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رضوان السيد

كلية الدراسات العليا والبحث العلمي، جامعة محمد بن زايد للعلوم الإنسانية، أبو
ظبي، الإمارات العربية المتحدة

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1   النص بين الاستبدال والقطيعة

في السبعينات والثمانينات من القرن العشرين غلبت القراءات الجديدة للنص الكلاسيكي
العربي والإسلامي. وفي تلك القراءات غلبت منازع التنكر والإنكار لتلك النصوص والصور
التاريخية التي تضمنتْها للقرون الثلاثة الأولى من التاريخ الديني والثقافي للإسلام. وما جاء
نهج التنكر والإنكار من جانب الدارسين والقراء الغربيين وحسْب، بل ومن جانب الدارسين
والباحثين والمثقفين العرب. لكنْ كان هناك فرقٌ بارزٌ بين الجهتين، وإنْ ظلت النتيجة
واحدة أو متقاربة. فالدارسون الغربيون سواء سميناهم مستشرقين جددًا أو مراجعين جددًا
هدفوا في الغالب إلى الاستبدال بالنصوص والصُوَر التاريخية العربية والإسلامية نصوصًا
وصُوَرًا تاريخيةً أخرى من اللغات والثقافات القديمة والمجاورة للعرب في القرون ما بين
السابع والتاسع للميلاد. أما المثقفون العرب الكبار فقد أصرُّوا على استحداث قطيعة مع
النصوص العربية والإسلامية بحجة أنّ سيطرتها الباقية تحول دون دخول العرب والمسلمين
في الحداثة التي تعمُّ في عالم العصر وعصر العالم!

ذهب عشرات المراجعين الجدد إلى أنّ تلك النصوص والصُوَر متأخرة، واصطنعت
صُوَرًا للإسلام الأول (ظهور الدين وتكون الدولة) غير تاريخية وغير حقيقية. لقد تحيرنا
نحن المتخصصين العرب والمسلمين في الدراسات الكلاسيكية تلك، ماذا نصنع تجاه
الجهتين أو الجبهتين. فهناك تراثٌ زاخرٌ مدوَّن منذ أواخر القرن الهجري الأول في شتى
المجالات الدينية والثقافية العامة. أما البدائل المعروضة من اللغات الأخرى ففغضلًا على
أنها شذرات مقتضبة معنية غالبًا بعقائد وتاريخ الأقوام التي شهدت ظهور الإسلام وقيام
الدولة العربية، وهي لا تعرف غالبًا أو حتى القليل عن هذا الظهور الكبير لأنه غريبٌ
عنها كما أنها غريبةٌ عنه. وإذا اهتمت بشيء من وقائع ذاك الظهور فما اتصل مباشرةً بحياة

الجماعة الصغيرة المتفاجئة، وتخالطه أخطاء كثيرة في الأسماء والوقائع، والفهم المغلوط بالطبع بسبب البعد الشعوري والثقافي. إنما الطريف أنّ بعض هؤلاء الدارسين الجدد ذهبوا وبدون تردد إلى أنّ ما لم يذكره الراهب أو الكاهن السرياني أو الأرثوذكسي – ومن ذلك الإسلام والقرآن والدولة – لم يكن في الحقيقة موجودًا! وهكذا كانت هناك محاولات للذهاب إلى أنّ ما لم يعرفه السريان كأنه لم يكن بعد، لكنّ ذاكرة الطبري أو البلاذري قدمتْه في الوجود مائة عام على الأقل، وهو عندما ظهر كان محمّلًا بعقائد وأفكار وصور أولئك السابقين! وإذا كنتَ لا تملك غير شذراتٍ غامضة فماذا تفعل لتتبع وقائع القرنين الأولين السابع والثامن؟ تحاول ملءَ ''الفراغ'' بالخيال الخصب والحديث عن تكون دينٍ هو مزيج ووشائج من العقائد والتقاليد الموجودة أو التي تفترض وجودها في البيئة، ويشمل ذلك أحيانًا وجود النبي والقرآن وحتى شخصيات التاريخ الأول. ومع أنّ ذلك الزخم التأويلي خفّ بعد تسعينيّات القرن الماضي، لكنه صار اتجاهًا ما يزال عشرات الدارسين يلوكونه في تأويلاتٍ تبدأ ولا تنتهي. وقد قرأتُ خلال العامين 2023 و2024 ست ''دراساتٍ'' عن إبراهيم أبي الأنبياء وتطورات صورته وسيرته في القرآن ودئاثر المسلمين الأولى، وكلها تتراوح بين الإنكار أو مماثلة الموروث الآخر بأشكالٍ مختلفة. وهو الشأن نفسه في علاقة شخصية النبي موسى بالنبي محمد، أو علاقة شخصية عبد الملك بن مروان بشخصية أحد أباطرة البيزنطيين مثلًا.. إلخ. كان الأستاذ شتفان فيلد S. Wild قبل خمسة عشر عامًا يشكو لي أنّ الدارسين العرب حتى الذين يعرفون منهم اللغات الأجنبية لا يقرأون الدراسات النقدية الغربية عن القرآن(!)، فأجبته: أنت سميت أخيرًا فقط القرآن ''نصًا''، لكنّ فلانًا وفلانًا ما يزالون يفرّقون بين القرآن والمصحف ويجتهدون في شرذمة سُوَر المصحف وأجزائه، فأخبرْني ماذا نقرأ ولماذا، ما دام فلان وفلان يرون أن التاريخ العقدي للإسلام الأول لا يمكن كتابته إلا بلسانيات الخارج!

2 نظرة في الحاضر والمستقبل

خلال قرنٍ ونصف قام المستشرقون بنشر آلاف النصوص العربية والإسلامية واستندوا إليها بعد تردد في كتابة تاريخ الحضارة. بيد أنّ كثيرين من أعقابهم وتلامذتهم في العقود الأخيرة تنكروا لنشرات ما قبل القرن التاسع الميلادي بحججٍ مختلفة. وصحيح أنّ هناك دارسين آخرين حاولوا ويحاولون اجتراح نهج ومناهج أخرى في القراءة، لكنْ – كما قالت الدارسة الكبيرة للقرآن أنجليكا نويفرت Angelika Neuwirth – فإنّ عقودًا من التنكر والإنكار والاستبدال نشرت حالاتٍ من الفوضى والتصديع لا يعلِّلها النزوع النقدي الجذري، ولا متغيرات المناهج في العلوم الإنسانية.

وتعودُ اليوم النقاشات حول الاستشراق وإشكاليات الدراسات الإسلامية في الغرب إلى الاشتعال. والذي يمكن الذهاب إليه ثلاثة أمور: الفهم النقدي والتجاوُز من جهة – والتطلع إلى أعمال شباب الدارسين العرب والمسلمين في الجامعات الغربية وفي الجامعات العربية والإسلامية – والانتباه إلى أعمال نخبةٍ من الدارسين الغربيين الذين عادت علاقاتهم بالنصوص إلى حميمية تشبه مواريث الكبار. ليس من حق أحدٍ أن يمنع أحدًا من الكتابة عن الإسلام ونصوصه. لكن من حقنا البحث الآخر والمنافسة والقراءة النقدية لأعمال الراديكاليين وإنتاج دراسات وبحوث جيدة و أكثر إقناعًا.

منذ إدوارد سعيد وكتابه الاستشراق (1978) تزايد "النقد الكولونيالي" وظهرت مدرسة "التابع Subaltern" ذات الرؤية السلبية المليئة بالعداء للعلم الغربي في العلوم الاجتماعية والإنسانية. لكنْ كما أنّ تأويلات المراجعين الجدد غير مفيدة؛ فإنّ الجانب المقابل من النقد الجذري للحضارة الغربية والتنوير غير مفيد أيضًا.

ولا بد من كلمةٍ عن أعمال مفكري القطيعة العرب مع الموروث فيما بين السبعينيّات والتسعينيّات. لقد كانت في نظرهم مشروعاتٍ كبرى وغالبًا من غير متخصصين في نقد ونقض التراث الحضاري. ولأنها كانت في الغالب أعمالًا أيديولوجية وبمنهجياتٍ غربية إنكارية، فقد ذهبت دون أن تترك أثرًا في أوساط المتخصصين أو أوساط الدارسين الغربيين للحاضر الفكري العربي والإسلامي.

تؤثّر متغيرات المناهج كثيرًا في أعمال الدارسين. بيد أنّ جدالات الإسلاميات والموروث متأثرة أيضًا بالرؤى في الغرب والعالم حول العرب والإسلام، وصراعات الحاضر في العلاقات الدولية، ودعاوى الهوية والثقافة من ورائها، وعلى الدارس المعاصر أن يراعي ويعتبر ذلك كلَّه في العمل العلمي الذي لا تنتهي متغيراته في العلوم الإنسانية على وجه الخصوص.

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يتضمن العدد الثاني من **مجلة الدراسات الإسلامية** أربع مقالاتٍ طويلة ومراجعات لعدة كتب جديدة. وهي تعرض جميعًا مطالعات جادّة ومختلفة في القرآن وقراءاته، وفي أطروحات الاستنباط، والآفاق الأخرى للتأويل العلمي والثقافي والحضاري. هو نهجٌ جديدٌ وبنّاء عماده التدقيق الصابر، وتوخّي المبهر والمتقدم في البحث العلمي.

Beyond the ʿUthmānic Codex: the Role of Self-Similarity in Preserving the Textual Integrity of the Qurʾān

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Abstract

Self-similarity is the most pervasive feature of the Qurʾān and demands an explanation. Western scholarship generally maintains that self-similarity indicates the Qurʾān's oral origins. In contrast, this article argues that self-similarity is evidence of an initial written origin of the Qurʾān that played a crucial role in giving the text its distinct identity and safeguarding it from corruption. The article is divided into three sections. The first introduces the concept of self-similarity, briefly defining it and reviewing Western scholarship that has dealt with self-similarity. The second section examines how self-similarity functions within the Qurʾān by analyzing eleven samples of parallel passages, thereby substantiating the study's central claim. The third section concludes that the Qurʾān was not subject to later editing and that the ʿUthmānic Codex was copied from an earlier written exemplar.

Keywords

ما قبل المصحف العثماني: وظيفة التكرار في المحافظة على سلامة النص القرآني

جوهر محمد داوود

باحث مستقل

الملخص

إنَّ التكرار أبرز ظاهرة في القرآن الكريم، وهي ظاهرة تحتاج إلى تفسير. فالأوساط الأكاديمية الغربية عمومًا ترى أن هذه الظاهرة مردها الأصل الشفاهي الإلقائي للنص القرآني عند نشأته. وفي المقابل، يرى هذا البحث أنَّ التكرار دليل على أنَّ القرآن لم يكن نصًّا شفاهيًّا مرتجلًا، وإنَّما كان نصًّا مقيّدًا بالكتابة منذ لحظة تنزله، وأنَّ التكرار هو الأساس الذي يمنح النص القرآني خصوصيته التي يتفرد بها، ويصونه من التحريف. ينقسم البحث إلى ثلاثة أقسام. فالقسم الأول يقدم تعريفًا وجيزًا بظاهرة التكرار، ويراجع تأثير هذه الظاهرة في الدراسات القرآنية المعاصرة في الغرب. والقسم الثاني يتناول بالتفصيل وظيفة التكرار داخل النص القرآني من خلال تحليل أحد عشر أنموذجًا من الآيات المتشابهة للبرهنة على صحة ما يدعيه البحث. والقسم الثالث يخلص إلى أنّ القرآن لم يخضع للتنقيح في مراحل لاحقة، وأنَّ المصحف العثماني منسوخ من أصْل مكتوب سابق عليه.

الكلمات المفاتيح

القرآن – سلامة النص – المصحف العثماني – التقنين – توحيد النص – طرس صنعاء

Introduction

The Qurʾān defines itself as a self-similar book, "God has sent down the most beautiful discourse: a Book [that is] self-similar, oft-repeated (*allāhu naz-zala aḥsana al-ḥadīthi kitāban mutashābihan mathāniya*).[1] This definition not only highlights the Qurʾān's most pervasive feature but also implies that its self-similarity is both intentional and intrinsic to its design. The term *mutashābihan* can denote both similarity and confusion. In this context, it

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1 Qurʾān 39:23. The English translations of the Qurʾānic texts are taken, with the necessary changes made, from six sources: 1-Sahih International, 2-Pickthall, 3-Yusuf Ali, 4-Shakir, 5-Arberry, and 6-Khattab.

refers to the strikingly similar passages repeated throughout the Qurʾān, which can sometimes be so alike that they confuse the reader. To elucidate this meaning, the adjective *mutashābihan* is modified by "oft-repeated (*mathāniya*), indicating that the intended confusion arises not from ambiguity of meaning but from the close resemblance in the appearance of passages.

Essentially, self-similarity and repetition are synonymous in the Qurʾān. Words, phrases, *āyas*, and entire passages are repeated, creating a tapestry of self-similar elements woven throughout the text. While repetition is often viewed as a compositional flaw, the phrase "the most beautiful discourse (*aḥsana al-ḥadīth*)" suggests that the Qurʾān's beauty lies precisely in its self-similarity.[2] This perspective challenges the common negative perception of repetition and redefines our understanding of its role in the text. This article will show that self-similarity, as a central phenomenon, reflects not only the original formation of the Qurʾān but also plays a pivotal role in preserving its textual integrity.[3]

1 The Impact of Self-Similarity on Modern Scholarship

The self-similarity of the Qurʾān has profoundly impacted modern Western scholarship. Leading theories on its formation and origins are essentially reactions to the text's repetition. For instance, John Wansbrough's radical hypothesis posited that the Qurʾān crystallized centuries later than traditional accounts maintain and emerged within Mesopotamian sectarian communities rather than the Hijaz. This theory was heavily influenced by Wansbrough's interpretation of the phenomenon of repetition in the Qurʾān. He viewed it as evidence of an "organic development" from originally separate collections of

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2   Theodor Nöldeke criticized repetition in the Qurʾān, particularly during its second Meccan period, arguing that it rendered the style dull, prosaic, and downright boring. See Theodor Nöldeke et al., *The History of the Qurʾān*. ed. and trans. Wolfgang H. Behn (Leiden and Boston: Koninklijke Brill, 2013), 117.

3   In my PhD thesis, I demonstrated that repetition forms the foundation of *sūra* unity, providing numerous examples and a detailed analysis of three complete *sūras*: al-Tawbah (Q 9), Yūsuf (Q 12), and al-Kahf (Q 18). See Jawhar M. Dawood, *Lexical Cohesion in the Qurʾan. The Surah: Disjointed or Interwoven?* (PhD. Diss, University of Aberdeen, 2019). I further elaborated on the thesis in my Arabic monograph, *Naẓm al-Qurʾān*, with extensive examples, a particular emphasis on the narrative structure in the *Qurʾān*, and a more detailed analysis of three complete *sūras*: al-Anʿām (Q 6), al-Kahf (Q 18), and Yūsuf (Q 12). See Jawhar M. Dawood, *Naẓm al-Qurʾān: Qirāʾa Jadīda fī Tajānusi Īqāʿihi wa-Talāḥumi Bināʾihi* (Beirut: Mominoun Without Borders Institution for Publication and Distribution, 2022).

logia, arguing that a more unified text would have reduced such redundancy.[4] He further argued that the very high frequency of formulae and formulaic systems in the Qurʾān "could indicate not only a long period of oral transmission but also of oral composition."[5]

However, this hypothesis has not gained universal acceptance. For example, Fred Donner disagreed with Wansbrough's notion that the Qurʾān crystallized centuries after the Prophet's lifetime, but he found common ground in the idea that its formation could have occurred within a shorter timeframe – thirty years rather than two hundred.[6] Additionally, both scholars concurred that the Qurʾān may have originated through oral composition, with Donner offering a vivid analogy: "different recordings of a politician's stump speech delivered over a few days or weeks."[7]

Devin J. Stewart critiqued Wansbrough's hypothesis, particularly his analysis of the Shuʿayb story in Sūrat al-Shuʿarā (Q 26:178–88). Wansbrough considered this version to be the least coherent and potentially the earliest, suggesting a primitive origin.[8] However, Stewart argued convincingly that each retelling of the Shuʿayb story is tailored to fit the context in which it appears.[9] He suggested that Wansbrough's misinterpretation stemmed from analyzing the stories in isolation.[10] Partially agreeing with Donner's analogy of oral composition, Stewart offered his own refined and more realistic version: a sermon (*khuṭba*) where producing different versions of the same Prophetic stories may have involved written, oral, or mental preparation rather than an impromptu performance.[11]

Wansbrough's hypothesis has not been entirely dismissed. What has been challenged is only the aspect lacking support from textual evidence or historical data – specifically, the proposition concerning the temporal and spatial shifting of the Qurʾān's origins. This facet of his hypothesis has been definitively discredited following the discovery of Qurʾānic manuscripts dated to the

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4   John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, trans. Andrew Rippin (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2004), 50.

