THE QUR'ĀN AND
ITS EXEGESIS

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The Qur'ān and its Exegesis

Selected Texts
with Classical and Modern
Muslim Interpretations

by

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PREFACE TO THE GERMAN EDITION

This selection of texts on Qur'ānic exegesis is intended to provide for the non-orientalist reader an impression of the exegetic activity of the Muslims. In accordance with this goal, an attempt has been made to present clearly certain general features of Qur'ānic exegesis within Islam without complicating the issue by presenting too great a number of individual peculiarities. A wealth of exegetical works on the Qur'ān have been produced within Islam, a large part of which have been treated recently by Muḥammad Ḥusain adh-Dhahabī in the extensive Arabic work *At-tafsīr wa-l-mufassirūn* ('Exegesis and the Exegetes'), 3 vols, Cairo 1381 A.H./1961–2. Although there is still much to be said with regard to Qur'ānic exegesis, the present work is concerned much less with an elaboration of this topic as with a presentation of representative Muslim thought.

Central to the selection are important representatives of 'classical' Sunnite exegesis, who, however, are accompanied by representatives of other points of view. The fact that Zamakhsharī occupies a large part of the text is due not only to his significance but also to the fact that his texts are well suited for a selection of this type. Ṭabarī, for example, is frequently too verbose. On the other hand, Baiḍāwī is more often included because he often skilfully makes Zamakhsharī's text more concise or, for dogmatic reasons, offers another interpretation. In making the selections, care had to be taken not to assume too great a knowledge of Islam on the part of the reader. For this reason the texts have been arranged topically rather than according to the individual exegetes. The texts themselves will receive varying interest. For the most part they reflect the straightforward, technical course of the exegesis, but some have been abbreviated, specifically those of little significance to the non-orientalist.

The individual texts are usually preceded by the Qurʾānic verses, printed in italics. In the Muslim texts themselves this is not always the case, since the exegetes and their pupils knew the Qurʾānic passages by heart and thus could limit themselves to brief allusions. For the German version of the Qurʾānic text, the translation by Rudi Paret has been used, with certain exceptions. Deviations resulted necessarily from the content of the commentaries, and occasionally minor alterations have been made without any indication to the reader. To justify each change would have demanded too much space. Thus, if the reader wants to delve more deeply into the subject, he will do well to consult Paret's translation. In translating the commentaries, I have proceeded somewhat more freely than Paret has in relation to the Qurʾānic texts. Again, too many explanations would have been necessary otherwise. On the whole the footnotes are limited in general to references that are essential for an immediate understanding of the texts. Some supplementary material is also to be found in the form of brief notes that have been incorporated into the index. The usual eulogies that follow certain names in Arabic texts have been omitted in the translation.

The Qurʾānic references are cited according to the so-called Kūfic verse numbers (see p. 27). The verse numbers of the Flügel edition, which is still widely used in the West, have been indicated following a diagonal whenever they differ from the Kūfic numbers. When such an indicator is not present, the numbers agree. Dates refer to the Christian calendar unless otherwise indicated; the Islamic calendar dates from the Hijra (see p. 10). The bibliography at the end is intended only to give the reader a very general basis for orientation and at the same time signify those writings and editions which were utilized the most by the author. For the introduction I owe much to these and other writings, without mentioning them specifically. Now and then I have also adopted unconsciously certain modes of expression.

A considerable length of time has elapsed since this book was written, and it is obvious that during this time new contributions to the subject have been published. In the realm of newly published contributions to Qurʾānic research, I would like to direct the reader's attention first of all to Paret's commentary to his translation of the Qurʾān (Rudi Paret, *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz*, Stuttgart, 1971), and then also to Nabia Abbott, *Studies in*

Arabic Literary Papyri, Vol. II, *Qurʾānic Commentary and Tradition*, Chicago, 1967, a book which provides us with new knowledge on the problem of written documentation in early Islamic times.

In addition to the editor of the Bibliothek des Morgenlandes and the publishing house, my thanks go also to Professor Paret, who not only motivated me to do research on this subject but also was kind enough to read the manuscript and make several comments concerning its content. Points of information raised by specific questions were provided to me by Professor Spitaler. Special thanks go to Herr Dr Khoury and Frau Dr Jacobi, who were unselfish with their help in selecting and interpreting the texts, and thus have contributed significantly to the completion of this book. Finally, the members of the local Institut für Orientalistik have assisted me in correcting the manuscript. Their part too should be mentioned specifically at this point.

Saarbrücken   Helmut Gätje
1971

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

This edition of Helmut Gätje's *Koran und Koranexegese* provides for the English-speaking world a valuable collection of classical and modern Muslim interpretations of key passages of the Qur'ān. Because of its topical arrangement, this collection provides a survey of Muslim faith based on original Arabic sources that have been inaccessible to the majority of English readers. This work will thus be just as valuable to the general reader who has an interest in Islam as to the specialist. This English edition is based on both the German and the original Arabic texts. A literal rendering of the German would not have provided the best English translation of the original Arabic.

For the English version of the Qur'ānic text, the translation by Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955), has been used, with certain exceptions. It should be noted that Arberry's title is misleading to the general reader. It reflects the orthodox Muslim view that the Arabic text of the Qur'ān *is* the Qur'ān, and that any rendering into another language is an 'interpretation' and not a 'translation'. Arberry's version is, in fact, closer to the Arabic than most English translations. While this has the advantage of accurately reflecting the Arabic text, at times it results in ambiguity (reflecting the ambiguity of the Arabic) or rather awkward English, as for instance in the literal rendering of Arabic idioms. As with Helmut Gätje's use of Rudi Paret's translation of the Qur'ān (see the Preface to the German Edition), alterations were necessitated, sometimes by the content of the commentaries, and at other times for reasons of style followed in the English edition. Occasionally, significant interpretations in the translations by Arberry and Paret, when not followed in the English edition, are cited in footnotes.

In all Qur'ānic references the verse numbers of the Egyptian

standard edition are given first, followed after a diagonal by the numbers of the European edition by Gustav Flügel, where they differ. In the Qur'ānic quotations at the beginning of each section of commentary, the verse numbers have not been included in the text of the translations. The reader can determine the exact location of each verse, however, since the last line of each verse (according to the Egyptian standard edition) is indented, except where the quotation consists of only one verse.

Numerous transliterations of Arabic terms appearing in Gätje's text have been omitted in the English edition, when it seemed that they were included only because they appear in Paret's translation of the Qur'ān, which is adopted by Gätje, and when they are not essential for understanding the commentary. On the other hand, transliterations of Arabic terms not included in Gätje's translation of the commentaries have sometimes been added in the English edition, where it seemed necessary for proper understanding of the text. A standard method of transliteration followed by English-speaking orientalists and in English editions of the Islamic World Series has been adopted.

The translator and editor of the English edition has added notes (in square brackets), which provide references to English literature and to other works that have appeared since the publication of the German edition. A new and expanded bibliography with annotations has also been prepared for the English edition. It is designed for the English-speaking reader, but also includes classic and standard works in other languages. An attempt was made to include all English editions of works cited by Gätje where they exist. The list of Arabic works includes only the editions used by Gätje. The equivalent Western dates have been added to citations of oriental works.

Certain corrections and improvements in the translation mentioned in reviews of the German edition have been made in the English edition. For these improvements we are especially indebted to Professor Rudi Paret and Professor A. F. L. Beeston.

East Lansing, Michigan
1975

Alford T. Welch

INTRODUCTION

1. ARABIA BEFORE ISLAM

With the founding of a new religion in the first half of the seventh century, Muḥammad created the pre-conditions for the entrance of the Arabs into world history and the founding of the Islamic world empire. The fact that Arabia had remained outside the mainstream of world history until then had to do with the geographical position and nature of the land: the Arabian peninsula consists for the most part of desert regions and is difficult to reach from the neighbouring cultural centres of Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia. The peninsula's climate is determined essentially by the paucity and irregularity of precipitation during the hot season. Periodic summer rains fall only in the higher mountain altitudes of southern Arabia, making self-reliant agriculture possible only through the use of dams. Here, in the first century B.C., separate states developed, whose survival was supported by their role as middlemen in the trade between the Mediterranean region and the Indian Ocean.[1] Trade with the Mediterranean was accomplished in part via the Red Sea and in part on land via the so-called 'incense route' along the east coast of the Red Sea. The significance of these states, whose inhabitants differed from the remaining populace of the peninsula also in their language,[2] had, of course, by the time of Muḥammad already largely diminished. After an intervening period of Ethiopian rule, southern Arabia had by that time become a Persian province.

Other attempts to establish states had occurred in the border regions of the Fertile Crescent.[3] In contrast, the interior desert regions of Arabia offered only poor prospects for the founding of states of longer duration. Here there were settled tribes in separate oases, while the Bedouins lived a partially or fully nomadic existence based on the herding of animals. In general, both among the Bedouins and the settled peoples, there existed a division into tribes and clans, each of which elected a chief. The peculiar conditions of the

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severe Bedouin way of life often led to conflict and feuding, which however did not result in the total absence of a common culture. Rather, common religious and judicial customs had developed, among which was the significant 'truce' during four months of the year.[4] During this time of 'sacred peace' one could safely undertake the pilgrimage to various religious sites and at the same time conduct trade without being disturbed. Around the religious sites themselves, there was a 'protected area' (*ḥimā*) or 'holy area' (*ḥaram*), in which neither the spilling of blood nor the apprehension of criminals was permitted.

A special beneficiary of these religious and judicial customs was the city of Mecca, which lay on the incense route and lived almost exclusively from trade. From here the inhabitants, who belonged largely to the Quraish tribe, sent out caravans in various directions and thus came into contact with the cultural centres of the north. Inside its walls Mecca sheltered one of the most significant religious sites, the cube-shaped structure of the Ka'ba (cube), in which lies a black meteorite. In addition, various other holy places, which became centres of annual pilgrimage, were to be found in the surroundings of Mecca.

An important basis for the continuation of an encompassing culture was achieved through the formation of a common Arabic literary language. This language probably originated with a single dialect, and only gradually became a kind of common 'standard' language which differed from the daily speech patterns of the Bedouins, and yet has remained to a certain degree in living contact with the dialects. With this elevated speech, which did not pose insurmountable demands in terms of one's ability to differentiate linguistically, Arabic had entered a mature phase, and even if the language of Muhammad deviates from this language in many ways, a certain influence is unmistakable. From the poetry of the pre-Islamic Arabs various individual examples have survived, partly because the language of these poems was later used to gain philological understanding of the Qur'ān.

A frequently recurring theme in these poems is the representation of relentless fate, which one cannot escape but, rather, can only face with patience and manly courage. One finds next to nothing in the poems concerning specific religious concepts of pre-Islamic items, the so-called period of 'ignorance' (*jāhiliyya*). This may be related to the fact that the inherited religious concepts had already

lost much of their efficacy by this time. Also, since Muslim descendants of the ancient Arabs essentially showed interest in the pagan religious concepts only to the extent that they were mentioned by Muḥammad, we know little about the details of the pre-Islamic forms of religion in Arabia. Also, the older inscriptions that have survived in various regions in Arabia do not convey a complete picture. Nevertheless, it is certain that a series of masculine and feminine gods were worshipped, sometimes belonging to individual tribes and having their place of residence at specific locations. In Mecca, the worship of the three goddesses al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā, and Manāt,[5] as well as the tribal god Hubal continued until the time of Muḥammad, when these cults were partly incorporated into that of Allāh. Significant in this connection is that a more general term for 'God' had developed already in pre-Islamic times with the word Allāh, which came from *al-ilāh* (the god). This term could at first be applied to the specific tribal god, but also offered the linguistic basis for the concept of a High God. Next to the gods stood the spirits (*jinn*[6]), which were viewed as half 'worldly' and half 'otherworldly' beings and which could enter into direct contact with certain individuals. The soothsayers or seers (*kuhhān*, sing. *kāhin*), who could interpret dreams, make prophecies, and do various other kinds of supernatural things, are said to have been inspired by such spirits. These seers clothed their pronouncements in the form of a rhymed prose called *saj'* and showed themselves through their speech and the content of their statements to be the mouthpieces of their specific spirits. The legitimacy of the pronouncement was strengthened by impressive oaths. Also the poets, who were called 'knowing ones' (*shu'arā'*, sing. *shā'ir*), brought one into contact with the spirits.

