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RECENT TRENDS IN HISTORICAL AND LITERARY STUDY OF THE QUR'ÂN

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Abstrak: **Tren Baru Studi Sejarah dan Sastra Terhadap al-Qur'an**. Dua buah karya yang dipublikasikan ilmuan Inggris dan Amerika pada tahun 1971, *Hagarism* oleh Patricia Crone dan Michael Cook, dan *Quranic studies: sources and methods of scriptural interpretation* oleh John Wansbrough merevolusi studi baik sastra dan sejarah al-Qur'an maupun masa awal Islam. Tidak satupun dari kedua karya ini mendapatkan pengakuan signifikan dari kalangan ilmuan Islam dan menuai protes keras baik dari ilmuan Barat maupun Muslim. Tanpa memfokuskan pada kedua karya tersebut, artikel ini mengeksplorasi keilmuan Barat terkini dalam kebangkitan dan upaya mereka menakar hubungan antara pendekatan sejarah dengan sastra terhadap al-Qur'an secara tegas menekankan kedua pendekatan ini bukan menjadi ancaman bagi Islam. Pada akhirnya ada potensi signifikan untuk menciptakan pembicaraan kreatif antara Muslim dan non-Muslim tentang karakter dan pesan al-Qur'an yang menyertai munculnya karya-karya oleh berbagai ilmuan yang menulis dalam bahasa-bahasa Barat dalam kurun waktu 30 tahun terakhir.

Abstract: Two works published by English and American scholars in 1977, Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism* and John Wansbrough *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* revolutionized both historical and literary studies of the Qur'an and early Islam. Neither work achieved significant agreement among western scholars of Islam and met with strong protest from both western and Muslim scholars. Rather than focusing on these two works, this article explores some recent Western scholarship in their wake and attempts to weigh the relationship between historical and literary approaches to the Qur'an, strongly affirming that neither are threats to Islam. The artificiality of the distinction of literary and historical is also an important argument. In the end there is significant potential for a creative conversation between Muslims and non-Muslims about the character and message of Qur'an that attends to efflorescence of work by a wide range of scholars writing in western languages in the past thirty years.

Key Words: Qur'an, historical study, literary study

Introduction

The last two decades have seen a significant and exciting efflorescence of Qur'ânic studies. The *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* began publication in 1999. The following decade saw the completion of the six volume *Encyclopedia of the Qur'ân,*[1] a four volume collection of major scholarly articles on the Qur'ân[2] and four significant collections of introductory reference essays to Qur'ânic studies[3] and finally an Arabic English Quranic dictionary.[4] There has also been a steady stream of collections of essays from conferences dealing with Quranic studies.[5] In addition there have been a number of introductions to the Qur'ân aimed at the more general reading public, including especially college undergraduates.[6]

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[1] See Jane Dammen McAuliffe, (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ân* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2006).

[2] See Colin Turner, (ed.), *The Koran: Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies* (London-New York: Routledge, 2004).

[3] See Oliver Leaman, (ed.), *The Qur'ân: an Encyclopedia* (London-New York: Routledge, 2006); Andrew Rippin, *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'ân* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2006); Michael Marx, "The Koran According to Agafa Gotthelf Bergsträhers Archiv der Koranhandscriften" *Trajekte* 19 (October), 2009; Nicolai Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung: Studien zur Frûhen Koran Interpretation* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2009).

[4] See Elsaid M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Arabic–English Dictionary of Qur'ânic Usage* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008).

[5] See Herbert Berg (ed.), *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003); Issa J. Boullata (ed.), *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qur'ân* (Richmond-Surrey: Curzon, 2000); *G. De Smet, G. de Callatay and J.M.F. Van Reeth (ed.), Al-Kitab: La Sacralité du Texte dans le Monde de l'Islam* (Acta Orientalia Beigica, *2004);* G.R. Hawting and Abdul Kader A. Shareef, (ed.), *Approaches to the Quran* (London-New York: Routledge, 1993); Stefan Wild (ed.), *The Qu'ran as Text* (Leiden-New York: E.J. Brill, 1996); Stefan Wild (ed.), *Self Referentiality in the Qur'ân* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2006); Reynolds Gabriel Said (ed.), *The Qur'ân in its Historical Context* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008); Khaleel Muhammad and Andrew Rippin (ed.), *Coming to Terms With The Qur'ân: A Volume in Honor of Professor Issa Boullata, McGill University* (North Haledon, N.J.: Islamic Publications International, 2007); M. Kropp (ed.), *Results of Contemporary Research on the Qur'ân: The Question of a Historico-Critical Text* (Beirut: Orient-Institut, 2006).

[6] See Michael Cook, *The Koran: a Very Short Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Mohammad Draz, *Introduction to the Qur'ân* (New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000); *Mateen Elass, Understanding the Koran: A Quick Christian Guide to the Muslim Holy Book (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervans, 2004);* Farid Esack, *The Qur'ân: a User's Guide: a Guide to Its Key Themes, History and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005); Bruce B. Lawrence, *The Qur'ân: a Biography* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006); Ingrid Mattson, *The Story of the Qur'ân: Its History and Place in Muslim Life* (Malden, MA-Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2008); Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'ân: a Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003); Abdullah Saeed (ed.), *Approaches to the Qur'ân in Contemporary Indonesia* (London: Oxford in association with the Institute of Isma'ili Studies, 2005); Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'ân: Towards a Contemporary Approach* (Abingdon [England]-New York: Routledge, 2006); Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur'ân: the Early Revelations* (Ashland, OR: White Cloud Press, 1999); Michael Sells, "Sound and Meaning in *Sûrat al-Qâri'a*," in *Arabica* 40:3, November, 1993; Michael Sells, "Sound, Spirit and Gender in *Sûrat al-Qadr,*" in *Journal of the American Oriental* Society 111:2, 1991; Mona Siddiqui, *How to Read the Qur'ân* (London: Granta Books, 2007); Barbara Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'ân, Traditions, and*