5   Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, 48.

6   Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Gerlach Press, 2021), 37.

7   Fred M. Donner, "The Qurʾān in Recent Scholarship: Challenges and Desiderata," in *The Qurʾān in Its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Reynolds (London: Routledge, 2007), 34.

8   Devin J. Stewart, "Wansbrough, Bultmann, and the Theory of Variant Traditions in the Qurʾān," in *Quranic Studies Today*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth and Michael Anthony Sells (London: Routledge, 2016), 27.

9   Ibid., 28.

10   Ibid., 30.

11   Ibid., 45.

first century of Islam.[12] However, the other aspect, linked to oral composition, continues to be the subject of study in contemporary scholarship. Scholars still employ it as a powerful tool, not only to explain self-similarity, but also to explore the Qurʾān's origins.

A notable illustration of this phenomenon is the work of Islam Dayeh, who closely examined the intertextuality of seven adjacent *sūras* in the *muṣḥaf*, traditionally referred to as the *ḥawāmīm* (Q 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46), all commencing with the disconnected letters *ḥā-mīm*.[13] Employing the formulaic theory of oral composition pioneered by Milman Parry (d. 1935) and later expanded by his disciple Albert Lord (d. 1991),[14] Dayeh studied parallel phrases and sentences that appear in these *sūras*. His objective was to discern traces of oral composition within these *sūras* by analyzing the recurring patterns of specific expressions. Dayeh saw a striking resemblance between the concept of self-similarity (*mutashābih*) in the Qurʾān and Parry's formulaic theory, despite the latter being designed to function exclusively *under the same metrical conditions*, which do not actually apply to the Qurʾān since it lacks metrical systems.[15] Milman Parry defined the formula in Homeric poems as "a group of words which is regularly employed *under the same metrical conditions* [emphasis added] to express a given essential idea."[16] Nonetheless, Dayeh argued that residues of oral literature and formulaic language are discernable in the Qurʾān, while simultaneously acknowledging the theory's limitations and advising caution in its application to the Qurʾān.[17]

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12   On multiple historical, orthographic, paleographic, and codicological studies challenging Wansbrough's hypothesis, see Hythem Sidky, "On the Regionality of Qurʾānic Codices," *Journal of the International Qurʾānic Studies Association* 5, no. 1 (December 20, 2020); 133–210.

13   Islam Dayeh, "AL-ḤAWĀMĪM: Intertextuality and Coherence in Meccan Surahs," in *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 468.

14   *Ibid.*

15   Devin J. Stewart argued that the Qurʾān exhibits a form of accent-based metrical structure, or *sajʿ*. However, his argument is not convincing because accent-based meter is a literary concept of his own development that does not have any precedent in the Arabic language. Indeed, he arbitrarily rejected the established prosody of al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (d. 170 AH / 791 CE) and proposed a new triad of prose, poetry, and *sajʿ* to replace the traditional dichotomy of prose and poetry. See Devin J. Stewart, "Sajʿ in the Qurʾān: Prosody and Structure," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 21, no. 2 (January 1990); 101–139.

16   Milman Parry, "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making. I. Homer and Homeric Style," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 41 (1930), 80.

17   Dayeh, "al-Ḥawāmīm," 469f.

Another significant example is Andrew G. Bannister, who rigorously attempted to apply Milman Parry's theory to the Qurʾān in his book *An Oral-Formulaic Study of the Qurʾān*. Utilizing a computerized database encompassing the entire Qurʾānic corpus, he observed the recurrence of specific phrases, such as *al-ladhīna āmanū wa-ʿamilū, ʿalā kulli shayʾin qadīr* and *fī sabīl illāh*, throughout the Qurʾān. From this observation, he deduced that the Qurʾān exhibits a highly formulaic nature, although none of these phrases possesses any metrical value – a criterion essential for a text to be classified as formulaic according to Parry's definition.[18]

The primary focus of the book, however, was to explain the variations found in the seven retellings of the Iblīs and Adam story in the Qurʾān. The author posited that these variations arise from the oral composition of the story at speed under the pressure of performance, thereby bearing "the hallmark of being performance variants."[19] However, Bannister fell into the same analytical pitfall as Wansbrough did. Like Wansbrough, Bannister analyzed the different versions of the story in isolation rather than examining them within their contextual framework. Instead of considering the stories in their respective contexts, he juxtaposed them and compared them with one another, making no effort to explain why, for instance, Iblīs employs one diction in one *sūra* and a different one in another *sūra*.[20]

The fact that Bannister fell into the same analytical pitfall as Wansbrough is indicative of the challenges persisting in Western scholarship's understanding of self-similarity in the Qurʾān over the past fifty years. While there are differing viewpoints and ongoing debate, Wansbrough's hypothesis of oral composition continues to be the prevailing assumption, even among scholars like Devin Stewart, who advocated for examining the different versions of the same story in the Qurʾān within their specific contexts. A notable dissenting voice is Angelica Neuwirth, who cautiously suggested that later *sūras*, characterized by complex structure and devoid of mnemonic technical devices, may have

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18   Andrew G. Bannister, *An Oral-Formulaic Study of the Qurʾān* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014), 149ff.

19   Ibid., 30, 271.

20   Nicolai Sinai devoted some attention to the diction of the Adam-Iblīs story, but his primary focus was on exploring thematic intertextuality between the Qurʾān and Jewish-Christian traditions. When it comes to lexical overlaps, he also juxtaposed the different versions instead of considering them within their respective *sūras*. Moreover, he relied mainly on the mean verse length of a *sūra*, which is a rather mechanical criterion, to determine whether the version of the story is early or late. Nicolai Sinai, *The Qurʾān: A Historical-Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: University Press, 2017), 150ff.

been immediately fixed in writing or may even have been written composi-
tions from the outset.[21]

Building on Neuwirth's suggestion, this article proposes a new paradigm
aimed at enhancing our understanding of the nature and function of self-
similarity in the Qurʾān, particularly its role in preserving the integrity of the
text. The article argues that it is possible to arrive at the original form of the
Qurʾān through a careful analysis of self-similarity features and demonstrate
that the individual *sūras*, as they exist today, emerged as unified, independent
textual units much earlier than the commonly accepted ʿUthmānic transcrip-
tion date around 30 AH / 650 CE.[22]

The method used to achieve this involves closely examining self-similar
texts within the diction of the Qurʾān as a whole and within the diction of indi-
vidual sūras. Through textual evidence, the article demonstrates that the struc-
ture of the Qurʾānic text is so complex that it could not have been the product
of oral composition or transmission. The text exhibits a highly sophisticated
level of planning and organization, suggesting that it was a written composi-
tion from the outset. It bears the hallmark of a book that had a detailed blue-
print for its actual composition.

2   Self-Similarity at Work in the Qurʾān

While maintaining its overall diction, each *sūra* within the Qurʾān exhibits its
own distinct diction. For instance, the phrase "*al-ladhīna āmanū wa-ʿamilū
al-ṣāliḥāti*" is characteristic of the Qurʾānic diction, appearing fifty times
in Meccan and Medinan *sūras*. Conversely, the phrase "*al-ladhīna āmanū
wa-ʿamilū al-ṣāliḥāti*" followed by "*sa-nudkhiluhum*" is specific to Sūrat al-Nisāʾ
(Q 4:57,122), as it is not attested elsewhere. Similarly, in a more subtle manner,
the phrase "*alladhīna āmanū wa-ʿamilū al-ṣāliḥāti*," preceded by the particle
"*fā-*," appears twice in Sūrat al-Ḥajj (Q 22:50, 56) and is not found elsewhere in
the Qurʾān.

These examples illustrate how the Qurʾān creates its diction through repeti-
tion. Major themes in the Qurʾān, such as prophetic narratives, eschatology,

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21   Angelika Neuwirth, "Structural, Linguistic and Literary Features," in *The Cambridge
      Companion to the Qurʾān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University
      Press, 2006), 101.

22   Behnam Sadeghi and Mohsen Goudarzi presented a similar argument, though for differ-
      ent reasons and conclusions, based on their comparative analysis of the upper and lower
      texts of the Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest. See Behnam Sadeghi and Mohsen Goudarzi, "Ṣanʿāʾ 1 and
      the Origins of the Qurʾān," *Der Islam* 87, no. 1–2 (February 1, 2012), 8.

polemics, creation signs, and affirmations of the revelation (to use Neuwirth's turn of phrase), are constantly repeated.[23] These themes are expressed in very similar, though not quite identical, words, phrases, and syntactic structures.[24] It is from this endless repetition that self-similarity in the Qurʾān emerges, leading to the birth of the distinct Qurʾānic diction. It is also because of this endless repetition that *readers see the Qurʾān everywhere within it.*

To appreciate the intensity of repetition in the Qurʾān, it is important to note that the Qurʾān contains approximately 78,000 words, with around 1,850 unique lexical entries, including about 455 *hapax legomena.* Proper nouns are not included in this count.[25] The ratio of unique words to total words is 40:1, meaning that each unique lexical entry is repeated forty times on average.[26] This limited range of vocabulary produces a text with the size and scope of the Qurʾān, explaining why the Qurʾān is so self-referential.

This high level of repetition performs at least two functions. First, it creates an unmistakable textual identity for the Qurʾān, making it instantly recognizable and distinct from any other text. This unique identity helps safeguard the Qurʾān from being confused with other writings. Second, it establishes fixed phrases that recur throughout the Qurʾān, allowing only specific word combinations and precluding those that are not used in the text.

The second function requires illustration that will be provided through three examples: two from the Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest and one from literary sources. The first is the fixed phrase "confirming that which (*muṣaddiqan li-mā*)," which appears eleven times in both Meccan and Medinan *sūras* and is invariably followed by "with you/them (*maʿakum/hum*)" or "before it/me (*bayna yadayhi/ya*)." One instance of this is Q 5:46, which reads: "confirming that which came before him in the Torah (*muṣaddiqan li-mā bayna yadayhi min al-tawrāti*)." However, the reconstructed lower text of the Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest violates this universal rule in Q 5:46 by reading: "confirming that which We have sent down (*muṣaddiqan li-mā **anzalnā***),"[27] suggesting a departure from the Qurʾānic style that is more likely an error.

The second example is the fixed phrase "after what has come to you [singular/plural]/him/them (*min baʿdi mā jāʾaka/jāʾatkum/jāʾatʾhu/jāʾatʾhum*)," which recurs twelve times in Meccan and Medinan *sūras* and is always followed

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23   Neuwirth, "Structural, Linguistic and Literary Features," 108.

24   Donner, "Recent Scholarship," 35.

25   Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, 117.

26   *Ibid.*

27   Behnam Sadeghi and Uwe Bergmann, "The Codex of a Companion of the Prophet and the Qurʾān of the Prophet," *Arabica* 57, no. 4 (2010), 431.

by "of knowledge (*min al-ʿilm*)" or by "knowledge (*al-ʿilm*)" or "clear proofs (*al-bayyināt*)." One such occurrence is Q 2:209, which reads: "after clear proofs have come to you (*min baʿdi mā jāʾatkum al-bayyinātu*)." The lower text of the Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest deviates from this norm in Q 2:209 and reads: "after guidance has come to you (*min baʿdi mā jāʾakum al-hudā*),"[28] which indicates a deviation from the Qurʾānic style and suggests a potential error.

The third example is the word "path (*ṣirāṭ*)," which recurs forty-five times in the Qurʾān. Whenever it is associated with guidance, the only verb that comes with it is "to guide (*hadā*)," which appears twenty-three times, as in "Guide us to the straight path (*ihdina al-ṣirāṭa al-mustaqīm*)." However, it never appears associated with any other synonyms such as "to guide (*arshada*)" or "to show (*baṣṣara*)." Therefore, the readings "Guide us to the straight path (*arshidna al-ṣirāṭa al-mustaqīm*)" and "Show us the straight path (*baṣṣirna al-ṣirāṭa al-mustaqīm*)" – attributed to Ibn Masʿūd (d. 32 AH / 653 CE) and Thābit al-Bunānī (d. 127 AH? / 745 CE), respectively – could not have been part of the Qurʾān as tradition claims because they break the law of fixed phrases.[29]

Having outlined these broad concepts, the article will now examine specific cases of self-similarity within the Qurʾān, spanning various *sūras* and themes. It will analyze eleven selected samples – restricted to this number due to space constraints – that feature uniquely parallel *āyas* sharing a common theme and interlinked vocabulary. Despite these intricate relationships, each *āya* retains its distinct lexical characteristics, anchoring it firmly within its respective *sūra*.

2.1   *Q 5:36, 13:18, 39:47*

[5]	المائدة	36 إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ أَنَّ لَهُم مَّا فِي **الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لِيَفْتَدُوا** بِهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَا **تُقُبِّلَ** مِنْهُمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ
[13]	الرعد	18 لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمُ الْحُسْنَى وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُ لَوْ أَنَّ لَهُم مَّا فِي **الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَافْتَدَوْا** بِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ **سُوءُ الْحِسَابِ** وَمَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ المِهَادُ

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28   *Ibid.*, 430. These two examples are not sufficient to claim that every deviation in the lower text of the Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest follows the same pattern. Further research is required to gain deeper insights into the nature of the lower text and its deviations from the Qurʾānic text.

29   Makkī b. Ḥammūsh al-Qaysī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, *al-Ibānah ʿan Mʿāni al-Qirāʾāt* (Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣir lʾal-Ṭabʿ wa al-Nashr, n.d.), 126.

[39]   الزمر   47   وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهِ مِن سُوءِ الْعَذَابِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَبَدَا لَهُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يَكُونُوا يَحْتَسِبُونَ

These three *āyas* are from three different *sūras*. The first belongs to a Medinan *sūra*, while the second and third are from Meccan *sūras*. Despite their differing *sūras* and historical periods, they convey the same message: even if disbelievers possessed the entire world and its equivalent with it, offering it as ransom to escape the severe punishment of Judgment Day, God would not accept it from them.

Structurally, the three *āyas* follow a similar pattern, each having three sections. The first section describes the identity of those who will be punished (disbelievers or wrongdoers), the second presents the concept of ransom, and the third describes the impending punishment. At the center of the three āyas is the phrase "all that is in the earth and its equivalent with it (*mā fī al-arḍi jamīʿan wa-mithlahū maʿahū*)," which is unique to these three *sūras* and is not found elsewhere in the Qurʾān.

Additionally, the three *āyas* employ similar words and phrases. The first and second *āyas* share the words "punishment (*ʿadhāb*)" and "Day of Resurrection (*yawm al-qiyāma*)." The second and third share the word "severity (*sūʾ*)," while all three share the verb "to offer as ransom (*iftadā*)." They are so similar in theme, vocabulary, and rhyme that they could readily interchange positions, with the first *āya* replacing the second or third without disrupting the overall flow of the respective *sūras*. The key question here is: How were these *āyas* assigned to their respective *sūras*? To answer this question, we must examine each *āya* within its respective *sūra*.

In Q 5:36, the passive verb "to be accepted (*tuqubbila*)" is used in the phrase "it would not be accepted from them (*mā tuqubbila minhum*)." Remarkably, this *sūra* also contains the identical passive verb "and it was accepted from one of them (*fa-tuqubbila min aḥadihimā*)" in Q 5:27, creating a unique symmetry that is exclusive to this *sūra*. In other words, the past tense passive form of this verb *tuqubbila* appears only in these two *āyas* in the Qurʾān. In Q 13:18 there is the phrase "severity of reckoning (*sūʾ al-ḥisāb*)." Interestingly, the exact phrase *sūʾ al-ḥisāb* reappears in Q 13:21 within the same *sūra*, forming yet another distinctive symmetry unparalleled elsewhere in the Qurʾān. In Q 39:47 there is the phrase "the severity of punishment on Judgment Day (*sūʾ-l-ʿadhābi yawm al-qiyāma*)." The same phrase *sūʾ-l-ʿadhābi yawm al-qiyāma* surfaces in a different context in Q 39:24, also within the same *sūra*, constructing yet another unique symmetry. Moreover, in Q 39:24, the phrase "and it was said to the

wrongdoers (*wa-qīla li-'l-ẓālimīna*)" resonates, echoing the phrase *li-'l-ladhīna ẓalamū* in Q 39:47 and unifying the identity of those deserving severe punishment in both *āyas*. In a similar manner, Q 5:36 refers to "those who disbelieved (*al-ladhīna kafarū*)," for the *sūra* has a higher frequency of the root *k-f-r* compared to the other two *sūras* combined.

