book of agreement between the Qurʾān and the law of Mohammed and the Protestant*) in 1543, drawing parallels between Islam and the Lutherans.¹⁷ The century also saw the publication of several new translations of various parts of the Qurʾān. The Zurich theologian Theodor Bibliander (1504-64) attempted to revise the “very corrupted” translation of Robert of Ketton, though his own knowledge of Arabic was insufficient to undertake the task.

I (b). The Seventeenth Century Watershed

The efforts to produce scholars with command of Arabic bore fruit in the seventeenth century which laid the foundation of philological study of the Qurʾān in Europe. Several new translations of the Qurʾān appeared in different European languages along with many partial translations, glosses, and commentaries.¹⁸ Leiden, Hamburg, Wittenberg, and Padua rapidly emerged as centers of philological studies. Two works of this century stand out. The first was published in 1694 by pastor Abraham Hinckelmann (1652-95), who was trained as an Orientalist at Wittenberg during 1668-72, and the second in 1698 by the Italian priest Ludovico Marracci (d. 1700).¹⁹ Hinckelmann did not produce a translation of the Qurʾān; rather, in his extensive Latin introduction to the Arabic text of the Qurʾān, which he called *Al-Coranus s. lex Islamitica Muhammedis, filii, Abdallae pseudoprophatae*, he insisted that all Christian theologians should read the Qurʾān in its original language, because most of it could be understood by an average theologian who knows Arabic. Hinckelmann’s goal was to make the original available to his Arabist colleagues, but

17. Hartmut Bobzin, “Pre-1800 Preoccupations”, 245a.

18. These include the 1616 German translation, *Alcoranus Mahometicus* from Italian by S. Schweigger, printed at Nuremberg; the 1647 French translation, *L’Alcoran de Mahomet from Arabic* by Andre du Ryer, the third from the original Arabic directly into a European language, the first two being to Latin (1100s, 1200s); the 1649 English translation, *L’Alcoran de Mahomet* from the French by Alexander Ross; the 1696 Dutch translation, *Mahomets Alkoran* translated from the French by Hendrik Jan Glasemaker; the third Latin translation from Arabic published in Padua in 1698, with extensive annotation, and preceded by a biography of the Prophet and a discussion of Islamic doctrines by Father Louis Maracci.

19. Hartmut Bobzin, “Pre-1800 Preoccupations”, 247a.

he did not follow any known numbering order, and began his work with the invocation 'I.N.J.C.', *In Nomine Jesu Christi*'. The work was so flawed that he had to produce an extensive errata-list. His work, nevertheless, remained the most widely used Arabic text of the Qur^ʿān in Europe until the appearance of Gustav Flügel's edition in 1834.²⁰

Ludovico Marracci's *Alcorani textus universus Ex correctioribus Arabum exemplaribus summa fide, atque pulcherrimis characteribus sdescriptus* followed his 1691 four-volume refutation of the Qur^ʿān, *Prodromus in refutationem Alcorani*, and contained a Latin translation, a description of the life of the Prophet and an introduction to the Qur^ʿān in addition to the entire text of the *Prodromus*. The Arabic text of the Qur^ʿān was not presented in a continuous form, but was chopped into various topical sections, marking the first European attempt to treat the Qur^ʿān not as an integral text but as a document which could be taken apart and recompiled according to one's own desire and need. Marracci's 1691 refutation of the Qur^ʿān, appended to this work, is in the now familiar format of Christian polemics which attempt to show that Prophet Muḥammad was not a true prophet, and that the Qur^ʿān is not Divine revelation. The refutation claims that the beliefs of the "sect of the Hagarene" are blasphemous. By that time the Vatican Library had collected sufficient original Arabic works to provide scholars material for their refutations and Marracci made full use of these for his extensive comments, thereby earning the descriptive "the first Christian scholar who actually composed a 'commentary' to the text of the Qur^ʿān."²¹

In 1721, Marracci's work moved beyond Catholic circles through a reprint in a handy Octavo edition published in Leipzig by Protestant theologian Christian Reineccius (d. 1752); an Arabic translation followed, this time by a Maronite from Aleppo by the name of Ya'qūb Arūṭīn (d. after 1738).

The philological studies of the Qur^ʿān also gave rise to the first efforts to produce research tools for the Qur^ʿān. William Bedwell (d. 1632), for instance, produced an English translation and an index of the Qur^ʿān with the suggestive title *Mohammedis imposturae: that is, A discovery of the manifold forgeries, falshoods, and horrible impieties of the blasphemous seducer Mohammed with a demonstration of the insufficiencie of his law, contained in the cursed Alkoran; deliuered in a conference had betweene two Mohametans, in their returne from Mecha. Written long since in Arabicke, and now done into English by William Bedwell. Whereunto is annexed the Arabian trudgman, interpreting certaine Arabicke termes used by historians: together with an index of the chapters of the Alkoran, for the vnderstanding of the confutations of that booke* (1615);²² his Index, issued as a supplement, was called

20. Ibid., 247b.

21. Ibid., 248a.

22. Originally "Imprinted by Richard Field dwelling in great Wood-streete" in

Index assuratarum Muhammedici Alkorani. That is a catalogue of the chapters of the Turkish Alkoran, as they are named in the Arabicke, and knone to the Musslemans: Together with their sevrall interpretations.

The seventeenth-century work that was to considerably change the direction of European study of the Qurʾān was, however, not a translation or refutation of the Qurʾān, but a work of history—*Specimen historiae Arabum*—by the first Oxford Arabist Edward Pococke (d. 1691).²³ Using a textual fragment from the world history of Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286), Pococke provided new information about pre-Islamic Arabs to his European colleagues, thus widening the scope of Qurʾānic studies by bringing it into the field of the history of religion. This work had direct bearing on the emergence of George Sale’s (d. 1736) *Preliminary Discourse* appended to his *The Koran: commonly called the Alkoran of Mohammed translated into English from the original Arabic with explanatory notes and commentaries*.²⁴ Sale used Pococke’s work extensively and based his translation on Marracci’s edition of the Qurʾān. The seventeenth century was a watershed for European study of the Qurʾān for several reasons. Some of these need to be listed for a better understanding of the emerging field of Qurʾānic studies in European universities.

Until then, European civilization had looked toward Islamic civilization with a certain respect, awe, and expectation. It has been plausibly argued that the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries were actually the “golden age of Arabic studies in Europe.”²⁵ This intense activity rested on the appearance of a spirited community of scholars eager to pursue the study of Islam, Muslims, their languages and literature. They were interested in producing learned editions of original works in Arabic and not merely translations as had been done during the Middle Ages. Several professorships of Arabic were established in various European universities, scores of scholars made their way East in search of instruction in languages spoken in the Muslim world or for manuscripts—thousands of which made their way to Europe—and various publishers as well as individual scholars acquired Arabic type in anticipation of a signifi-

1615 and now available on the worldwide web through “Early English Books Online” <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>>.

23. The complete title is: *Specimen historiae Arabum, sive, Gregorii Abul Farajii Malatiensis microform : de origine & moribus Arabum succincta narratio, in linguam Latinam conversa, notisque è probatissimis apud ipsos auctoribus, fufiùs illustrate* (Oxonix: Excudebat H. Hall, impensis Humph. Robinson, 1650), reprinted in 1806.

24. Reprinted several times throughout Europe and the United States and still in use.

25. M. Feingold, “Decline and Fall: Arabic Science in Seventeenth Century England” in *Tradition, Transmission, Transformation*, ed. Ragep and Ragep (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 441-69.

cant publication enterprise.²⁶ There was a marked difference in this renewed interest—which lasted for almost a century, between 1580 and 1680—and the translation movement of the previous centuries. This time around, the focus was on producing Arabic texts along with commentaries, annotations, and translations. Through patronage, internal politics of the European academic community, and necessity, the study of Arabic became an indispensable component of late Renaissance humanism who applied it to gain access to classical texts preserved, and enriched, by Muslim scholars.

The dignity conferred upon Arabic by the greatest scholars of the day further boosted its status. Joseph Scaliger, Isaac Casaubon, and G. J. Vossius helped transform Arabic into an integral and esteemed part of erudition, both through the work they carried out and their instrumentality in stimulating scholars like Peter Kirsten and Thomas Erpenius to apply themselves to its life-long pursuit. Indirectly, the stature of these scholars and the public support they garnered helped fire the spirits of a whole generation of scholars who made Arabic their domain of expertise, as well as galvanized patrons to endow professorships, support individual scholars, and amass important collections of manuscripts.²⁷

Sir Henry Savile, a highly respected mathematician and Greek scholar of seventeenth century England who wished to restore the purity and originality of the mathematical sciences through philology and the new tools of textual analysis for the recovery and improved understanding of classical texts, established geometry and astronomy chairs at Oxford in 1619 and considered the knowledge of the Islamic scientific tradition an indispensable tool for these chairs. In a public lecture delivered at Oxford in 1620, he cited the examples of Jābir ibn Aflaḥ, al-Baṭṭānī, and Thābit ibn Qurra as instances of Arab mathematicians who had gone beyond Greek mathematicians.²⁸ The aforementioned Edward Pococke (1604-1691), the first Laudian professor of Arabic, noted that John Bainbridge, the first Savilian professor of astronomy, had stated that “Brahe and Kepler had scarcely improved on the observations made by the Arabs centuries earlier.”²⁹

This reappraisal of Islamic tradition of learning reversed European attitudes within the lifetime of these patrons and enthusiasts of “Arabic learning”. It was primarily the achievements of the European Scientific Revolution which decreased the value of the previously coveted scientific works from the Islamic scientific tradition; European scientists and philosophers now started

26. *Ibid.*, 441.