The fact that the traditional religious views of the Arabs had already lost some of their vitality by Muḥammad's time may be attributed to a certain inherent destiny. However, one cannot view this development without relating it to the incursions of Judaism and Christianity, which had penetrated into the Arabian interior in spite of all the hostile conditions for propagation. Apparently, after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus (70 A.D.) and the unsuccessful rebellion of Bar Kochba (135 A.D.), large groups of Jews immigrated to Arabia, where they settled in closed units and remained faithful to the strict monotheism of their religion, despite their adoption of the Arabic language and way of life.

Christianity penetrated into Arabia from the surrounding cultural centres. Syria, Palestine, and Egypt were provinces of Christian Byzantium, and the majority of the populace under Persian rule in Mesopotamia was also Christian. In addition, there was the influence from Ethiopia, which had elevated Monophysite Christianity to the status of a state religion in the fourth century, and had been especially influential in southern Arabia. The influence of Christianity was naturally strongest in the border areas and in the newer, developing Arab states situated there. In Arabia itself there seems to have been only a single Christian community of duration, and that was in the southern part of the land (Najrān). Eremites, who travelled into the desert to evangelize, were important for the spread of the Christian faith. They belonged mostly not to the Byzantine state religion, but were rather members of the Monophysite or Nestorian confessions. Although these missionaries, whose ascetic piety commanded the respect of the heathen Arabs, had few direct successes to show for their work, they had the effect, together with the Jews, that a number of Arabs became inclined toward monotheistic and eschatological concepts. Such ancient Arab seekers of God, who confessed formally to neither Christianity nor Judaism, are designated (in the Qur'ān) with the word ḥunafā' (sing. ḥanīf), the actual meaning of which is still not completely clear today.[7] In Mecca and Medina, Muḥammad's centres of influence, there were no united Christian communities, but probably single individuals of this faith, who belonged for the most part to the slave class and could rarely show evidence of a higher educational niveau.

2. MUḤAMMAD AND HIS TEACHINGS

Muḥammad, who for the devout Muslim stands as the 'seal' (khātam) at the end of a line of prophets and is usually designated simply as 'the Prophet' (an-nabī) or 'the messenger of God' (rasūl Allāh),[8] was born in Mecca around 570 as the posthumous son of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib of the clan of Hāshim of the tribe Quraish. Then, when he was six years old, his mother Āmina died, and the orphan, Muḥammad, grew up at first under the guardianship of his grandfather 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, and then of his father's brother Abū Ṭālib (died 619), whom he is supposed to

have accompanied on a business trip to Syria. As a young man Muḥammad entered into the services of the rich merchant widow Khadīja, whom he married when he was approximately twenty-five years old. Although Khadīja was considerably older than Muḥammad, the marriage progressed very happily and was blessed with several children, of whom however only the daughters survived beyond early youth.[9] It appears that Muḥammad did not at first enter into the public life of his native city in any special way.

We know very little concerning the inner development that led Muḥammad, at the age of forty or more, to go before his countrymen with religious revelations. According to the Muslim tradition, the calling occurred suddenly; however, it is known that Muḥammad had occupied himself with religious questions for some time previously, either consciously or unconsciously. The decisive point for Muḥammad's mission as a prophet originated, of course, with the conviction that he was a chosen 'messenger' (rasūl) of God who was given responsibility in matters of faith, not only for himself but also for his people. In this awakening lies the actual experience of his calling which occurred once initially and then led to a continuing awareness of mission. Traditional Muslim accounts, according to which an interruption (fatra) is supposed to have occurred after the first revelations, show that this consciousness of mission established itself only gradually.

In the Qur'ān itself it is stated that the Qur'ān was sent down in the month of Ramaḍān (Sūra 2:185/181), and also in 'the night of destiny' (Sūra 97:1), and in 'a blessed night' (Sūra 44:3/2).[10] These passages seem to indicate that the first revelations were experienced in this night. The oldest part of the revelation is traditionally held to be Sūra 96:1–5 or Sūra 74:1–7.[11] The accuracy of this view remains unverified, considering, among other things, the possibility that the oldest parts of the revelation have not even survived. In any case, the certainly very old beginning of Sūra 96 contains in the command 'Recite!' (iqra') directed to Muḥammad a leitmotif of the whole revelation, which also at other points proclaims again and again that Muḥammad is not to speak in his own name but rather to repeat something that has been conveyed to him word for word. The revelation thus involves a recitation or something to be recited; and this indeed is the meaning of the probably originally Aramaic word qur'ān, which came to signify the revelation in its totality as well as single parts of it. With such a

concept concerning the form and content of the revelation, the possibility arose of using parts of the revelation as liturgical texts in the worship service.

Externally, all of Muḥammad's revelations were clothed in the form of rhymed prose (saj‘), the effect of which may be exemplified here by the following translation of Sūra 93:

> I swear by the splendour of the light,
> And by the silence of the night,
> That the Lord shall never forsake thee,
> Nor in His hatred take thee;
> Truly for thee shall be winning
> Better than all beginning.
> Soon shall the Lord console thee, grief no longer control thee,
> And fear no longer cajole thee.
> Thou wert an orphan boy, yet the Lord found room for thy head,
> When thy feet went astray, were they not to the right path led?
> Did He not find thee poor, yet riches around thee spread?
> Then on the orphan boy, let thy proud foot never tread,
> And never turn away the beggar who asks for bread,
> But of thy Lord's bounty ever let praise be sung and said.[12]

While the distance between rhymes is relatively short in the older parts of the Qur'ān, which are spoken in a lively, passionate style for the most part, it increases gradually in the later parts, and, correspondingly, the style becomes more copious and more tranquil. In his use of rhymed prose Muḥammad was influenced by the ancient Arab soothsayers (kuhhān, sing. kāhin). The same is true for some conspicuous oaths which are found in the earliest revelations.

The question concerning the basic themes of the earliest revelations has been answered in various ways. Without doubt Muḥammad was at an early stage moved by the belief in a last judgment, where man would be held responsible for his actions. This idea is quite impressively described. Scenes from the end of the world are supposed to convey to the listeners the horrors which the evil-doers will one day experience. After the end of the world comes the resurrection of the dead and the judgment; and then the stay in paradise or hell follows. Later in the Qur'ān, these thoughts are expanded. This is true also for the image of the almighty and benevolent God, which apparently already at an early time co-

existed with that of the judging and punishing God. God created heaven and earth as well as all creatures, concerning which the Qur'ān places special emphasis on the creation of man. The process of the creation is not terminated with a single act but rather repeats itself constantly in the genesis and development of new life. This serves also as a sign that God can resurrect the dead. God's goodness reveals itself especially in that he sends rain to the arid land and thus creates nourishment for man. For all this he deserves praise. Man is to surrender himself to God completely (aslama, infinitive islām) and in so doing becomes a Muslim. His relationship to God corresponds to that of a slave or servant (‘abd) to his master (rabb), who stands by him as a protector or patron (maulā[13]), friend (walī) or helper (nāṣir), on whom one can depend. In contrast to the believer (mu'min), is the unbeliever (kāfir), a man who does not acknowledge the oneness of God, but rather associates (ashraka, participle mushrik) other gods with him. It seems that Muḥammad conceived the thought of a single God quite early; however, the strong emphasis upon this concept probably first arose during the confrontation with the pagan Meccans.

Much is to be found even in Muḥammad's earliest revelations that would not have been thinkable without the emanations of Christianity and Judaism. This is even more the case with some of the later revelations. If one assumes, contrary to the traditional Muslim accounts that say otherwise, that the merchant Muḥammad could read and write, it is remarkable that the assimilation of Jewish and Christian thought occurred exclusively by way of mouth. Disregarding the fact that a corresponding literature in translation could hardly have existed, the direct borrowing of aspects of the older texts of revelations would have been irreconcilable with Muḥammad's sense of mission. When the text of the Qur'ān in places resembles the biblical tradition fairly closely, Muḥammad was never so conscious of such a resemblance as to have considered the content of his revelation not to be an inspiration conveyed to him personally.

Yet Muḥammad naturally knew that the Jews and Christians possessed scriptures. From a certain point onwards he held the conviction that the essential contents of these texts were identical with the contents of his revelations and that, with the Qur'ān, God had in a certain sense provided an Arabic equivalent to the other scriptures. The Qur'ān also, like the older books of revelations,

is a holy scripture that has its origin in a heavenly archetype (*umm al-kitāb*[14]). Muḥammad reproduces the content of this text faithfully in his revelations.

With this conviction, Muḥammad gained at the same time a special understanding of his own historical situation. History is the history of salvation, and the men of God of the Hebrew Bible, as well as Jesus, are prophets or messengers whom God sent to mankind from time to time in order to inform them of his laws and warn them against disbelief. Several times already in this world, that is, even before the Last Judgment, God has inflicted devastating punishment upon disbelievers, as for example in the story of the Flood. Muḥammad himself is the last in this series of prophets. He repeats and confirms their revelations. So it is understandable if Muḥammad many times saw the older prophets in the light of his own situation. They experienced similar things in their confrontations with the disbelievers as he did with the pagan Arabs. Through this view of things Muḥammad gained courage and hope for God's support.

Although one might assume that Muḥammad would manifest a special interest in the fate of his predecessors, the amount of biblical material reproduced in the Qur'ān, taken on the whole, is relatively small. The material extends in time from the creation story and the expulsion from paradise, and the legends of Cain and Abel,[15] Noah and the Flood, Abraham and his sons, Moses and Aaron, Joseph and his brothers, as well as further references to figures in the Hebrew Bible, to Jesus, of whom Muḥammad knew well only the apocryphal version of his birth and childhood. Taken independently, references to such materials are of varying scope and significance. The Qur'ānic accounts differ in places quite substantially from the biblical accounts and often prove to be very sketchy.[16]

At first, Muḥammad recited his revelations to a small circle of friends and relatives and only later went before a larger public. Among the first adherents to the new faith were Muḥammad's wife Khadīja, his cousin and later son-in-law 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and Muḥammad's client (*maulā*) and adopted son Zaid ibn Ḥāritha. Along with others, the rich and upright merchant Abū Bakr allied himself with them and stood by Muḥammad faithfully during all attacks and dangers and later became the first successor (*khalīfa*, 'caliph') to Muḥammad, assuming leadership of the community (*umma*[17]) of believers. At first the Meccans

did not give Muḥammad's revelations any special attention. This changed, however, when Muḥammad began energetically to oppose polytheism and the worship of idols. The Meccans now had to be concerned about their religious festivals and the profitable business that accompanied them. In spite of increasing opposition, Muḥammad remained steadfast, with the possible exception of a temporary compromise. In his polemic against paganism, he proceeded from the assumption that his opponents recognized the existence of God, but associated other gods with him. In relation to this, Muḥammad pointed to the chaos which, among other things, would follow for the world as a result of such polytheism. Occasionally, the Qur'ān refers to the idols as totally worthless (*bāṭil*), but in general they seem to be regarded as angels, satans, or spirits (*jinn*). But they are clearly not gods.

The Meccans reacted to Muḥammad's revelations first of all by attempting to make him look ridiculous and by rejecting his claim to be a prophet. They portrayed him as one possessed by a spirit (*majnūn*), a sorcerer (*sāḥir*), a wizard (*mashūr*), a seer of the old order (*kāhin*), and also as a poet (*shā'ir*). Countering these accusations Muḥammad pointed above all to the character of his revelation, which was so structured that no being except God could have produced it. So, the Qur'ān became a miracle (*mu'jiza*[18]) that prohibited Muḥammad's opponents from doubting his mission. The Qur'ān was the 'sign of proof' for Muḥammad in the same sense that the miracles were proofs for Jesus and the other prophets. Muḥammad himself did not perform any other miracles.[19] Just as this line of thought had little impact, the references to the coming judgment and the punishments to be expected seem to have made little impression on the opponents. Muḥammad was challenged to name the exact time of the judgment and was ridiculed. Meanwhile things went further. Means of persecution based on social superiority were put into effect and other types of oppression were employed against the believers. Muḥammad himself was protected by his clan, which had to endure a prolonged boycott as a consequence.