It is clear from this analysis that, despite thematic and lexical similarities among the three *āyas*, each *āya* is intricately tied to its respective *sūra* and cannot be interchanged without disrupting the symmetry it forms with its counterparts. Evidently, each *āya* is meticulously crafted to harmonize with the diction of its *sūra*. For instance, *ʿadhābi yawm al-qiyāma* and *sūʾi-'l-ʿadhābi yawm al-qiyāma* are so similar in theme and vocabulary that they could, in theory, be interchanged without significant semantic impact. However, such an interchange is not possible because it would disturb the symmetry of their respective *sūras*, as pointed out earlier.

This precision suggests a sophisticated level of planning and organization, indicating that the Qurʾān was a written composition rather than an orally improvised text, and that it was composed according to a detailed blueprint, ensuring each component was placed precisely within the text. Moreover, the seamless integration of an *āya* from a Medinan *sūra* with Meccan *āyas*, while preserving textual integrity, is of profound significance. It provides reassurance to scholars like Nicolai Sinai, who speculate about the preservation of early revelations in the consciousness of early Muslims, particularly prior to the ʿUthmānic transcription.[30] By now, the answer to our earlier question about the criterion used in the Qurʾān to assign *āyas* to their respective *sūras* must be clear. That criterion is the diction of each *sūra*, which strictly governs which *āyas* belong to it and which do not. This assertion will further be reinforced by the cases that follow.

2.2   *Q 7:16, 15:39, 38:82, 17:62*

[7]   الأعراف   16   قالَ فَبِما أَغوَيتَني لَأَقعُدَنَّ لَهُم صِراطَكَ المُستَقيمَ

[15]   الحِجر   39   قالَ رَبِّ بِما أَغوَيتَني لَأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُم فِي الأَرضِ وَلَأُغوِيَنَّهُم أَجمَعينَ

[38]   ص   82   قالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغوِيَنَّهُم أَجمَعينَ

[17]   الإسراء   62   قالَ أَرَأَيتَكَ هذَا الَّذي كَرَّمتَ عَلَيَّ لَئِن أَخَّرتَنِ إلى يَومِ القِيامَةِ لَأَحتَنِكَنَّ ذُرِّيَّتَهُ إلّا قَليلًا

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30   Sinai, *The Qurʾān*, 150ff.

These four *āyas* are from different retellings of the Adam-Iblīs narrative found in four separate *sūras*. They are part of the famous dialogues between God and Iblīs, featuring the reported speeches of the latter, as evident from their initiation with the verb "He said (*qāla*)." These *āyas* were selected for analysis because, out of the seven retellings of the narrative in the Qurʾān, they are the only instances where Iblīs vows to tempt and lead human beings astray, driven by his desire for vengeance following his expulsion from Paradise. What is remarkable about Iblīs' speeches across these four *āyas* is his employment of different language in each instance, carefully selecting vocabulary that aligns with the diction of the respective *sūra*.

In Q 7:16, Iblīs declares "for leading me astray, I will certainly sit in wait for them on your straight path (*fa-bimā aghwaytanī la-aqʿudanna lahum ṣirāṭaka al-mustaqīm*)." This statement exhibits his clear defiance, demonstrating his unwavering determination to execute this threat. Indeed, his threat will come to pass. In Q 7:86, Shuʿayb makes a striking allusion to this threat by borrowing Iblīs' words, stating "And do not sit in every path, threatening and averting from the way of Allah those who believe in Him and seeking to make it crooked (*wa-lā taqʿudū bi-kulli ṣirāṭin tūʿidūna wataṣuddūna ʿan sabīli-llāhi man āmana bihī wa-tabghūnahā ʿiwajan*)." Shuʿayb borrows two words from Iblīs' speech: "to sit (*qaʿada*)" and "path (*ṣirāṭ*)," implying remarkably that his people are not only following the path of Iblīs but also acting as his agents on earth, thus fulfilling his primordial threat to mankind. While the word *qaʿada* appears twenty-one times and *ṣirāṭ* forty-five times in the Qurʾān, it is only in these instances (Q 7:16 and 86) that they co-occur, forming an exclusive connection between the two *āyas* and the two narratives. Moreover, both Iblīs and Shuʿayb employ these words only in these two places in the Qurʾān, indicating a deliberate selection of vocabulary in these two sections of the *sūra*. Indeed, understanding the significance of Shuʿayb's allusion requires an understanding of Iblīs' initial threat at the beginning of the *sūra*.

In Q 15:39, Iblīs makes a vow: "my Lord, for leading me astray, I will certainly adorn 'the path of error' for them on the earth, and will mislead them all (*rabbi bi-mā aghwaytanī la-ʾuzayyinanna lahum fī al-arḍi wa-la-ʾughwiyannahum ajmaʿīn*)." In this statement, Iblīs adopts a new strategy for tempting humans: he will adorn the path of error to make it appealing to them. This declaration directly challenges God's earlier statement in Q 15:16 and 17: "And We have placed in the heaven great stars and We have adorned it for beholders. And We have protected it from every cursed devil (*wa-laqad jaʿalnā fī al-samāʾi burūjan wa-zayyannāhā li al-nāẓirīn. Wa-ḥafiẓnāhā min kulli shayṭānin rajīm*)." It is evident that Iblīs is confining his deceitful activities to the earth since he will not have access to heaven, as it is protected from every cursed devil. Moreover, his adornment activities to lead people astray stand in sharp contrast to God's

adornment of the sky with stars to guide people to the right path. Interestingly, the decoration of the heaven with stars and its protection from devils is not mentioned in all the *sūras* that contain the Adam-Iblīs narrative, except in Sūrat al-Ḥijr.

In Q 38:82, Iblīs defiantly announces: "by Your Glory, I will surely mislead them all (*qāla fa-bi-ʿizzatika la-ʾughwiyannahum ajmaʿīn*)." This *āya* has puzzled commentators, as Iblīs appears to both glorify and defy God in the same breath. The phrase *fa-bi-ʿizzatika* is commonly understood to mean that Iblīs is swearing by the Glory of God. However, reading this phrase in conjunction with Q 38:2: "But those who disbelieve are in self-glory and dissension (*bali al-ladhīna kafarū fī ʿizzatin wa-shiqāq*)" can shed some light on the meaning of the *āya*. Iblīs seems to be saying that he will tempt humans to lay claim to God's glory in revenge for his own lost glory. With this interpretation, Q 38:2 can be seen as the actual fulfillment of Iblīs' primordial threat. This interpretation is further reinforced by the fact that God is described as *al-ʿazīz* in two places in the same *sūra* (Q 38:9 and 66). Furthermore, the word *ʿizzah* does not appear in all the *sūras* that contain the Adam-Iblīs narrative except in Sūrat Ṣād.

In Q 17:62, Iblīs defiantly states: "do You see this one You have honored above me? If You delay me until the Day of Resurrection, I will surely bring his descendants under my sway, except for a few (*qāla a-raytaka hādha al-ladhī karramta ʿalayya la-ʾin akhakhartanī ilā yawmi al-qiyāmati la-ʾaḥtanikanna dhurriyyatahū illā qalīlā*)." The first notable aspect in this text is Iblīs' justification for his resentment, citing that God has honored (*karrama*) Adam above him. This directly references God's declaration in Q 17:70: "Indeed, We have honored the children of Adam (*wa-laqad karramnā banī ādama*)." The phrase *banī ādama* is significant here because Iblīs' anger in this *sūra* is directed specifically at Adam's descendants, unlike in the other three *āyas* where he threatens to "mislead them all" in general. Remarkably, the verb *karrama*, in this geminated form, with the doubled (*r*), appears exclusively in these two positions (Q 17:62 and 70), connecting the *āyas* both lexically and thematically. Furthermore, Iblīs uses the *hapax legomenon* "to put a bit in a horse's mouth (*iḥtanaka*)" instead of "to tempt (*aghwā*)," possibly alluding to God's response in Q 17:64 to his defiance: "and assault them with your horses (*wa-ajlib ʿalayhim bi-khaylika*)."

Moreover, he says: "if you delay me (*la-ʾin akhakhartanī*)" where one would expect him to say: "if you respite me (*la-ʾin anẓartanī*)," for "respite me (*anẓirnī*)" is the word he employs in the other *sūras* (Q 7:14; 15:36; 38:79). The reason for this seems to be that the word *al-ākhirah*, which carries the meaning of delaying, recurs seven times in this *sūra*. Lastly, while this *āya* can be assigned to Sūrat al-Isrāʾ almost mechanically due to its rhyme *illā qalīlā*, which appears

four times within the same *sūra*, the selection of individual words within the *āya* cannot be purely mechanical; it is strictly governed, as we saw, by the *sūra*'s diction.

Thus, a close examination of the four speeches of Iblīs reveals that the various retellings of the story of Adam and Iblīs are not integrated into their respective *sūras* solely by the common speech marker *wa-ihd*, as a superficial analysis of the texts might imply.[31] Rather, they are interwoven into their respective contexts through an intricate web of words, phrases, and themes. With these complex features, they bear the hallmark of a written text whose composition exhibits a sophisticated level of planning and execution, not a text that was produced hastily under the pressure of live performance.[32] This contrasts with the process described by Milman Parry, who highlights the limitations faced by oral poets compared to those who write out their lines:

> Unlike the poet who writes out his lines, – or even dictates them, – he [the oral poet] cannot think without hurry about his next word, nor change what he has made, nor, before going on, read over what he has just written. Even if one wished to imagine him making his verses alone, one could not suppose the slow finding of the next word, the pondering of the verses just made, the memorizing of each verse. Even though the poet have an unusual memory, he cannot, without paper, make of his own words a poem of any length.[33]

2.3   *Q 7:82, 27:56, 29:29*

[7]	الأعراف	82	**وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَن قَالُوا أَخْرِجُوهُم مِّن قَرْيَتِكُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ أُنَاسٌ يَتَطَهَّرُونَ**
[27]	النمل	56	**فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَن قَالُوا أَخْرِجُوا آلَ لُوطٍ مِّن قَرْيَتِكُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ أُنَاسٌ يَتَطَهَّرُونَ**
[29]	العنكبوت	29	أَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ وَتَقْطَعُونَ السَّبِيلَ وَتَأْتُونَ فِي نَادِيكُمُ الْمُنكَرَ ۖ **فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَن قَالُوا ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابِ اللَّهِ** إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

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31   Bannister, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, 3ff.

32   *Ibid.*, 75f.

33   Parry, "Studies in the Epic Technique," 77.

These three *āyas* are part of various renditions of the story of Lot in the Qurʾān, narrated in three different *sūras*. They all share one common phrase: "But his people's only response was to say (*wa-/fa-mā kāna jawāba qawmihī illā an qālū*)." In the first two *āyas* (Q 7:82, 27:56), this phrase is followed by the imperative verb "drive out (*akhrijū*)," whereas in the last *āya* (Q 29:29), it is followed by the imperative phrase "bring upon us the punishment of Allah (*iʾtinā bi-ʿadhābi ʾllāhi*)," which deviates from the norm. The purpose of this deviation is to mirror the phrase "like the punishment of Allah (*ka-ʿadhābi ʾllāhi*)" that appears in Q 29:10 but not in the other two *sūras*, establishing a unique connection between the two distantly located *āyas* within the same *sūra*. Additionally, the root *k-r-j*, which appears thirteen times in Sūrat al-Aʿrāf and six times in Sūrat al-Naml, does not appear at all in Sūrat al-ʿAnkabūt. This provides another reason why Sūrat al-ʿAnkabūt avoids the use of the standard expression "drive out (*akhrijū*)." Interestingly, the word "abomination (*munkar*)," found in Q 29:29, also appears in Q 29:45 in association with "indecency (*faḥshāʾ*)," connecting the two *āyas* firmly. Notably, while the word *munkar* occurs once in Q 7:157, it is in connection with "what is right (*maʿrūf*)." However, since it occurs only once in Sūrat al-Aʿrāf, it lacks the cohesive power it holds in Sūrat al-ʿAnkabūt.

2.4   *Q 27:83, 41:19*

[27]   النمل   83   وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ مِن كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ فَوْجًا مِّمَّن يُكَذِّبُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ

[41]   فُصِّلت   19   وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ أَعْدَاءَ اللَّهِ إِلَى النَّارِ فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ

These two *āyas* share striking similarities, beginning with "when We gather (*wa-yawma naḥshuru*)" and ending with "and they will be [driven] in rows (*fa-hum yūzaʿūn*)," both focusing on the gathering of people on the Day of Judgment. However, they differ in the phrases that separate these bookends. Despite their resemblance, each *āya* is firmly anchored within its respective *sūra* through distinct lexical features. First, Q 27:83 is linked to its *sūra* through two key elements: the recurring phrase *fa-hum yūzaʿūn*, which also appears in Q 27:17, and the phrase "from every (*min kull*)," found three times in this *sūra* (Q 27:16, 23, 83) but absent from Sūrat Fuṣṣilat. Second, Q 41:19 is uniquely connected to its *sūra* by the phrase "the enemies of Allah (*aʿdāʾ allāh*)," which also appears in Q 41:28, establishing an exclusive link between the two *āyas*, as it is not found elsewhere in the Qurʾān.

When considering the question of interchangeability, these two *āyas* are particularly intriguing because of their confusing similarities. They are so alike

that one could be placed in the other's position without disrupting the flow of the narrative in either *sūra*. This is facilitated by three factors: first, their identical beginnings (*wa-yawma naḥshuru*) and endings (*fa-hum yūzaʿūn*); second, their shared eschatological message; and third, the fact that both are followed by the phrase "Until, when (*ḥattā idhā*)" in Q 27:84 and 41:20. This makes the interchange not only smooth and plausible but also particularly tempting for the transcriber.

Nevertheless, despite the striking similarities that could have easily confused transcribers, each *āya* was accurately placed within its respective *sūra*. This suggests that the assignment of *āyas* to their *sūras* was not the result of a conscious decision by those who transcribed the text. Rather, it points to a faithful preservation of the text as it was originally dictated by the Prophet.

2.5   *Q 6:56, 40:66*

[6]   الأنعام   56   قُلْ إِنِّي نُهِيتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ
قُل لَّا أَتَّبِعُ أَهْوَاءَكُمْ ۙ قَدْ ضَلَلْتُ إِذًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ

[40]   غافر   66   قُلْ إِنِّي نُهِيتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ
لَمَّا جَاءَنِيَ الْبَيِّنَاتُ مِن رَّبِّي وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أُسْلِمَ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

The first halves of both *āyas* are identical: "Say: 'I am forbidden to worship those you invoke besides Allah' (*qul innī nuhītu an aʿbuda al-ladhīna tadʿūna min dūni ʾllāhi*)." However, the second halves contain distinct lexical features that firmly anchor each *āya* within its respective *sūra*. In Q 6:56, the phrases *qul lā* and *wa-mā ana* appear five and three times, respectively, throughout Sūrat al-Anʿām, but are absent in Sūrat Ghāfir. Conversely, in Q 40:66, the phrase "clear proofs from my Lord (*al-bayyinātu min rabbī*)," spoken by the Prophet, echoes *bi-ʾlbayyināti min rabbikum* in Q 40:28, which is delivered by a believer from Pharaoh's people (*muʾmin min āli firʿawn*) in defense of Moses. The Prophet's use of this phrase suggests a deliberate emulation of Moses in addressing his own people. Notably, the phrase *al-bayyināt* (in this plural form with the definite article *al*) followed by "from [the] Lord (*min rabb*)" occurs only in these two *āyas* (Q 40:28 and 66) across the entire Qurʾān, establishing a unique lexical and thematic connection.

Despite these intricate parallels, each *āya* is precisely placed within its respective *sūra*. This exact allocation suggests that the text was fixed in writing

from the outset, ruling out the possibility of later editing or redaction.[34] It further indicates that subtle elements, such as *bayyināt min rabb*, were highly likely beyond the discernment of early transcribers of the text during or after the lifetime of the Prophet. Additionally, there is no evidence in the literary sources to suggest that these transcribers were aware of these linguistic features or that they arranged the *āyas* within the *sūras* based on such knowledge.