27. *Ibid.*, 441-2.

28. *Ibid.*, 446.

29. *Ibid.*, 447, n. 9.

to look down upon these works as inferior to their own achievements in fields as diverse as geography, chemistry, astronomy, physics, and even mathematics and medicine. This change in attitude toward Islamic scientific tradition was accompanied by an emerging sense of superiority in the overall attitude of European scholars and scientists toward Islamic civilization. By the time William Laud, James Usher, John Selden, and Gerard Langbaine died, they had already lost their interest in Islamic scientific tradition and their students showed nothing but scorn toward what their teachers had found. In sciences like geography, this was partly due to the more accurate information that European sailors had gathered by then. John Greaves, for example, griped to Pococke in 1646 that the drudgery he had put himself through the editing of “Abulfeda’s *Geography*” was simply not worthy of his time and energy. “To speak the truth, those maps, which shall be made out of Abulfeda, will not be so exact, as I did expect; as I have found by comparing some of them with our modern and best charts.”³⁰

This change in attitude was not specific to Islamic scientific tradition; rather, it hearkened back to an older animosity toward Islam and its Prophet. Already in the fourteenth century, Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) had placed Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, and his cousin and son-in-law, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, may Allah be pleased with him, among a group of “sowers of scandal and schism” who are depicted in mutilated and bloodied form, with their bodies ripped open with entrails spilling out, and bemoaning: “See how Mohomet is deformed and torn! In front of me, and weeping, Ali walks, his face cleft from his chin up to the crown”.³¹ While he had placed Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd in Limbo—in the First Circle of Hell, with the greatest non-Christian thinkers, Electra, Aeneas, Caesar, Aristotle, Plato, Orpheus, Cicero where they live without hope of seeing God, in perpetual desire, though not in torment.³²

Certain fundamental changes in European attitude toward the religion in general deeply affected the field of Qur’ānic studies from the seventeenth century onwards. This change in attitude towards religion has its roots in the Renaissance—an era during which Europe had attempted to rebuild its civilization based on the foundation of an imagined Greek antiquity rather than its Christian tradition. The triumph of early modern science, with its characteristic distaste for established authority and scholastic learning, elevated the experimental sciences to such an extent that observation and experiments

30. Ibid., 448.

31. Alighieri Dante, *The Divine Comedy, Inferno*, trans. Mark Musa (New York: Penguin, 1971), 326, Canto XXVIII: 31-33.

32. Ibid., 101, Canto IV: 142-144.

became the sole means to knowledge.³³ The propagandists of the new science were quick to single out Arabs as harbingers of scholasticism whose learning was derivative and irrelevant in the light of their own accomplishments. This attitude was to solidify with the appearance of Francis Bacon. “The sciences which we possess come for the most part from the Greeks,” he wrote in *Novum Organum*, “for what has been added by Roman, Arabic, or later writers is not much nor of much importance; and whatever it is, it is built on the foundations of Greek discoveries.”³⁴ This verdict was to be repeated in all fields of learning until it was engraved on the European conscience. Almost every historian of science and philosopher from this period has left a testimony of disrespect. Even men like Ibn Sīnā, whose *Qānūn* was considered the summa of medical sciences in the European universities, were not spared.³⁵ The criticism spread from the scientific realm to general learning and from the examination of achievements and limitations in various sciences to Islam, Muslims, and Arabs. By the turn of the seventeenth century, these opinions could be articulated in broad terms. “It is certain that the Arabs were not a learned People when they over-spread Asia,” wrote William Wottons (1666-1727), “so that when afterwards they translated the *Grecian* Learning into their own Language, they had very little of their own, which was not taken from those Fountains.”³⁶

I (c). Prelude to Nineteenth-Century Orientalism

A far more important factor than the specific European appraisal of Islamic civilization and learning was the change in European attitude toward religion in general. This change may not have been apparent to the men and women who lived in the seventeenth century, but those who lived in the next century—the so-called century of Enlightenment and the Age of Reason—could explicitly call religion a thing of the past. This century of three significant

33. Scientific and philosophical works of Francis Bacon (1561–1626), Galileo Galilei (1564–642), Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), William Harvey (1578–1657), René Descartes (1596–1650), Antonie van Leeuwenhoek (1632–1723), Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), Baruch Spinoza, (1632–677), John Locke (1632–1704), Isaac Newton (1642–1727), and Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716) all contributed toward the emerging sea-change.

34. John M. Robertson (ed.), *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon* (London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1905), 275; Bacon adds in a footnote: “M. Chasles appears to have shown this with respect to the principle of position in arithmetic. We derive it, according to him, not from the Hindoos or Arabs, but from the Greeks” n. 37.

35. Richard, L. Greaves, *The Puritan Revolution and Educational Thought* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 90.

36. William Wottons, *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (London: Printed by J. Leake for Buck, 1694), 140.

revolutions—the French (1789–1799), American (1775–1783) and the Industrial (roughly dated between 1760 and 1830)—did not advance the field of Qurʾānic studies in any significant way. There were several partial translations of the Qurʾān in various European languages and Andreas Acoluthus (d. 1704), a Breslau Orientalist, launched an ambitious project of producing multi-language edition of the Qurʾān along with the Arabic text, but the project did not move beyond the first sūrah.³⁷

Perhaps the most important work of the century was the previously-mentioned English translation of the Qurʾān by George Sale (1697–1736) and his *Preliminary Discourse* published in 1734.³⁸ What the century did accomplish, however, was a clear movement of the field of Qurʾānic studies away from the Church circles into the heart of Orientalism—a shift that produced a significant result in the next century which marks a clear divide between the polemical works of the preceding era and the so-called scientific Orientalism which was given a definitive and new shape in this century by a number of Orientalists including Gustav Weil (1808–89), Abraham Geiger (1810–74), Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930), Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921), Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936), Otto Pretzl (1893–1941), and Richard Bell (1876–1952).

II. The Qurʾān and Orientalism

What these Orientalists accomplished during the course of the nineteenth century was actually based on the work of preceding generations (which included men like André du Ryer (b. 1580), who published a French translation of the Qurʾān in 1647 and George Sale, but they affected a break with their predecessors by distancing themselves from the overt polemical discourse of their works and by inventing a new methodology to study Islam and its Scripture “scientifically.” The Orientalists of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century challenged the views of their peers while simultaneously building a new edifice by rarefaction of the older tradition of Jewish and Christian writings on the Qurʾān—a tradition reaching back to the polemical literature of the late medieval era. This process of rarefaction removed the open hatred and the polemic veneer of that tradition and recast it into a new academic mould, without, however, yielding anything from the two basic premises upon which that tradition was built: the first being its claim that the Qurʾān is not an authentic

37. Hartmut Bobzin, “Pre-1800 Preoccupations”, 249b–50a.

38. The original edition is available at several websites in scanned versions; the cover page contains detailed information in eighteenth century style: George Sale, Gent., *The Koran, commonly called The Alcoran of Mohammed, Translated into English immediately from the Original Arabic; with Explanatory Notes, taken from the most approved Commentators. To which is prefixed A Preliminary Discourse*. London: C. Ackers in St. John’s Street, for J. Wilcox at Virgil’s Head overagainst the New Church in the Strand. MDCCLXXXIV.

revelation, and the second being its refusal to accept Prophet Muḥammad as a true Messenger of God.

What the nineteenth-century Orientalists accomplished can be likened to the demolition of the centuries-old castle of polemical literature against the Prophet of Islam and the Qurʾān, and the reconstruction of a new building on the same foundations—a building, furthermore, that used all but the most tainted material from the demolished edifice. The tainted portion was for the most part discarded, and in its stead, a plethora of new devices was invented to give the new building a scientific look.

The achievements of the nineteenth century Orientalists in the field of Qurʾānic studies cannot be explored in isolation of other currents of that century which brought almost the entire Muslim world under colonial rule. In order to understand the construction of the monumental new framework for the study of Islam in general and the Qurʾān in particular, one must ask questions beyond the field: what were the intellectual, political, and social conditions of the Muslim world at the time when the nineteenth century Orientalists were at work, charting new territory and opening new directions for the study of Islam and its Scripture? If we accept that all texts are historically situated, then what is the relationship between the texts produced by the Orientalists of the nineteenth century and European Imperialism of that century? Furthermore, is there any relationship between the new methods these Orientalists applied to Islamic studies and the European outlook on religion in general that emerged during this century? Obviously, these and related questions broaden the scope of the investigation of Qurʾānic studies in the West during that formative century. A fuller investigation will have to include other fields and disciplines such as political science, sociology, anthropology, and history of religions. Even though these questions cannot be explored here, it is, nevertheless, important to raise them in a study of this kind, for they can yield a better understanding of the nineteenth-century works on the Qurʾān as well as the current phase of Qurʾānic studies in the contemporary Academy.

The nineteenth century saw significant inventions and discoveries and the use of physics, chemistry, biology, electricity, and metallurgy for rapid technological innovations which would transform the way people lived, giving rise to a second Industrial Revolution fuelled by electricity, steel, and petroleum. The century further witnessed the discovery of the last remaining landmasses of Earth, accurate and detailed mapping of almost the entire Earth except the extreme zones of the Arctic and Antarctic, and, in 1869, the Suez Canal opened, linking the Mediterranean to the Red Sea. The century was marked by the rise of numerous “isms” which rapidly eroded the centuries-old authority of religion in Europe—a process that would come to a definite stage with Charles Darwin’s 1859 *The Origin of Species*, which introduced the idea of evo-

lution by natural selection.