This essay will survey some features of this work, broadly dividing it into two streams, the historical and the literary. The distinction is not always a clear one and in the end it will be the interface of these two that will occupy the conclusion. Still broadly speaking the historian is concerned with a number of diachronic questions: what processes produced the Qur'ânic corpus, when was it fixed, what was the interaction between the formulation of Islam in its first few centuries and the Qur'ân? The historian is interested in determining the reliability of his/her sources, recognizing when later interests inform the primary sources available for historical construction. As a general rule, historians of early Islam are profoundly cognizant of the fact that the historical record they read in Islamic sources about the origins of Islam have come down to us in texts written at least a century after the events. The debated question regarding the Qur'ân is whether the story of its canonization under the Caliph 'Uthmân can be taken as true. If so, then the Qur'ân stands at least two generations closer to its putative historical context. On the literary side, the questions are synchronic having to do with understanding the literary structures and form of the Qur'ân, its presumed reader and its functions in Islamic society. In both trends the character and history of Qur'ânic commentary (*tafsîr* and *ta'wîl*) are an important source and also present significant problems. It is important to understand that a significant scholarly production about classical Islamic commentary has taken place, even while the so-called closed world of Islamic scholarship has been pushed against by western scholars.

Conventional wisdom has it that both these trends were revolutionized and energized by two publications in 1977 that caused a so-called seismic shift in the study of Islamic origins and therefore the study of the Qur'ân. Patricia Crone and Michael Cook's *Hagarism* and John Wansborough's *Qur'ânic Studies* did electrify the field, though it is important with hindsight to recognize that both works had been prefigured by the work of earlier generations of scholars. Both are predicated on the recognition that edifice of the Islamic law sciences was only completely constructed in the tenth century c.e. The traditional narratives about Islamic origins and the revelation of the Qur'ân were fixed in the context of that larger project. The challenge laid down by those two works to the authority of the traditional Islamic narrative of the origins of Islam and the composition of the Qur'ân stimulated a wide range of scholarship, although it is important to stress at the outset that neither of those works has unambiguously spawned direct successors. Rather they initiated a much wider conversation and agenda for research. However, it is clear that in many minds there is now a firm division between revisionists/skeptics and traditionalists in the field and that this has all occurred in the contemporary context of the encounters between the Islamic world and the west, an important reminder that all historical inquiry is at least unconsciously self-reflective. The revisionist/skeptical position has become in particular a flash point in contemporary interreligious conversation between Muslims, Christians and Jews and has also become part of the latest chapter of anti-Islamic propaganda by politically motivated writers.

It is therefore important to stress both the consequence and the limit of this putative revisionist/skeptical stance. Crone and Cook's experiment in reading the rise of Islam solely from contemporary non-Muslim sources was just that, an extraordinarily well documented thought experiment. It has generated a wide range of work in seeing the origins of Islam in the context of Late Antiquity, something that was already well underway before that. But there has been little acceptance of their specific claims that Islam was the product of a messianic sect of Arab Hagarenes energized by the Jews fleeing from the Persian conquest of Palestine and allying with the Arabs united by Muhammad who united in a movement to reconquer the Holy Land directly under the leadership of 'Umar.[7] Wansborough's historical claim about the second century A.H. fixation of the Qur'ân has found no supporters and generated a review of considerable contradictory evidence. But in fundamental ways Wansborough's 'historical' claim was a distraction from the primarily literary approach that he pioneered, an approach, however, that has still not widely influenced developments in literary approaches because of his dependence on an interpretative frame taken from the Jewish tradition. In many respects the primary influence of Wansborough has been in encouraging the concomitant growth in the study of Qur'ânic commentary.

This essay will focus respectively on trends in the historical and literary study of the Qur'ân subsequent to these two works. On the historical side it will examine the rise of the concept of Late Antiquity to name both the context of Islamic origins and also the world into which the early Arab conquerors came. After examining the usefulness of concept Late Antiquity as heuristic device, we will note three trends in historical approaches to the Qur'ân: the suggestions of non-Arabic sources for the Qur'ân; the decline in interest in the significance of the chronology of the Qur'ân and finally the discussion of the fixation of the Qur'ânic text. The survey of literary studies will attend to the range of literary tools used to interpret the text, the emergence of the topic of the coherence of the sûra, and the narratives of prophetic history before concluding with brief attention to the role of study of the classical commentary tradition for both trends. This will then allow a final consideration both of the possibility of synthesizing these two modes of inquiry and addressing the concerns raised my Muslim scholars by what are seen to be arguments threatening to the truth of Islam.

At the outset I stress that the historical and the literary are not exclusive categories, neither should they be essentialized into unified and agreed upon strategies of inquiry. The literary and the historical blend into each other. The question of sources and forms is

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Interpretation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Sayyid Muhammad Tabâtabâ'i, *Qur'ân in Islam: Its Impact and Influence on the Life of Muslims* (London: Zahra Publications, 1987); Walter H. Wagner, *Opening the Qur'ân: Introducing Islam's Holy Book* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Uiversity of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

[7] Robert A. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: a Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1997).

both historical and literary. The fixation of the final form of the Qur'ân has both an historical and a literary dimension. Both types of questions are informed by acquaintance with the traditional Islamic commentaries. In fact, probably the most significant feature of the field today is that much of the corpus of classical *tafsîr* is easily available, some even in translation into English under the sponsorship of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Amman, Jordan (Guezzou). But there has also been an important break with the traditional approach to *tafsîr* in the contemporary Islamic world. A number of Muslim scholars have tried to break out of the genre of verse by verse commentary posing interesting literary strategies for the reading of the text as a larger whole, rather than a string of discrete words and verses. This essay aims to give an overview of developments, it cannot escape being incomplete and is admitted tilted primarily toward publications in English. Nevertheless it hopes to give the reader a sense for recent works in the field and present some final reflections on what might come next.