2.6   Q 28:60, 42:36

<div dir="rtl">

[28] القصص   60   وَمَا أُوتِيتُم مِّن شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتُهَاۚ
وَمَا عِندَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰۚ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

[42] الشورى   36   فَمَا أُوتِيتُم مِّن شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَاۖ وَمَا عِندَ
اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

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These two texts are among the most perplexing self-similar *āyas* in the Qurʾān. It is easy to confuse one with the other and mistakenly place it in the wrong *sūra*. Their opening statement, "And whatever you have been given is the enjoyment of this worldly life (*wa-/fa-mā ūtītum min shayʾin fa-matāʿu al-ḥayāti al-dunyā*)," adds to the confusion. In the first *āya*, the phrase "its adornment (*wa-zīnatuhā*)" appears, whereas it is absent in the second. As is often the case, the resolution to this confusion lies in the diction of each *sūra*. The opening statement of Q 28:79, which depicts Korah's ostentatious display of his worldly possessions, states: "and he came out before his people in his adornment (*fa-kharaja ʿalā qawmihī fī zīnatihi*)." This not only justifies the presence of *wa-zīnatuhā* in Q 28:60 but also enhances our understanding of the *āya*. Indeed, it is only by referencing Q 28:79 that we can fully appreciate the depth of Q 28:60. In contrast, the term "adornment (*zīna*)" or any derivative of its root does not appear in Sūrat al-Shūrā.

Furthermore, the two *āyas* share the identical statement: "and what is with Allah is better and more lasting (*wa-mā ʿinda ʾllāhi khayrun wa-abqā*)." However, they diverge after this statement. Q 28:60 concludes with the rhetorical question: "will you not use reason (*a-falā taʿqilūn*?)." Although the phrase

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a-falā appears three times in Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ, it is absent from Sūrat al-Shūrā. Additionally, the root ʿ-q-l is not found in Sūrat al-Shūrā. Conversely, Q 42:36 ends with the statement: "for those who believe and rely upon their Lord (*li-alladhīna āmanū wa-ʿalā rabbihim yatawakkalūn*)." This statement parallels a similar one spoken by the Prophet that concludes Q 42:10: "that is Allah, my Lord, upon Whom I rely, and to Him I return (*dhālikumu ʾllāhu rabbī ʿalayhi tawakkaltu wa-ilayhi unīb*)," linking these two *āyas* and encouraging Muslims to follow the Prophet's example. In contrast, the root w-k-l is not present in Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ.

2.7   *Q 2:119, 35:24*

البقرة   119   إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا ۚ وَلَا تُسْأَلُ عَنْ أَصْحَابِ الْجَحِيمِ   [2]

فاطر   24   إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا ۚ وَإِن مِّنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ   [35]

In these two relatively brief *āyas*, there is an intriguing interaction between a Meccan and a Medinan *āya*. This interaction exemplifies the Qurʾānic blueprint, where a segment from a Meccan *āya* is integrated into a new *āya* in a Medinan *sūra*. The opening statement, "Indeed, We have sent you with the truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner (*innā arsalnāka bi-al-ḥaqqi bashīran wa-nadhīrā*)," is borrowed from Q 35:24 and used as the opening statement for Q 2:119. Despite their shared opening, the *āyas* retain their distinctiveness through the specific diction of their respective *sūras*. In the latter part of Q 2:119, the phrase "and you will not be asked (*wa-lā tusʾalu*)" creates a unique symmetry with the identical phrase "and you will not be asked about what they used to do (*wa-lā tusʾalūna ʿammā kānū yaʿmalūn*)" found in Q 2:134 and 141. The syntactic structure of *wa-lā tusʾalu* exhibits its cohesive power through its exclusive appearance in these three locations within Sūrat al-Baqarah (Q 2:119, 134, 141).[35]

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35   Nāfiʿ and Yaʿqūb read this as "and do not ask (*wa-lā tasʾal*)" in the imperative form instead of the passive form, while the rest of the Readers read it as "and you will not be asked (*wa-lā tusʾalu*)" in the passive form. The latter not only makes more sense but also aligns with the fact that all the Readers read Q 2:134 and 141 in the passive form. See Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Bannā, *Itḥāf Fuḍalāʾ al-Bashar bi- al-Qirāʾāt al-Arbaʿata ʿAshar* (Beirut, Lebanon: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1987), 414.

Similarly, in the latter part of Q 35:24, lexical elements anchor it to its respective *sūra*. First, the term "a warner (*nadhīr*)" appears six times in Sūrat Fāṭir, while it is found only once in Sūrat al-Baqarah, thereby lacking the same cohesive power in the latter. Second, the word *nadhīr* co-occurs with the term "nation/nations (*umma/umam*)" in Q 35:24 and 42, marking the only instances in the Qurʾān where these two words are used together, thereby establishing a distinctive connection between the *āyas*. Consequently, while Sūrat Fāṭir retains its Meccan character, the Medinan Sūrat al-Baqarah adeptly integrates the borrowed Meccan statement into its broader context. This sophisticated level of interaction between two *sūras* from different periods and contexts indicates a meticulously controlled organization of the Qurʾān as a whole.

2.8   *Q 16:58, 43:17*

[16]   النحل   58   وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُم بِالْأُنثَىٰ ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ

[43]   الزخرف   17   وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُم بِمَا ضَرَبَ لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ مَثَلًا ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ

These familiar *āyas* share nearly identical wording and structure, differing only in their middle part. Both *āyas* condemn the disgraceful manner in which people in Pre-Islamic Arabia reacted to the news of the birth of a female. Q 16:58 reads: "And when one of them is given the good news of [the birth of] a female, his face grows dark, as he suppresses his grief (*wa-idhā bushshira aḥaduhum bi-al-unthā ẓalla wajhuhū muswaddan wa-huwa kaẓīm*)." Q 43:17 reads exactly the same, but instead of "of a female (*bi-al-unthā*)," it reads: "of what which he attributes to the All-Merciful (*bi-mā ḍaraba li al-raḥmāni mathalan*)." This difference in wording, as it is clear by now, stems from the unique diction of each *sūra*.

The word "female (*unthā*)" is chosen in Q 16:58 because the same word appears in Q 16:97, affirming the equal entitlement of both males and females to a good life in this world and generous rewards in the hereafter for their good deeds. While the word "females (*ināth*)" is mentioned in connection with angels in Q 43:19, the singular form "female (*unthā*)" is not found in the same *sūra*. Similarly, the phrase *bi-mā ḍaraba li al-raḥmāni mathalan* is used in Q 43:17 because the word *al-raḥmān* is frequently used in this *sūra*, which has the second highest concentration of the word (seven times) in the Qurʾān, with the highest being in Sūrat Maryam (sixteen times), while it is not found anywhere in Sūrat al-Naḥl.

2.9   *Q 31:33, 35:5*

لقمان [31]   33   يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ وَاخْشَوْا يَوْمًا لَّا يَجْزِي وَالِدٌ
عَن وَلَدِهِ وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ هُوَ جَازٍ عَن وَالِدِهِ شَيْئًا ۚ إِنَّ وَعْدَ
اللَّهِ حَقٌّ ۖ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللَّهِ الْغَرُورُ

فاطر [35]   5   يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ ۖ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا ۖ
وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللَّهِ الْغَرُورُ

These two *āyas* offer an interesting example of how a meaning expressed concisely in one *āya* is further elaborated upon in another by splitting the shorter *āya* into two and inserting additional details in the middle. Q 35:5 reads: "("O mankind, indeed the promise of Allah is truth, so let not the worldly life delude you and be not deceived about Allah by the Deceiver (*yā ayyuha al-nāsu inna waʿda ʾllāhi ḥaqqun fa-lā taghurrannakumu al-ḥayātu al-dunyā wa-lā yaghurrannakum bi-ʾllāhi al-gharūr*)." Similarly, Q 31:33 begins with "O mankind (*yā ayyuha al-nāsu*)," but it diverges, inserting the following statement: "fear your Lord and dread a day when no father will avail his son, nor will a son avail his father whatsoever (*ittaqū rabbakum wa-ʾkhshāw yawman lā yajzī wālidun ʿan waladihī wa-lā mawlūdun huwa jāzin ʿan wālidihī shayʾan*)." It then resumes from where it diverged and continues to the end. If we were to remove this inserted statement, both *āyas* would become identical, suggesting that the insertion might be a later interpolation that could be omitted without leaving a gap.[36]

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36   For instance, Nicolai Sinai suggested that Q 37:102 could be removed from its context without leaving a jarring gap in the narrative. However, contrary to this claim, such arbitrary removal does indeed disrupt the coherence of the text. Specifically, in Q 37:105, the term "dream (*ruʾyā*)" cannot be fully understood without reference to the preceding phrase "I have seen in a dream (*innī arā fī al-manāmi*)" in Q 37:102, which serves as an anaphoric reference. See Sinai, *The Qurʾān*, 92ff. Likewise, Sinai maintained that Q 3:7–9 were only embedded in the *sūra* at a late editorial stage to justify the Qurʾān's ambiguity. See *Ibid.*, 55. However, what has escaped his notice is that these three verses are tied to the *sūra* through an intricate network of lexical connections. For instance, the phrase "those well-grounded in knowledge (*al-rāskhūna fī al-ʿilmi*)" appears in Sūrat Āl ʿImrān twice (Q 3:7, 162) and is unique to the diction of this *sūra*. Another example is the phrase "for a Day about which there is no doubt (*li-yawmin lā rayba fīhi*)," which also appears twice in the *sūra* (Q 3:9, 25) but is not attested elsewhere in the Qurʾān. It is difficult to imagine that the alleged editors were aware of these subtle lexical features while inserting these verses into the *sūra*. Moreover, removing Q 3:7–9 would create a clear thematic gap,

However, a close examination of the *sūra*'s diction reveals that this insertion is an integral part of the *sūra*, reinforcing a message previously conveyed in an earlier *āya*. Q 31:14 reads: "And We have commanded man to 'honor' his parents. His mother bore him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. So be grateful to Me and to your parents. To Me is the final return (*wa-waṣṣayna al-insāna bi-wālidayhi ḥamalathu ummuhū wahnan 'alā wahnin wa-fiṣāluhū fī 'āmayni ani 'shkur lī wa-liwālidayka ilayya al-maṣīr*)." This *āya* not only emphasizes the duty of honoring parents but also places the obligation of gratitude to God on par with that of parents. It concludes with a subtle admonition that the ultimate reckoning lies with God, implying accountability for how people treated their parents in worldly life. Q 31:33 echoes this theme, affirming that children and parents, despite their close bond in this world, will not be of benefit to one another on the Day of Judgement. The unique lexical connection lies in the mention of parents and children, "parent/child (*wālid/mawlūd*)," in both *āyas* (Q 31:14, 33), while these terms are absent in Sūrat Fāṭir.

2.10   *Q 18:36, 41:50*

[18]	الكهف 36	وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً وَلَئِن رُّدِدتُّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي لَأَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهَا مُنقَلَبًا
[41]	فُصِّلت 50	وَلَئِنْ أَذَقْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا مِن بَعْدِ ضَرَّاءَ مَسَّتْهُ لَيَقُولَنَّ هَٰذَا لِي وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً وَلَئِن رُّجِعْتُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي إِنَّ لِي عِندَهُ لَلْحُسْنَىٰ ۚ فَلَنُنَبِّئَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُم مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ

These two *āyas* present a very interesting case. While in the previous case one *āya* is split into two to be stuffed with additional details, in the present case an independent *āya* is modified to be part of another *āya* in a different *sūra*. This is assuming that Sūrat al-Kahf is earlier than Sūrat Fuṣṣilat. Conversely, if it is assumed that Sūrat al-Kahf came later, a portion of an *āya* is used to compose an independent, new *āya*. Regardless of the chronology of the *sūras*, both *āyas* depict a portrait of human arrogance under the influence of wealth

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disrupting the flow of the narrative. In the Qurʾān, the phrase "Verily, those who disbelieve (*inna alladhīna kafarū*)," which begins Q 3:10, appears most frequently in Sūrat Āl ʿImrān (five times out of eighteen occurrences). This phrase often follows an allusion to those who believe, as exemplified in Q 3:10.

and good life. In Q 18:36, the owner of the Two Gardens says: "nor do I think the Hour will 'ever' come and even if I am returned to my Lord, I will surely find better than this as a return (*wa-mā aẓunnu al-sāʿata qāʾimatan **wa-la-ʾin rudidttu** ilā rabbī la-ajidanna khayran minhā munqalabā*)." In Q 41:50, a man who has tasted God's mercy after passing through hardship says: "and I do not think the Hour will 'ever' come; and if I am returned to my Lord, for me there will be with Him the best' (*wa-mā aẓunnu al-sāʿata qāʾimatan **wa-la-ʾin rujiʿtu** ilā rabbī inna lī ʿindahū la-al-ḥusnā*)." Interestingly, both *rudidttu* and *rujiʿtu* are perfect synonyms and can be used interchangeably without causing any change in meaning.

The question here is: Why is *rudidttu* assigned to Q 18:36 and *rujiʿtu* to Q 41:50, despite their perfect synonymity? And why has none of the widely accepted readings (*qirāʾāt mashhūra*) or the irregular readings (*qirāʾāt shādhdha*) ever interchanged the two words?[37] The answer lies in the diction of the *sūra*, as demonstrated throughout the previous cases. Q 18:36 employs *rudidttu* rather than *rujiʿtu* because the root *r-d-d* is an essential element of the *sūra*'s diction. Firstly, the phrase "then he shall be returned to his Lord (*thumma yuraddu ilā rabbihī*)" appears in Q 18:87 where Dhū al-Qarnayn borrows the words of the owner of the Two Gardens. This borrowing is unique because it is only in these two *āyas* that the verb *radda*, both in its active and passive forms, is used followed by the phrase *ilā rabb* in the entire Qurʾān.

This uniqueness is achieved even though the root *r-d-d* recurs fifty-nine times in the Qurʾān, and despite the occurrence of "And then they are returned to Allah, their true Lord (*thumma ruddū ila ʾllāhi mawlāhumu al-ḥaqqi*)" in Q 6:62, where *ruddū* is followed by *ila ʾllāhi*, not *ilā rabbihim*. This indicates that the phrase *ilā rabb* is reserved for the exclusive use of Sūrat al-Kahf. Furthermore, we find in the same *sūra* (Q 18:64): "so they returned, following their footprints (*fa-ʾrtaddā ʿalā āthārihimā qaṣaṣā*)" where *fa-ʾrtaddā* can be replaced with *fa-rajaʿā*. However, this substitution has not occurred because *rajaʿa* is not part of the diction of Sūrat al-Kahf.

In contrast, the verb *rujiʿtu* is used in Q 41:50 because it echoes the phrase "and to Him you will be returned (*wa-ilayhi turjaʿūn*)" in Q 41:21, which gives a vivid description of an eschatological scene, implying that the arrogant man in

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37   None of the primary sources of *qirāʾāt* mentions these two words as having different wording. See Abū Bakr b. Aḥmad Mūsā b. al-ʿAbbās Ibn Mujāhid, *Kitāb al-Sabʿah fī al-Qirāʾāt* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), 390, 578; Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Jazarī, *al-Nashr fī al-Qirāʾāt al-ʿAshar* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.), 1785, 1895; al-Bannā, *Itḥāf*, 214, 445.

Q 41:50 will face on the Day of Judgement the same fate as that of the people described in Q 41:21.

The assignment of the perfectly synonymous terms *rudidttu* and *ruji'tu* to their respective *sūras*, adhering strictly to each *sūra*'s specific vocabulary, reveals profound insights into the origins of the Qurʾān. Firstly, it clearly demonstrates that the diction of each *sūra* strictly controls the vocabulary selection process. Furthermore, it challenges the commonly held traditional Islamic view that early Muslims used synonymous words interchangeably while reciting the Qurʾān. This strict control suggests that the Qurʾān has not been a "multiform text," as true multiformity would require the interchangeable use of synonyms.[38]

If such precise synonyms as *rudidttu* and *ruji'tu* cannot substitute for each other within identical thematic contexts, it follows that less precise synonyms, such as *halumma, ta'āla, aqbil, ilayya, qaṣdī, naḥwī, and qurbī*, intended to convey the meaning of "draw near" or "come close," would have even less chance of substitution.[39] Moreover, the structural constraints of Qurʾānic composition, particularly its rhyming patterns, further limit the use of synonyms. For instance, words like *al-fīl, abābīl, sijjīl*, and *kawthar* lack suitable alternatives that can maintain not only their semantic value but also their rhythmic harmony within the text. This holds true for numerous other words, particularly proper nouns.

2.11 *Q 6:83, 12:6*

الأنعام   [6]   83   وَتِلْكَ حُجَّتُنَا آتَيْنَاهَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مَن
نَشَاءُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ

يوسف   [12]   6   وَكَذَلِكَ يَجْتَبِيكَ رَبُّكَ وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِن تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ وَيُتِمُّ
نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَى آلِ يَعْقُوبَ كَمَا أَتَمَّهَا عَلَى أَبَوَيْكَ مِن
قَبْلُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

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38   Yasin Dutton vehemently defended the traditional Muslim view that the Qurʾān, prior to the ʿUthmānic transcription, existed as a multiform text. See Yasin Dutton, "Orality, Literacy and the 'Seven Aḥruf' Ḥadīth," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 23, no. 1 (2012): 1–49.