It was a century in which Europe considered Islam to be a spent force in world affairs. The great mutation of the Muslim world, which had started in the eighteenth century, reached an apex in this century as European armies marched from one success to another in their rapid colonization of the Muslim world. Numerous events of the nineteenth century emboldened Orientalists, adventurers, and spies of all kinds—men who ventured into the ancient cities of the Muslim world to gain a first-hand experience of Islam and Muslims. It was a time when any white man or woman arriving in Cairo, Lahore, Istanbul, or Damascus could strike terror in the hearts of the natives, as Marshall Hodgson observed in his account of European world hegemony.³⁹

There is hardly a need to reestablish the fact that there are direct connections between what Orientalists did and the European colonialism of the Muslim world after Edward Said's groundbreaking work.⁴⁰ It would be sufficient to simply enumerate major events and dates that reconfigured the intellectual, political, economic, and social landscape of the Muslim world between the late eighteenth and early twentieth century. This record of defeats, dismemberment, and disintegration can easily provide support to what Edward Said has so clearly established, but, more importantly, it can also show why European scholars, thinkers, and political leaders could treat Islam and its Scripture with such contempt; they were dealing with a people who were not only defeated on the battle field but also in their mind; a phenomena clearly observable in the attitude of Muslim elite toward Europe and things European. This servitude to Europe and European civilization was not limited to the political sphere; rather, it penetrated all fields of life and learning. The 1798 landing of the armies of French Republic under the command of Napoleon Bonaparte in the Ottoman province of Egypt not only brought Egypt under French rule, it simultaneously established superiority of things European to such an extent that henceforth even the so-called revivalist movements and the most nationalistic thinkers and political leaders would remain indebted to Europe and European thought in their efforts to reform their lands and people, their cultures, and even their minds. Men like Muhammad Ali of Egypt would attempt to modernize Egypt (1805–1848) on a European pattern. European hegemony would directly affect all fields of learning and scholarship, including Qur'anic exegetical literature.

Following the Napoleonic Wars, when the British Empire became the world's leading power, controlling one quarter of the world's population and

39. Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 3 volumes. See in particular the chapter "European World Hegemony: The Nineteenth Century", 223-248.

40. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

one third of the land area, it simultaneously gave rise to thinkers and reformers like Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) who considered all previous exegetical works on the Qurʾān

to be nothing but rubbish, for all I found in them was baseless and unauthentic traditions and fables taken from the Jewish sources. When I studied books of the principles of *tafsīr* with the hope that they would surely provide clues to the principles of the Qurʾānic interpretation based on the Qurʾān itself or would be otherwise so sound that no one could object to them, but in them I found nothing but statements that the Qurʾān contains knowledge of such and such nature...then I pondered over the Qurʾān itself to understand the foundational principles of its composition and as far as I could grasp, I found no contradiction between these principles and the modern knowledge...then I decided to write a *tafsīr* of the Qurʾān which is now complete up to *Sūrat al-Naḥl*.⁴¹

There is a direct relationship between what the nineteenth-century Orientalists thought of Islam and its Scripture and the thought of certain influential Westernized Muslims like Sayyid Ahmad Khan; both saw Islam in need of reform. Ahmad Khan wanted to re-interpret Islam in order to prove that it is compatible with modern science and rationalism. “We need a modern *‘ilm al-Kalām*,” he said in a speech delivered at Lahore in 1884, “by which we should either refute the doctrines of modern sciences or show that they are in conformity with the articles of Islamic faith.”⁴² Others who advocated similar ideas during the nineteenth century include Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnīsī (d. 1889), Rifā‘ah al-Taḥṭāwī (d. 1871), Jamal al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1897) and Muḥammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905).⁴³

The relationships between the new methods and approaches of the nineteenth century Orientalists toward the Qurʾān and that of the nineteenth century Muslim reformers become more meaningful if we keep in mind the direct connection between the foundation of this so-called scientific study of Islam in the nineteenth century by the Orientalists and the Jewish Enlight-

41. Mawlanā Muḥammad Ismāʿīl Panipatī (ed.), *Maqalāt-e Sir Sayyid* (Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqi-e Adab, 1963), vol. 2, 199-200.

42. *Maqalāt-e Sir Sayyid* (Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqi-e Adab, 1963), vol. 2, 199-200.

43. Muslim exegetical literature of the nineteenth century also witness the emergence of a new kind of exegesis, the so-called scientific exegesis (*tafsīr ‘ilmī*), under the impact of modern science developed in Europe. In 1880, an Egyptian physician, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Iskandrānī, published one such *tafsīr* in Cairo. This was followed by another work of the same kind, though not a *tafsīr*: *Tibyān al-Asrār al-Rabbāniyya fī l-Nabāt wa l-Ma‘ādīn wa l-Khawwāṣ al-Haywāniyya* (Damascus: n. 1300/1883). For the emergence of scientific *tafsīr* in this century, see Muzaffar Iqbal, *Islam and Science* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), chapters 9 and 10.

enment, or the Haskala, of the latter half of the eighteenth century which provided tools, techniques, and methods to the Orientalists who laid a new foundation of Islamic studies.

Most of the nineteenth century Orientalists who laid the foundation of the scientific study of Islam were trained in European universities, especially those at Berlin, Leipzig, Leiden, and Vienna, where a powerful intellectual movement against the traditional view of religion and religious texts had gained so much momentum that men like David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874) were vehemently rejecting the Gospels as historical truth and instead insisting on seeing them as myths created by human fears and psychological disorders. The concept of revelation had already been rejected by European thought in the preceding century and the Bible had lost its status as a revealed Book; they were merely historical documents written by human beings at some point in history and they recorded real or imaginary events. But now it was time to take the next step and view the text of the Scripture not merely as historical documents recording events, but as complex and multilayered accounts originating in history but reflecting ideas, fears, suppositions, superstitions, and intellectual, emotional, and psychological troubles of their authors, all meshed and blended with historical events to such an extent that they could not be considered sound as historical sources. Instead of truth, they were approximations of truth; instead of narratives, they were myths constructed around narratives of questionable veracity. The dominant current behind this movement was of the Age of Reason, which judged everything on the basis of Reason and experimental proof and rejected the supra-rational and supernatural as myths.

Under the influence of this movement, whose most powerful representative was the Tübingen School led by Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860), the very foundation of traditional faith was eroding and a new edifice was being constructed on the basis of reason and science in which ethics, understood in a secular manner, rather than religion, was to become the centerpiece. With every major thinker trying to come up with a novel idea, Biblical studies were quickly turning into an unending saga of sensational views, questioning everything possible. The ultimate consequence of this approach to religion, history, and historical texts was to doubt everything that did not fit the scientific understanding,⁴⁴ but the first task of this movement was to demolish the

44. For example, the historical method employed in the eighteenth century by Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768) and William Wrede (1859-1906) in the nineteenth, rejected religious data (such as miracles) and, instead, attempted to reconstruct the life of Jesus on historical data alone. Reimarus accused Bible authors of fraud; D.F. Strauss' biography of Jesus explained gospel miracles as natural events misunderstood and misrepresented; and Ernest Renan portrayed Jesus simply as a human person. See Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the*

received beliefs and dismember the Bible. European scholars of Biblical, Arabic, and Syriac studies such as Abraham Geiger (1810-74), Friedrich Dieterici (1821-1903), Theodor Haarbrück (d. 1880), Emil Rödiger (1821-74), and J. G. Wetzstein (1815-1905)—most of whom were to become Goldziher's teachers—were doing exactly that.

First Christianity and then Judaism received such blows at the hands of this new movement that the entire traditional foundation of these religions collapsed. Obsession with reform may have been triggered by the moribund state of these religions, but its result was the total destruction of the very foundation upon which religious truths were established. Having destroyed the Old Jerusalem, these scholars began to construct a new Jerusalem by casting aside the received form of religious truths, beliefs and rituals. Their attempts at construction of a new edifice was ostensibly for the expressed goal of the revitalization of spirituality, but these attempts were purely at a human plane; thus everything beyond the human domain was discarded. Abraham Geiger, for instance, attempted to revitalize Judaism by rejecting the received dogmas and rituals and constructing, instead, a new truth on the basis of reason and rationality. He advocated critical analysis of sources, and since he believed all texts to be human creations, it was valid for him and others to take what was relevant in these texts and cast out what had become irrelevant to their age. In short, this new movement was to utterly destroy the sanctity of all texts by making them all too human.

With this movement firmly established, all that Nöldeke, Goldziher, and other Orientalists who appeared on the academic scene in the second half of the nineteenth century, had to do was to apply to the Qurʾān and the Prophet the principles and methods of critical analysis which their peers had already applied to the Bible and Biblical Prophets. The path was, in fact, already opened for them by Abraham Geiger and his generation, for already in 1832, when Nöldeke was only four and Goldziher had not yet born, Geiger had written a prize essay in Latin (now better known in its 1833 German translation) under the guidance of Gustav Flügel (1788-1861), *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* which “caused something of a stir”.⁴⁵

Jew of Nazareth (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995); Gregory A. Boyd, *Cynic Sage or Son of God: Recovering the Real Jesus in an Age of Revisionist Replies* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books/SP Publications, 1995); Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993); Robert B. Strimple, *The Modern Search for the Real Jesus: An Introductory Survey to the Historical Roots of Gospels Criticism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1995); D.M. Baillie, *God Was in Christ: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973, reprint. 1956).