To escape the growing pressure, more than a hundred faithful men and women emigrated to Christian Ethiopia in the year 615. During this time of oppression Muḥammad won the allegiance of a significant individual, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who subsequently became the second caliph, but in 619 Muḥammad lost his wife

and his uncle Abū Ṭālib in death. In about 620 Muḥammad tried in vain to win the tribe of Thaqīf in the neighbouring city aṭ-Ṭā'if to his cause. He was successful, however, with the two chief tribes of Yathrib, a place which through the influence of the Jews who settled there was also called by the originally Aramaic name al-Madīna, 'the city, the court district', which was later construed as 'the city of the Prophet' (*madīnat an-nabī*). These tribes in Medina accepted the obligation for the defensive and offensive protection of Muḥammad and a group of about seventy Meccans who emigrated to Medina by September of 622. The Islamic system of dating stems from this emigration (*hijra*).

Through the stubborn opposition of the Meccans, Muḥammad became firmly convinced that such an obstinacy would be impossible if God himself had not wanted it. God not only allows the disbelievers to wander astray, but actually leads them astray and has determined from the beginning that they shall be damned. Having reached this conviction in predestination while in Mecca, a teaching which of course does not appear uniformly in all parts of the Qur'ān, Muḥammad carried it with him to Medina and reiterated it there.

In contrast to Mecca, which was largely inhabited by a single tribe, Medina had a relatively loose political structure. The inhabitants earned a living through agriculture and the cultivation of palms and were divided into various tribes. In this way they became more and more involved in feuding and thus had reason to look for an arbiter who stood above the factions; this they hoped to find in Muḥammad. Also, in Medina alongside the chief tribes of Aus and Khazraj, who became the 'helpers' (*anṣār*) of the Prophet, three Jewish tribes had been living for a long time. Thus, the concepts of monotheism were not so strange to the Arab populace of this city as they had been to the Meccans. At first Muḥammad encouraged the 'emigrants' (*muhājirūn*) to fraternize with the newly converted 'helpers', and then he issued a communal decree which banned any feuding in the region of Medina and made all inhabitants responsible for the defence of the total community. Muḥammad, as the Messenger of God, was the final judge in all disputes. Through such regulations, which were also valid for the disbelievers and Jews of Medina, the old tribal ordinances were not in fact suspended but probably in actuality were made powerless. Muḥammad came inevitably to assume a political role in Medina, and he so mastered this role that the union of religion and politics in the widest sense

became the continuing feature of Islamic communal government.

A severe disappointment met Muḥammad in Medina at the hands of the Jews. It appears that shortly before the emigration Muḥammad had introduced the Friday worship service under the influence of the Jewish Sabbath, without intending a complete cessation of all work. Jewish influences also appeared in fasting and in the form of prayers, which were for a time performed facing in the direction of Jerusalem. When, in spite of all this, the majority of the Jews still did not want to recognize the prophetic mission of Muḥammad, he became convinced that they had falsified the revelation conveyed to them, a claim for which he found support in various examples from biblical stories. Muḥammad remained friendly towards the Christians for a longer time; yet in the course of time he criticized them too, primarily for dogmatic reasons. For example, Muḥammad held the doctrine that Christ was the Son of God to be polytheistic. Also, under Docetic influence, he rejected the fact of Jesus' crucifixion. Yet, the Jews and the Christians, along with the so-called Sabaeans and the Zoroastrians,[20] came to enjoy a special position in later Islam as members of a book-religion (*ahl al-kitāb*, literally 'people of the book'). In general, after payment of a tribute (*jizya*) they could remain true to their faith and were then viewed as wards (*dhimmiyyūn*, sing. *dhimmī*).

Following the confrontation with Judaism, which led to the expulsion, and even the violent elimination, of Medinan Jews, the direction of prayer (*qibla*) was re-oriented towards Mecca rather than Jerusalem. For Muḥammad, who now once again leaned more strongly upon the Arab culture, the relationship of the holy places of Mecca to the earlier salvation-history came to be represented in the claim that the 'Ḥanīf',[21] Abraham, with his son Ishmael, had built the foundation walls of the Ka'ba. Henceforth, Mecca became the central place of worship of Islam, and in this way various heathen rites came to an end. The pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca is still today an obligation (*farḍ*) for every Muslim who is able to make such a trip. As further basic duties that the individual must perform, Islam has the confession (*shahāda*) that there is no god except God (Allāh) and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, the ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*[22]) to be performed five times daily, fasting (*ṣaum*) during the day in the month of Ramaḍān, and the payment of alms (*zakāt*[23]).

With the change of the *qibla* towards Mecca, a firm political goal was also established at the same time: the conquering of the Holy Places. From the fight for Mecca, which was directed against unbelievers, the idea of the holy war (*jihād*) developed. This became a duty for the community of believers, from which the individual could escape only when there were enough other fighters available.[24] Of course, a desire for booty also came into play in the military undertakings that followed. Muḥammad himself received one-fifth of the booty from each raid.

In the fight against the Meccans and in other campaigns, Muḥammad showed himself to be a patient and resolute politician, who however was not unaware of the dangers posed to him by the 'hypocrites' (*munāfiqūn*) in Medina, who confessed in public to be Muslims but were actually unconverted. Despite many setbacks, in March of 628 in Ḥudaibiya not far from Mecca, Muḥammad was able to conclude a treaty that granted him the right to make the pilgrimage the following year. In January of 630 Mecca fell to him without bloodshed, after he had previously met defeat in a campaign against the Byzantines. The following 'Year of the Deputations' saw many Arab legations in Medina, who declared that their tribes were joining the theocratic community of the Prophet. In February and March of 632 Muḥammad undertook the last pilgrimage and firmly established on this occasion the Islamic calendar, in so far as it proceeds strictly according to the lunar year without inserted months.[25] A little later the Prophet became ill and died on the 7th or 8th of June 632 in Medina in the arms of his old companion Abū Bakr and his daughter 'Ā'isha, whom Muḥammad had married in Medina along with several other women and to whom he was especially close.

In the Christian occident, Muḥammad was considered for a long time merely as a heretic; later, however, he was accused of having been a deceiver who used the revelation solely as means to an end. Further, it was suggested that he had spread his religion with the sword and had shied away neither from breaking treaties nor from assassination. Also, his alleged sensuality and the large number of his marital or semi-marital relationships were held up against him. Although there may be some validity to these allegations, the historian must not concern himself with judging Muḥammad according to the values of Christian morality. One must view him in the context of his times and consider the conditions that prevailed

in Arabia at that time. Measured by these standards, Muḥammad fulfilled a thoroughly moral mission. For example, he put limits on polygamy, and from a certain point onwards he restricted his own desire for marriage. He lessened blood revenge and also tried to alleviate the lot of slaves. And the fact that he held fast to the essential content of his mission even in the face of severe and depressing setbacks can be taken as proof of an inner truthfulness.

3. ISLAM AFTER MUḤAMMAD

After the death of Muḥammad, who had given no instructions regarding his succession in the leadership of the community, there was a series of defections, together with the appearance of various other prophets in the Arabian peninsula. Thanks to the determined intervention of the Prophet's Companions, Abū Bakr and 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, this dangerous crisis was surmounted. Abū Bakr was appointed as the first successor (*khalīfa*) of the Prophet, and after his death (on 22 August 634), 'Umar assumed the leadership of the community. Of special significance in overcoming this first crisis, which was later followed by others, was the unifying influence which the large military expeditions exerted upon the Arabs. Within a few years the Byzantine provinces of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, as well as the Persian territory in Mesopotamia, were conquered; and around the middle of the seventh century the Sassanid empire completely ceased to exist. With this and other vast conquests which followed, the external foundations for the development of Islam as a world religion were laid. One may ask whether Muḥammad himself had striven towards such a development. Whereas at first he considered himself to be an envoy to the Arabs, later he gradually went beyond this limitation in his confrontations with the Jews and Christians and in the founding of the theocracy. He came to regard himself as the envoy to all unbelievers, and for this reason one can say that his successors acted completely according to his wishes. On the other hand, the expansion of Islam into a number of areas with ancient cultures had internal repercussions upon Islam which neither Muḥammad nor his first successors could have foreseen. Also, with the exception of the position of their language, the Arabs were unable to retain an enduring position of pre-eminence in the new cultural situation.

After the assassination of 'Umar by a Persian slave (on 23 November 644), arguments regarding the question of succession ensued. 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, one of the Quraish of the clan of Umayya, was chosen to succeed 'Umar; but opposition arose immediately and led eventually to 'Uthmān's murder by Muslim opponents on 17 June 656 while he was at prayer in Medina. 'Uthmān's successor was the son-in-law and cousin of the Prophet, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, who, however, was not universally acknowledged and who had an especially energetic opponent in the Umayyad governor of Syria, Mu'āwiya. In the midst of severe internal strife 'Alī was fatally assaulted on 22 January 661. Mu'āwiya then established control of the caliphate, which remained for nearly a century in the hands of relatives of the family of Umayya, who resided in Damascus. The consequences of this struggle lasted for a long time. While the majority of Muslims acknowledged the caliphate of the Umayyads, or at least considered permissible any choice for caliph so long as he was from the tribe of Quraish, the supporters of 'Alī, who obtained recruits mainly from regions of Iraq and Persia, continued to maintain the view that the political and religious leader (imām[26]) of the community (umma) must be a member of the family of the Prophet. Following 'Alī this could only mean one of his descendants from his marriage to Muḥammad's daughter, Fāṭima. This would include only al-Ḥasan, who for his part renounced claim to the title of caliph, and al-Ḥusain, who met his death on 10 October 680 at Karbala in Iraq in a battle over the caliphate. One refers to the supporters of 'Alī and his family as Shī'ites, from the Arabic expression shī'at 'Alī (party of 'Alī). Over against them stand the Sunnites, the 'people of the tradition and the community' (ahl as-sunna wa-l-jamā'a[27]).

The Shī'ites split up later into various sects. One small group, called the Zaidites after a great-grandson of 'Alī, Zaid ibn 'Alī (died 740), made no distinction between the descendants of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusain regarding the caliphate and, in their theology, stood relatively close to the Sunnites. The majority of the Shī'ites, on the other hand, believed in a hereditary imāmate and in the divine knowledge being transmitted from the father to the oldest son within the descendants of al-Ḥusain. Now when Ismā'īl, the son of the sixth imām, died in 762 before his father, a further schism resulted. A minority, in fact, denied that Ismā'īl had died before his father and saw in him or in his son Muḥammad ibn

Ismā'īl a legitimate imām. Some regarded Ismā'īl, and others his son Muḥammad, as the last and seventh imām, who had gone into seclusion in order to return at the end of time as Mahdī ('rightly guided one'). These Ismā'īlites are called the 'Seveners' (sab'iyya). Other followers of Ismā'īl and his son carried the line of imāms further to the descendants of Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, who lived in strict seclusion until, with the founder of the Fāṭimid dynasty, 'Ubaid Allāh (died 934), a line of public imāms began again in the tenth century. In addition, other factions developed within the realm of the Ismā'īliyya. In contrast to the Ismā'īlite lines within the Shī'a, who leaned in part very strongly on gnostic speculations and spread their doctrines as secret knowledge, the large group of the 'Twelvers' (ithnā 'ashariyya) or Imāmites continued the line of imāms after the death of Ismā'īl with his brother Mūsā al-Kāẓim (died 799), down to 'Alī Muḥammad al-Mahdī, who, as the twelfth imām, is supposed to have been carried away in 874. They also conceded divine inspiration to the imāms and, along with it, authority in doctrinal matters, which they more or less unhesitatingly used for their political goals in reference to contemporary events.