39   These are synonymous words provided by al-Ṭabarī in defense of his interpretation of the tradition of "the Seven Modes of Reading (*al-aḥruf al-sabʿa*)" and his theory that the Qurʾān was recited in different forms before ʿUthmān selected only one form and made it into one *muṣḥaf*. See Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Taʾawīl Āy al-Qurʾān* (Cairo: Dār Hajr liʾl-Ṭibāʿa waʾl-Nashr waʾl-Tawzīʿ waʾl-Iʿlān, 2003), 1:52.

These two *āyas* offer a unique opportunity to examine one of the most confusing instances of self-similarity in *āya*-concluding sentences. The first (Q 6:83) concludes with "Indeed, your Lord is Wise, Knowing (*inna rabbaka ḥakīmun ʿalīm*)," and the second (Q 12:6) with "Indeed, your Lord is Knowing, Wise (*inna rabbaka ʿalīmun ḥakīm*)." These two concluding sentences have the same syntactical structure, the same number of words, and the same divine attributes: *ʿalīm* and *ḥakīm*. The only difference is the order of these attributes. In Q 6:83, *ḥakīm* comes first, while in Q 12:6, *ʿalīm* comes first. The latter order is the more common one in the Qurʾān. Since both *ʿalīm* and *ḥakīm* are divine attributes and both end in *-īm*, changing their order would not have any significant semantic or rhythmic effect on the *āya*. Yet, the diction of the *sūra* is so sensitive that it does not allow even the transposition of these identical divine attributes.

The intentional design behind assigning *ḥakīmun ʿalīm* to Sūrat al-Anʿām and *ʿalīmun ḥakīm* to Sūrat Yūsuf is evidenced by the fact that the same word order of these attributes is found in different positions within each *sūra*. In Sūrat al-Anʿām, *inna rabbaka ḥakīmun ʿalīm* is at the end of Q 6:128, which is identical to the final sentence in Q 6:83. This phrase is unique to this *sūra* and does not appear elsewhere in the Qurʾān. Moreover, in Q 6:139, "Indeed, He is Wise, Knowing (*innahū ḥakīmun ʿalīm*)" is found with *ḥakīm* occurring first.

On the other hand, in Sūrat Yūsuf, *innahū huwa al-ʿalīmu al-ḥakīm* is found in two distinct positions, Q 12:83 and Q 12:100, with *ʿalīm* occurring first in both cases. It is noted that the final sentence in Q 12:83 is uttered by Joseph's father Jacob as an expression of hope, while the one in Q 12:100 is spoken by Joseph himself at the fulfillment of that hope when the family is reunited in Egypt after years of separation. Furthermore, the phrase *innahū huwa al-ʿalīmu al-ḥakīm* is unique to Sūrat Yūsuf and is not attested elsewhere in the Qurʾān.

Thus, the two divine attributes appear three times in each *sūra* in the same order, clearly demonstrating that the *sūra*'s diction does not allow the substitution of perfectly synonymous words, such as *rudidttu* and *rujiʿtu* that we saw earlier, nor the transposition of identical words, such as *ʿalīm* and *ḥakīm*, as in the present case. This high sensitivity of the *sūra*'s diction indicates that the Qurʾān was a rigidly fixed text from its inception, a finding that contradicts the commonly held view, both in Muslim tradition and modern scholarship, that the Qurʾān was originally recited in different forms. One version of the famous *ḥadīth al-aḥurf al-sabʿah* states that the Prophet permitted the use of alternative *āya*-concluding phrases so long as the general sense of the text was maintained and no *āya* of mercy was concluded with punishment or vice versa. According to this tradition, phrases such as *ghafūrān raḥīmā*, *ʿazīzan ḥakīmā*,

and *ʿalīman ḥakīmā* were all valid alternatives to complete an *āya*.[40] Evidently, in view of our analysis, this tradition is incompatible with the Qurʾān's diction and is likely a later fabrication to justify the multiplicity of the reading traditions (*qirāʾāt*).[41]

In modern scholarship, these *āya*-concluding sentences have been the subject of considerable debate and speculation. In his now somewhat outdated book, *Introduction to the Qurʾān*, W. Montgomery Watt referred to these sentences as "detachable phrases."[42] Angelika Neuwirth called them *clausulae* that recur at the end of long *āyas* in late Meccan and Medinan *sūras*, offering an interpretive addition to or a comment on the content of the *āya*.[43] More interestingly, François Déroche paid significant attention to these *clausulae* and argued that, in the later editorial process, they "provided the flexibility needed to integrate [...] ready-made phrases into the body of the Qurʾānic revelations."[44] Drawing on literary sources, especially the version of *ḥadīth al-aḥruf al-sabʿah* mentioned earlier and manuscript evidence, Déroche posited that the *clausulae* were not only used in the editorial process to give the *sūras* their final form but were also spontaneously inserted into passages during recitations.[45]

In support of his argument that the Qurʾān was fluid in the first decades of Islam,[46] Déroche adduced numerous examples of discrepancies between the ʿUthmānic text and early manuscripts, namely Parisino-Petropolitanus and the Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest. For instance, using the latter, he observed that Q 9:11 (in Fol. 5v, line 11) ends with "that you might reason (*laʿallakum taʿqilūn*)," whereas

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40   This version of *ḥadīth al-aḥurf al-sabʿa* is transmitted on the authority of Abū Hurayra (d. 59 AH / 679 CE) and Ubayy b. Kaʿb (d. 30 AH / 649 CE). See Yūsuf b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Nimrī Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd li-mā fī al-Muwaṭṭaʾ min al-Maʿānī waʾl-Asānīd* (London: Muʾassasat al-Furqān li-l-Turāth al-Islāmī, 2017), 5:594.

41   After a careful examination of the chain of transmission (*isnād*) and body text (*matn*) of the different versions of this *ḥadīth*, Shady Hekmat Nasser declared this version to be a later fabrication. See Shady Hekmat Nasser, *The Transmission of the Variant Readings of the Qurʾān: The Problem of Tawātur and the Emergence of Shawādhdh* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 28.

42   W. Montgomery Watt and Richard Bell, *Introduction to the Qurʾān* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), 71.

43   Angelika Neuwirth, *The Qurʾān and Late Antiquity: A Shared Heritage* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 195; Angelika Neuwirth, *Scripture, Poetry, and the Making of a Community* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 391.

44   François Déroche, *The One and the Many*, 217.

45   Ibid., 238.

46   Ibid., 199.

in the Qurʾān it ends with "for a people who know (*liqawmin yaʿlamūn*)." He highlighted that the phrase *laʿallakum taʿqilūn* appears eight times in the Qurʾān and the verb *taʿqilūn* twenty-four times, preceded by *a-falā* in thirteen cases.[47] However, he said nothing about the Qurʾānic phrase *liqawmin yaʿlamūn* in Q 9:11, leaving the reader with the impression that *laʿallakum taʿqilūn* is the formula that the Qurʾān's diction supports.

To fully grasp Déroche's approach to textual analysis, his methodology must be carefully scrutinized. Notably, he did not compare *clausula* to *clausula*, i.e., *wa-nufaṣṣilu al-āyāti li-qawmin yaʿlamūn* from the Qurʾān to *yufaṣṣilu ʾllāhu al-āyāti laʿallakum taʿqilūn* from the manuscript. Instead, he divided the latter into two segments and then compared the truncated phrase *laʿallakum taʿqilūn* with its parallels in the Qurʾān, implying that this is the correct concluding phrase compatible with Qurʾānic diction. However, he did not apply the same methodology to the Qurʾānic *clausula*. This approach appears to be driven by two main factors. First, truncating the *clausula* allows him to adjust the data to produce a result that aligns with his hypothesis. Second, applying the same procedure to the other *clausula* would yield the opposite result.

If we apply the same procedure, we find that the phrase "for a people who know (*li-qawmin yaʿlamūn*)" appears eight times in the Qurʾān, out of which it is preceded in five cases by the verb "to detail (*faṣṣala*)" and the word "signs (*āyāt*)." In other words, if we compare "and We detail the signs for a people who know (*wa-nufaṣṣilu al-āyāti li-qawmin yaʿlamūn*)" in Q 9:11 with its parallels in the Qurʾān, "We have detailed the signs for a people who know (*qad faṣṣalna al-āyāti li-qawmin yaʿlamūn*)" is found in Q 6:97, "thus do We detail the signs for a people who know (*ka-dhālika nufaṣṣilu al-āyāti li-qawmin yaʿlamūn*)" in Q 7:32, and "He details the signs for a people who know (*yufaṣṣilu al-āyāti li-qawmin yaʿlamūn*)" in Q 10:5. In contrast, the phrase "that you might reason (*laʿallakum taʿqilūn*)," which also appears eight times in the Qurʾān, is never preceded by the verb *faṣṣala*. Rather, it is preceded by the word "signs (*āyāt*)" in four instances (Q 2:73, 242; 24:61; 57:17), by the verb "to make clear (*bayyana*)" in three cases (Q 2:242; 24:61; 57:17), and by the phrase "an Arabic Qurʾān (*qurʾānan ʿarabiyyan*)" in two cases (Q 12:2; 43:3). This means that in the Qurʾānic diction, the phrase *laʿallakum taʿqilūn* is associated with the words *bayyana*, *āyāt*, and *qurʾānan ʿarabiyyan*, but never with the verb *faṣṣala*.

Thus, contrary to Déroche's result, an equal application of the same procedure to the two *clausulae* yields a result that clearly favors the *āya*-concluding

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47   François Déroche, *The One and the Many*, 211.

phrase *wa-nufaṣṣilu al-āyāti li-qawmin yaʿlamūn* (Q 9:11) found in the Qurʾān today and clearly rules out the phrase *laʿallakum taʿqilūn*. Moreover, the verb "to reason (*ʿaqala*)" is not part of Sūrat al-Tawbah's diction, which further demonstrates that *laʿallakum taʿqilūn* cannot belong to that *sūra*.

Conclusions and Implications

The Qurʾān defines itself as self-similar, and this self-similarity, in turn, shapes its identity, safeguarding its textual integrity and distinctiveness. By utilizing self-similarity as a framework for analysis, we gain fresh insights into the Qurʾān's original form and the arrangement of its passages across various *sūras*. This analytical framework offers a deeper understanding of the Qurʾānic text's unique structure and composition, revealing the complexity of its design.

The analysis of the eleven cases examined in this study strongly suggests that the Qurʾān was a written text from its inception, rather than orally composed and transmitted. Such textual precision, with its elaborate lexical patterns, could not have been achieved through oral composition and transmission. The text's rigidly fixed nature thus challenges theories of fluidity, multiple forms, later codification, canonization, and editorial intervention.[48] Instead, the transcription and canonization of the Qurʾān likely occurred simultaneously, functioning as both a single process and two interrelated aspects of the same phenomenon. In its consonantal text (*rasm*), the Qurʾān as we have it today appears to have emerged as a canonized text from the start. In contrast, the reading traditions (*qirāʾāt*) – an elaborate layer of orthographic and recitational details applied to the *rasm* by later generations – took centuries to stabilize and did not generally alter the consonantal script.

Furthermore, it seems that the ʿUthmānic Codex was copied from an earlier, meticulously organized written exemplar, possibly on uniform material such as leather, as opposed to the disorganized assortment of materials like palm branches, stones, and bones often mentioned in traditional accounts.[49] This calls into question the authenticity of the traditional Qurʾānic collection

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48   Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Creating the Qurʾān: A Historical-Critical Study*, First Edition (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2022), 204–229; Dutton, "Orality, Literacy and the 'Seven Aḥruf' Ḥadīth," 42–45; Nicolai Sinai, "Process of Literary Growth and Editorial Expansion in Two Medinan Surahs," in *Islam and Its Past: Jahiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Qurʾān*, ed. Carol Bakhos and Michael Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 69–106.

49   Nöldeke et al., *History*, 232.

narrative, as transmitted by Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124 AH / 741–42 CE).[50]

The minor verbal discrepancies found in a few locations within the Regional Codices (*maṣāḥif al-amṣār*) sent by ʿUthmān to major cities seem to be scribal errors. These discrepancies, which affect only grammatical particles and pronouns – such as *min* (Q 9:100), *huwa* (Q 57:24), *fa-* (Q 42:30), and *wa-* (Q 3:133)[51] – but never a complete word, can be explained using the self-similarity model applied in this study. Similarly, the discrepancies observed between the lower text of the Ṣanʿāʾ Palimpsest and the ʿUthmānic Codex can also be accounted for using the same method.

In summary, the findings of this study significantly complicate "the most cherished dream"[52] of those seeking to produce a critical edition of the Qurʾān, making it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. In light of these findings, the search for the Ur-Qurʾān appears to be futile, as the Qurʾān in its present form closely corresponds to the text recited by the Prophet, despite the discrepancies noted earlier. Any edition that alters the delicate equilibrium of the current text risks invalidating the integrity of a new critical edition.

For example, the phrase "O my people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him (*yā qawmi ʿbudū ʾllāha mā lakum min ilāhin ghayruhu*)" appears eight times in the Qurʾān across three *sūras* (Q 7:59, 65, 73, 85; 11:50, 61, 84; 23:23) spoken by Noah, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, and Shuʿayb. However, in Q 29:36, Shuʿayb deviates from this pattern, saying, "O my people, worship Allah and expect the Last Day (*yā qawmi ʿbudū ʾllāha **wa-rjū al-yawma al-ākhira***)." Instead of using the familiar phrase, Shuʿayb draws from an earlier verse in the *sūra* (Q 29:5): "Whoever should hope for the meeting with Allah – indeed, the term decreed by Allah is coming (*man kāna yarjū liqāʾa ʾllāhi fa-inna ajala ʾllāhi la-ātin*)." Both verses share the theme of hope and anticipation for the Final Day and employ the verb "to hope (*rajā*)," which appears twenty-two times in

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50   Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124 AH / 741–42 CE) is the solitary transmitter of the fullest account of the collection of the Qurʾān. See Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd*, 613. Furthermore, after an extensive study of the *isnād* and *matn* of the narrative of the collection of the Qurʾān, Harald Motzki identified al-Zuhrī as the common link where different transmission lines intersect. See Harald Motzki, "The Collection of the Qurʾān. A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments," *Der Islam* 78, no. 1 (January 1, 2001), 22.

51   Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān b Saʿīd al-Dānī, *al-Muqniʿ fī Maʿrifat Marsūm Maṣāḥif Ahl al-Amṣār* (Riyadh: Dār al-Tadmuriyya, 2010), 571ff.

52   Donner, "Recent Scholarship," 43.

the Qurʾān and twice in Sūrat al-ʿAnkabūt (Q 29:5, 36), but never in the other *sūras* where *mā lakum min ilāhin ghayruhu* is used.[53]

Thus, what might initially seem like a textual aberration is, in fact, a carefully crafted structural choice aimed at preserving the *sūra*'s textual and thematic integrity. This level of precision is something those hoping to produce a critical edition of the Qurʾān must consider before committing precious resources – both material and human – to such a project.

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53   It is worth noting that the verb "to postpone (*arjā* or *arjaʾa*)" appears in Q 7:111 in connection with the story of Moses and Pharaoh. However, it is distinct from the verb "to hope (*rajā*)."

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Is Qur'ān *Sūra* 4:157–158 an Islamic *Kalima*-Like Christological Reading of the Crucifixion? A Textual Investigation beyond Polemics

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Abstract

It is believed to be a fact that the Qur'ān takes a rejective and antagonistic stance to Christian Christology and the belief in the crucifixion. However, is this conviction unquestionable or hard to re-consider? This article demonstrates that opting for revision and reconciliation, rather than antagonism and rejection, may be a considerable stance characteristic of how the Qur'ān approaches Jesus's crucifixion in Sūra 4:157–158. The article offers an analysis of these verses, demonstrating that the Qur'ān's concern about the crucifixion neither implements heterodox Christian views that deny it happened, nor does it negatively respond to the orthodox Christian insistence on the truthfulness of the cross. Rather, this article proposes that the Qur'ān attempts to develop an Islamic theological approach that resonates with a particular Christological trend, but was also adopted by the Qur'ān as it was a more appropriate revised interpretation of the fate of "Allah's Word and Spirit from Him." Discerning the revisionary, propositional, and reconciliatory characteristics of the Qur'ānic attestations on the crucifixion not only invites observers to realize the serious dialogical, interlocutional, and connectional – and not just the apologetic – nature of the Qur'ān. It also unravels the fascinating development of the Qur'ān's complex, multi-phased and multi-faceted theology, which amounts to more than a simple call to monotheism.