45. Martin Kramer, *The Jewish Discovery*, 11.

II (a). The Qurʾān and the Nineteenth-Century Orientalism

Out of all the Orientalists of the nineteenth century credited with laying the new foundation of Islamic studies, two stand out: Theodore Nöldeke (1836-1930) and Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921). Their work is considered as foundational and transformative in the history of Western studies on Islam in general and the Qurʾān in particular. The mould they wrought was so firm that

until about the 1970s, academic discussion of the Qurʾān and how it has been treated in traditional Muslim scholarship took place largely within boundaries which had been established by men such as Theodor Nöldeke and Ignaz Goldziher in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The imposing scholarship of these founders of Islamic Studies as a field of scientific enquiry set the agenda for subsequent researchers.⁴⁶

This is by no means an isolated example of homage paid to Goldziher and Nöldeke; there is a general scholarly consensus in the Academy that these two men are the godfathers of academic studies on Islam in general and the Qurʾān in particular: “Goldziher’s publications command a topical breadth that few contemporary scholars could hope to equal,” claimed McAuliffe in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qurʾān*. “None of his works, however, has had more lasting value than his lectures on the history and varieties of Qurʾānic (*sic*) interpretation. Contemporary work on this subject continues to cite this seminal study and it remains an active part of the scholarly conversation. For breadth and acuity it has yet to be superseded.”⁴⁷ The later scholarship will call Goldziher the “Shaykh” of Islamics,⁴⁸ scholars will talk of his seven month long trip to the “Orient” as his *Rihla* and even as his *Hajj* and *hijra*.⁴⁹

46. G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (eds.), *Approaches to the Qurʾān* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), viii.

47. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Qurʾān*, 10. Goldziher’s work to which reference is made is I. Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden: Brill, 1920, reprinted 1970).

48. Raphael Patai, *Ignaz Goldziher and His Oriental Diary: A Translation and Psychological Portrait* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 56; hereinafter *Diary*; for counter arguments and for an attempt to resuscitate Goldziher, see “Ignaz Goldziher and the Question Concerning Orientalism” in Hamid Dabashi, *Post-Orientalism: Knowledge and Power in Time of Terror* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2009), and Dabashi’s “Introduction” to the new edition of Goldziher’s *Muslim Studies* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2006).

49. Lawrence I. Conrad, “The Pilgrim from Pest: Goldziher’s Study Tour to the Near East (1873-1874)” in Ian Richard Netton (ed.), *Golden Roads: Migration, Pilgrimage and Travel in Mediaeval and Modern Islam* (Richmond: Curzon Press Ltd. 1993), 110-159.

While this debt to Goldziher, and to a lesser extent to Nöldeke, is widely recognized, even by those who have contested some of his conclusions,⁵⁰ the reasons for their enormous influence are often glossed over. What was it that they actually did to create a new mould for Islamic studies? Specifically what did Goldziher accomplish to gain this broad respect and appreciation from subsequent generations? How did he actually become the founder of academic scholarship on Islam? These questions are seldom asked,⁵¹ but answers are always assumed to be implicitly present and the matter-of-fact statements just keep repeating: he founded the modern scientific study of Islam; he brought to Islamic studies the insights of Biblical scholars such as Abraham Geiger (1810-1874), “who insisted that all religious texts were human productions, decisively determined by the historical contexts that generated them. Goldziher took this insight into Islamic studies.”⁵²

In all these works Goldziher applied the same methodology that he had learned ultimately from Strauss, Bauer, and the Tübingen school, appreciated as relevant to his own liberal way of thinking as a result of his exposure to Geiger, and first advocated and applied himself in his critique of Renan. The method he espoused, and which he was the first to apply systematically to the study of Islam on such a broad-ranging scale, viewed texts not as depositories of mere facts that research should ferret out and line up one after another, but as sources in which one could discern the stages of

50. Dimitri Gutas, for instance, has posed serious challenge to some of Goldziher's ideas about “Islamic orthodoxy” in the context of Islamic scientific tradition in his *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society* (London: Routledge, 1998). But despite these rather rare challenges to his authoritative oeuvre, Goldziher remains a broadly acknowledged master of the academic study of Islam. Though he was not honored in his native Hungary during his lifetime, “contemporary scholars abroad regarded Goldziher as the founder of a new branch of learning, the study of Islam. It has since been established that he was not just the founder of a new branch of learning but its greatest contributor ever, whose world-fame, acquired a century ago, has not subsided. On the contrary!” Róbert Simon, *Ignác Goldziher: His Life and Scholarship as Reflected in his Works and Correspondence* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1986), 11. The first chapter of Simon's poorly edited book provides a detailed overview of the appreciation Goldziher received during life and since then.

51. Seldom, but not never. See, for instance, Lawrence I. Conrad, “Ignaz Goldziher on Ernest Renan: From Orientalist Philology to the Study of Islam,” in Martin Kramer (ed.), *The Jewish Discovery of Islam: Studies in Honor of Bernard Lewis* (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 1999), 137-80, where Conrad explores this theme in the context of Goldziher's critique of Ernest Renan.

52. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*, 10.

transformation through which a community based on a common religious vision had passed as it struggled to come to terms with a host of new situations and problems. By careful and critical analysis of these sources, one could extrapolate important new insights on such process of development not only in religious thought, but in literature, social perceptions, and politics as well.⁵³

That Goldziher did this—and much more—is unquestionable, but why did his application of the tools and methods of the nineteenth century Biblical studies to Islam strike such a receptive chord? What were the intellectual, political, and social conditions of the Muslim world at the time when his work turned the attention of Western scholarship on Islam in new directions and what relationship did these new directions have to the subsequent reconfiguration of the Muslim world and the emergence of a new global order? If we accept the now fully-entrenched and broadly espoused view of the Academy that all texts are historically situated, then what is the relationship between Goldziher and his generation's works on Islam and the nineteenth century Imperialism?⁵⁴

Furthermore, since Goldziher remains a highly influential scholar almost a century after his death, is there any relationship between the new methods he applied to Islamic studies and the current phase of Western understanding of Islam and Muslims on the one hand, and the role of the Academy in the shaping of this understanding? In addition, it would be important to inquire about the relationship between what Goldziher did to Islamic studies and the post-Goldziherian currents in Western attitudes toward religion in general and Islam in particular; Goldziher's continuing relevance and importance signifies rather important links in these areas.

Obviously, these and related questions can be better explored if we keep in view the background to the emergence of the “Goldziher phenomena”, which,

53. Lawrence I. Conrad, “Ignaz Goldziher on Ernest Renan: From Orientalist Philology to the Study of Islam”, 162.

54. Of course, this question can be easily extended to the contemporary works on Islam being produced by the Academy and the very real-life events such as the falling of twin towers, the pulverization of mountains and caves in remote regions of Afghanistan by B-52 bombers, and pre-emptive invasions and occupation of Muslim lands by Western armies, because each event brings scores of academic experts on Islam and Muslims to millions of television screens. What role do these neo-Orientalists play in the making of the image of the Qurʾān, the Prophet of Islam, and Muslims? In fact, “everything about the study of Islam today remains drenched in political expediency and pressure,” as M. M. al-Azami has pointed out in his magisterial *The History of the Qurʾānic Text: From Revelation to Compilation—A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments*, 2nd edition (Riyad: Azami Publishing House, 2008), 362.

for the lack of a better term, can be called Goldziherism for this term fits well with hundreds of other “isms” which were invented during the nineteenth century. Goldziher also helped in many ways to highlight the works of his elderly colleague, Theodor Nöldeke (1836-1930), whose studies on the Qurʾān were to become less influential in time, but who held a commanding position in Western scholarship until the 1960s. Theodor Nöldeke had burst on the field of Orientalism with a prize-winning French essay on the Qurʾān in a competition held by the French Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in 1857. Nöldeke published an expanded German version as *Geschichte des Korans* in 1860 at Göttingen. Subsequently, three other Orientalists further expanded the 1860 edition.⁵⁵ This study was to become a landmark event in the history of Orientalism and it continues to be quoted as “the classic” work on the Qurʾān.⁵⁶

55. Richard Bell paid glowing tribute to this venture: “The subsequent history of Nöldeke’s book is itself a veritable saga. In 1898 the publisher suggested a second edition; and as Nöldeke himself could not contemplate this, the task was entrusted to a pupil, Friedrich Schwally. Schwally took up the task with traditional German thoroughness; but because of the thoroughness and for various other reasons the publication of the second edition was spread out over many years. The first volume, dealing with the origin of the Qurʾān, eventually appeared at Leipzig in 1909; and the second, on ‘the collection of the Qurʾān’, in 1919. Schwally, however, died in February 1919, after virtually completing the manuscript, and it had to be seen through the press by two colleagues. Schwally had also done no more than preliminary work for a third volume on the history of the text, but his successor at Königsberg, Gotthelf Bergsträsser, agreed to make himself responsible for the volume. Two sections of the volume (about two-thirds of the whole) were published in 1926 and 1929. A further quantity of important material had come to light by this time and delayed the third section. Next Bergsträsser died unexpectedly in 1933; and it fell to yet another scholar, Otto Pretzl, to bring the work to completion in 1938, sixty-eight years after the first edition and forty years after the first suggestion of a second edition. It is truly a remarkable work of scholarly cooperation, and deservedly maintains its position as the standard treatment of the subject, even though some parts of it now require revision.” W. M. Watt and Richard Bell, *Introduction to the Qurʾān: Bell’s Introduction to the Qurʾān completely revised and enlarged by W. Montgomery Watt* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), 175-76. For the original work, see Theodor Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Korāns*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Dietrichsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1938).