Although the Shī'ites, who today live for the most part in Iran, Iraq and the Yemen, have always been outnumbered by the Sunnites, politically they have played no small role and, from time to time, have ruled regions which are Sunnite today. As opponents of the Umayyad caliphs, they also supported the 'Abbāsid revolutionary movements, then saw themselves deceived of course when the 'Abbāsids, who descended from al-'Abbās, a paternal uncle of Muḥammad, claimed the caliphate for themselves (750). Whereas the Arabs had been the chief supporters of the Umayyads and the most prominent element of the realm, now the Persian element moved more strongly into the forefront. The relocation of the caliphate from Damascus to Baghdad, where court was held in a way that showed many similarities with older Persian customers, can be seen as a symbol of this change.

Under the 'Abbāsids, Islamic culture reached its highest point of development, together with a gradual consolidation, and then fell into a phase of stagnation. Politically, the history of the 'Abbāsids shows many changes in the structure of the empire, which lost much of its internal strength in the course of time. In their rule of the empire the caliphs utilized to an increasing degree Turkish mercenaries who streamed in by way of Persia. In this empire they

played a role with stages that are comparable in many respects to those of the Germanic migrations into Rome. The end of this development was the leading position of the Ottoman Turks as they established themselves in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The gradual decay of the Ottoman empire, the intervention of the Western great powers in the Islamic territories, and the counter-movements having more or less nationalistic tendencies bring the development up to the present.

The collection of divine revelations in the Qur'ān serves Muslims as the primary source for their religious doctrines. However, the fact that Muḥammad was not a systematic thinker but rather allowed himself to be guided by inspirations had as a consequence the fact that the Qur'ān provided a general outline of the faith but left certain questions unanswered, or even seemed to answer them in contradictory ways. Therefore, the problem arose of going beyond the Qur'ān to the will and opinions of the Prophet and, when necessary, to approximate his 'custom' (sunna). Verification for such a sunna is testified to by a number of trustworthy reporters who have transmitted the respective 'traditions' (aḥādīth, sing. ḥadīth[28]) from the time of the Prophet. In its final form, then, a specific Tradition (ḥadīth) consists of a chain of witnesses (isnād), which must be without gaps, and the content (matn) which is transmitted. The same is also true for Traditions regarding deeds and statements of the Companions of the Prophet, since they were supplementarily consulted.[29] The fact that much of dubious reliability is present within the voluminous material of the Tradition, and in reality does not go back to Muḥammad or his Companions but rather conveys the opinions of the transmitters, did not escape the Muslims and led to the development of a Ḥadīth criticism, which is of course essentially a critique of the transmitters. The material resulting from this criticism is to be found in various collections of the ninth century, which later enjoyed an almost canonical reputation. As a historian, however, one can depend on this material only in a limited sense.

The external form of the Tradition, in conjunction with Muslim accounts, led to the assumption that the transmission was achieved for a long period of time chiefly by way of mouth and that the plans for collections of the Traditions did not begin until about two hundred years after Muḥammad's death. On the other hand, it has recently been shown that the Companions of the Prophet and

their immediate successors already possessed written accounts, which were then compiled in notebooks in the first half of the eighth century. The Traditions are now believed to have been arranged according to content since about the middle of the eighth century; then, in the ninth century they were compiled according to the Companions of the Prophet, who are named as competent authorities for the individual Traditions. Of course, there still remain many open questions concerning the transition from verbal to written transmission.

To the extent that the contents of the Tradition refer to the external living conditions of Muḥammad and the development of his community, it became the basis of the sīra, or official biography of the Prophet, and the related historical account. Regarding questions of faith, cult, law, and interpretation of the Qur'ān, the Tradition was able to attain normative stature. Of course, by no means are all of the questions answered or unambiguously resolved regarding this material; the Tradition itself often reflects different points of view. With the Tradition as starting point, an intellectual development proceeded, which found its outcome in the various sciences. In this respect, the Shī'ites have gone their own way on many occasions, which can only be mentioned in passing here.

Of concrete significance were especially questions of law (fiqh[30]), which had the character of religious law (sharī'a) in medieval Islam and encompassed all relationships concerning private and public life as well as matters pertaining to ritual. While earlier it was common to decide doubtful cases in these and in other areas according to individual opinion (ra'y[31]), later the so-called 'decision by analogy' (qiyās) established itself. This consists in referring back to a rule which was devised for a similar case in order to decide a current case. Finally, the consensus (ijmā') of the scholars also came to be taken as a practical authority concerning decisions of law and faith, proceeding from a Tradition according to which the Prophet said that his community would never agree on a mistake. The issue of consensus was determined negatively by the absence of objections. Often an original consensus, by which the Shī'ites and other sects remained excluded, was considered as continually binding, and any 'independent investigation' (ijtihād) based on the Qur'ān and Tradition was regarded as inadmissible. Since about 300 according to Islamic dating the 'gate of ijtihād' has been closed,

according to prevailing opinion, and complete dependence (*taqlīd*[32]) on the older authorities is to be maintained. For newly arising questions the office of the Muftī (from *aftā*, 'to deliver an opinion, decide a legal question') was created. The Muftī renders a legal judgment (*fatwā*) for each case.

Although complete agreement concerning details of the law and questions of method has never been achieved, four 'legal rites' (*madhāhib*, sing. *madhhab*) have established themselves as predominant. They are attributed to four important teachers of law, namely Abū Ḥanīfa (died 767), Mālik ibn Anas (died 795), ash-Shāfiʿī (died 820), and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (died 855). One speaks, therefore, of Ḥanafites, Mālikites, Shāfiʿites, and Ḥanbalites. These legal rites, which also represent at the same time certain forms of theology, have validity in various regions of the Muslim world, although the choice of the rite is made freely by each Muslim. The adoption (*taqlīd*) of a legal decision from another legal school is also considered permissible. The law is essentially casuistic and categorizes the human actions according to a religious doctrine of duties as: required or necessary (*farḍ*, *wājib*), recommended (*mandūb*, *mustaḥabb*), allowed or permissible (*mubāḥ*, *ḥalāl*, *jāʾiz*), objectionable (*makrūh*), and forbidden (*ḥarām*).

Traces of the dogmatic development which led to the formation of an Islamic theology are identifiable at an early date, although our knowledge of the details at many times is incomplete. The struggles described above concerning the successor of ʿUthmān in the caliphate, which led to the formation of the Shīʿa, had in fact primarily a political basis, although questions of faith were also involved. A group of believers broke away from ʿAlī during the struggle, with the justification that neither he nor his opponent Muʿāwiya possessed the moral qualification to be caliph. According to the view of 'those who went out' (the Khārijites), the most worthy one in the community has a claim to the caliphate, completely independent of his descent. Indeed, faith and works are linked in such a way that anyone who has committed a serious sin is not only a sinner but absolutely an unbeliever. In contrast to this development, which continued to evolve further outside Sunnite Islam, 'those who postpone' (the Murjiʾites) leave the decision concerning a man's faith undecided. God alone is to judge and decide. Also the problem of freedom of will was already voiced at an early date. On ethical grounds, the Qadarites represented the view that divine predetermi-

nation (*qadar*) is limited to the extent that a man creates his deeds himself. They designated their opponents as 'followers of blind necessity (*jabr*)' (Jabrites).[33] When Christian concepts and, more significantly, philosophical thought of Greek origin were incorporated into the course of further dogmatic discussions, there is much to support the point of view that the motivation for such discussions originated in Islam itself. In the early ʿAbbāsid period there was an extensive treatment of various difficult questions, in which especially the so-called Muʿtazila—a name which remains uncertain—took part.

The theology of the Muʿtazilites shows strong rationalistic features, and, correspondingly, the place of the intellect (*ʿaql*) in determining faith is emphasized. The Muʿtazilites took man's freedom of will so seriously that they limited God's omnipotence through the principle of justice (*ʿadl*). God is obligated to reward the good and to punish evil. In this world he can, in fact, help (*waffaqa*) man's good strivings to succeed, but man creates his deeds himself. According to the Muʿtazila, the acknowledgment of monotheism (*tauḥīd*) means that the very being of God is one in the strictest sense and that no eternal attributes may be ascribed to him that would supplement this being. What appears to us as an attribute is in reality not different from God himself. The Qurʾān as the speech of God was created in 'time' as an additional attribute and therefore does not exist from eternity, as is many times assumed. Corresponding to this strict interpretation, the Muʿtazilites, who of course do not agree on all details, turn away from any anthropomorphic concepts of God. Therefore, when God's seeing or hearing or God's hands and feet are spoken of in the Qurʾān, or even the idea that man sees God, one must not take this literally but rather must think of it as a kind of metaphor. In their argumentation the Muʿtazilites drew from Greek logic and introduced a speculative dialectic into theology, which is called *kalām* (speech, discussion). The word subsequently became the term used simply to designate theology, and theologians are called *mutakallimūn*.

For many believers, of course, the dialectic of the Muʿtazilites was too subtle and incomprehensible, and so the demand was voiced that one should accept the Qurʾān's portrayal of God as it is, without further asking 'how?' (*bi-lā kaifa*, literally 'without how'). Finally, a kind of synthesis theology became established in Sunnite Islam, as taught by al-Ashʿarī (died 935). Al-Ashʿarī himself

originally came from the Mu'tazila but then moved towards ortho-
doxy and fought for this standpoint with the methods of dialectic
reasoning. According to al-Ash'arī and his school, man does not
possess freedom of will in the strict sense. He has merely the capacity
to acquire (kasaba), through an act of acceptance, the actions that
have been created for him. The concept of God must not be made
completely void, as most Mu'tazilites have done in a practical
sense; yet one must keep imagined concepts of God, which encroach
upon the dignity of God, at a distance.

The doctrine of faith and duties which was developed by the
theologians and legal experts of Sunnite Islam has in many ways
the sober features of a legal piety, which perhaps corresponds to the
essential nature of the Arabs but not to other characteristics, which
lean towards a warmer, more emotional religiosity. Movements
towards an inwardness of religion have been important in Islam to
various degrees, not least in the faith of the common people.
After theologians had idealized Muhammad's image and accorded
him sinlessness ('isma[34]) and intercession (shafā'a[35]) with God,
the people embellished this image with all kinds of added features
which made possible a stronger personal devotion to the Prophet.
Also in popular Islam there are a number of pious saints (auliyā',
sing. walī) who, since they are not prophets, did not perform any
'miracles of proof' (mu'jiza), but many did, however, perform a
number of 'personal miracles' (karāmāt, sing. karāma).[36]

Islamic mysticism has expressed in various ways the desire to
break down the barrier which stands between man and God as a
consequence of dogma. Proceeding out of early Islamic thought and
ascetic practices, mysticism in its numerous forms was without
doubt influenced by Christian, Persian, late Hellenistic, and probab-
ly also Buddhist thought. Its Arabic name at-taṣawwuf (as well as
the alternative name, aṣ-ṣūfiyya) refers to the woollen cowl (ṣūf)
of the older ascetics (ṣūfī). The path by means of which the Sūfīs
seek to come closer to God, or even to become one with him, consists
of pious exercises and contemplations, which are performed singly
or together with brothers of the order. To the extent that mysticism
still recognizes legal piety at all, this is now a preliminary step
along a path of development which in various stages leads deeper
and deeper into the secrets of divine knowledge by means of divine
enlightenment. Corresponding to this, the mystics seek a deeper,
inner meaning of the Qur'ān, beyond the external meaning, as

interpreted by the traditional exegesis, sometimes even attempting
to grasp this inner sense with clearly cabbalistic methods.

Al-Ghazzālī[37] (died 1111), probably the most significant Islamic
thinker, deserves the credit for having made the inward-turning
piety of mysticism, in a moderate form, fruitful for Islamic theology.
Al-Ghazzālī, after an intense involvement with the thought of
traditional Greek philosophy, arrived at the brink of complete
scepticism concerning the human intellect and then came to believe
that the intuitive certainty of faith alone could convey truth.
The law must be fulfilled, but it must be fulfilled with the right
intentions and in purity. Al-Ghazzālī employed dialectical methods
in presenting his theology and also claimed for himself the right
of 'independent investigation' (ijtihād) which had been curtailed
by the orthodoxy, but he became an opponent of traditional
philosophy and did decisive damage to this aspect of Islam. With
his theology, which is presented above all in the extensive work
Iḥyā' 'ulūm ad-dīn ('The Revival of the Religious Sciences'), Muslim
dogma of the Middle Ages reached its high point and at the same
time found a certain inner conclusion for a long time to come.