هل تقدم آيتا سورة النساء، 157–158، قراءة خريستولوجية إسلامية لحدث الصلب؟ تحقيق نصوصي يتجاوز الجدال التهجمي

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مركز اللاهوت المقارن والقضايا الاجتماعية، جامعة بون، ألمانيا

الملخص

يعتقد الكثير من الباحثين بأنّ القرآن يتخذ موقفًا رافضًا ومعاديًا للمسيحية والإيمان بصلب المسيح. ولكن، هل هذا الاعتقاد غير قابل للشك أو إعادة النظر فيه؟ يوضح هذا البحث أن المراجعة والمصالحة، بدلًا من العداوة والرفض، قد يكون موقفًا مهمًا يميز الطريقة التي يتعامل بها القرآن مع صلب المسيح في الآيتَيْن 157 و158 من سورة النساء. ويقدم البحث تحليلًا لهذه الآيات، موضحًا بأنّ اهتمام القرآن بالصلب لا يستثمر في وجهات نظر المسيحية غير الأرثوذكسية التي تنكر حدوثه، وهو لا يستجيب سلبيًا لإصرار المسيحيين الأرثوذكس على حقائقية حدث الصلب. يقترح هذا البحث أن القرآن يحاول تطوير نهج عقائدي إسلامي يردد صدى اتجاه مسيحي معين، إلا أن القرآن يتبنى هذا النهج لأنه تفسيرٌ منقحٌ أكثر ملاءمة لمصير ''كلمة الله وروح منه.'' ولهذا، فإن تمييز الخصائص التنقيحية والاقتراحية والتصالحية للشهادات القرآنية عن الصلب يدعو المراقبين إلى إدراك الطبيعة الحوارية والتواصلية والارتباطية الجادة للقرآن، وعدم الاكتفاء فقط بلغته الجدالية الدفاعية. يكشف البحث بهذا عن التطور المذهل لعقيدة القرآن المعقدة ومتعددة المراحل ومتعددة الأوجه، والتي تعادل أكثر من مجرد دعوة إلى التوحيد.

1   Introduction

In his reflection on the history of Christianity in Arabia and Arabia Felix, Kenneth Cragg highlighted the vagaries of tensions detected in the extant

data on the connections between the Orthodox Christianity of the east that spread in the territories of Roman Arabia, and the rather far from orthodox, tendentiously Gnostic, Christianity that existed in the south (Arabia Felix) two centuries before the eve of the birth of Islam.[1] Cragg acknowledges that Nestorian and Monophysite versions of Christological orthodoxy were evident during that era in Najran. Yet, he related that such versions of Christian faith did not fall on interested ears among the Arab inhabitants of Arabia, whose cultural worldview did not "admit of orthodoxy at all."[2] Cragg related that the Aramaic-speaking Syrian missionaries who conveyed Monophysite and Diaphysite convictions injected them with cemiticized – El-Kasaite-like views of prophetism similar to those witnessed in the message of Muḥammad and the Qurʾān. Despite this attempt, Cragg concluded, the developments gleaned from this era demonstrate the orthodox faith's "seeming incapacity … to root itself authentically within Arab consciousness."[3] Why did these Christological orthodox discourses fail to find home in the Arabic sphere and soul? Because, Cragg confirmed, "That vital sense of 'God in Christ' – of the incarnation and the cross – did not translate into Arab acceptance since it came in partly alien form and was harnessed to external interests, which sought to impose themselves politically on a subject, or a hostage, people."[4]

Craig believes that Christians of Arabia on the eve of Islam held a belief loaded with "aspects of Gnostic teaching, with its Neoplatonic antecedents in the Greek world."[5] Ultimately, Cragg's understanding seems to be that Christian theological trends, in all forms and after every school of thought or discursive form, lost the battle of making the Arabs – and the Muslims for that matter – embrace the Christian Christ as God's Word incarnate and crucified. Ignaz Goldziher, another exponent of this conviction, articulated this dire theological defeat even more explicitly when he said, "Consider … how alien [Christian thought] was to the main body of the Arab people, despite the support it found in some districts of Arabia … we must be convinced of the antagonism of the Arabs to the idea which [Christianity] taught."[6]

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1   Kenneth Cragg, *The Arab Christian: A History in the Middle East* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 38–40.

2   Cragg, *The Arab Christian*, 38.

3   Cragg, *The Arab Christian*, 39. "Somehow, these elements in the context of Christian faith failed to encompass in the Arabic sphere and in the Arab soul the Christology that, in Christian terms, monotheism necessitated and where prophethood found consummation."

4   *Ibid.*

5   Cragg, *The Arab Christian*, 42.

6   Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, ed. S.M. Stern (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1968), 1:21.

Has Christianity truly totally failed in making the Arabs of Arabia and the ensuing Muslim world pay attention to its theological voices, as both Cragg, Goldziher, and others, seem to suggest? What if Islam did not really antagonize the Christian christological soundings and the Muslim scripture, the Qurʾān, correlated with Christian christological views and tried to propose its own christological interpretations, rather than conjuring up a frank and absolute rejection of Christian Christology altogether? What if the Qurʾān intermarries mainline and marginal Christological approaches, instead of dismissing Christology and deeming it a theological foe? In other words, what if instead of Goldziher's 'antagonism' and Cragg's 'alienation,' the Qurʾān opted for 'reconciliation' and 'revision?'

In the ensuing sections, this article shall demonstrate that opting for 'revision' and 'reconciliation' is a considerable stance that is characteristic of how the Qurʾān approaches Jesus's crucifixion in *Sūra al-Nisāʾ* 4:157–158. As will be seen, scholars are divided in their speculations on which Christianity these verses have in mind when rejecting Jesus's crucifixion. Some opt for tracing ideas derived from heterodox Christian trends, while others tend to believe that these versus respond directly to orthodox Christianity. Through an analysis of Q 4:157–158, this article shall show that the Qurʾān's concern might have been neither exclusively implementing heterodox views nor responding to orthodox ones. Rather, the Qurʾān attempts to develop a theological approach that resonates with a particular Christological trend adopted by the Qurʾān as a more appropriate revised interpretation of the fate of "Allah's Word and Spirit from Him." The Qurʾān might be suggesting that its reconciliatory version associates Jesus in a particular manner with God's divinity, without needing to endorse the theological belief in his divine sonship.

It is important for readers to realize that this article does not pursue a comparative *tour de force* of the different interpretations of the crucifixion of Christ in Christian and Muslim commentaries from early Islam. Neither does this article aim to display a historiological exposition of the genesis and development of the controversy over the crucifixion that arose between Christians and Muslims in the early ages of Islam. These topics have been covered in an earlier publication.[7] This article merely aims to discuss the possibility that the

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7   Najib George Awad, "'If His Crucifixion Was Figurative as You Claim, then So Be It': How Two Christian Mutakallims from the Abbasid Era Used *An-Nisāʾ* 4:157–158 in Dialogues with Muslims," *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 68, nos. 1–2 (2016); 53–80. On the development of the *ad intra* Christian understanding of the crucifixion of Christ within the process of the evolvement of Christian Christological reasoning, see Martin Hengel, *The Cross of the Son of God* (London: SCM Press, 1986); Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh & New York: T&T Clark, 1995); and James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New*

Qurʾānic stance on the crucifixion is neither an echo of Christian orthodoxy nor of Christian heterodoxy. Rather, it is a unique Islamic theological reasoning inspired by the *ad intra* textual rationale of the Qurʾān, one that aspires to bring the controverting Christians to a third option that can reconcile their differences over this subject. By means of its unique Christological solution, the Qurʾān reflects a perception of the crux of the disagreement among orthodox and heterodox Christian factions over the crucifixion and its Christological connotations. The Qurʾān also plays the role of a 'reconciler' and 'mediator' between these two sides by inviting them for a 'common word' or third-way: an 'Islamic' Christology-like interpretation.

2   Did Muslims Know Heterodox Christologies from Antique Christianity?

In his discourse against Christianity, known with the name of *The True Doctrine* (*Logos Alethes*), the second-century Greek philosopher Celsus attacked the Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ and harshly ridiculed His ministry and death. Celsus expressed his rejection of the disturbing news that Jesus, who claimed to be the Son of God, "have been afraid of death,"[8] and that "He was eager to escape and hide after His condemnation" like a coward insignificant human imposture.[9] Celsus argued that if Jesus was immortal god, then He will not fear death because He cannot die in the first place: He can simply avoid all this and disappear.[10] Yet, Celsus insisted, Jesus is not a god or a son of God because He did not deliver Himself from the shame of suffering and death: "Where He a god, He should not have died."[11] "What is plain," Celsus eventually confirmed, "is that this Jesus was a mere man."[12] Not just any man, Celsus satirically commented, but a man *crucified*; the thing that makes the religion of the Christians directed at a person (Jesus) who is "surely no better than dog or goat worship at its worst."[13]

Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996).

8   Celsus, *On the True Doctrine: A Discourse Against the Christians*, trans. Joseph Hoffmann (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 59.

9   Celsus, *On the True Doctrine*, 61.

10   Celsus, *On the True Doctrine*, 62–3.

11   Celsus, *On the True Doctrine*, 65.

12   Celsus, *On the True Doctrine*, 69.

13   Celsus, *On the True Doctrine*, 71, emphasis added.

Origen of Alexandria responded to this anti-Christianity discourse in his text *Against Celsus* (*Contra Celsum*). In his response, Origen demonstrated that Celsus refuted Jesus's divinity by assessing this divine identity's plausibility in light of Jesus's crucifixion. For Celsus, Origen noticed, if Jesus was truly divine, he could have not been exposed to a shameful, human death as a criminal on a cross. Origen claimed that, at one point, Celsus stated the following: "But if [Jesus] was really so great, He ought, in order to display his divinity, to have disappeared suddenly from the cross." Jesus, that is, "should have demonstrated His divinity by being transported, either at the time of His capture or later, from the cross."[14] For Celsus, Origen related, Jesus did not do that and was exposed to the shame of crucifixion and death. Therefore, Jesus cannot be divine, or even the promised Messiah, as the Christians allege. Since Jesus's crucifixion was real, His claimed divinity is, then, phantasmal and false.

In his apology, Origen conceded Celsus's rhetorical claim that Jesus could have disappeared before they nailed Him to the cross, and He could have fooled His capturers as He is divine. Origen principally concurred with the implication that Jesus did not have to fear anything or any man because He was sent by God to the world, and, in His ministry, He could make Himself known and concealed as well at different occasions, leave alone the fact that His whole nature was hidden even to those who knew Him, as if part of Jesus did not appear to them.[15] Therefore, Origen initially conceded that Jesus's divinity enabled Him to disappear from the crucifixion and to misguide His capturers. This notwithstanding, Origen's option was elsewhere, for he claimed that "it was not to the greater advantage of the whole purpose of the incarnation that He should have suddenly disappeared physically from the cross."[16] Instead, Origen confirmed, Jesus accepted to appear on the cross to fulfill human salvation via his humanity.[17] Origen went farther to argue that although Jesus was capable of disappearing from the cross, had the Gospels said that "He disappeared suddenly from the cross, unbelievers would have pulled it to pieces, and would have accused Him as follows: Why did He disappear after arriving at the cross, when He did not do this before His passion?"[18]

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14   Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1953). See also Martin Hengel, "Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross," in *The Cross of the Son of God*, ed. Martin Hengel, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1986), 93–188, 109 and note 7.

15   Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 2:68, 1.

16   Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 2:68, 4.

17   Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 2:69, 5.

18   Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 2:70.

The 'Origen-vs-Celsus' controversy is not the subject of this study. Nevertheless, its relevance to the subject of this article lies in the very interesting fact that the Muslim religious book, the Qur'ān, also speaks about ʿĪsa b. Maryam's fate at the hands of the Jews and in relation to a crucifixion incident. in *Sūra al-Nisā'* 157–158, the Qur'ān states that the Jews claim that they tortured the Word of Allah (*kalimatahu*), ʿĪsa b. Maryam, and that He was exposed to death by crucifixion. In direct response to this allegation, the Qur'ān adamantly affirms that the Jews neither killed Jesus nor crucified Him (*wa-mā qatalūhu wa-mā ṣalabūhu*). Instead, it only appeared to them to be so (*wa-lakin shubbiha lahum*). These textual attestations invited for the development of serious studies on early Islam and the history of Qur'ān which concede that Muslim views of Jesus originated from an intimate, first-hand communication and mutual interaction with the Jews and Christians of the Arab Peninsula during late sixth and early seventh centuries CE.[19] Scholars of historical Christian theology do also affirm that some first and second-century Christian trends of thought claimed that Jesus, the divine Son of God, was not exposed to the human shamefulness of dying on a cross because his humanity was phantasmal. Scholars do believe that such trends never vanished from history.[20] They persisted in various forms and versions among some Christian groups who resided in the remote outskirts of the heartland of the late-antique Christian

19   See, for example, Najib G. Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms: A Study of Theodore Abu Qurrah's Theology in Its Islamic Context* (Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 267–91; Sidney H. Griffith, "Answers for the Šaykh: A 'Melkite' Arabic Text from Sinai and the Doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation in 'Arab Orthodox Apologetics,'" in *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, ed. Emmanouela Grypeou, Mark Swanson, and David Thoams (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 277–309; Sidney H. Griffith, "Muhammad and the Monk of Bahira: Reflections on a Syriac and Arabic Text from Early Abbasid Times," *Oriens Christianus* 79 (1995); 146–174; Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 6–11; Karl Heinz Öhlig, "Syrian and Arabian Christianity and the Qur'ān," in *The Hidden Origins of Islam: New Research into Its Early History*, ed. Karl-Heinz Öhlig and Gerd-R. Puin (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2010), 361–401.

20   See for instance Aloys Grillmeier, S.J. & Theresia Hainthaler, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590–604)*, trans. John Cawte and Pauline Allen (London: Mowbray/Louisville, Ken: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 2:2; W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1964), 77–8; Harry A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1976), 337–348; James W. Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology: A Study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in the Two Religions* (Cambridge: James Clark & Co., 1945/2002), 1:1, 57–62; Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battle for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Hugh J. Schonfield, *The History of Jewish Christianity: From the First to the Twentieth Century* (London: Duckworth, 1936/2009).

world and its central urban capitals like Constantinople, Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch, Damascus, and Alexandria. Scholars went even as far as arguing that these groups found also shelters in regions like the Arab Peninsula and Arabia Felix. This conviction paved also the way for exploring a possible continuity between the Qurʾān and ancient Judaism and emerging Christianity concerning the theme of the Jews' killing of (their) prophets.[21] Gabriel Said Reynolds has even traced the existence of the same theme in early Syriac Christian literature before the Qurʾān, like in Ephrem (fourth century), Jacob of Serugh (sixth century) and in the text of *Lives of the Prophets* (sixth century). He argued for this Syriac tradition's direct influence on the Qurʾānic stance.[22]

The questions that still divide scholars today are: Which versions or trends of Christian theology did these abovementioned groups articulate and proliferate? Which Christian theology does the Qurʾān engage with and react to (or even for)? The classical answer to this question that still occupies some ground in modern scholarship is that Islam in Arabia encountered Gnostic, Docetic, and Jewish editions of Christian reasoning. Such trends, it is believed, go back to the earliest years following the birth of Christianity and represent minority heterodox and heretic discourses in their theological interpretations of Jesus Christ, especially His passion and crucifixion.

Quite known, and much studied, is the essay Francois De Blois published two decades ago on the Christians the Qurʾān knew of and spoke about. There, De Blois tread onto an etymological track chasing after the linguistic Qurʾānic use of the term *Naṣrānī* and whether it connotes mainline, orthodox, Christians or not.[23] De Blois demonstrated that the Qurʾānic term *Naṣārā* indicates that the Christianity known by early Islam in Arabia was not the mainline orthodox one, for this term was never used as a self-designation for these orthodox Christians, nor has it ever been synonymous to Christians in any other language, save Arabic. To the contrary, De Blois affirmed, "From the later part of the fourth century onwards, the name '*Nazoraeans*' is used by Christian authors specifically to designate one or more of the supposedly heretical sects

21   Gerald Hawting, "'Killing the Prophets and Stoning the Messengers': Two Themes in the Qurʾān and their Background," in *The Qurʾān's Reformation of Judaism and Christianity: Return to the Origins*, ed. Holger M. Zellentin (Oxon & New York: Routledge, 2019), 303–17, 312.