56. For example, see Estelle Whelan, “Forgotten Witness: Evidence for the Early Codification Of the Qurʾān” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118 (1998) 1-14. Some of Nöldeke’s studies are included in *The Origins of The Koran: Classic Essays on Islam’s Holy Book* edited by Ibn Warraq. Several of his essays first appeared in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and his long article on the Qurʾān, with some others, was republished in a volume

II (b). Background to the Appearance of Goldziherism

Goldziher appeared on the intellectual horizon of the Western studies on Islam at a time when most of the Muslim world was under colonial rule and Islam was considered a spent force—the nineteenth century. Born at the mid-century mark (June 22, 1850), Goldziher grew up with the consciousness of unchallenged and unchallengeable European hegemony over the Muslim world. The eighteenth century, which had witnessed the triumph of Humanism, was already behind him. Voltaire (1694–1778), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Alexander Pope (1688–1744), David Hume (1722–1776) and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) had already paved the way for the replacement of the “superstitions” that they thought religion was with “scientifically sound reason”. The French Revolution beginning in 1789 with the removal of the absolute monarchy of the Bourbons and the system of aristocratic privileges and ending with Napoleon’s overthrow of the Directory and seizure of power in 1799, was also not a localized event that happened in France; it had tremendous impact on the rest of the world. When Napoleon arrived in Egypt in 1798, he was accompanied by a number of scientists who would find, among other things, the Rosetta Stone⁵⁷ in the Nile Delta in 1799, which would prove to be the key to deciphering the Egyptian hieroglyphs. Napoleon’s arrival in Egypt was symptomatic of a major transformation of the relationship between Muslims and Europe as well as of the European attitude toward Islam. Napoleon’s arrival in the Islamic heartland crystallized the “catching up syndrome” that had already made its appearance all over the Muslim world. By the time Goldziher made his initial mark as a young scholar, this syndrome had already produced a huge inferiority complex in the Muslim mind with regard to all things European. The rapid loss of political power in many regions of the traditional lands of Islam during the early decades of the nineteenth century further intensified this servile disposition. Henceforth, any adventurous European could arrive in the Muslim lands and strike terror in the heart of its populace. Any Orientalist could treat the

variously called *Oriental Sketches* and *Sketches from Eastern History*. The articles dealing with Persia were republished in a German volume, *Aufsätze zur persischen Geschichte* (Leipzig, 1887).

57. The stone bears a decree of the Egyptian priesthood in 199 BC. The script was written in three columns; the first was hieroglyphs; the second, demotic, a late form of ancient cursive Egyptian script, and the third Greek. Everyone, including Napoleon, understood the importance of the stone. Despite the state of war between France and England, Napoleon ordered plaster copies of the stone to be sent to scholars all over Europe but the defeat of his armies meant that the stone ended up in the British Museum, where it remains to this day.

most sacred texts of Islam with impunity.⁵⁸

Goldziher and his generation were particularly well-placed for recasting the entire edifice of Islamic studies for more than one reason. This generation emerged shortly after the “romantic enthusiasm for high Islam”,⁵⁹ particularly strong among the German-speaking Jews of central Europe, had passed its apex; they could now move on to “scientific study” of Islam. Their scholarly lives fell in the so-called golden age of Orientalism (1873-1919).⁶⁰ This generation had the financial means—primarily due to the patronage of the newly arisen liberal political leadership in Europe—,⁶¹ as well as the political clout and protection offered to them by those in high places to actually embark on adventurous trips to the “Orient” and, thereby, gain first-hand experience of living Islam as well as languages spoken in the Muslim world.⁶² This was

58. The oft-quoted lines of Heinrich Heine’s play, *Almansor* (published in 1823) come to mind. The exchange is between the eponymous hero Almansor and his servant Hassan:

Almansor: We heard that Ximenes the Terrible
in Granada, in the middle of the market-place
—my tongue refuses to say it!—cast the Koran
into the flames of a burning pyre!
Hassan: That was only a prelude; where they burn books
They will, in the end, burn human beings too.
(quoted from Martin Kramer, *Jewish Discovery*, 5).

59. Kramer’s apt phrase “romantic enthusiasm for high Islam” captures the essence of this attitude. “It manifested itself most famously in the work of the poet and essayist Heinrich Heine (1797-1856). Heine, like Victor Hugo, never set foot in the East, but like Hugo he found it the ideal space for his imagination.” Martin Kramer (ed.), *The Jewish Discovery of Islam*, 4.
60. The first International Congress of the Orientalists was convened in Paris in 1873; this was followed by sixteen others up to World War I. Only four Congresses were held after World War I. In 1973, the Congress held in Paris decided to change its name from the International Congress of Orientalists to the International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa, marking a new beginning.
61. Most of them belonged to poor families and had to rely on benefactors for survival.
62. For instance, King Oscar II of Sweden patronized the Eighth International Congress of Orientalists convened in Stockholm in 1889, he also presented the Congress’ Gold Medal to Ignaz Goldziher in the same Congress. See also: Rosane Rocher, “British Orientalism in the Eighteenth Century: The Dialectics of Knowledge and Government” in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (eds.), *Orientalism and the Colonial Predicament* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 215-49; for a broader survey of criticism of Orientalism, see Alexander Lyon Macfie (ed.), *Orientalism: A Reader* (New York: NYU Press, 2000); one of the first major critiques of Orientalism was written by Anwar Abdel-

a huge step forward from the limited direct exposure which all the previous generations of Orientalists had to Islam and Muslims.⁶³ It is no wonder that the nineteenth century witnessed an unprecedented rise in the number of missionaries arriving in Muslim lands, as well as Orientalist masqueraders embarking on hazardous journeys into the very heart of Islam: Goldziher's patron and main benefactor Arminius Vámbéry went to Istanbul in 1857; in 1863, he disguised himself as a dervish ("Rashid Effendi") and visited Khiva, Bukhara, Samarkand, and Herat;⁶⁴ Hurgronje arrived in Jeddah on August 28, 1884, publicly proclaimed *shahādah* and entered Makka on January 21, 1885;⁶⁵ Gustav Weil (1808-89) spent more than four years in Cairo (1931-53), teaching French at the new Egyptian medical school established by Muhammad Ali Pasha (r. 1805-49), while he perfected his Arabic and learned Persian and Turkish; and on September 15, 1873, Goldziher himself departed from

Malek, an Egyptian philosopher at Sorbonne, in his article, "Orientalism in Crisis" in *Diogenes* 44 (Winter 1963), 104-12; another important early contribution was by the Palestinian historian A. L. Tibawi at the University of London, A. L. Tibawi, "English-Speaking Orientalists: A Critique of their Approach to Islam and Arab Nationalism" in *Islamic Quarterly*, vol. viii (1964) nos. 1 and 2, 25-45, and its sequel, "A Second Critique of English-Speaking Orientalists: Their Approach to Islam and the Arabs" in *Islamic Quarterly* vol. xxiii (1979) nos. 1, 3-54, where Tibawi has demonstrated how medieval European polemics have resurfaced in the works of contemporary academic scholars such as W. Montgomery Watt, Kenneth Cragg, Bernard Lewis, John Wansbrough, Patricia Crone, and Michael Cook; for specific connections between Orientalism and politics of the colonial powers see Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 96-110; for a brief history of British Orientalists, see A. J. Arberry, *British Orientalists* (London: William Collins of London, 1940); also see his admirable portraits of seven Orientalists, *Oriental Essays: Portraits of Seven Scholars* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1960); a brief account of Irish Orientalism is M. Mansoor, *The Story of Irish Orientalism* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co., 1944).

63. Even the Abbot of Cluny (d. 1156) and Robert of Ketton (fl. 1136-57) had limited access compared to the nineteenth century Orientalists.
64. His *Travels and Adventures in Central Asia* (1864) would bring Europe-wide fame, money, and prestige to this converted Jew, whose influence on Goldziher caused his father to lose sleep over the possible baptism of his son. In many cases, political motives were part of the adventure. Hurgronje, for instance, was hired by the Dutch colonial government to spy on the Javanese community residing in Makka. Vámbéry was heavily involved in complex intrigues; it is he who had arranged the 1901 meeting between the Zionist leader Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) and the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909).
65. See my review of *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century* in *Islam & Science* 5 (Winter 2005) 2, 168-174.

Hungary for what he later called his “Mohammedan Year”.

On the intellectual level,

Three developments combined to break down the barrier and afford Jews a role in the rapid expansion of the European scholarly exploration of Islam. The first was the *Haskala*, the Jewish Enlightenment: Jewish scholars began to take an interest in secular history, and the place of Jewish narratives within that history. The second development was the Jewish emancipation: Jews gradually won admission to secular academic institutions, as students and professors. The third development was Europe’s secularization: Europeans increasingly sought an understanding of Islam and the Muslims freed from Christian theological dogma.⁶⁶

This “Jewish discovery of Islam”, which struck such a hostile chord in the Christian circles,⁶⁷ fitted well in the anti-Christian fervor then surging among European Jews. What these new Orientalists brought to the field was not only new methods and tools, originally developed in expanding areas of Jewish studies, but—and more importantly—a large amount of new material from the original sources of Islam, which gave their work an appearance of authenticity lacking in the Orientalist enterprise until then. Never before in the entire history of Western study of Islam such a large amount of original material came into the repository of source material within one generation. In fact, it was a singular event of such fundamental importance that it broke the very mould of Orientalism and reconfigured it. Even the translation project initiated by Pierre Maurice de Montboissier, the abbot of Cluny, in 1142, which produced the first-ever translations of the Qur’ān and several other original texts dealing with the life of the Prophet into a European language (Latin), as well as the subsequent skilful utilization of these translations for the production of a large amount of polemical literature—which gave Orientalism its first concrete form—lose luster when compared to the apt use of the original sources by Goldziher and his generation.