Historical Trends

Late Antiquity

Peter Brown's classic *The World of Late Antiquity: AD* 150-750 popularized the conceptualization of a discrete historical period that deliberately included the first Islamic century. In giving a name to this field of study Brown urged the shift of attention away from the narrative of decline of the Western Roman Empire to the Eastern Empire, which experienced relative prosperity during the same period. He also broke down the intellectual and linguistic barriers that divided this field among classicists, early church historians, students of Rabbinic Judaism, language specialists in Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopic, Coptic, and middle Iranian languages to try to create a more integrated vision of the era. Deeply informed by anthropological modes of inquiry, Brown has spawned a major scholarly industry that continues highly productive.

Robinson[8] has rightly questioned the actual usefulness of the category of Late Antiquity and of placing Islam within it. In my opinion, however there are at least four features of the period of Late Antiquity which are highly relevant to Islamic origins: a new relation of religion and empire represented by the Sasanian and early Byzantine empires, the emergence of the idea of the holy book and its interpretation, the significance of the idea and institution of the holy man and the ascetic discourse of the body, and finally apocalyptic expectations. The close alliance between the Zoroastrian clergy and the Sasanian dynasty in the third century c.e. and the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth established a new ideological and institutional structure in both 'eyes of the world,' Rome and Persia. Whether there is an elective affinity between

[8] Chase F. Robinson, "Reconstructing Early Islam," in Herbert Berg (ed.), *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003).

monotheism and empire (and whether Persia was strictly monotheist) can be debated, but what is clear is that new institutional forms of religious specialists emerged, the Christian bishop, the Zoroastrian *mobad*, the Jewish Rabbi, who were in complicated relations with the state structure of empires. Those empires were themselves dealing with, external threats, regional tensions and religious diversity, especially at their borders. These religious specialists were occupied with the fixation and commentary on scripture and of developing the theological tools to clarify and proclaim their religious identities. The Rabbinic creation of the Talmud, the work of Christian, Manichaean and Zoroastrian clergy to establish orthodoxy are all comparable, though not identical, problematics and processes. Within the Christian context the increasing power of asceticism, disciplining and sometimes rejecting as much as possible the body emerged to give rise to an alternative authority, the holy man, who was often in conflict with the clerical establishment and the state. We continue to discuss whether the ascetic impulse was as strong elsewhere, but it is quite clear that Islam itself engaged in defining itself over and against what it considered the extremes of asceticism displayed by Christians, while seeing the development of its own privileging of the piety of asceticism (*zuhd)*. Finally, apocalyptic expectations of Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrian seem to have been a regular feature of the traditions, easily deployed and updated in the face of historical catastrophe and particularly prominent in connection with the events of the sixth and seventh centuries c.e.

What does it mean to try to see Islam in the context of Late Antiquity? In making that assertion we recognize that Arabia was part of this larger world, an arena of the conflict between Rome and Persia, not the backwater that some have considered it, especially those who restrict themselves to Arabic sources. More subtlety though, this has allowed a revisiting of the questions of cultural and religious interaction in the Hijaz without falling into the tendentious habit of positing unidirectional influence from Jewish or Christian sources on the formation of Islam. It is unfair to earlier generations of scholars to accuse them uniformly of reducing Islam to one external source or another, though some did. It is also the case that some scholars today do precisely that, but insistence on the multi-cultural and multi-confessional context of Late Antiquity ameliorates some of that (as well as of course reflecting the present age out of which these historical reimaginings come.)

The Sources of the Qur'ân

It is naïve to argue that an insistence on the multi-confessional and multi-cultural character of Late Antiquity could put earlier tendencies among some scholars to see Islam as a poor or distorted copy of Judaism or Christianity behind us. We might have thought that Mingana's polemically motivated desire to see Syriac sources behind the Qur'ân and thus diminish the claims of some Jewish scholars to that the sources of Islam were Jewish was a closed book. It is not, but the new consensus has been articulated well by the

Syriac scholar Sidney Griffith, who has given a measured stance regarding the worst features of this old mode of scholarship.

Hermeneutically speaking, one should approach the Qur'ân as an integral discourse in its own right; it proclaims, judges, praises, blames from its own narrative center. It addresses an audience which is already familiar with oral versions in Arabic of earlier scriptures and folklores. The Qur'ân does not borrow from, or often even quote from these earlier texts. Rather, it alludes to and evokes their stories, even sometimes their wording, for its own rhetorical purposes. The Arabic Qur'ân, from a literary perspective, is something new. It uses the idiom, and sometimes the forms and structures of earlier narratives in the composition of its own distinct discourse. It cannot be reduced to any presumed sources. Earlier discourses appear in it not only in a new setting, but shaped, trimmed and re-formulated for an essentially new narrative.

Nevertheless there have been two recent attempts hypothesizing a non-Arabic al-Qur'ân source. The first is *Günter Lüling who argued that behind the earliest textual level of the Qur'ân there are hymns arising in a Christian community in Mecca with different theological allegiances. These materials were then taken over by Muhammad (PBUH) and added to with later materials to form the Qur'ân. This proposal exists for Lüling in the context for his call for a reformation in Islam and a closer alliance between a reformed Islam and Christianity. The other attempt is that of Christoph Luxenberg, a pseudonym adopted by a Belgian scholar, who fears the danger posed to him by his proposal. Like Lüling he seeks a precursor to the Qur'ân in Christian circles. His technique is more modest in that he seeks primarily to explain words in the Qur'ân whose meaning is uncertain by seeking Syriac sources for those words. This continues the work both of Muslim scholars, most of whom long recognized Syriac sources for some vocabulary in the Qur'ân and also the work of earlier figures like Mingana. While both Lüling and Luxenberg have been dismissed by almost all scholars, they did capture the interest of the press.*[9] *It is significant to note that while the evidence they adduce for their theories is unconvincing and to say the least idiosyncratic, a new opening to research on these issues has begun with it is hoped more care and less of an overt polemical agenda. In any case like the earlier work of Wansborough and Crone and Cook they should not be assumed to reflect any sort of consensus among scholars of the Qur'ân*