This is not to imply, however, that there has been no development
within Muslim theology until the most recent past. When al-
Ghazzālī linked his theology to various older movements and
joined these together in his own way, this did not in any way relieve
all of the existing tensions. Furthermore, one could ask whether
the events of the dogmatic and practical development corresponded
to the actual intentions of Muhammad. This question was answered
negatively above all by the Hanbalite theologian Ibn Taimiyya
(died 1328). He proposed a reform of Islam through the elimination
of all innovations (bida', sing. bid'a[38]), which included for him
not only the cults of the prophets and saints but also long-establish-
ed forms of this older theology. His demands were later revived
on the Arabian peninsula by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb
(died 1791) and led significantly to the so-called Wahhābī move-
ment, which has characterized the present kingdom of Saudi
Arabia.

A totally new situation for Islam resulted from the encounter
with modern, Western culture. Considering the technical superiority
of this culture it was inevitable that certain processes of assimilation
would be introduced into Islamic countries. Thus, certain states
have modelled parts of their legal systems after the European

example, proceeding more or less directly from the existing laws of Western states. This led in fact to a reduction of the scope of the traditional, religious law; yet a major concern was that the new, positive law should not force the believers into actions prohibited by the Islamic religion.

The encounter with Western culture resulted, however, not only in processes of assimilation in certain areas but also in a new attitude towards the native culture and history. The resulting reform movements form the so-called Islamic modernism. To begin with, in the preceding century, educated Indian Muslims became convinced that Islamic religion could come to terms completely with the demands of the modern age. They sought to prove this by means of a rationalistic interpretation of Muḥammad's revelation and proceeded in such a manner that they regarded certain rulings as final and timeless, but others, as conditioned by time and thus antiquated. These Muslims adopted a critical attitude towards the older theology since it had made the mistake of treating relative matters as absolutes.

Of special significance for the reform movements in Islam was the activity of Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī (died 1897), who came from Persia and won an important following specifically in the Egyptian scholar Muḥammad 'Abduh (died 1905) and his pupil Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (died 1935). All three viewed the liberation of all Islamic peoples from foreign rule as an essential prerequisite for the revival of Islam; however, they presented varying view-points regarding the question of the formation of a united pan-Islamic dominion or individual, national states.

Whereas the Indian reformers expounded their thoughts largely under the influence of a civilizing belief in progress, the Egyptians were led more by theological considerations, whereby of course they also acknowledged that Islam as a world religion is valid for all times and all cultural circumstances. In order to perceive the true essence of Islam, which has been lost in the course of time, one must free oneself from the blind dependence (*taqlīd*) on traditional interpretation and return to the religion of the forefathers (*salaf*[30]). The Qur'ān and the Tradition are sources, the latter, however, only to the extent that it can be proved to be authentic. These sources must be opened anew through 'independent research' (*ijtihād*). The application of the religious tenets to practical life is guided according to the needs of the common welfare (*maṣlaḥa*)

and cannot be presented as binding for all times; indeed, certain rulings are intentionally made only for a definite time. Among these is, for example, polygamy, which must yield in Islam, when conditions demand it. The old system of the legal schools is to be discarded along with the illegitimate innovations (*bida'*). The law is thus fulfilled only when one accepts the ethical demands that stand behind it. In other areas one recognizes here the influence of al-Ghazzālī. But there are also clear similarities with the spiritual fathers of the Wahhābīs as the first 'reformers' of a theological bent. The intellectual discussion within Islam continues. It proceeds in part from quite divergent points of view. The most recent past has shown in the meantime that Islam is not willing to sacrifice its essential identity and that it is beginning to win new strength from this conviction.

4. THE HISTORY OF THE TEXT OF THE QUR'ĀN

Although the Qur'ān is considered by the believing Muslim to be the exact reproduction of a heavenly document, it is for us a literary document in which are collected the revelations which Muḥammad presented as divine inspiration in the period from about 610 to his death. In general there is no doubt about the genuineness of the revelations that have been handed down, even if many details concerning the exact wording are problematic. It may be assumed that the Qur'ān in its present form contains the greatest part of the revelations which actually occurred; on the other hand, one cannot support the claim that it includes all of the revelations. Through the Muslim Tradition, a few shorter pieces are known to us, which are expressly designated as original parts of the revelation, yet are not in the Qur'ān. Of course, the genuineness of such additions is sometimes difficult to prove at all, and sometimes may be proved only in a tentative manner. Above and beyond this, it has been concluded, from a selection of warnings, commands, and elucidations that Muḥammad is supposed to have given on various occasions, that he received still other revelations in addition to the Qur'ān. Perhaps this is why he was sometimes himself in doubt.

Granted that certain revelations, especially some from the

first part of his ministry, may have been forgotten, still Muḥammad seems to have begun quite early the practice of reciting passages from the Qur'ān to his followers for as long as necessary until they knew them by heart. This type of transmission had its model in the propagation of ancient Arabic poetry, since the art of writing was not widespread in pre-Islamic Arabia. On the other hand, his does not preclude the possibility that written copies of poems already existed in pre-Islamic times. Muḥammad also probably dictated connected sections of the revelation to be written down even before his departure for Medina. To a certain degree, things remained in flux, of course, since the Prophet often referred back to older parts of the Qur'ān during his revelations and, when necessary, modified, expanded, or even nullified them.

The need for establishing the written form and collecting the revelations arose, if not before, at least by the time of the death of Muḥammad, when the source of the revelation was exhausted and one had to rely on the material which had been previously given. With this in mind, according to prevailing tradition, the later caliph 'Umar is believed to have commissioned Muḥammad's secretary Zaid ibn Thābit (died ca. 655) to produce a written collection even during the lifetime of Abū Bakr. He then gathered more or less comprehensive documents recorded on various materials and from various sources and referred back to the oral tradition to complete his work. He transferred the content of this collection onto regular 'sheets' (ṣuḥuf). After 'Umar's death (644) these are supposed to have come into the possession of his daughter, the Prophet's widow, Ḥafṣa, and to have become the basis of the so-called 'Uthmānic edition of the Qur'ān. The traditional accounts are ambiguous at this point and thus it has been assumed that, in addition to this collection, Zaid perhaps compiled a personal version which then became the basis for the edition named above. However that may be, it is in any case certain that Zaid ibn Thābit played an essential part concerning the production of the Qur'ān in the form in which it appears today.

In addition, in the period of about twenty years between the death of Muḥammad and the compilation of the 'Uthmānic edition of the Qur'ān, there were at least four additional collections or editorial versions which we know of through indirect sources. They go back to: Ubayy ibn Ka'b (died 639 or later) from Medina, a secretary of the Prophet; 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd (died around

653), a long-time servant of Muḥammad; Abū Mūsā 'Abd Allāh al-Ash'arī (died 662 or later); and Miqdād ibn 'Amr (died 653), one of the earliest adherents to Islam. With the exception of a few additions and omissions, these versions had the same sūras as the 'Uthmānic Qur'ān, although in somewhat different orders.

Complaints that different versions of the Qur'ān were in circulation, which led to disputes and would have seriously endangered the future of Islam, are cited as the impetus for the 'Uthmānic edition of the Qur'ān. Concerning the circumstances under which the 'Uthmānic edition came into being, there are divergent reports. In any case, it is certain that 'Uthmān appointed a commission, to which Zaid ibn Thābit belonged, around 650 or somewhat later in Medina. Probably, the editorial activity of this commission consisted chiefly in copying the text which Zaid ibn Thābit had previously produced. Copies were then made from this Medinan model-codex (al-imām) which were then sent to the respective metropolitan centres of Kūfa, Baṣra, and Damascus, and perhaps also to Mecca. During this same period administrative measures were taken to ensure the general acceptance of the 'Uthmānic text. This included especially the destruction of copies of divergent texts. In this way a relatively uniform version of the Qur'ān was established throughout the entire Islamic world, although there has never been a textus receptus which is binding in all details. The Shī'ites use this version also, maintaining of course that individual words and verses or even whole sūras had been added, omitted, or changed in a biased manner. Such accusations, which are tantamount to alleging a conscious falsification to the detriment of 'Alī and his successors, do not stand up under investigation. On the contrary, a so-called 'Sūra of Light', which has been handed down outside the Qur'ān, represents with certainty a Shī'ite falsification.

Reliable information about the fate of the copies of the Qur'ān produced by direction of 'Uthmān is as good as non-existent; however, using traditional Muslim accounts and the later version of the Qur'ān, a number of conclusions can be drawn concerning the state of the 'Uthmānic edition of the Qur'ān. In this edition the material of the revelation is divided into 114 sūras of various lengths which are familiar to us. Smaller units within the sūras are formed by the prose rhymes; these form, essentially, the basis for the division into verses (āyāt, sing. āya, actually meaning 'sign'[40]), although these were not yet graphically indicated in the 'Uthmānic Qur'ān.

The division of the material into separate sūras seems to have been maintained in general agreement with the older versions. The term *sūra*, the meaning of which is still ambiguous, occurs in the Qur'ān just as the term *āya* does, and it may be assumed that Muhammad himself had already fashioned a number of sūras into final form. This applies especially to the shorter sūras of the older times, which form independent units. On the other hand, the longer sūras are composite, being put together out of various segments of the revelation, usually with the same prose rhyme, and not necessarily agreeing in time, so that in certain circumstances the specific technique of compilation played a role.[41] Having developed in this manner, and being neither chronologically nor contextually similar throughout, the units are arranged in the 'Uthmānic Qur'ān according to the external criterion of length, with the longer sūras coming first, with the exception of the shorter opening sūra. However, to be more exact, one would have to say that this principle of arrangement, which apparently aims not at the number of verses but at the overall length of the sūras, had already existed previously since it is found in earlier versions, and that it has not been applied rigorously. Taking into consideration a few uncertainties, this is roughly the manner in which the present order was established.

The so-called *basmala*, that is, the phrase *bi-smi llāhi r-rahmāni r-rahīm* ('in the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate'), which is missing only before Sūra 9, serves as an introductory formula and divider for the individual sūras. From the Qur'ānic text (Sūra 27:30) and other sources, it can be established that Muhammad knew this formula, and therefore it is not improbable that he himself had it placed at the beginning of separate sūras when they were written down. In addition, at the beginning of twenty-nine sūras one finds certain letters or groups of letters, the meaning and significance of which are in dispute. These symbols are considered part of the revelation. The names of the individual sūras were a later supplement to the 'Uthmānic edition of the Qur'ān and were at first probably not titles but rather phrases written at the end. What is involved here is the use of striking words from the beginning or elsewhere in the sūras for the purpose of facilitating reference to specific sūras. Some sūras came to be referred to by more than one name. Muslims usually use these names, which were in general circulation in the second century after the Hijra,

when they cite passages of the Qur'ān. Whether or not Muhammad himself also did so in certain cases must remain uncertain.

Since the 'Uthmānic Qur'ān did not at first have any graphic divisions for the separate verses, there developed later various systems for the division and enumeration of the verses. Means for delineating the verses were already developed in the first century of the Muslim era; however, these were at first used non-uniformly and inconsistently. For the actual division into verses, it was significant, among other things, whether or not the introductory phrase (*basmala*) and the symbols before certain sūras were counted as separate verses or as part of the following contexts. The majority of differences in verse divisions result from differing sub-divisions within the text of the revelation and in the maximum case amount to more than twenty discrepancies in a single sūra. Barely one-fourth of the sūras remain unaffected. While in the West up until the present time, the Qur'ān has usually been quoted according to the inadequate edition by Gustav Flügel (printed in Leipzig since 1834), gradually the so-called Kūfic verse numbering[42] according to the official Cairo edition (printed since 1925) is beginning to establish itself here also.