66. Martin Kramer, *The Jewish Discovery*, 10.

67. When Goldziher first encountered Jews of Damascus, they mistrusted him because they thought he was a Christian missionary. Recalling his experiences Goldziher wrote in his 1890 memoirs: “In this abominable religion [Christianity], which invented the Christian blood libel, which puts its own best sons to the rack, they want to entice away the believers in the one and only Jehova—in Muslim lands. This is an insolence of which only Christianity, the most abdominal of all religions, is capable. It has no forehead to become aware of the insolence that forms its historical character. The forehead of a whore, that is the forehead of Christianity. Poor Damascene Jews! Go on hating this shameless rabble, if under the pressure that weights you down you are still capable of hatred!” (*Dairy*, 21).

What was achieved by Goldziher's generation became a lasting influence on Western scholarship on Islam, partly because it was thoroughly fused and cemented with the rapidly changing European intellectual attitudes toward religion in general and Islam in particular within the lifetime of that generation, partly because it was patronized by European Imperialism, and partly because these Orientalists left behind a large number of trained and dedicated students who carried their work to the post-World War II period when the Academy in Europe and North America became fully entrenched in the intellectual, social, and economic life of the West.

In short, "intent on proving the West's moral and theological superiority Bergsträsser, Jeffery, Mingana, Pretzl, Tisdall and many others dedicated their lives to finding within the Qurʾān all the evils of textual corruption uncovered in the Bible."⁶⁸

III. The Qurʾān and the Academy

The advantage Goldziher and other nineteenth-century Orientalists had over their predecessors was their command of Arabic, Persian, Turkish and other languages of the people whose religion, literature and language they studied. This made it possible for them to read, in the original, the two primary sources of Islam as well as the vast repository of scholarly writings on the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth*, *sīra*, *fiqh*, and other related disciplines. Compared to the previous generations of Orientalists, they had more texts available to them both in printed form as well in the form of rare and precious manuscripts—which had been brought to Europe either by plundering,⁶⁹ piracy, or by buying in the bazaars of Cairo, Istanbul, Damascus, Lahore, and other ancient cities of the occupied Muslim lands by hordes of manuscript hunters and transferred to Oxford, London, and Paris in connivance with the colonial governments whose officials often assisted in this task. This ready availability of source material and their ability to utilize it made it possible for them to tap into a vast reservoir of Islamic scholarship at a scale never before attempted.

Their readings in the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*—the two primary sources of Islam—deeply affected their views about Islam and its Prophet. This was inevitable. They had consciously tried to rid themselves of what they considered to be unfair treatment of the subject under study in the works of their predecessors—the polemics and pre-nineteenth century Orientalists—and, in many cases, they experienced Islam in a direct and personal manner. The experience of reading the Qurʾān in its original language, exposing them-

68. M. M. al-Azami (2008), 335.

69. For a brief description of the plunder of Islamic manuscripts see Robert Jones, "Piracy, War, and the Acquisition of Arabic Manuscripts in Renaissance Europe" in *Manuscripts of the Middle East 2* (1987), 96-110.

selves directly to its profound wisdom and eloquence, fathoming its linguistic richness with the understanding and mastery of a philologist, and actually standing in front of the Ka'aba—as Hurgronje did—or prostrating in a congregation with hundreds of other believers—as both Hurgronje and Goldziher did—must have produced certain fundamental changes in the psychic, emotional, and intellectual state of these Orientalists; this is clearly borne out of their works, memoirs, and letters. After a very brief encounter with living Islam in Damascus,⁷⁰ Goldziher were to write:

I truly entered in those weeks into the spirit of Islam to such an extent that ultimately I became inwardly convinced that I myself was a Muslim and judiciously discovered that this was the only religion which, even in its doctrinal and official formulation, can satisfy philosophical minds. My ideal was to elevate Judaism to a similar rational level. Islam, my experience taught me, was the only religion in which superstition and pagan elements were proscribed, not by rationalism but by the Orthodox doctrine.⁷¹

While in Cairo,⁷² identifying himself with his Arab hosts at so many levels of daily living, Goldziher

felt one thing missing to complete his happiness in Islam. He had a deep desire to attend the Friday services in the mosque. “They did not admit me,” he writes, “to the Friday divine service because I was not a Mohammedan. But I wanted to bend my knee before Allah with thousands of believers and, crying ‘Allāh [A]kbar’ (Allah is the greatest), sink with them in the dust before the Only One, the Almighty.”⁷³

Goldziher was finally able to realize his desire with the help of a Syrian acquaintance, ‘Abdallāh al-Shāmī, who had him dress like an Arab with a turban and a kaftan. Thus disguised, they arrived at the tomb of Imām Shāfi‘ī, where Goldziher “gave proof of true belief”, that is pronounced *shahādah*, and from there the two went to the mosque and attended the Friday prayer—the Friday preceding the ‘Āshūrah, the tenth of Muḥarram (February 27, 1874). Goldziher was to later recall this experience in a memorable sentence: “In the midst of the thousands of the pious, I rubbed my forehead against the floor of the mosque. Never in my life was I more devout, more truly devout, than on

70. He arrived in Damascus on October 14, 1873 and left on November 24, 1873.

71. *Diary*, 20.

72. He arrived in Cairo on December 10, 1873 and left some time in the second half of April 1874, for he was back in Budapest just a few days before his father died on May 4, 1874.

73. *Diary*, 28.

that exalted Friday.”⁷⁴

The impact of the Qurʾān on the Orientalists of the past as well as on the contemporary academic scholars is one of the most important factor in the emergence of a hybrid scholarship in which admiration, damnation, outright blasphemy and contempt all mix together, creating truly schizophrenic work, split right down the middle. This feature is so characteristic of Oriental scholarship as well as that of contemporary works on Islam that it requires a much detailed analysis in a separate study, which will have to take into consideration spiritual and psychological states of the authors when they are at work as well as other factors which influence a piece of inspired and scholarly work.

When this hybrid work first appeared, many Muslims were immediately attracted to it. Suffering from a deep-seated inferiority complex—which has not really departed even now—they saw “validation” of their religion, language, culture, and literature by the white men who ruled over them. This attitude manifests in various manners: travel accounts of Goldziher and Hurgonje, for instance, provide first-hand and direct evidence of how even the learned scholars in Damascus and “shaykhs of al-Azhar” would bend over backwards to please a Goldziher and grant him extraordinary importance and his knowledge of Islam to be superior,⁷⁵ even though he was merely a novice at the time; George Sarton’s *Introduction to the History of Science*⁷⁶ became the most quoted source by Muslim writers because it highlighted “Muslim achievements in science”, but his positivistic attitude and incomplete historical sources were seldom mentioned; often a few sentences or paragraphs from an otherwise highly convoluted work are paraded as evidence of veracity of Islam; often works which “defend” Islam and its Prophet become highly popular among Muslims, no matter how arbitrary this “defense” is, and no matter how baseless the foundation of such a “defense” is.⁷⁷

74. *Tagebuch*, 71-72, quoted from *Diary*, 28.

75. In describing one such event, Goldziher narrates the details of his meeting with a *qāḍī* in Damascus who asks him: “Are you the learned *Madshar* whose fame filled the bazaars and the coffeehouses, whom all the pashas call one of the wonders of the world, and more of the like. I answered, *Istaghfar Allāh* [I ask God for forgiveness, i.e., God forbid]. Since I knew that he got everything from Mr. Sbā’i, I permitted myself to extemporize...” (*Diary* 121). Goldziher goes on to write four lines of his improvised poem in which he “permitted himself the most atrocious licence, which, however, my learned friend did not seem to notice” (*Diary*, 122) and thereby won his admiration and friendship.

76. George Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science* (Baltimore: Williams & Wilking Company, 1931-48).

77. For example, when Karen Armstrong “defends” marriages of the Prophet on the basis of political, cultural conditions of his time, Muslims feel ecstatic, without realizing the fundamental problem associated with the founda-

On their part, these nineteenth-century masqueraders took full advantage of the traditional Islamic hospitality offered them by their hosts, while at the same time harboring contempt and ridicule in their hearts. Throughout his seventh-month long sojourns among Muslims, Goldziher himself is conscious of his deceptive, cunning and manipulative tricks: in the last entry of his *Diary*, for instance, he mentions a meeting in Cairo with Shaykh al-Mahfūz al-Maghribī, who had received him with greatest love and hospitality in his own home as well as in his lectures in the following manner:

... [at] Azhar with the analectic Shaykh al-Mahfūz al-Maghribī. After the lecture the professor approached me with a very friendly *marḥaban* [welcome] and invited me to a little conversation. He explained to me that the Jews are the most contemptible people of the world and that the Christians are closer to Islam; he thought he paid me a compliment thereby. You missed the mark, good Shaykh! As I hear, this shaykh is supposed to be very strong in polemics (*jadāl*). It is remarkable that he took leave of me with the words with which he had received me: *Allāh yuhdīnā wa'yyākā 'alā'l-ṣīrāṭil-mustaqīm wal-tarīq al-hudā* [May Allah lead us and you on the straight path and on the right road]. During the conversation he often expressed the hope that God would lead me to Islam, which I, of course, did not reject. I have prepared for myself for such occasions a treasury of equivocal phrases with which I manage very well. Thus, e.g.: *Wa'llāh yahdī man yashā* [And God leads whom He wants], or: *al-ḥaqq sikkah nāfidhah mush masūdih, yafihā man yahdāhu Allāh* [Truth is an open road which is not closed; he whom God leads to it will enter it]. Or again: *Allāh yazhir al-ḥaqq bi-qalbi man yashā ihdā'ihī* [God reveals the truth in the heart of him whom He wants to lead].⁷⁸

This is not an isolated example of this attitude. What is really important in this attitude is not merely the basic lack of decency, but also the fact that these Orientalists attempted to learn about Islam and its sources without really opening their hearts to it.⁷⁹

The works of most of the Orientalists of the previous centuries, have now become the stock from which academic writings are emerging on the Qur'ān.

tional principles of her “defense” which have nothing to do with his Prophetic status, but are based on cultural customs of his time.