The Decline of Interest in the Chronology of the Qur'ân

From Nöldeke through Bell one of the major tasks of historical study of the Qur'ân was to analyze and organize the text chronologically. Of course, Muslim scholarship from the very outset was also engaged in the same task, producing a template overlaying the Qur'ânic text that recognizes a chronological position for each sûra and in many

[9] *Toby Lester, "What is the Koran?" in Atlantic Monthly (January) accessed on line* http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/print/199901/koran, downloaded at April 28, 2009.

cases recognizing individual portions of a sûra as arising at different chronological points. The Muslim work was informed by the study of occasions of revelation contained in the life of the Prophet (PBUH) and also the science of abrogation, which recognized a portion of legal verses that had been later abrogated. Bell's work made it possible for W.M. Watt, Bell's student, to write a biography of the Prophet (PBUH). With that, however, the chronology of the Qur'ân ceased to be an area of active scholarly interest. Certainly, part of the reason for this cessation was that the work had been done. The detailed parsing of materials that Bell produced had much more a literary than a historical feel. More fundamentally, though, a habit of skepticism about using the Qur'ân for historical reconstruction has developed. An evident minimalism has set in among historians. For example, need the reference to the help offered to the orphan really need to be a reference to Muhammad and might the verse actually be the source rather than a reflection of the account of Muhammad being an orphan?

I think the minimalism does mean a loss for historical inquiry. For example, the proposal that there was a portion of the Meccan period when *al-rahmân* was used as the primary designation of the deity is interesting, whether it represented a period of the actual preaching or one set of texts later assembled. The salient reasons for the minimalism are the rejection of 'historical' reliability of the Qur'ânic reconstruction and a rejection of the task of writing a narrative of the career of the Prophet based upon the Qur'ân. Reynolds[10] gives a compelling argument for not using the Qur'ân as a historical source, but in doing so may also inadvertently reveal the limits of the position. The template of Qur'ânic chronology still overlays the text, the doctrine of gradual revelation still is structured into the text and the reader is placed in the position of bringing to the text the historical contexts of many of the revelations. Consideration of recent trends in the study of the biography of Muhammad would require a separate essay, but it is to be noted that the abdication of writing the biography of the Prophet (PBUH) to non specialists is odd and regrettable. Here the works of Uri Rubin are an important exception to this unfortunate situation.

The Canonization of the Qur'ân

Issues concerning the fixation of the Qur'ânic canon circulate around two large issues; the official Islamic story about how the Qur'ânic text was fixed and then epigraphic evidence from early manuscripts. The two issues are quite distinct, but tend to interact with each other. The traditional account argues that there was no full collection of Qur'ânic materials during the lifetime of the Prophet (PBUH), but that an initial collection was made after his death by Abu Bakr with a more official one made by a committee appointed

[10] Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Qur'ân and Its Biblical Subtext* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

by the third caliph 'Uthmân. This became the official version of the text, though uncertainties in the transcription led to the establishment of nine schools of reading (al-Iman). Some accounts also suggest a role played by a later Umayyad governor al-Hajjâj in imposing an official version. This is admittedly a complicated and contradictory story that generates skepticism. This skepticism has led to two proposals by Burton and Wansborough, which completely contradict one another, though sharing the same starting point. Both recognize that it was only in the third Islamic century that the full organization of the Islamic sciences, especially the establishment of the law schools clarified the sources of the law and the role of the Qur'ân as source of law. Both Burton and Wansborough see the third century as the period in which the community defined its relation to the Qur'ân. In the case of Wansborough,it was only then that the canon of the Qur'ân was fixed. On the one hand, Burton's argument is that the Qur'ân was in fact collected during Muhammad's (PBUH) lifetime, but the later story appeared to disestablish the authority of the Qur'ân as the primary source of law, represented above all by the famous story of the lost page of the Qur'ân concerning the punishment for adultery and also the structure abrogating and abrogated verses in the Qur'ân. On the other hand, Wansborough argues that *logia,* by which he seems to mean sûras were in independent circulation but were only culled and assembled once it was clear which of them conformed with the construction of Islamic law and the history of the early community that scholars had agreed upon. Neither proposal has met with support among other scholars and contradictory evidence seems sufficient to dismiss them and leave us with the traditional story of the canonization under 'Uthmân as not implausible, but unproven

The epigraphic evidence is more concrete, but also evolving. Two collections of early manuscripts have recently come to light. The first was an older collection made by Bergsträter that was incorrectly claimed to have been destroyed during World War II. These are now being studied under the Corpuscoranicum project. The second is a collection of old manuscripts discovered in the chief mosque of Sana' in Yemen. Both of these collections have again caught the interest of the press in the case of the Corpuscornicum against the wishes of researchers while in the case of the Sana' materials with the active support of researchers.[11] Both of these collections are still not fully worked through, but appear to add significantly to the early Qur'anic fragments.that have already been studied. It should be clear that in many of these early texts we are dealing with what was later recognized as a defective alphabet that undoubtedly did give rise to alternative and variant readings. What we are almost always dealing with is only portions of the text rather than evidence of a different canon of the Qur'ân, so the likelihood of very significant discoveries that might support theories of the late fixation of the Qur'ân is unlikely.[12]

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[11] Andrew Higgins, "The Lost Archive: Missing for Half a Century, a Cache of Photos Spurs Sensitive Research on Islam's Holy Text,' in *Wall Street Journal* (January 18) A1, 2008.

[12] Robert A. Hoyland, "Epigraphy and the Emergence of Arab Identity," in Petra Sijpesteijn *et al.* (ed.), *From al-Andalus to Khurasan: Documents from the Medieval Muslim World* (Leiden: E.J.