22   Gabriel Said Reynolds, "On the Qurʾān and the Theme of the Jews as Killers of the Prophets," *Al-Bayān: Journal of Qurʾān and Ḥadīth Studies* 72 (2009); 237–58, 222ff.

23   Francois De Blois, "'Naṣrānī (Ναζωραιος) and Ḥanīf (ἐθνικός): Studies on the Religious Vocabulary of Christianity and Islam," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 65, no. 1 (2002); 1–30.

of the type which in modern theological literature are usually called 'Jewish Christians.'"[24]

These heretic Christians, De Blois related, believed in Jesus's messianic identity and his divine sonship, and they read the Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew. However, they were loathed and cursed by the Jews. So, the nomenclature '*Nazoraeans*,' De Blois wrote, "was the Jewish name ... first and foremost for the Christians in the Synagogue with whom, naturally, Jews had most intimate contact."[25] De Blois also noted that, when it comes to the use of *Nazoraeans* as *Naṣārā* in the Qurʾān, the etymological water becomes muddy. What can be certain, according to him, is that the Qurʾānic term does not name the mainline catholic Christianity of the Melkites, Jacobites, and Nestorians. Applying the Qurʾān's *Naṣārā* to this Christianity was a latter business performed in the Abbasid era, when "Muslims came into extensive contact with Catholic Christians, [so] they decided to transfer the Qurʾānic name '*Naṣārā*' to these Christians."[26] This later historical implementation aside, De Blois concluded, one must glean from the Qurʾānic use's resonation with extra-Qurʾānic historical Christian data that, "the '*Naṣārā*' of the Qurʾān were indeed Nazoraeans ... it is consequently likely that there was a community of Nazoraean Christians in central Arabia in the seventh century, unnoticed by the outside world."[27] Be that as it may, if the Prophet Muḥammad happened to know anything about orthodox, mainline Christian thought ('Pauline Christianity', in De Blois's terms), such acquaintance must have "come merely from hearsay, or from contacts with Catholic (Melkite or Jacobite) Christians during his travels to Syria."[28] In Arabia, De Blois stated, Islam's prophet and scripture were exclusively in living contact with "forgotten fossils" of Christianity.[29]

Beside De Blois's proposal of defining the heterodox Christianity that contacted Islam as Nazoraean Christianity, scholars also lean towards suggesting that the "forgotten fossil" of Christian thought the Qurʾān interacts with is Docetism. One must point out here that there is a general consensus among scholars that the ambiguous and still unknown origin of this Christian trend challenges the postulated Muslim familiarity with it. One of the best studies on this subject in the past two decades was the essay by Ronnie Goldstein and

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24   De Blois, "'Naṣrānī,'" 2. In a footnote on the same page, De Blois reflects his belief in the inadequacy of this expression in the special historical sense that concerns us here [i.e., in his study]. Thus, De Blois ends up suggesting, "it is perhaps better to put the words 'Jewish Christians' in inverted commas.".

25   De Blois, "'Naṣrānī,'" 3.

26   De Blois, "'Naṣrānī,'" 13.

27   De Blois, "'Naṣrānī,'" 16.

28   De Blois, "'Naṣrānī,'" 27.

29   *Ibid.*

Guy Stroumsa published in 2007. In this study, the authors proposed that the etymological roots of the terms '*Eidwlon*' and '*Dokesis*' invite readers to realize a Greek, but also Jewish (Old Testament) origin to Docetism.[30] What is of interest to the current study is Goldstein's and Stroumsa's exposition of the core (Gnostic-like) theological views of Docetism. Ultimately, they stated that the Docetists rejected "Jesus's passion on the cross" and sought a theological explanation for it by suggesting that Jesus Christ was not crucified. Instead, the one who suffered and was hanged on the Cross was Jesus's "phantom" or "double (*eidwlon*)."[31] The Docetists borrowed the idea of *eidwlon* from Greek thought and literature where, according to Goldstein and Stroumsa, it is "systematically used ... to solve theological problems related to myth and its interpretation."[32] The mythical hero or semi-divine figure did not suffer or die; his/her "double (*eidwlon*)" did so. The Docetists used the very same idea in their explanation of Jesus's passion and crucifixion. This is what Goldstein and Stroumsa detect in various extant texts with Docetic content found in the Nag Hammadi manuscripts, e.g., texts like *Treaties of the Great Seth; The Revelation of Peter; The Letter of Peter to Philip; First Revelation of James*; and others.[33] In the *Revelation of Peter*, for example, a narration on the Crucifixion demonstrates that the Jews crucified Jesus's double, who appeared to them to be Jesus-like, while Jesus Himself stood invisibly laughing as He watched them drowned in their deception:

> When He said this, I [Peter] saw Him [Jesus] apparently being arrested by them [the Jews]. I said: 'What do I see, Lord? Is it really you they are seizing, and are you holding on to me? And who is the one smiling and laughing above the cross? Is it someone else whose feet and hands they are hammering.'
>
> The Savior said to me: 'The one you see smiling and laughing above the cross is the living Jesus. The one into whose hands and feet they are driving nails in his fleshly part, the *substitute* (*shebī*) for Him. They are putting to shame the one who came into being in the likeness of the living Jesus. Look at Him and look at me.'[34]

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30   Ronnie Goldstein and Guy G, Stroumsa, "The Greek and Jewish Origins of Docetism: A New Proposal," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 10, no. 3 (2007); 423–41.

31   Goldstein and Stroumsa, "The Greek and Jewish Origins," 425.

32   Goldstein and Stroumsa, "The Greek and Jewish Origins," 429.

33   Goldstein and Stroumsa, "The Greek and Jewish Origins," 429–30.

34   Marvin Meyer, trans., "The Revelation of Peter: NHC VII.3," in *The Nag Hammadi: Scriptures*, ed. Marvin Meyer (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), 487–98, 81.3–82.3, 495–96.

The other Docetic text called *The First Revelation of James* reports Jesus as affirming the following: "Never did I suffer at all, and I was not distressed. These people did not harm me. Rather, all this was inflicted upon a figure of the rulers."[35] One can go father in tracing the implementation of the idea that Jesus was not crucified but His double appeared to the Jews as if He is Christ.

Goldstein and Stroumsa not only find this view in Docetic texts, but also in patristic heresiographical ones as well, e.g., in Irenaeus of Lyon's *Against the Heresies*, or the Valentinian Christological text called *Acta Ioannis*.[36] The two scholars detected therein a striking similarity with the idea conveyed vis-à-vis the terms "*eidwlon*" and "*dokesis*" in Greek literature: "While the substitute suffers indignity, the hero is transferred into safety. In some of the traditions, he (or she) is carried up into heaven."[37] Be that as it may, Goldstein and Stroumsa proposed that

> Some among the earliest Christians, as we have seen, could not believe that Jesus had suffered on the cross. Their quandary was similar to that of Greeks seeking to salvage mythical figures through the device of the *Eidwlon*. We may postulate, then, that this device offered them a ready-made solution, which stands at the very root of Docetism.[38]

For early Christianity, these Docetic-Gnostic ideas were used to tackle the problems Christians faced in association with the divinization of the figure of Jesus Christ. Goldstein and Stroumsa related that they used them to state that: "Jesus did not really suffer Himself … His *eidwlon* suffered in His place, while He went up to heaven. It is the substitute of the divine figure, its *eidwlon*, who suffered."[39]

Is it possible that such ideas of Jesus's crucifixion reached Arabia and were spread among the Christians there? It has already been realized by Mathias Zahniser that Muslim commentators of the Qurʾān conveyed a belief that early Christians in Syria and Egypt were seriously skeptical about Jesus's crucifixion. Some of them not only questioned its historicity, but also rejected its

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35   Wolf-Peter Frank, trans., "The First Revelation of Kames: NHC V.3; Codex Tchacos 2," in *The Nag Hammadi: Scriptures*, 321–30, 30.16–32.28, 327.

36   Goldstein and Stroumsa, "The Greek and Jewish Origins of Docetism: A New Proposal," 430–31.

37   Goldstein and Stroumsa, "The Greek and Jewish Origins of Docetism: A New Proposal," 434.

38   Goldstein and Stroumsa, "The Greek and Jewish Origins of Docetism: A New Proposal," 435.

39   Goldstein and Stroumsa, "The Greek and Jewish Origins of Docetism: A New Proposal," 440.

occurrence altogether on theological grounds: It disgraces Jesus's status as the Christ. The interesting factor in this regard is the Muslim commentators' attribution of such a stance among the Christians to sects and groups beyond the boundaries of Docetism alone:

> Some of the many sects denying the crucifixion included the followers of Saturninus, the Marcionites, Docetists, followers of Bardesanes, Tatianites, followers of Carpocrates, followers of Mani, and the Valentinians. Along with many others, none of these sects could accept in any way that Christ was actually nailed to or died on the cross.[40]

Qur'ānic commentators claim that Muslims were familiar with the abovementioned Christian explanations that "while going to the place of crucifixion, Jesus and Simon the Cyrene were made to look like each other [i.e., the '*eidwlon*' idea]. Jesus then hid Himself to laugh in derision over his misguided persecutors."[41] Against such claims' spreading among Muslims, Mathias Zahniser confirms that only a minority among Christians rejected the crucifixion of Jesus. The earliest known form of Christianity believed in the crucifixion and confirmed its occurrence. The very few who did not do so, Zahniser emphasized, "were not closer in time and space than the vast majority of Christians who recognized the canonical Gospels as scripture and based their faith in past on the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah." These abovementioned Egyptian and Syrian rejecting figures, Zahniser argued, "came to the scene later than the communities that formulated Christianity in the principal cities of Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome and Alexandria."[42]

Whether those who rejected the crucifixion of Jesus were a majority or minority in early Christianity is not the central question here. Far more relevant is the fact that the views of those Christians on the impossibility of Jesus's crucifixion might have found their way to the context of Arabia and Arabia Felix, before and during Islam. For, if they did get through, the Muslims would have been possibly able to meet and listen to Christians from that region who adopted various Christological views. It is acknowledged that at least "by the dawn of the seventh century Christians had long been pressing into the Arabian heartland from all sides. Arabia was literally surrounded by Christian

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40   A.H. Mathias Zahniser, *The Mission and Death of Jesus in Islam and Christianity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 95. Whether one can trace these trends to the Arab Peninsula in the seventh century and provide historical evidence of their presence is still an open-ended discussion among scholars.

41   Zahniser, *The Mission and Death of Jesus*, 96.

42   Zahniser, *The Mission and Death of Jesus*, 114.

enclaves, in the towns and villages of south Arabic, in Ethiopia and Egypt, in Sinai, Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia and in Iran."[43]

In interlocution with this awareness, Sidney Griffith diverged from the prevalent trend of associating the Qurʾānic stances with heterodox Christianity, which is believed by earlier scholars to be based on the fact that the Late Antique Arab Peninsula was a shelter for heretics, or was "haeresium ferax," that is "heresies' fertile ground"[44] Griffith deconstructs the heterodoxy thesis by targeting one of its primary re-articulations in recent scholarship: Francois De Blois's hypothesis on the *Nazoraeans* and his take on Christianity in Arabia. Contrary to De Blois, Griffith argues that it is hard to prove that Arabian Muslims were exposed to the theological views of non-orthodox Christians. Rather, it is more tenable to verify that Muslims were in touch with the mainline orthodox views of their contemporary Melkites, Jacobites, and Nestorians.[45] Griffith reveals his serious skepticism about the Muslims' exclusive exposition to Gnostic, Jewish-Christian trends, and he questions the belief in their later encountering with orthodox Christianity when they embarked on their conquests (*futūḥāt*) outside Arabia. Instead, he stipulated that the people of Arabia, at least from the 4th century CE, were fully in touch with the Greek-, Syriac- and Geʾez-speaking Christian orthodoxies of the Melkites, Jacobites, and Nestorians:

> By the time of the Qurʾān, knowledge of the Christian Bible, the Christian Creed, and Christian liturgy had already spread orally among the Arabs, presumably transmitted first from those Arabs living on the Arabian periphery, who were in more immediate contact with those Syriac and Geʾez-speaking Christians whose faith and practice of the Qurʾān echoes.[46]

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43   Sidney H. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the 'People of the Book' in the Language of Islam* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1979); Theresia Hainthaler, *Christliche Araber vor dem Islam* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007).

44   Two of the oldest scholarly theses on this conviction trace to the end of the nineteenth and very beginning of the twentieth centuries. Gustav Weil, *The Bible, the Koran and the Talmud or Biblical Legends of the Muselmans* (New York: Harper, 1846); Richard M. Zwemer, *Arabia: The Cradle of Islam* (Edinburgh: Anderson and Ferrier, 1900). Irfan Shahid also echoed the same conviction and speaks about "Arabia the land of heresies." Irfan Shahid, *Rome and the Arabs* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1984).

45   Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 11–13.

46   Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 15. See also C. John Block, "Philoponian Monophysitism in South Arabia at the Advent of Islam with Implications for the English Translation of '*Thalātha*' in Qurʾān 4.171 and 5.73," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 23 (2012); 50–75; John Bowman, "The Debt of Islam to Monophysite Christianity," in *Essays in Honor of Griffith*

Arabia, that is, was not simply a shelter for all non-orthodox Christological and theological Gnostic- and Docetic-like trends of Christian belief that renegaded to Arabia seeking refuge from persecution and suppression. Rather, it was also exposed to the orthodox Christian, creedal-faith holders in the churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Constantinople, Rome, and Alexandria.

Methodologically speaking, Griffith conjured up his conclusion by means of reversing the hermeneutical strategy that is usually followed to determine the identities of the Christians whom the Muslims could have interacted with in Arabia: Speculating first about the Christians who influenced the Qurʾān and whose ideas drove it to criticize the Christian belief-system. Griffith turned this approach upside-down by starting with the Qurʾānic rhetoric on Christianity and then discerning in this rhetoric the identity of the Christianity the Qurʾān has in mind. By this, Griffith endeavored to circumvent the trap of treating the Qurʾān as if it "had no agenda of its own and was borrowing words, phrases, themes and narratives rather than commenting on them from its own point of view."[47] Griffith believed that by pursuing such reversed hermeneutical methodology, observers can question the presumption that the Qurʾān and the Prophet Muḥammad had a rudimentary or distorted knowledge of Christianity.[48] It is important to add here that such an approach also questions the claim that distortion is due to the exclusive and narrow Muslim exposure to heretic Christian thought and that it has nothing to do with the dominant orthodox one.

Rather than taking the Qurʾān's criticism of basic Christian doctrines, e.g., Trinity, Christology, Incarnation and Crucifixion, as "reports or echoes of the views of heterodox Christians living in the Qurʾān's milieu" – whose presence in that location, according to Griffith, has "no historical evidence at all" – Griffith now deemed such criticism expressive of a polemical discourse "directed at these doctrines and their customary formulae as they were actually professed by the very Melkite, Jacobite and Nestorian Christians whose increasing infiltration into Arabia in the first third of the seventh century is historically attested."[49] The mistake scholars trap their investigation methodologically into, Griffith opined,

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      Wheeler Thatcher 1863–1950, ed. E.C.R. Maclaurin (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1967), 191–216.

47   Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 24.

48   *Ibid.*

49   Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 36. Griffith here is standing against a legion of scholarly theses. In addition to the proposal of Francois De Blois, displayed above, Griffith also disagrees with the thesis of Joachim Gnilka, *Die Nazarener und der Koran: Eine Spurensuche* (Freiburg: Herder, 2007).

Is the hermeneutical one of failing to notice the Qurʾān's polemical rheto-ric against the Christian doctrines it critiques and consequently interpret-ing its language in these critical passages as evocations of or reflections of the teachings of Christian communities not otherwise known to have been in the Qurʾān's world. In other words, the [scholars'] misreading of the pertinent Qurʾānic passage became their evidence for postulating the lingering presence of Christian groups in Arabia at a time when no other evidence supports their presence there and abundant evidence indicates that the communities whose doctrines the Qurʾān directly criticizes in its own very effective rhetorical style were present.[50]

Is what Griffith thought-provokingly proposes truly the case? This question remains open for discussion and this article is not the place to attend to it. What matters is how can all this "orthodoxy-or-heterodoxy" scholarly discus-sion invite a re-reading of Q 4:157–158 and furnish for the attempt to discover a plausible interpretation of the Qurʾān's own rationale and theological stance on the crucifixion in a proper exegetical, and far from eisegetical, manner.