Although neither a uniformly objective nor a chronological point of view served as a criterion in the arrangement of the material in the 'Uthmānic Qur'ān, the Muslims, too, raised questions concerning the dates and order of the revelations. Not only because it is not unimportant for the understanding of the individual revelations to know when and under what circumstances they occurred, but also because of the Qur'ānic doctrine that certain verses can be abrogated by others, a motive existed for research into the relative chronology. Given the variety of situations and the inner development of many of Muhammad's views, there occurred in the Qur'ān rulings on various subjects which deviated from one another or even contradicted one another. Now, if one believes that such deviations are inconsistent with the perfection of holy revelation, this problem could be resolved by assuming from the start that a proclaimed decision is made only for a specific period or situation, and that it may later be expanded, refined, or even rescinded by another decision. The application of this principle could not have been so much of a problem for Muhammad himself as for the later Muslims who in retrospect had to determine the chronological sequence in order to determine which parts of the

revelation were abrogating (*nāsikh*) and which abrogated (*mansūkh*).[43]

In determining dates of parts of the Qur'ān, the Muslims referred back to materials of the Tradition, but also employed linguistic and contextual criteria. For a rough, chronological division, the emigration of the Prophet offered a starting point: the distinction between Meccan and Medinan revelations. Beyond this, indexes are to be found in various Traditions in which the sūras are listed according to their chronological order. To a limited extent the internal structure of the sūras has also been taken into consideration. The results of traditional Muslim research are not satisfying, and one must accept the fact that definitive decisions regarding exact dates or even exact chronological order are simply no longer possible. Thus, it is questionable whether even the Prophet himself in his time would have been in a position to indicate the exact sequence of the early Meccan portions of the revelation. Taking these circumstances into account, it may be said that the results presented by Theodor Nöldeke in 1860 in his *Geschichte des Qorāns*, and afterwards by the revisers of this history, are definitive in their major features and also in many details. Nöldeke, following Gustav Weil, distinguished between three Meccan periods of the revelation and one Medinan period. As belonging to the first periods, he counted the 'older, more passionate'; to the third, the 'later, approaching more the Medinan sūras or parts of sūras'; and the second he regarded as a transitional group. Richard Bell, in his English translation of the Qur'ān (1937–9), went even further than Nöldeke. He attempted to isolate the individual segments of the sūras and, within the individual sūras, to arrange the segments chronologically and in relation to one another, as they might have once existed separately, or as they were attached to other materials, in the early period of Islam.[44]

Although not all traces of earlier variants were eliminated with the 'Uthmānic edition of the Qur'ān, this edition still provided a relatively complete uniformity in opposition to deviating variants. However, the 'Uthmānic text was in no sense unambiguous in all details. The Muslims of older times already knew that this text was not absolutely perfect and without mistakes. In addition, the different copies sent to the metropolitan centres of the realm exhibited certain deviations from one another. When once again a number of different variants developed on the basis of the 'Uthmā-

nic Qur'ān, this was due less to scribal errors than to the inadequacy of the contemporary Arabic script. This script derived from the Aramaic and consisted of a number of consonantal symbols with which the vowels could be expressed either not at all or only inadequately. Besides this, certain consonantal symbols had become so similar to each other in the course of their development that diacritical marks were needed to distinguish between them. The origin of these marks goes back to pre-Islamic times; however, they were used only sparingly in the older Qur'ānic manuscripts which for the most part can be positively dated only since the fourth century after the Hijra. Additional symbols for vowels and other sounds are believed to have been developed already in the first century after the Hijra, but they became established only gradually in the orthography of the Qur'ān. Moreover, the copies of the Qur'ān of the first four centuries were written in a style which differed from the usual cursive Arabic. This concise script is called Kūfic.

Considering these inadequacies of older Qur'ānic orthography, it is understandable that the oral tradition remained authoritative at first for individual reading, and only later became fixed in writing. In the first century after the Hijra there developed in Medina, Mecca, Kufa, Baṣra, and Damascus schools of Qur'ānic readers (*qurrā'*, sing. *qāri'*), whose supporters were for the most part active in various areas of Qur'ānic study. While the choice between several possible variants (*qirā'āt*, sing. *qirā'a*) was made at first according to free judgment (*ra'y*[45]) or also according to Traditions, later the variants of the teachers became more influential and a choice was made from among them. Criteria for the reliability of a variant were correct language, assurance based on a Tradition, and the view of the majority, that is, a kind of consensus of the majority. The result was similar to that of law: one did not propagate the exclusivity of a single form of the text, but rather permitted different 'canonical' groups of variants to be valid[46] alongside each other, the knowledge of which belonged to the armour of the Qur'ānic teacher. A saying of Muḥammad was referred to in this connection, according to which God's word had been revealed to the Prophet himself in several ways.

There are different types of variants. In part what is involved are differing interpretations of the consonantal text and, in part, different ways of adding the vowels. But, in addition, there were also

interpretive supplements (*ziyādāt*, sing. *ziyāda*[47]), which perhaps were intended as emendations, or perhaps merely as explanatory glosses. Also, the substitution of one word by a better-known synonym was done relatively freely in earlier times. It is understandable that in choosing a variant, the obvious tendency was often to achieve a theologically unobjectionable text.[48]

The history of the text of the Qur'ān shows many interesting connections with linguistics and other branches of the sciences. Endeavours to fix the Qur'ānic text have been of decisive significance for the rise and development of such sciences. Here, also, the crucial phase occurred in the first centuries of Islam. When one evaluates the variants from a philological point of view today, one must say that their large quantity stands in no relationship to their significance in the task of reconstructing the text.

Although the existence of the Qur'ān was known in the West at an early time, it was not until 1143 that Peter the Venerable of Cluny had an initial, complete Western translation into Latin made by the Englishman Robertus Ketenensis. This translation, which was printed exactly 400 years later, was followed by others which were all motivated more or less by missionary and apologetic considerations. Critical studies of the Qur'ān did not come until the period of historical critical research. Among the translations available today, in addition to the English by Richard Bell, above all should be mentioned the French by Régis Blachère (1949–51) and the German by Rudi Paret (1962).[49] Paret's translation is of special significance because, for the first time, it considers very seriously the idea that one must interpret the Qur'ān from within itself as an historical document. Paret therefore searched through the whole Qur'ān systematically for parallel points and interpreted these alongside the material from Muslim commentaries. Regarding its form, the translation is clothed in an easily flowing conversational style in such a way that the intention of the text, above and beyond the linguistic expression, is made clear to the reader by means of parenthetical remarks of various lengths.

5. MUSLIM EXEGESIS OF THE QUR'ĀN

Muhammad himself declared the Qur'ān to be an inimitable work.[50] The subsequent justification of the resulting miraculous

character (*i'jāz*) of the work as conceived by Muslim theology encompasses various points of view, which in part are directly derived from statements from the Qur'ān. Thus, it has been asserted that the Qur'ān contains a number of correct prophecies of future events, that in spite of its considerable volume it exhibits not a single contradiction, and that in its own way it anticipates a number of scientific discoveries. According to Muslim tradition, Muhammad was uneducated (*ummī*)[51] in the sense that he could neither read nor write, and his compatriots also had no knowledge of the earlier story of salvation; thus, he must have experienced this through a superhuman source. The language of the Qur'ān is also considered to be more or less uniformly unsurpassable. Although opinions concerning the validity and significance of these views, and concerning particulars, may vary, the fundamental existence of the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān has not been doubted by Muslim exegetes. It is obvious that an exegesis which views the Qur'ān with such presuppositions must proceed in many instances in a different direction from that of the historical-critical analysis of the Qur'ānic text, as practised by Western researchers.

According to the Muslim view, the Qur'ān, as God's speech, cannot be translated but, rather, must be studied in its original Arabic form. In fact, there have been isolated attempts to make the Qur'ān accessible in other languages of the Islamic cultural world; yet by far the greatest extent of Muslim literature on the Qur'ān is written in the Arabic language, although the authors of this literature were often of non-Arab origin. Arabic also played a leading role in other areas of Islamic literature, which would have been unthinkable without the significance of the Arabic Qur'ān.

If one conceives of Qur'ānic interpretation in the widest sense, it can be said that it is as old as the revelations of Muhammad, for every listener had to interpret the revealed text for himself. Problems regarding the form of the text lead directly or indirectly into the realm of exegesis. As long as the Prophet was living, one could turn to him when in doubt and provide an occasion for him to give an explanation or even an elaborating revelation. Thus, it is statements by the Prophet and testimonies of his Companions that stand in the centre of the older exegesis, as religious Tradition (*hadīth*) handed down from the first generation of Islam. When, according to Muslim reports, in the early period of Islam doubts were occasionally expressed about an interpretation of the Qur'ān,

these were probably directed primarily towards an all too specula-
tive interpretation based on subjective opinion (*ra'y*[52]), and not
towards an interpretation based on knowledge (*'ilm*[53]) of authorita-
tive religious Tradition. Meanwhile, the material of the exegetic
Tradition grew very soon in such a manner and to such an extent
that considerable doubt has often existed concerning its authenti-
city. In addition, contradictions occur among the statements of
various Companions of the Prophet, and even within accounts
attributed to the same person. Already in the early exegesis, there
was a tendency to interpret as many of the ambiguous passages
(*mubhamāt*) of the Qur'ān as possible, if not all of them, including
even unimportant details. In this connection there has been talk of
fabrications and falsifications; yet one must also consider the possi-
bility of unconscious appropriation and mutual misunderstanding.
For the later Muslim exegetes, the contradictions resolve themselves
in part by the fact that differing interpretations are accepted along-
side one another as admissible and correct.

The scholarly exegesis which developed on the basis of the reli-
gious Tradition is designated by the term *tafsīr*[54] (explanation,
interpretation). Originally, the word *ta'wīl* was equated with this
term; then an additional 'inner' meaning, to be grasped through
intuition, came to be accepted by the mystics and others, alongside
the 'external' meaning of the Qur'ān as represented by the Tradi-
tion-bound exegesis. Within these circles the term *tafsīr* became
limited to the 'external' interpretation of the Qur'ān, while the
term *ta'wīl* came to designate the 'inner' or allegorical interpreta-
tion.

The chief authority on the exegetical Ḥadīth was Muḥammad's
cousin 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās (also 'ibn al-'Abbās', died around
688), who is therefore held to be the actual originator of traditional
exegesis. Although at the time of the death of the Prophet, Ibn
'Abbās was at most fifteen years old, the Prophet is supposed to
have conveyed to him a whole series of interpretations. More
trustworthy are reports which state that Ibn 'Abbās asked for
information from the Prophet's older Companions and also Jewish
converts as well as people of the book religions (*ahl al-kitāb*).
When warnings are issued against seeking information from Jews
and Christians, this in itself indicates indirectly some of the various
tendencies which were at work in the formation of the traditional
exegesis. Regarding doubtful linguistic expressions, Ibn 'Abbās

is supposed to have referred back to illustrative material from an-
cient Arabic poetry, thus opening up to the exegesis of the Qur'ān
a methodological principle which was subsequently extended to
other areas of the old language. It may be that reference to such
illustrations (*shawāhid*, sing. *shāhid*) in order to explain word
meanings actually does go back to Ibn 'Abbās or his pupils, for the
introduction of extensive grammatical investigations into Qur'ānic
exegesis is of an early origin; however, these investigations presup-
pose an extent of linguistic reflection that was hardly extant before
the middle of the second century after the Hijra.

According to Muslim tradition, Ibn 'Abbās wrote his own com-
mentary on the Qur'ān. While up to the present time, the correct-
ness of this report has been doubted, recently a few indications to
the contrary have been brought forward. In fact, Ibn 'Abbās
probably aided his memory with extensive notes, which were then
utilized by his pupils. Among the immediate pupils of Ibn 'Abbās,
who in part wrote independent works and in part conveyed the
material again to their pupils, were Sa'īd ibn Jubair (died 713),
Mujāhid ibn Jabr (died 721), 'Ikrima (died 724), 'Aṭā' ibn Abī
Rabāḥ (died 732), and Abū Ṣāliḥ Bādhām (died 719). Other exegetes
of the first century of the Muslim era who stand in more or less
direct relationship to the school of Ibn 'Abbās are Ḥasan al-Baṣrī
(died 728), Qatāda ibn Di'āma (died 730 or later), and Muḥammad
ibn Ka'b al-Quraẓī (died 735 or later), a man of Jewish origin.
Striking is the fact that most of the exegetes of this and the following
generations came from the slave class. Of the commentaries of the
first century after the Hijra, which do not yet exhibit the unified
character of the later works of exegesis, some survive in more recent
versions, and others can be at least partly reconstructed on the basis
of what has been handed down in the Tradition. Sunnite Islam has
been the primary supporter of traditional Qur'ānic exegesis;
however, the Shī'ites too have used in part the inherited material
and, in particular, have also recognized Ibn 'Abbās as an authority
on doctrine.