Skeptics/Revisionists

As is evident from this section which has treated several trends in historical approaches to the Qur'ân there are a number of positions that have been called revisionist, starting with complete skepticism concerning the traditional Muslim accounts of the formation and history of the Qur'ân.[13] Several points should be underlined. *First*, while the specific proposals may be recent, they are part of a longer term trend of trying to get behind the history of the tradition that began with Goldziher and continued with Schacht with regard to the 'authenticity' of the *hadîth*. Already this work has been attacked by some Muslim scholars, but others have embraced the historical findings as consistent with traditional Muslim scholarship.[14] *Second*, and tragically, sometimes these revisions, often despite the wishes of the scholars involved, have been brought into the public arena to serve polemical interests.[15] It would be the height of naiveté and scholarly myopia simply to decry this development, but it also needs to be said that those involved in this wider project are engaged in polemic against Islam not scholarship. Finally, and most importantly, we underline that the revisionists are all saying very different things, some have in fact moved away from their earlier claims, and none of them have found much acceptance of their more radical proposals in the wider community of scholars of Islam.

Literary Trends

The Qur'ân as Literature

Approaching the Qur'ân as a literary document is also fraught with controversy and potentially offensive to some Muslims. After all there is a fundamental difference between a revealed scripture and a piece of literature. The Qur'ân is insistent that it is not poetry. There cannot be any justification for approaching it as literature. The fact that some Muslim scholars notably Nasr Abu Zayd suffered grievously for doing so only lends weight to this attitude. In response, however, at least two arguments can be marshaled. First, classical Muslim scholars who focused on the rhetorical elegance of the Qur'ân (*balagha*) and articulated the doctrine of the inimitability of the Qur'ân (*ijaz al-Qur'ân*) engaged in literary critical analysis of the text in comparison with works of human

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Brill, 2007); A. Jones, "Arabic Script and the Committing of the Qur'ân to Writing," in C.F. Robinson, (ed.), *Texts, Documents and Artefacts: Islamic Studies in Honour of D.S. Richards* (Leiden: E.J. Brill. 2003).

[13] J. Koren and Y.D. Nevo, "Methodological approaches to Islamic studies," in *Der Islam* 68, 1991.

[14] Wael B. Hallaq, "The Authenticiy of Prophetic Hadîth: A Pseudo-Problem" *Studia Islamic 89*, 1999.

[15] Ibn Warraq, *What the Koran Really Says. Language, Text and Commentary Edited with Translations* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002); Karl-Heinz Ohlig, *The Hidden Origins of Islam: New Research in its Early History* (Amherst-NY: Prometheus Books, 2009).

composition must productively. Second, one of the major features of some contemporary Muslim scholars, such as Sayyid Qutb and Islâhî, has been to try to capture the larger unity of the suras of the Qur'ân, against the tendency of traditional *tafsîr* not to rise above the level of the individual verse in its commentarial practice. Thus again we can see that the firm divide between Muslim and western scholarship is blurred.[16]

Two further points should be made. First, there is no question that the specter of Higher Biblical Criticism does stand behind both the adoption and the resistance to a literary approach. Wansborough's starting point was the widespread recognition that the last two centuries of Biblical study in the forms of source, form, redaction and canonical criticism had damaged the claims of Biblical authority and inerrancy of scripture for many. However, it should be acknowledged that the Qur'ân as a text is radically different from the scriptures of Jews and Christians. It is possible to separate the different sources of the Pentateuch by the name used for the God. It is possible to isolate a shared source in Matthew and Luke, by comparing it with Mark and seeing what has been added to Mark's gospel. Those techniques I would argue are simply irrelevant to the Qur'ân. At the levels of form, redaction and canon criticism the text requires different approaches, as will be indicated below. Second, at the risk of succumbing to transitory academic trends, it is striking how certain features of the Qur'ân: the eclipse of the author; the suspicion of narrative, the privilege of the fragment, intertextuality, the reader in the text and the totality of a textual world, have lead some to see the Qur'ân as a remarkably post-modern text and to pose apposite questions and employ techniques of reading from that context[17]

Orality/Aurality and Writing

Orality has been a crucial notion in much recent scholarship approaching the Qur'ân as literature.[18] While perhaps a bit too much of the presumed 'authenticity' of the oral as

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[16] Navid Kermani, *Gott ist Schön Das ästhetische Erleben des Koran* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1999).

[17] Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971).

[18] Anna M. Gade, *Perfection Makes Practice: Learning, Emotion, and the Recited Qur'ân in Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004); Anna M. Gade, *The Qur'ân: An Introduction* (Oxford, England-Rockport, MA: Oneworld, 2010); William A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qur'ân* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985); Angelika Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition der Mekkanischen Suren* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1981); Angelika Neuwirth, "Images and Metaphors in the Introductory Sections of the Makkan sûras," in G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (ed.), *Approaches to the Qurân* (London: Routledge, 1993); Angelika Neuwirth, "Qur'ân and History a Disputed Relationship: Some Reflections on Qur'ânic History and History in the Qur'ân," in *Journal of Qur'ânic Studies* 5(1), 2003; Angelika Neuwirth, "Orientalism in Oriental Studies? Qur'ânic Studies as a Case in Point," in *Journal of Qur'ânic Studies 9* (2), 2007; Angelika Neuwirth, *et al.* (ed.). *The Quran in Context* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010).

against the artificiality of the written, so successfully destroyed by deconstruction, occasionally inhabits these works, there can be no question that the Qur'ân does exist as much as an oral and aural experience as a read text. That is how it is experienced both by Arabic and non-Arabic speaking Muslims. Neuwirth has added two further features to the orality of the text. First, is the recognition of the original communicative act that was the revelation. Second, there is the claim that at least some of the Qur'ân had early liturgical usage. The first claim has developed a rich interpretative strategy. There is no question that the use of Qur'ânic materials in liturgical seems to have occurred, but the character of this and its comparison with the case of Syriac hymns still needs to be prosecuted in detail, especially when the relatively minor role that the text plays in the primary ritual of salât is considered. Finally, it is noteworthy that much of Neuwirth's work has focused on material from the Meccan period and she has herself indicated that the work on the Medinian material still needs to be done. If the historical import of the chronology of the Qur'ân has receded, it remains central in these literary studies without, however, addressing the paradox this might involve.