78. *Diary*, 153.

79. For a short, but insightful survey, see S. Pervez Manzoor, “Method Against Truth: Orientalism and Qur'ān Studies” in Andrew Rippin (ed.), *The Qur'an: Style and Contents* (Aldershot: Ashgate, Variorum, 2001), 381-97; also see Mohammad Khalifa, *The Sublime Qur'an and Orientalism* (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1976). Also see the more scholarly as well as somewhat apologetic treatment by M.A. Draz, *Introduction to the Qur'an* (London-New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000).

They are presented as “authorities”. The Orientalists’ discourse on the Qurʾān cannot, however, be completely isolated from Orientalism as such, that is, the general field of learned study that “is considered to have commenced its formal existence with the decision of the Church Council of Vienne in 1312 to establish a series of chairs in Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac at Paris, Oxford, Bologna, Avignon, and Salamanca”.⁸⁰ In addition to the professional Orientalists associated with the Academy there were hosts of eager amateurs, and all of this fervor made the orient a career.⁸¹ “By the middle of the nineteenth century,” Edward Said noted, “Orientalism was as vast a treasure-house of learning as one could imagine.”⁸²

After spending tremendous amount of energy in its efforts to dislodge and discredit *Ḥadīth* as the second primary source of Islam, Orientalism repackaged as academic studies has now turned its attention toward the Qurʾān. Today the Academy sees Qurʾānic studies as the cutting-edge field of its research on Islam. This change in focus is not without affinities to certain recent political events, which have formerly inaugurated a seemingly interminable war of terror and have added a certain degree of urgency (and of course funding) to the need to study the Qurʾān which is now being seen as the very root of the “Muslim problem”, not only by politicians but also by scholars and religious leaders. This perceived problem comes, more specifically, from the Qurʾānic verses on *Jihād*, which have attracted the attention of many influential politicians and various think-tanks. As a result of fear, misunderstanding, and sheer ignorance, terrorism is now being linked to the Qurʾān. Certain Muslim countries have been compelled to “expunge” many verses dealing with *Jihād* from their educational curricula. The vigorous political and military campaign now underway has, however, not remained in the domain of politics; it has its academic counterpart, just as Orientalism of yester-years was not merely an academic exercise.⁸³ *The Qurʾān and the West*, one of the first books on the Qurʾān published in the West after the events of September 11, 2001, is a case in point. The author, Kenneth Cragg, who “for six decades has been recognized and praised as one of the West’s most gifted interpret-

80. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 50.

81. Rephrasing Benjamin Disraeli’s “The East is a career”, used by Edward Said as an epigram for his *Orientalism*.

82. *Orientalism*, 51.

83. In this context, it is important to note that most of the academic criticism of Edward Said’s work has been directed against his brilliant exposé of the links between Orientalism and political ambitions of certain Western governments, even when this “academic imperialism”—to use Richard Martin’s term—is recognized by some as legitimate aspect of his work. For Said’s response to this criticism, see his 1994 “Afterword” in *Orientalism*, 329-352.

ers of Islam”, is pre-occupied with the relevance of the Qurʾān to the events of that day, which he takes for granted was the work of Muslims who were inspired by the Qurʾān. While both these premises are open to doubt, what is relevant here is the sheer force of these events, leading Western scholars and religious leaders like Cragg to look into the Qurʾān to discover the root of the “inner crisis in the liability of Islam”.⁸⁴ Cragg oscillates between condemning the “harsh belligerence in the Qurʾān, a strong pugnacity on behalf of faith” and what he calls its “gentler side”. Despite his counsel to Westerners to respect the Qurʾān and Muslims, Cragg’s own highly charged book is filled with overt and covert insults and disparaging remarks. His book is primarily an attempt to sift and separate apart from the Book of Allah portions that can be called “acceptable Qurʾān”—one that has no political content, no theme under the title of *Jihād* save the *jihād biʾl-naḥs*, a Qurʾān with no role in the shaping of society, for “the political power-exercise only came at all for the briefer Median period and had been firmly excluded throughout the defining Meccan years when only the ever prior preaching task was given [to the Prophet]”.⁸⁵ He does this by making a sharp distinction between the life of the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, in Makka and Madina—this time in a much harsher manner than he had done in his 1971 work, *The Event of the Qurʾān: Islam and Its Scripture*.⁸⁶ By so bifurcating the Qurʾān and *Sīra*, Cragg’s purpose is to

care about an aberrant Islam, from which the menace comes, by caring with the Islam that can and must disown the other. That there is high tension between them with the Qurʾān as party to it, cannot be in doubt. There is a dimension of harsh belligerence in the Qurʾān, a strong pugnacity on behalf of faith. Its being there can perhaps be explained by the situation in which Muhammad’s mission was embroiled by the obduracy of his local audience. The legacy of that militancy abides but can well be offset or abandoned by considerations no less explicit in the same Qurʾān. These we are set to examine, in company with contemporary Muslims who know their crisis—the crisis between the two ‘minds’—for what it is.

It will be long and hard to resolve. For it bifurcates the *Sīra* as well as the Qurʾān and has its symbol in the sequence of both from their Mecca to their Medina. The sense of legitimate belligerence came with the sinews that availed for it after the Hijrah. Yet that Hijrah supervened on thirteen years of powerless faith-care which might be likened to the first three centuries of New Testament Christain

84. Kenneth Cragg, *The Qurʾān and the West* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 202.

85. *Ibid.*, 24.

86. Kenneth Cragg, *The Event of the Qurʾān: Islam and Its Scripture* (Oxford: One-world, reprint. 1994).

faith. Muhammad foreclosed these in forceful power, as if to be his own—and immediate—version as Islam’s ‘Constantine’, and thereby seeming to abrogate the Meccan ‘innocence’. Thus the pivotal decision had the sanction of his own doing and came to be embedded—as Constantine has never been—in the founding Scripture of the faith.⁸⁷

III (a). Religion and Academy

A fuller appreciation of the perspective from which contemporary academic works on the Qurʾān are emerging in the Academy not only requires an understanding of the historical process through which the Academy has arrived at its current understanding of Islam, but also its understanding of religion in general. This understanding has been shaped by specific currents in Western thought, beginning with a phase of pseudo-Christianization of Aristotelian philosophy—mainly through the influence of Thomas Aquinas (1225–74)—and going through Reformation, humanism, naturalism, nationalism, the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century, rationalism, deism, idealism, positivism, historicism, utilitarianism, Marxism, scientism, and many other “isms”. The Academy being an integral part of the modern Western civilization—drawing its legal, human, and material resources from that civilization—has been influenced by all of these currents. Its entire apparatus of teaching, research, and production of knowledge rests on the same currents of thought that have shaped modern Western civilization, which has emerged out of a series of revolts against what it subsequently called its “Dark Age”. While there is considerable difference of opinion among scholars working in different fields about when the Middle Ages ended and when what is now called “modern times” began, for our purpose, there is a clear demarcation between the two eras: the dawn of the fourteenth century. “This date marks the beginning of a fresh decline,” René Guénon (1886-1951) said in *The Crisis of the Modern World*:

which has continued through various phases and with gathering impetus down to the present day. The real starting point of the modern crisis dates from that moment: it witnessed the first signs of the disruption of Christendom, with which the Western civilization of the Middle Ages was inseparably bound up: at the same time, while it marked the breakup of the feudal system, so closely linked with that same Christendom, it also coincided with the origin of the formation of “nations”. Modern times must therefore be regarded as going back almost two centuries farther than is usually assumed to be the case; the Renaissance and the Reformation were both primarily in the nature of results and they were only rendered possible by the preceding decadence; but far from constituting a re-

87. *Ibid.*, 9-10.

vival, they denoted a yet more serious decline since they completed the rupture with the traditional spirit, the former in the domain of the arts and science and latter in the sphere of religion itself, and that, in spite of the fact that this is the field in which it would have seemed most difficult to conceive of the possibility of such a rupture taking place at all⁸⁸

The Renaissance man was, therefore, already a fallen man, the one who sought solace in the philosophical thought of the fifth century BC—an era deemed to be the golden age of Greek thought, while in fact it was an age of decline and decadence even when compared to the Pythagorean era, not to mention the pre-Pythagorean age. “The Renaissance was really the death of many things; on the pretext of a return to Graeco-Roman civilization it merely took over the most outward part of that civilization...there was a word which rose to repute at the time of the Renaissance and which summarized in advance the whole programme of modern civilization: this word is ‘humanism’.”⁸⁹

In short, in the very process of its so-called Renaissance, European religious thought suffered an irreparable loss through

reducing everything to purely human proportions, of eliminating every principle belonging to a higher order and, figuratively speaking, of turning away from heaven on the pretext of gaining possession of the earth; the Greeks, whose example men claimed they were following, had never gone so far in this direction, even at the time of their lowest intellectual decadence, and utilitarian considerations had at least never occupied first place with them as they were very soon to do with the moderns. “Humanism” was already an earliest form of what has subsequently become contemporary “laicism”; and, in attempting to reduce everything to the stature of man taken as an end in himself, modern civilization has sunk stage by stage to the level of his lowest elements and aims at little more than satisfying the needs inherent in the material side of his nature, an aim which is, in any case, quite illusory, as it continually creates more artificial wants than it can ever hope to satisfy.⁹⁰

The rise of the “material civilization”⁹¹ which now engulfs all realms of

88. René Guénon, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, trans. Marco Pallis and Richard Nicholson (London: Luzac & Co., 1942); hereinafter *Crisis*, original French edition, *La crise du monde moderne* (Paris: Bossard, 1927), 9.