The exegetical traditions (*aḥādīth*) also found entrance into the
canonical collections of the Tradition. Thus one finds, for instance,
in the famous Tradition collection of al-Bukhārī (died 870) and
in that of at-Tirmidhī (died 892) separate chapters on Qur'ānic
interpretation, which of course do not nearly cover all of the
material. Alongside the more or less compilatory Qur'ānic inter-

pretation of the early commentaries, after the second century following the Hijra, purely philological works on the Qur'ān appear, which were subsequently continued at a later time. Examples of works of this kind, which have a certain usefulness even today, are the books *Gharīb al-qur'ān* ('Obscure Aspects of the Qur'ān'), and *Mushkil al-qur'ān* ('Doubtful Aspects of the Qur'ān') by Ibn Qutaiba (died 889).

Traditional exegesis found a high point, and at the same time a certain finality, in the activity of Abū Ja'far Muḥammad aṭ-Ṭabarī (died 923), a scholar of Persian ancestry whose strength lay above all in his industrious collecting. In addition to various theological and judicial works, Ṭabarī wrote an extensive history of the world and a voluminous commentary on the Qur'ān, which filled thirty volumes in its first edition of 1903. The value of Ṭabarī's commentary on the Qur'ān, which bears the title *Jāmi' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-qur'ān* ('Collection of Explanations for the Interpretation of the Qur'ān'), usually cited simply as *Tafsīr* or 'Commentary',[55] lies above all in his bringing together the entire breadth of the material of traditional exegesis extant in his time, and in so doing providing a valuable source for modern historical-critical research.

Ṭabarī seeks to cite the material of the standard authorities as fully as possible for every verse or verse segment of the Qur'ān and notes also even insignificant variants.[56] He meticulously reproduces the exact chain of authorities (*isnād*) and therefore many times places side by side the same content (*matn*) received through different chains of authorities. He openly expresses reservations concerning the validity of certain material and does not spare the pupils of Ibn 'Abbās. Ṭabarī also deals with the different variants, although he treats these in a special monograph, which unfortunately has not survived. To illustrate the text, Ṭabarī provides simplifying paraphrases and lexical references including numerous poems. There are also grammatical discussions which refer back to matters of Baṣran and Kūfan linguistics. Together with the compilation of the more or less dissimilar material of older exegesis, Ṭabarī often gives his own judgment on the validity or probability of an interpretation. The purpose, plan and presuppositions of the work are presented in a valuable introduction.

In his interpretation, Ṭabarī espouses the principle that above all the clear, immediately visible meaning should be definitive and that one may deviate from this only if convincing reasons can be

shown.[57] Ṭabarī is averse to laborious justifications of unimportant details.[58] Thus, when he places himself consciously on the foundation of inherited concepts of doctrine and seeks to find a moderate middle view, this does not prevent him from occasionally deriving dogmatic, practical applications from the material or from arguing extensively against certain doctrinal views. In this sense, for example, he disagrees strongly with the metaphorical interpretation of the Mu'tazilites and their dogmatic conclusions or presuppositions. Since the size of Ṭabarī's Qur'ānic commentary placed limits on its distribution, a series of excerpts was later compiled, but other works were also incorporated with them.

If, in the first centuries after Ṭabarī, no significant commentary on the Qur'ān was written within Sunnite Islam, this in no way implies that stagnation occurred in Qur'ānic exegesis. Interpretation of the Qur'ān is not limited to the comprehensive works of the commentaries, but rather is to be found everywhere in theological, judicial, and other works. In this sense, the above-mentioned work by al-Ghazzālī on 'The Revival of the Religious Sciences' also contains a number of basic reflections concerning exegesis and a large number of individual interpretations. As a supplement to the systematic exegesis one must also consult introductions to the Qur'ān, works on 'the occasions of revelation' (*asbāb an-nuzūl*), legal decisions regarding Qur'ānic passages, and similar writings, since in later times these continued to be written. On the other hand, it is evident that more significant commentaries on the Qur'ān often mark the end or the high point of a theological development. To a certain extent this applies also to the commentary *Al-kashshāf 'an ḥaqā'iq ghawāmiḍ at-tanzīl* ('The Unveiler of the Realities of the Secrets of Revelation'), which the Persian-Arab scholar Abū l-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar az-Zamakhsharī (died 1144) completed in the year 1134. Zamakhsharī's commentary contains a quintessence of Mu'tazilite doctrine and, in this respect, stands much more intentionally on a specifically dogmatic foundation than does Ṭabarī's commentary. On the whole, Zamakhsharī's commentary is characterized more strongly by the personal view-point and talent of the author, who exhibits his perceptiveness and his brilliant knowledge of language in a number of grammatical, lexical, and philological writings, while bringing these to bear again and again in his commentary on the Qur'ān.

If Zamakhsharī's commentary has had considerably less influence

than Ṭabarī's commentary, in spite of an enrichment in the linguistic-rhetorical sphere, this is due primarily to the fact that Zamakhsharī omits parts of the traditional material and only includes what he himself considers important; moreover, regarding the chain of authorities, he is satisfied with abbreviated references to origin or omits them altogether. Instead, he brings to the text the characteristic themes of Muʿtazilite theology, for example, the doctrine of the unity and justness of God, the rejection of anthropomorphic concepts, the recognition of the intellect as the source of understanding of faith, and the advancement of freedom of will. In this connection belongs also the rejection of unnatural, superstitious concepts. Through the pronounced dogmatization of the exegesis, Zamakhsharī's commentary loses some of its significance for historical-critical Qur'ānic research, however, it gains significance through its perceptive linguistic details.

For Zamakhsharī himself there is no doubt that his type of interpretation is rooted directly in the Qur'ān, even though it is stated in the revelation itself that certain verses of the Qur'ān are clearly and unambiguously formulated while others are ambiguous.[59] The existence of such ambiguous verses is of positive value to the extent that it offers an occasion for deeper reflection which may clarify these verses in the light of the unambiguous ones. Zamakhsharī sees the path to such a clarification in linguistic-rhetorical analysis, by means of which questionable passages can be viewed in the right light when specific uses of language are demonstrated in them. If in so doing it is shown that the revelation is clothed in a garment of pictures and metaphors, therein lies a proof of the incomparable nature and miraculous character of the diction of the Qur'ān. Without doubt this view contains a *petitio principii*; yet Zamakhsharī eliminated this for himself through his artful handling of the philological method.

Even as orthodox theologians of the Sunna have been unable to escape the original achievements represented by Zamakhsharī's Qur'ānic interpretation, so also in the Shīʿite realm, certain influences can be demonstrated. Orthodox Islam has 'thoroughly pillaged' Zamakhsharī's commentary, but has either opposed or avoided the dogmatic inferences of his work. Thus the Alexandrian legal scholar Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Manṣūr ibn al-Munayyir (died 1284) wrote polemical glosses in opposition to Zamakhsharī's commentary. Strongly dependent on Zamakhsharī but also drawn

from other sources is the commentary *Anwār at-tanzīl wa-asrār at-ta'wīl* ('The Lights of Revelation and the Secrets of the Interpretation'), by ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar al-Baiḍāwī (died 1286 or later), who likewise came from Persia. Baiḍāwī condensed the commentary of Zamakhsharī in places, but on the other hand also expanded it with details from other sources and assimilated it to orthodox theology. Baiḍāwī's commentary has been considered the best by the Sunnite theologians, although in no area is it complete nor does it represent such an original achievement as Zamakhsharī's commentary.

The Persian-Arab theologian and religious philosopher Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (died 1209) also opposed Muʿtazilite interpretation of the Qur'ān in his unfinished monumental commentary *Mafātīḥ al-ghaib* ('The Keys to the Hidden'), which was expanded by his pupils. In this work, which likewise is linked to Zamakhsharī and which is also called simply *At-tafsīr al-kabīr* ('The Great Commentary') because of its volume, Rāzī reaches out widely and brings into consideration philosophical thought, along with material from all other possible areas. Compared with Baiḍāwī's commentary, Rāzī's work differs not only in volume but also in many independent suggestions for solutions embedded in painstaking arguments. Certainly from the Muslim side, the objection has been raised, and not entirely unjustly, that Rāzī goes far beyond the realm of actual exegesis and in many instances misses the purpose.

Although productive Sunnite exegesis of the Qur'ān reached a certain conclusion with Rāzī's commentary, among the later interpreters should be mentioned above all the Egyptian Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī (died 1505), who re-establishes ties with the older traditional exegesis in a comprehensive, monumental work, well known in its condensed version. Still widely used is the clearly arranged compendium which Suyūṭī's teacher Jalāl ad-Dīn al-Maḥallī (died 1459) began and Suyūṭī completed. This book, which contains an ongoing paraphrase of the text of the Qur'ān with linguistic explanations, material from the Tradition, and variants, is called, after its authors, *Tafsīr al-jalālain* ('Commentary of the Two Jalāls'). In the form of his work *Al-itqān fī ʿulūm at-tafsīr* ('The Perfection in the Sciences of Exegesis'), Suyūṭī created an introduction to Qur'ānic exegesis that is rich in material.

From the standpoint of historical-critical research, it must be said that although the material in the above-mentioned commenta-

ries is still of value today, it requires critical evaluation. Since the commentaries, in the final analysis, all rest on the assumption of the perfection of the Qur'ān as divine speech, they are inclined to relate difficult or corrupted passages to contexts which are unambiguous in meaning and wherever possible to concrete 'occasions of revelation' (asbāb an-nuzūl). In so doing they overlook the fact that what is involved in many instances are repetitions or quite general statements. In contrast to the tendency to interpret too minutely, there is also the opposite tendency among some scholars, a group to which Zamakhsharī also belongs to a certain degree, although he brings to his work on the Qur'ān view-points of a later historical situation much more than many other interpreters.

Much more clearly and more immediately evident than in the works just discussed is the tendency in Shī'ite circles to read their own concepts of belief into the Qur'ān. If one considers especially the more extreme tendencies of the Imāmites and Ismā'īlites among the Shī'ites, they do in fact recognize in general the major part of the religious Tradition (ḥadīth), but sanction and supplement it by means of the doctrinal authority of the imāms, who are supposed to have inherited the 'genuine' Qur'ān edited by 'Alī. Thus, when exegetical Traditions arose which tended towards momentary concerns, Shī'ite exegesis bore a much stronger and more direct relationship to post-Qur'ānic events because of the historical ties of the imāms, than did Sunnite exegesis. Thus, whenever positive statements in the Qur'ān were indefinite (mubham) or general enough, they were interpreted as referring to 'Alī, the imāms, and their community; and negative statements were interpreted as referring to their opponents, as well as to the first three caliphs. Of course, it is a matter of considerable doubt whether the later Shī'ites in such cases have always rightfully claimed the authority of the imāms. Nevertheless, various imāms were active in a literary manner in the field of Qur'ānic exegesis, among whom was the fifth imām, Muḥammad al-Bāqir, 'The Researcher' (died 733 or somewhat later), who is credited with a Qur'ānic commentary of his own.

Shī'ite exegesis reached a relatively completed form in the third to the fourth centuries after the Hijra. To be mentioned here, first of all, in the Imāmite realm is the concise commentary Tafsīr al-qur'ān by 'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (died 939), a work which has retained its significance up to the present time alongside the larger commentary Majma' al-bayān li-'ulūm al-qur'ān ('Collection

of Explanations of the Qur'ānic Sciences') by Abū 'Alī al-Faḍl aṭ-Ṭabarsī (died 1153 or later). Moreover, the Shī'ites were frequently active later in the area of Qur'ānic exegesis, without of course altering in any basic way the orientation that they had adopted. An example of a later commentary that synthesizes the material of the Tradition of earlier times is the work Aṣ-ṣāfī fī tafsīr al-qur'ān ('The Pure in the Interpretation of the Qur'ān'), written by the Imāmite scholar Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Kāshī (died around 1505).