The study of what has come to be called the "soundscape" of the Qur'ân has been a central feature of the works of Crapon de Caprona, Neuwirth, Robinson and Sells. The aural qualities of Qur'ân have become a rich area of inquiry that has several important dimensions. The lived experience of the text for all Muslims is more aural than reading. This is, of course, especially the case for the majority of Muslims who are not Arabic speakers, but even for Arabic speakers the aural qualities of Qur'ânic recitation can be said to make for diglossia for all Muslims. Especially relevant here is the experience of learning recitation of the Qur'ân.[19] This inquiry opens up interesting and important questions about the physical and emotional reaction to the text, the useful if controversial analogy to musical performance, and the status held by Qur'ânicly inflected speech as a source of religious authority.

The orality of the experience of the Qur'ân is a vital point for literary approaches. However, the complicated relation of writing to orality that is at the heart both of historical and literary approaches must not be overlooked. In fact it can be asserted that the self conscious way in which the Qur'ân positions itself between the oral and the written is one of its most central features, underlining the ways in which approaches to oral poetry pioneered by Milman Parry and Albert Lord in regard to oral epic are not particularly productive for the literary study of the the Qur'ân. It is conscious of itself as writing as well as recitation.[20] The tensions between oral and written have important literary dimensions as well as historical ones. It is perhaps the most important characteristic of the early Islamic

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[19] Anna M. Gade, *Perfection Makes Practice: Learning, Emotion, and the Recited Qur'ân in Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004); Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qur'ân* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985).

[20] Daniel A. Madigan, *The Qur'ân's Self Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001); Daniel A. Madigan, "Reflections on some Current Directions in Qur'ânic Studies," in *Muslim World* 85:3, 1995.

centuries that an oral culture is becoming a written one, a transformation already inscribed in the Qur'ân. This is not to deny that writing was already a feature of pre-Islamic times. Schoeler[21] has outlined several dimensions of this transition. Writing and orality existed side by side, with writing intimately connected to the authority of the state, while orality was available more for opposition voices. The insistence on oral transmission of the *Hadîth* in Basra and likely elsewhere is our best evidence of competing views of legitimacy and authenticity in relation to the emerging dominance of the written. The germane parallel to the status of the Oral Law in Rabbinic Judaism as it emerged after the first century c.e. and the eventual writing down of the results of the working out of that law shortly before the rise of Islam remains a very useful parallel to emergence of the Islamic law schools by the third century A.H.

Forms, Metaphors, Meter, Rhyme, and Discourse

If attention to the oral has become the bedrock of literary approaches, the classical tools of literary analysis, form, metaphor and rhyme remain the coin of the realm. The reason for this is obvious; the shorter, artistically powerful earlier materials of the Qur'ân do lend themselves more easily to the full deployment of these tools. Both the metaphors of catastrophe and the oath cluster form inform much of the treatment of the earliest sûras.

Relevant to this approach has also been a careful comparison between the form and rhetoric of pre-Islamic poetry, recognizing that corpus is itself contested. The comparison both of form, such as the oath cluster, as well as imagery, such as the meaning of ruins, between the two has been central to this work. Stetkyvech and Homerin have pursued close investigation of the Near Eastern mythological world still represented by the poetry and how it is transformed in Qur'ânic speech.

Attention to the specific power of individual metaphors, such as the metaphors of catastrophe so central to the early sûras is a major tool. Likewise analysis of rhyme, the *saj',* has also been central to articulating the structure and flow of individual sûras. Features of Qur'ânic discourse, especially the assumed omniscience of the implied author, the switching in between first, second and third person, and finally the character of the implied reader in the text, have all been carefully delineated. There is also a strong consensus about the tripartite structure that informs the Meccan corpus of sûras and also a hypothesis that liturgical use helps explain the structure and survival of these individual units.

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[21] Gregor Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read* translate Showkat M. Toorawa (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Gregor Schoeler, "Character and Authenticity of the Muslim Tradition of the Life of Muhammad," in *Arabica* 49:3 (July 2002), 2002; Gregor Schoeler, "Writing and Publishing On the Use and Function of Writing in the First Centuries of Islam," in *Arabica* 44:3 (July), 1997.

The Unity of the Sûra

The starting point of this work has always been the sûra and most specifically seeing each as an artistic whole. This is an important countertrend to work on the chronology of the Qur'ân and the oft expressed opinion that the Qur'ân is a fragmentary and disjointed text. Investigation of the putative structure and unity of the Meccan materials has been the dominant work, but it has been complemented by another group of scholars who make more explicit their interest in affirming the unity of the sûra, especially the longer Medinian chapters.[22] Three features are typical of their work, required in large part by the materials they work on and have been added to the literary tools that scholars employ. Form, metaphor, meter and rhyme retreat in importance and the technique is rather content analysis. The notion of tripartite structure also is no longer useful. What are the subjects of the main subunits of the larger text becomes the first question and recognizing the consistent content units of exhortation, eschatology, polemic, narrative, praise of the Qur'an are terms for what are recognized as content units. Secondly, there is close attention to the hinge or latch verses that connect the different content units, where the breaks are and how they are staged are a central focus.[23] Finally an overall structure to the text is predicated, often a ring structure, which means a close connection between beginnings and ends and generally a structured relation, a deliberate pairing between subunits.