89. *Crisis*, 9-11.

90. *Crisis*, 11.

91. A term used here in the sense in which Guénon used it to mean “an entire mental outlook...which consists in more or less consciously giving preponderance to things belonging to the material order and to preoccupations relating thereto, whether these preoccupations still retain a certain speculative appearance or whether they remain purely practical ones;

modern life and thought, was only possible at the expense of the destruction of the Kingdom of God, and “Humanism” provided all that was necessary for this barter. As a result, not only profane sciences of nature emerged, but the whole understanding of the natural order was reduced to a human level. Along with the emergence of modern science, there arose new fields of scholarship with their own methodologies and approaches, all tailored to the needs of the new Kingdom of Man to which “Humanism” gave birth; the academic study of religion was one such new discipline which first made its appearance in European and British universities and then spread to North America. Christianity was the first victim of this academic adventure. It provided challenges to the academicians in fields as varied as historiography, textual analysis, theology, sociology of religion, religious praxis, and so on. In the process of meeting these challenges, the doctors of the Academy developed tools, methodologies, and conventions which they are now applying to the Qurʾān even though the Qurʾān and Bible are two different kinds of books: one is a revealed text, untouched by human hands, the other, as we now have it, is a work of the human mind.

Conclusion

The Qurʾān, held sacred by one fourth of humanity, has been subjected to un-reverential treatment by its disbelievers for centuries, but its most complex form is the contemporary academic discourse with its scholarly veneer which attempts to hide centuries of polemical works, but which boastfully accepts most of the nineteenth-century Orientalism which is its progenitor. Non-Muslim scholars in the academy cannot, by definition, commit themselves to any position about the Divine origin of the Qurʾān; their professional obligation is to maintain an objective detachment from their object of study, yet, in this case, the object—the Qurʾān—itself makes it impossible to maintain neutrality for it insists and demands that one must settle the fundamental issue of its authorship before any further engagement can occur. This means accepting or rejecting the Qurʾānic claim to be the actual direct Word of God Himself. A corollary of whatever choice they make is their position regarding the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace. If they accept the Qurʾān to be the Word of God, then it automatically confirms their belief in the veracity of the Prophethood of Muḥammad the son of ‘Abd Allāh, upon him blessings and peace. If they reject the Qurʾānic claim, they simultaneously reject the Prophethood of the Prophet of Islam and thereby find themselves in the punitive position of questioning his honesty and truthfulness—something that polemical writers have done for centuries and that was at the root of the polemical works during

and it cannot be seriously denied that this is, in fact, the mental attitude of the great majority of our contemporaries”; see *Crisis*, 80 and *passim*.

the Middle Ages and European Renaissance.

Even though this dilemma has been recognized by some academic scholars in the West, there remains a particular vacuum in academic discourse pertaining to the methodology needed to examine historical material that is simultaneously sacred. In the absence of any recognized and well-established methodology, individual scholars continue to devise their own methods in the name of innovation, without recognizing or acknowledging that these innovations are, ultimately, *variations* and add nothing to advance the discourse or even understanding of Islam. The Academy has remained stuck for centuries on certain very basic and foundational issues regarding the Qurʾān and Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, and its inability to creatively resolve these issues in a manner which acknowledges, respects, and includes as primary the beliefs of every fourth person now living on earth has led it to a *cul-de-sac*; even though it is already late, those who teach Islam in the Academy need to urgently resolve these issues, for the continuation of the same methodologies is bound to increase friction between those who believe and those who do not believe in the Divine authorship of the Qurʾān and the veracity of the Prophethood of Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace.

Today the Academy holds a pinnacle position in the structure of Western civilization. It is a unique institution from which flow streams of scientific research, ideas which define, shape and affect all aspects of life—from the way journalists present Islam to millions of human beings to the way politicians and military generals perceive the Muslim world. Even though the Academy and academic scholarship is supposed to remain impartial and objective, in the real life situation, there is no such thing as impartiality and objectivity when it comes to the Qurʾān and its message: one simply has to face the fact that the Qurʾān poses a unique challenge to those who wish to study it and thus, it requires a unique and creative solution by the Academy. In a deeply traumatized world, one cannot overstate the need for an urgent resolution of the academic impasse, for continuation on the same course is a dangerous exercise bound to further increase violence and disharmony in an already violent and disharmonious world.

It is impossible for any non-Muslim scholar to claim impartiality, because, as a human being, he or she has a position toward the Qurʾān: a disregard or, in most cases, a rejection of its fervent invitation to take it as the very Word of God, by accepting its truth-claims and joining those who surrender to God and hence are called Muslims. This rejection of the urgent bidding of the Qurʾān to accept it as the Word of God through an inner process of reflection on the signs in and around them, and consequently give up disbelief, is in itself a position which cannot be said to be neutral. Thus when such a person teaches a course on the Qurʾān or on Islam and he assumes that by “get-

ting students to articulate issues and argue through various explanations, the stories surrounding the Prophet Muhammad, his relation to earlier prophets, and the concept of prophethood” *merely* “present pedagogically useful theoretical problems”,⁹² he is utterly discounting the fact that he has already framed the questions in a certain mould and has already loaded the dice before throwing it. Furthermore, when this teacher assumes that “given the diversity of accounts about the life of Muhammad, students are easily struck by a question about the historicity of Muhammad. Did Muhammad ‘really exist’ and if he did, was he a prophet or did he do the things he is reported to have done,”⁹³ without acknowledging that through this framing of the discourse he has already taken a position and has already applied a certain methodology of historical research—emerging from and remaining deeply embedded in the *one specific* tradition—to another tradition (for which this methodology is utterly foreign and unacceptable), he has trespassed the boundary of impartial and objective behavior. Furthermore, by framing the discourse on the Prophet in this manner, he has already relegated the study of Islam to the status of the study of the “other”, thus highlighting (in the so-called objective and impartial environment of the Academy) a subjective and partial position, dividing humanity into “us” and “them”, amounting to fanning the fires which characterize our contemporary world and which have produced a tremendous amount of bloodshed and ravaged the lives of millions of human beings in recent decades. This is, obviously, a function of which the Academy cannot be proud.

There is very little recognition in the Academy that when it comes to teaching Islam, non-Muslim academic scholars are prisoners of a tradition which has for too long denigrated the person of the Noble Messenger and the beliefs of millions of human beings. This tradition has vilified the person who is revered by 1.7 billion Muslims; it has taken liberties with the text of the Qurʾān which cannot be but an utter show of disrespect to the text held sacred by one fourth of humanity.⁹⁴ This lineage, inherent in the very struc-

92. Brannon M. Wheeler (ed.), *Teaching Islam* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5.

93. *Ibid.*

94. This includes attempts which amount to a dismemberment of the text of the Qurʾān—a text held in such esteem by Muslims that they do not even touch it without first purifying themselves—; rearrangement of its order of the *suwar*, even of verses (cf. Rodwell, Tritton, Muir, Nöldeke, and Jeffery). For a summary, see “On the Qurʾānic Textual Order”, chapter 4, in Mohammad Khalifa, *The Sublime Qurʾān and Orientalism*, *op. cit.* Also see Muhammad Mohar Ali, *Sīrat al-Nabī and the Orientalists* (Madinah: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qurʾān), chapters 32 and 33. The most insightful account is to be found in Part III of M. M.

ture of academic scholarship, not only includes centuries of accumulated and often detailed scrutiny of source material, valuable manuscripts, and insights of keen minds, but also brings to bear the framework, premises, and biases of previous generations. In the case of the Qurʾān, this genealogy reaches back to the polemical works of pre-modern Christian writers—a tradition that firmly underlies Orientalist scholarship on the Qurʾān. Current academic scholarship may not wish to admit residual traces of the past missionary works, but it proudly claims the putatively ground-breaking work of nineteenth-century Orientalists, who had merely refined the veneer of the polemical tradition without rejecting its basic premise and who shared with that older tradition its core claim that the text of the Qurʾān is man-made. The Academy is hence not objective or impartial but holds a particular position toward the Qurʾān.

The need to develop new tools and methods for the study of Qurʾān has never been so deeply felt as now due to the current state of humanity. The reach of the Western Academy is no more limited to the Western civilization. In a world rapidly being globalized, the Academy itself is emerging as a global institution in which members of all faith traditions as well as those who claim to have no faith at all need to find adequate institutional support and respect. The old boundaries are rapidly disappearing and with them the still-divided humanity finds itself face to face with challenges of an entirely new type. In this world of shrinking distances, the West is no more the West it used to be and the East is no more the East it used to be; millions of Muslims now live in the West and presence of the West can be felt all over the old East. Muslim presence in the Western Academy is no more a peripheral phenomenon and the Academy cannot continue to be what it has been so far; it urgently needs to find new approaches to the study of the Qurʾān.

As far as Muslims are concerned, one cannot but agree with M. M. Azami: “the maxim of Ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/728) holds greater urgency today than ever before: ‘This knowledge [of religion] constitutes faith, so be wary of whom you acquire your knowledge from.’”⁹⁵

Al-Azami (2008).

95. M. M. Azami (2008), 373. For the maxim itself, see Muslim b. al-Ḥajāj al-Qushirī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, F. ‘Abdūl-Baqī, 5 vols (Cairo: n.p. 1374), 14.