It is understandable that Shī'ite exegetes choose from among the Qur'ānic variants those favourable for their theology. They go still further, however, and undertake changes and expansions of the 'Uthmānic text, which they claim to derive from the 'genuine' Qur'ān of the imāms. Shī'ite exegesis also differs from traditional Sunnite exegesis in that it favours allegorical interpretation and finds in certain circumstances a many-faceted meaning for Qur'ānic passages, with deeper and deeper significance. Here the Shī'ites come in contact with the mystics. In a certain sense, Shī'ite interpretation of the Qur'ān is typical of sectarian Qur'ānic interpretation on the whole, as for instance is seen among the Khārijites and others. Often it reveals features of a malicious factional fanaticism. Of course, when Western Qur'ānic scholars portray Shī'ite exegesis as a 'miserable web of lies and stupidities',[60] this is not entirely correct. For, in the first place, one cannot dismiss all Shī'ite interpreters as stupid, and, secondly, the Shī'ites felt themselves for the most part to be fully conscious of the truth when they sought to legitimatize their hope for a transformation of the prevailing conditions by using the Qur'ān as their basis. The fact that there were, indeed, differences of level is obvious when, for example, the fragmentary Ismā'īlite Qur'ānic commentary Mizāj at-tasnīm[61] ('The Diluted Water of Tasnīm') by the Yemenite 'Caller' (dā'ī) Ḍiyā' ad-Dīn Ismā'īl ibn Hibat Allāh (died 1760), with its esoteric language, is compared with the incomparably more valuable works of Kāshī.

If Shī'ite commentaries on the Qur'ān are only in exceptional cases of definite value for historical-critical Qur'ānic research, this is also true for the exegesis of the mystics. In addition to the material of the Tradition, which is recognized as the basis for the 'external interpretation' (tafsīr), at least in moderate circles of mysticism, an additional source was at their disposal in the form

of intuition, or a similar capacity to grasp meaning, by means of which they could come to decisions concerning this material and place an 'inner interpretation' (ta'wīl) alongside the external. According to the mystics, the legitimacy for their kind of Qur'ānic exegesis is based on alleged statements of the Prophet or his Companions, although the religious Tradition offers on the whole only a few points of departure in this direction.

Regarding its age, the same thing can be said of mystical interpretation of the Qur'ān as of the other tendencies within Qur'ānic exegesis: it is as old as its intellectual foundations. The oldest completed exegetical work appears to originate in the third century after the Hijra. By this time, the foundations for an Islamic neo-Platonism had already been laid through translations, as we find later in a distinct form in the so-called Pure Brothers (ikhwān as-ṣafā') of Baṣra in their grandly planned encyclopedia (between 950 and 1000). Mysticism is indeed not to be equated with this neo-Platonism, but exhibits many parallels to it in its striving towards purification of the soul and immersion in God, as well as in its intellectual models. Even al-Ghazzālī put in a good word for the mystical interpretation of the Qur'ān, although he was against excessive allegorization and a complete break with positive religion. A striking appearance within Muslim mysticism is the Andalusian Muḥyī' ad-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī (died 1240), who was completely filled with his mission and imagined himself to be in direct contact with the Prophet and the angels, and even with God himself. The system of his esoteric mysticism, which was permeated with pantheistic features, was described by him primarily in the so-called 'Meccan Contributions' (Al-futūḥāt al-makkiyya) and in the work Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam ('Ring-stones of Wisdom'). Here also he shows himself to be knowledgeable concerning philosophical thought. Characteristic of the Qur'ānic exegesis of mysticism, even if not typical in all details, is the Tafsīr attributed to Ibn al-'Arabī, but in reality probably originating from his follower 'Abd ar-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (or, 'al-Qāshānī'; died 1330 or later).

Ibn al-'Arabī and his followers are representatives of 'parallel exegesis'. They maintain the character of reality of the external meaning; yet at the same time they see 'allusions' (ishārāt) in this, which are important to understand. Since the external meaning is generally treated exhaustively in the traditional exegesis, not much of an effort is made towards an interpretation in this direction.

In uncovering the inner meaning, a distinction is made between actual allegorical interpretation (ta'wīl) and the 'uncovering of parallels' (taṭbīq). While real allegory aims at a directly implied inner meaning, as for example in the case of the Flood and Noah's Ark, where the sea is related to matter and the saving ship to divine law, this approach of using parallels sees actual events and lawful decisions as symbols for the spiritual world. For example, when the Ethiopian king, Abraha, in the sūra called 'The Elephant' (105), marches towards the holy place of Mecca with elephants in order to destroy it, to begin with, nothing more is meant by this other than a concrete historical event which has its own inherent meaning. One can, however, view the king, Abraha, as the symbol for the dark Ethiopian soul that wants to annihilate the sanctuary of the heart. Underlying this is the idea that sensual forms stand dependent upon a more general spiritual world into which one may 'cross over'.

On the whole Ibn al-'Arabī and his school are representatives of a moderate mysticism to the extent that they do not lose sight of the religious law in favour of a hazily defined piety. In fact, although they are acquainted with a type of letter and script symbolism, cabbalistic methods do not play the same role here as with other mystics or with many Shī'ites.

Although the mystics had at their disposal an additional source for exegesis in the form of intuition and the tradition which grew out of it in the course of time, Muslim philosophers also had such a source in Greek thought, which was being translated into Arabic, and in the resultant activation of the intellect ('aql). Of course, the Greek cultural heritage available to the Muslims was not uniform in itself but rather included the thought of various schools, whose significance was variously emphasized by different Muslim philosophers. As a consequence, the attitude towards the phenomenon and content of revelation varied. Although the philosophers showed little interest in a systematic interpretation of the Qur'ān, they could not ignore the central phenomenon of 'believing' and had to relate this to 'knowing'. Obviously, in so doing they made reference to Qur'ānic passages which served their purpose, and they interpreted more or less comprehensive parts of the revelation in this respect. In its extreme form this endeavour led to the conclusion, by Ibn Rushd (Averroes, died 1198), that philosophical thought contains the absolute truth and therefore also the absolute

religion. Revealed religion is likewise a derivative of absolute religion, representing it in a historically-bound form appropriate to the general spiritual situation. Therefore there is no inner contradiction between revelation and science; on the contrary, a number of passages in the Qur'ān itself can be cited which encourage intellectual activity and, therefore, anticipate Muslim philosophy. Even if medieval Islam, which for scholastic philosophy meant practically nothing more than one intellectual movement among many, did not adopt these thoughts on a broad scale, still the modernists, when faced by the penetration of Western science, saw themselves encountering similar questions as the medieval philosophers faced.

Most significant, among the modernists, for Qur'ānic exegesis is Muḥammad 'Abduh, who was born in 1849 in a village in Lower Egypt and attended al-Azhar University in Cairo. In Cairo he came into contact with Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī, earned the teaching certificate at al-Azhar University, and was then active as a history teacher for a short time at the Dār al-'Ulūm, a normal school in Cairo. At the instigation of the British, he was forced to leave Egypt with Jamāl ad-Dīn and was able to return to al-Azhar University only after a long exile. When he died in 1905 he was Muftī of the Lands of the Nile. Muḥammad 'Abduh presented his Qur'ānic exegesis in the form of lectures at al-Azhar University and within the scope of legal opinions (fatāwā, sing. fatwā) which were published separately at first in the periodical, Al-manār ('The Lighthouse'), and later, with the author's approval, were compiled, revised from a literary view-point, and continued by Muḥammad 'Abduh's pupil, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā. The work thus created, Tafsīr al-qur'ān al-ḥakīm ('Commentary on the Wise Qur'ān'), which deals only with the first ten sūras of the Qur'ān and which soon found a wide distribution in the Islamic world, cannot deny its origin in the language of the lecture. In its diction it is rather verbose and exhibits a considerable amount of repetition, conditioned partly of course by its character as a compilation.

Although Muḥammad 'Abduh had the opportunity in Europe for direct contact with Western science, one has the impression that he often understood it differently from what was meant by its intellectual fathers. Muḥammad 'Abduh adheres to the doctrine of the uniqueness of the Qur'ān; he even tries to provide new proofs for the inimitability of the Qur'ān. Regarding the special significance

of the Qur'ān for the understanding of history, Muḥammad 'Abduh maintained that even though, on the one hand, the Qur'ān reflects specific historical situations and contains statements which can be understood only within the context of such situations, on the other hand, it is a textbook for history, in which the thought is expressed for the first time that a regularity prevails in social development. In this sense Muḥammad 'Abduh seeks and finds absolute statements behind relative determinations. Thus, for example, polygamy is generally supposed to have been best suited to the social structure in the time of Muḥammad, in terms of the welfare of the whole and of the individual.[62] Muḥammad 'Abduh, however, maintains that the Qur'ān itself teaches in an unequivocal way that monogamy and also the moral equality of male and female are the 'final condition' to be striven for. This 'final condition' is then achieved through monogamy, when the greatest possible good for all is present and morality is not affected, in the sense of being socially weaker through extra-marital relationships and dangers.

For Muḥammad 'Abduh there is no contradiction between the doctrines of the intellect and the revelation of the Qur'ān. This applies also in regard to modern natural science. The Qur'ān, to be sure, is not a book that was revealed solely for the explanation of scientific facts; therefore, one should not be offended when, for the glorification of God, specific historically-conditioned images and expressions have been employed which do not correspond directly with modern natural science. Also, one cannot expect the Qur'ān to anticipate, in a constructive manner, the discoveries of modern technology. Yet in a direct manner the Qur'ān unambiguously encourages intellectual involvement with nature and in no way contains explicitly anti-intellectual or superstitious doctrines. This principle occasionally leads Muḥammad 'Abduh to offer baffling interpretations, which, of course, should not be over-emphasized in relation to the total structure of his exposition. For instance, he draws the conclusion, from the ancient Arab view incorporated into the Qur'ān that the spirits or jinn cause sickness, that these beings are to be understood as the microscopic germs of modern medicine.

All in all, then, it follows that the modern interpretation of the Qur'ān, which found additional representatives after Muḥammad 'Abduh, is also the explication of a specific theology and world-view

based on the Qur'ān, and not an historical-critical investigation of the Qur'ān. Also, it would be fundamentally unfair to expect a renunciation of faith to the point of an inner surrender. On the other hand, the time will come when Muslim theology will be forced to incorporate within itself not only the intellectual foundations of modern technology and civilization, but also the results of Western studies of the Qur'ān. These must eventually receive their place within the realm of Muslim orthodoxy. In the Christian realm, historical studies have also led to the contemplation of inherited religious beliefs, and here also men have found in the sacred scripture again and again whatever dogmas they have sought to find.

I

REVELATION

1. Methods of divine inspiration

Zamakhsharī on Sūra 42:51/50f.

It belongs not to any mortal that God should speak to him, except by inspiration (waḥy), *or from behind a veil,' or that He should send a messenger and he reveal whatsoever He will, by His leave; surely He is All-high, All-wise.*

It belongs not to any mortal: it does not fall to any man's lot *that God should speak to him, except* in three ways:

(1) With the help of suggestion, that is, inspiration (*ilhām*), and lowering into the heart, or visions, just as God inspired the mother of Moses[1] and commanded Abraham[2] through inspiration to sacrifice his son. From Mujāhid (it is related) that God inspired David by placing the Psalms in his heart....

(2) In such a way that God causes man to hear his words, which he creates within someone's body,[3] without the hearer seeing the one who speaks to him—since in his essence God is invisible. God's expression *from behind a veil* is a simile. That is, (he speaks to him) like a king who is hidden behind a veil when he converses with one of his eminent people, so that this person hears his voice but cannot see his figure. In the same manner God spoke with Moses[4] and speaks with the angels.

(3) In such a way that God sends an angel to man as a messenger to inspire him, just as the prophets were inspired, with the exception of Moses.

Some say: *by inspiration*, just as God inspired the messengers through the mediation of angels. *Or that He should send a messenger*, that is, a prophet, just as God spoke to the peoples of the prophets in their own languages....