There are three interesting features about this focus on the unity of the sûra that deserve mention. First, to reiterate, this interest conforms to the interest of contemporary Muslim scholars in developing a new more holistic method of Qur'ân interpretation that allows them to speak of the meaning of the entire sûra rather than engaging in the word by word, verse by verse mode of commentary.[24] Second, it opens up the larger question of the concept of the sûra. What is this unit of organization? Are their coherent marks in addition to introductory formula and the naming of them that can be defined? This is an area that requires further research that does have interesting literary and historical implications. Finally, the issues of redaction or editorial criticism still need to be developed beyond the sûra, to the canon as a whole. Of special interest are the questions of what

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[22] Salwa M.S. El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Qur'ân: Relevance, Coherence and Structure* (London: New York: Routledge, 2006); Raymond K. Farrin, "Surat al-Baqara: A Structural Analysis," *Muslim World* 100 (January), 2010; Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'ân: A Study of Islâhî's Concept of Nazm in Tadabbur-i Qur'ân* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986); Mustansir Mir, "The *Sûra* as a Unity: A Twentieth-Century Development in Qur'ân exegesis," in G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (ed.), *Approaches to the Qurân*. (London: Routledge, 1993); Matthias Zahniser, "The Word of God and the Apostleship of 'Isa: A Narrative Analysis of Al Imran 3: 33-63," in *Journal of Semitic Studies* 37, 1991); Matthias Zahniser, "Major Transitions and Thematic Borders in Two Long Sûras: *al-Baqara* and *al-Nisâ',"* in Issa J. Boullata (ed.), *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qur'ân* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000).

[23] M. A S. Abdel Haleem, "Grammatical Shift for Rhetorical Purposes: *Iltifât* and Related Features in the Qur'ân," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 55: 3, 1992.

[24] Mohammed Arkoun, *Lectures du Coran* (Paris: G.-P. Maissonneuve et Larose, 1982).

impact this research might have on understanding the larger issues at the level of canon criticism, helping explain the organization of the text as a whole in addition to the fall back position of organization by length of sûra and the hypothesis of liturgical usage as the bedrock for the formation of the structure of the sûra.

The Narratives of Prophetic History

A separate line of literary research has organized material and explored parallels among the prophetic narratives contained in the Hebrew scriptures and the additional Aggadic literature as well as Christian materials about Jesus and also the earlier prophets.[25] This work has been informed by an insistent rejection of the notion that such comparison is meant to trace indebtedness or influence, but rather it is to lay the groundwork for recognizing the validity and independence of each version of the narrative. The largest goal of this work is articulating the pattern of prophecy and its relation in particular to the proclamations of monotheism that emerged throughout Late Antiquity. There are several features of this prophetic paradigm that open interesting areas of inquiry. First, there is the important theme of prophetic weakness, the disjuncture between human frailty and divine responsibility. Second, there is the model of persecution and failure that structures many of the narratives. Both these themes have interesting consequences in the development of the Islamic idea of the prophet, including the question of whether Muhammad (PBHU) was a prophet from birth or only became one with the first revelation, the eventual formulation of the idea of infallibility. It remains striking that the eventual remarkable success of the Islamic prophet, after the persecutions in Mecca, stands in contrast with the earlier prophetic failures and legends of divine punishment that concluded that narratives of the lives of earlier prophets. Finally, on the literary level modes of invoking and telling these stories are a central feature of the Qur'ânic text and more work needs to be done in elucidating Qur'ânic techniques of storytelling and the notions of narrative that lie behind it.

Qur'ânic Commentary

The study of the history and content of classical *tafsîr* and focused study of individual landmarks in that tradition have been one the major features of recent scholarship in Qur'ânic study.[26] Scholars are developing a much more nuanced understanding of the

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[25] Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); Hameen-Anttila Jaako, "We will Tell You the Best of Stories: A Study of Sura XII," in *Studia Orientlia (Societas Orientalis Fennica)* 1991; Robert Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qur'ân and Muslim Literature* (Richmond: Curzon, 2002).

[26] Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *The Qur'ân and Its Interpreters,* vols I and II (Albany: SUNY Press, 1982-1992); Herbert Berg, *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam: the Authenticity of Muslim Literature from the Formative Period* (Richmond, Surrey : Curzon, 2000); Claude Gilliot, *Exègèse,*

history of commentary and of the contexts and strategies of individual commentators. What remains debated, however, is whether this is an integral part of Qur'ânic studies or a separate field. Some, reflecting something of a sola scriptura attitude, often in the name of recognizing the genius of the Qur'ân and its status as world classic would keep study of the Islamic commentary tradition separate. Others disagree, informed perhaps by the usefulness in being grounded in the somewhat less obscure later history of commentary and the recognition that legacy and outworking of the text in generations of its readers is as important as elucidating the 'original'. It is not clear whether this impasse can be overcome, but it is also clear that a strict either/or position costs the interesting interconnections between the two.

Further Directions of Research

Before concluding let me signal two areas of research in which more work is needed. The first area is in the 'pragmatics' of the Qur'ân. While we have excellent works on learning Qur'ânic recitation, we still need to know more about the uses of the text. The anomalous fact about the Qur'ân—that it does not have as a whole a liturgical function has often been noted. Several short sûras must be recited during prayer, but there is no liturgical usage of the rest of the text. While it is the object of individual pious study we have less sense as to how that is conducted. While recitation of the entire text is a pious act in contexts including honoring the dead and during Ramadan, again we have very little contextualized understanding of these practices or the debates about when Qur'ânic recital is not permitted.[27] The other area where we continue to need works is on the extraordinary efflorescence of Qur'ânic commentary throughout the Muslim world. Cragg[28] and Taji-Farouki's study of nine contemporary intellectuals are excellent models of the approaches to individual commentators. Saeed's collection of essays on the role of the Qur'ân in Indonesia is a good model of a national or regional approach.

Langue et Théologie en Islam: l'exégèse Coranique de Tabari (Paris: Vrin, 1990); Claude Gilliot, "Kontinuität und Wandel in der Klassischen," *Islamischen Koranauslegung (II./VII.–XII./XIX. Jh.),"* in *Der Islam* 85, 2010; A.H. Johns, "On Qur'ânic Exegetes and Exegesis," in Peter Ridell and Tony Street, (ed.), *Islam-Essays in Scripture, Thought and Society: A Festschrift in Honour of Anthony H. Johns* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998); Andrew J. Lane, *A Traditional Mu'tazilite Qur'ân Commentary: the Kashshâf of Jâr Allâh Zamakhsharî d. 538/1144* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2006); Walid A. Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsîr Tradition: the Qur'ân Commentary of al-Tha'labî d. 427/1035* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Nicolai Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung: Studien zur Frûhen Koran Interpretation* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2009); Martin Wittingham, *Al-Ghazali and the Qur'ân: One Book, Many Meanings* (Routledge: Abingdon 2007).

[27]C. Melchert, "When Not to Recite the Qur'ân," in *Journal of Qur'ânic Studies* 11(1), 2009.

[28] Kenneth Cragg, *The Pen and the Faith: Eight Modern Muslim Writers on the Qur'ân* (London: Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1985).

Conclusions

I conclude with attention to three issues that have dominated this survey. First, there is the problem of history, what are the historical claims that are foundational for Islam. Second, there is the separation of the historical and literary that has structured this discussion. Finally, there is a call for a synthesis of the two approaches, recognizing the variety in each, to make possible the kind of synthetic work on the world and the ideas of the Qur'ân and the religious revolution out of which it emerged.

The strong negative response by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars to the two works of 1977 has generated a useful, but still inconclusive conversation about the character of historical study of Islamic origins and the nature of Islam's historical claims. The skepticism of the historian occasioned by the late date of most of our sources and the contradictions that are nevertheless contained within them has been contrasted with the credulity of Orientalists, whose commitment to the factuality of the Arabic sources inadvertently undoes a good portion of the fashionable critique of Orientalism that has also been a feature of the last decades. In addition, there is no question that some attempts in these areas to speak of sources of the Qur'ân, and which deny we can know anything historically about the career of the Prophet (PBUH) and the early community have been part of attempts to discredit Islam, either out of a reprehensible and irresponsible political agenda[29] or by those[30] who want to restage for Islam the critical study of the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament of the last few centuries to discredit the faith.

There are several problems with this polemic strategy. First, it is by no means clear that on balance historical study of Jewish and Christian scriptures, has in fact discredited those scriptures. The stakes here are high and issues complicated, but we have abundant evidence that historical study might just as well be a support of faith for all but the absolute literalist. Second, while there are obviously overlaps, it should be clear that the character of the Qur'ân is different from the Jewish and Christian scriptures and makes historical claims of a different sort from those made about Jewish and Christian scriptures. The Qur'ân does not narrate historical claims that can be skeptically investigated nor does it clearly show signs of its own construction and composition. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we require a careful discussion among Muslims about the character of historical claims and foundations of their faith. It is certainly notable that within the Jewish and Christian tradition notions of the historical development of their traditions have been as much liberating as destabilizing. The Roman Catholic notion of development of doctrine is but one example of the license that later generations have to continue to

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[29] Robert Spencer, *The Complete Infidel's Guide to the Koran* (Washington, DC: Regnery Press, 2009).

[30] Mondher Sfar, *In Search of the Original Koran: The True History of the Revealed Text* (Prometheus Books 2008); Gabriel Sawma, *The Qur'ân Misinterpreted, Mistranslated, and Misread: The Aramaic Language of the Qur'ân* (Plainsborough, NJ: Adibooks, 2006).

articulate their faith. Again, except for the complete literalist, the discovery that generations after the founders have played a crucial role in imagining the past and structuring the future can be seen as authorization for the current generation to continue that work.

In dividing up recent trends in the study of the Qur'ân I think I have been true to the scholarly identities of those involved. As emphasized, though, the two approaches by definition bleed together in individual works, while at the same time approach issues from very different standpoints. Wansborough's historical hypotheses have not found acceptance but the groundwork he has laid for a more wide ranging literary approach especially to Islamic commentary has begun to bear significant fruit. My hope in this essay is that by deliberately juxtaposing literary and historical approaches to the Qur'ân I might lay the groundwork for further synergies that might spark additional research that in fact comfortably combines the questions and approaches of both. I think above all scholarly focus on the concept and form of the sûra might be such a research agenda. We still need tentative but synoptic historical reconstructions informed by literary critical sensitivity and skeptical study of our sources.[31]

In closing I note a third and in many ways a more important area of the study of the Qur'ân that has been eclipsed in the current historical debates and literary analysis: a synoptic view of the main theological themes of the text and the setting of them into their milieu in Late Antiquity. It is noticeable that the main synoptic statements about the thought world of Qur'ân by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars[32] have not been followed by more recent writers. This is certainly too sweeping a statement since those works still provide the bedrock for the various introductory texts mentioned at the beginning of this essay. We still need careful textual studies of the development of individual terms in the Qur'ân[33] and more synoptic experiments as well. The important question to ask is whether the bifurcation of the field into historical and literary inquiry and the controversies surrounding the historical has not made the daunting task of articulating what the message of the Qur'ân is either inappropriate or impossible a question to pose, just as it has effected research into the career of Muhammad (PBUH). Scholarly caution is certainly a virtue, but the pressing responsibility of the field to its larger publics ought

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[31] Robert A. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam* (London-New York: Routledge, 2001); *Michael Lecker, Muslims, Jews, and Pagans: Studies on Early Islamic Medina (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995); Michael Lecker, The "Constitution of Medina": Muhammad's First Legal Document (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 2004)*.

[32] Kenneth Cragg, *The Mind of the Qur'ân: Chapters in Reflection* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973); Kenneth Cragg, *The Qur'ân and the West* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006); Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran* (New York: Books for Libraries, 1980); Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ân* (Montreal: McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies: McGill University Press, 1966); Fazlur Rahman, *Major themes of the Qur'ân* (Minneapolis, MN: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980).

[33] Erik S. Ohlander, "Fear of God (*taqwâ*) in the Qur'ân: Some Notes on Semantic Shift and Thematic Context," in *Journal of Semitic Studies* L:1 (Spring), 2005.

to inspire a return to what used to be characterized as a 'history of ideas' inquiry at a profound level into the intellectual background, internal development and religious revolution that the Qur'ân exemplifies.

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