3 The Qurʾānic Investment in the "Phantasmal Appearance" Idea

In the light of the above data on the possible theological Christian stances, it is plausible to presume that the Qurʾānic speech on Jesus's crucifixion as a phantasmal incident is used to advocate for Jesus's identity as God's '*Kalima*' (God's Word). This possibility plausibly explains why the Qurʾānic text does not speak directly about "imagination," but on "similitude," Instead. This pos-sibility conceded, the 'phantasmal appearance' terminology may also be mir-roring the Muslim reaction to certain theological views, which the Arabian Christians could have articulated to respond to Arabian Jewish refutations of Jesus's Messianic-divine identity. One can here equally pause at the possibility that such a phantasmal appearance option was echoed by the Jews themselves as an invocation of a polemical argument against Jesus's divinity, which is rem-iniscent of Celsus's logic and Origen's response to it.

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50   Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 37. See also Griffith's application of this proposed methodol-ogy in Sidney Griffith, "Syriacism in the Arabic Qurʾān: Who Were 'those Who Said Allah is Third of Three' According to *al-Māʾidah* 73?," in *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies in Medieval Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the Qurʾān*, ed. Meir M. Bar-Asher, et al (Jerusalem: The Ben Zvi Institute, 2007), 83–110; Sidney Griffith, "*Al-Naṣārā* in the Qurʾān: A Hermeneutical Reflection," in *New Perspectives on the Qurʾān: The Qurʾān in its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel S. Reynolds (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), 301–322.

What catches the attention regarding the 'phantasmal appearance' idea in this debate is the following: Celsus and Origen in the second century CE and the Qur'ān in the seventh use the very same idea, yet each employs it to serve a different argument. In *The True Doctrine* by Celsus and *Against Celsus* by Origen, we have a suggestion of the possibility of Jesus escaping from the cross either as evidence that Jesus's divinity is genuine since, as a divine Being, He can escape death (Origen), or as a demonstration that Jesus's divinity is impossible, for had He been divine, He would have disappeared from the cross (Celsus). From this, Celsus concluded that, since Jesus did not transport Himself away from the crucifixion, and since divinity can never be inflected with such a human shameful death-experience, Jesus can never be divine and could have never been heavenly because His crucifixion was real. To this refutation of Jesus's divinity, Origen responds by affirming that, if anything, Jesus is the first and foremost truly divine *Logos* and heavenly being. The Christian Docetic view agrees with Origen on this point. Yet, the Docetists add an extra justification: Jesus's crucifixion was nothing but imaginary and phantasmal, for His divinity could have never permitted Him to experience such a human fate as death on a cross. Both Origen and Docetism adopted a *Logos*-Christology discourse, yet they differed from each other in the understanding of the crucifixion which they derived from it.

This is the theological background of the earliest use of the idea of 'phantasmal appearance' to speak about Jesus's crucifixion, whether to attack Jesus (Celsus) or to advocate for Him as divine *Logos* (Origen and Docetism). Now, the very interesting and thought-provoking twist is the one which, centuries later, the Qur'ān conjured up in its implementation of the very same idea to offer its own understanding of Jesus's fate and identity. The Qur'ān relates that the Jews boasted about killing and crucifying the Christians' Prophet. The Qur'ān rejects and antagonizes this allegation, so it uses the idea of 'phantasmal appearance' to affirm that Jesus was never exposed to such a shameful death on a cross. The question here is: What does the Qur'ān want to say about Jesus's identity vis-à-vis the emphasis that the Jews did not crucify the real Jesus, for it just appeared to them to be imaginatively so (as the Arabic phrasing seems to suggest)? Does the Qur'ān reflect a Docetist answer to Celsus-like logic? Is it, then, implicitly conceding the *Logos*-Christology presumptions of the Docetists, but also Orthodox Christians (like Origen), who centralize Jesus's substantial relatedness to the divine in terms of the "God's Word" idea? If this was the case, then the Qur'ān is trying to back Jesus's substantial relatedness to the realm of divinity by emphasizing what the Docetists emphasized in conceding that Jesus's crucifixion was just an appearance or phantasmal. The Docetists sacrificed the historicity and factuality of Jesus's crucifixion in the

service of proving His identity as God's *Logos*. Could that same rationale be the one behind the Qur'ān's rejection of the Jewish claim and its insistence that Jesus was not really crucified: It just appeared to be so to the Jews (*shubbiha lahum*)?

Scholars usually take for granted that Islam does not accept the Christian creedal, orthodox Christology, and it does not view Jesus as divine or eternal in any ontological, metaphysical sense. Jesus is a human being; He is God's human servant like Adam; and He is God's messenger like the prophets of the Old Testament and like the Prophet Muḥammad. Be that as it may, it is not surprising that no one has yet expressed readiness to consider deeming the Qur'ānic refutation of the crucifixion in Q 4:157–158 as a Muslim revision of the defense of Jesus's *Logos*-based divine identity, which both Docetism and Orthodoxy accept. The logic behind the skepticism toward such a proposal might simply be the following: If for the Docetists the crucifixion's phantasmal nature is a proof of Jesus's divine origin, it cannot be the case in the Eyes of the Qur'ān, for Jesus's divinity is categorically rejected in Islam.

However, if the Qur'ān refuses to defend Jesus's divinity, and it categorically and unexceptionally refutes it, why would it then use the specific claim of the phantasmal crucifixion, which was used originally (as Origen's text informs us at least) to betray nothing else than this very divinity? One initial, *ad intra* Qurānic, answer to this question might be that "crucifixion is God's instrument for punishing the infidels and evildoers [see, for instance, Q 5:33; 7: 123–124; and 12:41]. [Crucifixion] cannot be the fate of God's messengers who call the infidels to surrender to God … the Qur'ān just cannot accept that God would allow his messengers to be exposed to the most shameful and scandalous death ever."[51]

As accurate this interpretation as is, there is an additional theological reason behind the Qur'ānic choice. A possible additional explanation of such a choice is the fact that, for Docetist and patristic Christian Christology, Jesus's divine identity is ultimately spoken of as a demonstration that Jesus is God's *Logos*, God's Word. Speaking of Jesus as "divine" serves the ultimate purpose of stating that Jesus is God's eternal Word. The distinction between the Docetic and the patristic stances here lies in the fact that, for orthodox Christology, this belief serves the ontological discourse on Jesus's divinity that was developed in the fourth and fifth centuries, where Jesus's divinity was understood in terms of an ontological causal relation of origin: Father-Son/begetting-begotten

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51   Najib George Awad, "'If His Crucifixion Was Figurative as You Claim, then So Be It,'" 57.

connection.[52] That context relates that the fourth and fifth-century patristic discourse on divinity was used to interpret that Jesus is primarily and metaphysically "of one substance with the Father (*homoousios*)," which prevailed over the stress on Jesus as *Logos* and made the latter, at some stages of the history of Christian doctrine, an ancillary theological understanding founded in and conditioned by the former.

To the contrary, 'divinity' for Docetism was not primarily, if ever, structured upon such an ontological-causal, *Homoousios*-centered connotation. *Homoousios* was not an acceptable theological expression of divinity for them. Such an understanding of Jesus's relation to God's divinity in association with the notion of *Homoousios* would also never be something Islam might concede and adopt. Nevertheless, the association of the understanding of Jesus's relation to God's divinity with the notion of *Logos* seems to have been accepted by Islam, as it was also embraced by patristic Christian theology. What invites such a possibility is that the Qurʾān in its own rhetoric speaks about ʿĪsa b. Maryam as no other than "the Word of God and a Spirit from Him (*kalimat Allah wa-rūḥun minhu*)," as the Qurʾān says in Q 3:39 and 4:171. In addition, Muslim *Kalām* emphasizes that God's Word is equal to Him and emanates from His own being (*kalimatahu hiya hūw*).

In light of this, the Qurʾān deems it plausible and permissible to borrow the emphasis on the phantasmal crucifixion to prove Jesus's *Logos*-centered identity. The Qurʾān does so because it resonates with its attestation that Jesus is God's Word (*kalimatahu*). It is not, then, necessarily a contrivance to propose that this represents a *Kalima*-Christology approach, rather than a *contra*-Christology one. To articulate this *Kalima*-Christology in Docetic terms: The Qurʾān stresses that the crucifixion was imaginary and phantasmal in order to advocate for Jesus's identity as God's *Kalima*. This does not at all make the Qurʾān echo the fourth and fifth-century creedal Christology where divinity defends the ontological causal relation of origin that is designated in the term *Homoousios* and is expressive of a Father-Son relationality. Nevertheless,

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52   See on this, for example, Aloys Grillmeier, s.j., *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), I; J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: A&C Black, 1993); Frances M. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and its Background* (London: SCM Press, 1983); Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, *A History of Christian Doctrine* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997); John Behr, *The Nicene Faith, 1 & 2* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004); Lewis Ayers, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2011); Najib George Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms*, ch. 3.

this offers a suggestion of an intimate connection between the Qurʾānic theology on ʿĪsa b. Maryam and the Christian theology on Jesus the Christ, the *Logos* of God, in Arabia. It seems that the Qurʾān is theologizing that, if Jesus is in any way God's "Word and Spirit (*Kalima wa Rūḥ*)," He cannot suffer or die in a shameful manner. This is reminiscent of the Docetic claim: "If Christ in any way shares the divine nature, He cannot suffer or die."[53] As the Docetic trend espoused immunizing Jesus Christ's divinity from being contaminated by birth and suffering, the Qurʾān seems to be immunizing God's Word from contamination by killing and crucifixion (not necessarily by death *per se*).[54] Such orientation not only resonates with the Docetic christological approach, but is also principally congenial with the orthodox, patristic *Logos*-Christology. After all, mainline patristic Christology, as demonstrated by Origen in *Contra Celsum*, does not truly or principally dismiss the idea of Jesus's ability, by virtue of His divinity, to disappear from the experience of the cross if He wanted to. It simply stands merely against this potential's practical congruence and usefulness to the inner logic of Jesus's Messianic, atoning, and salvific role.

This article's proposal of a potential Qurʾānic revision of the understanding of the crucifixion that resonates with, rather than nullifies or withstands, a Christian orthodox theological view of Jesus, like the one in *Logos*-Christology, might sound challenging, if not discomforting, to the predominant majority of the Christian and Muslim approaches to Q 4:157–158. If one departs from the Qurʾānic speech about Jesus as a mere human messenger and servant of God and sidelines the Qurʾānic exclusive speech on Jesus as, *alone*, God's "Word and Spirit from Him," one will fail to consider this interpretation an exegetical possibility. For example, Michael Fonner suggested that "for the Qurʾān, Jesus belongs within the framework of God's sending of prophets and books. Technically speaking, Jesus does not belong in *theology*."[55] Fonner supported his view by citing Qurʾānic attestations from *Sūras* 43:59; 4:171–172 and 5:75. In the light of Sidney Griffith's aforementioned critique of the hermeneutic approach that departed from preconceived and presumed views on what Islam rejects or espouses and then searched for evidences of such pre-tailored hermeneutic in the Qurʾān, one can say that Fonner looked merely for the Qurʾānic verses that vouch for a common, ready-made preconception of the

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53   Stuart G. Hall, "Docetism," in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, ed. Trevor A. Hart (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 163–164, 164.

54   *Ibid.*

55   Michael G. Fonner, "Jesus's Death and Crucifixion in the Qurʾān: An Issue for Interpretation and Muslim-Christian Relations," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 29, nos. 3–4 (1992); 432–50, 436.

Qurʾān's stance on Jesus. Fonner frankly revealed this preconception when he related that, in the Qurʾān, Jesus has no *theo*-logical connections to God.

This article follows Griffith's subtle methodological approach and starts with the Qurʾān's own rhetoric on ʿĪsa b. Maryam, deducing from it the Qurʾānic stance on Jesus, and asking whether it associates Jesus with *theo*-logy or not. Departing from the Qurʾānic inner logic as such – exegetically, that is, not eisegetically – drives us to realize that, besides the verses Fonner invoked, there are other verses wherein ʿĪsa b. Maryam is recognized as God's very own Word and Spirit and as God's designated judge over the two worlds (*diyyān al-ʿālamīn*), whom God lifted up to the divine heavenly realm (*Rafaʿahu Allah ilayih*). There is nothing more *theological* in perspective than such designations for the Qurʾān to ascribe to Jesus; something it does not even attribute to the Prophet Muḥammad. Perhaps the Qurʾān is not straightforwardly and categorically antagonist of all senses of relatedness Jesus has to God's divine realm after all. Maybe it militates primarily and specifically against these christological understandings of such connectedness to divinity that endorse ontological-causal, *Homoousios*-based and sonship-centered perspectives.

Robert Charles Zaehner might not be necessarily wrong, though echoing a "minority interpretation,"[56] when he reads Q 19:34, "Jesus the Son of Mary, the Word of Truth," as the Qurʾān's acceptance of a specific, conspicuously qualified sense of Jesus's divinity, which obviously does not approach it from any ontological-causal metaphysical perspective.[57] Zaehner's main thesis was that the Qurʾān's interpretation of Jesus's status in relation to God mirrors elements that are expressive of East-Syrian, Nestorian christological orientations. One of these Nestorian-like ideas which the Qurʾān reflects, Zaehner suggested, is the refusal to consider Mayram bint ʿUmrān "the mother of God (*theotokos*)," and its suggestion instead that God gave birth to the human Jesus in the womb of Mary by means of "God's creative Word (*Logos/Kalima*)" and by means of the verb "be (*kun*)."[58] Zaehner's overall approaches to Islam and other religions in relation to Christianity might be controversial and questionable. Yet, the point he made might be of relevance to the Qurʾānic take on Jesus as the one in whom God's "Word and Spirit (*kalimatahu wa rūḥun minhu*)" dwell, in the light of its interaction with Christian Christological trends of reasoning that offer

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56   Fonner, "Jesus's Death and Crucifixion," 438.

57   Robert C. Zaehner, *At Sundry Times: An Essay in the Comparison of Religions* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958), 209; Fonner, "Jesus's Death and Crucifixion in the Qurʾān: An Issue for Interpretation and Muslim-Christian Relations," 438.

58   Zaehner, *At Sundry Times*, 206–209. See also on Zaehner's approach Oddbjorn Leirvik, *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam* (London & New York: Continuum, 2010).

a "theology of the indwelling *Logos*."[59] It seems that the Qurʾān echoes – in its special qualified terms and perspective – a Christological statement about God's "Word and Spirit from Him" (i.e., Jesus) that is expressive of divine knowing and power, by means of which God made the worlds vis-à-vis the word "be (*kun*)."

It is known that such a trend of christological understanding of Jesus's sonship and *Logos*-status existed during the early Abbasid era on the mouth of the Nestorian theologian John of Dalyatha, whose views were anathematized in a council summoned by Catholicos Timothy I in 170 AH / 786–87 CE.[60] What is more intriguing still is the fact that such a trend of *Logos/Kalima-Christology* was used by Christian *mutakallims* in their interlocution with Islam. A careful study of early Christian-Muslim *Kalām* and the interlocutions on the crucifixion relate that both Muslims and Christians resorted to a *Logos/Kalima*-Christological idea to approach Q 4:157–158.

A primary example of this is found in the text of the debate (*mujādala*) that took place in the Caliph al-Maʾmūn's court between the Christian, Melkite-Chalcedonian *mutakallim*, Theodore Abū Qurra, and a Muslim *mutakallim* called ʿAlī b. al-Walīd ad-Dimashqī. In the extant text of this *mujādala*, the famous Melkite *mutakallim* from the third/ninth century used the implementation of Q 4:157–158 to make a theological point on Jesus. First, the Muslim interlocutor addressed Theodore with these words:

٣٨١. قالَ الدمشقي : ما قتلوهُ وما صلبوهُ ولكن شُبِّهَ لهُم ورفَعَهُ الله إليهِ لأَنَّهُ كلمتهُ وروحُه

381. Ad-Dimashqī said: They did not kill Him and they did not crucify Him, but it was made to appear as so to them, and God rose Him up to Him, for He [the Messiah] is His Word and Spirit.[61]

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59   Carlos A. Segovia, *The Quranic Jesus: A New Interpretation* (Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), 6.

60   See on John of Dalyatha and his condemnation, Alexander Treiger, "Could Christ's Humanity See His Divinity? An Eighth-Century Controversy between John of Dalyatha and Timothy I, Catholicos of the Church of the East," *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 9 (2009); 3–21.

61   Wafīq Naṣrī, ed., *Abū Qurra waʾl-Maʾmūn: al-Mujādala* (Beirut & Jounieh: CEDRAC (USJ)/ Librairie St. Paul, 2010), IV.E.2.381, 170. I make my own English translation of the Arabic text here. In the ensuing lines, I rely primarily on the detailed analysis of Theodore's take on Q 4:157–158 in Najib G. Awad, "If His Crucifixion Was Figurative as You Claim, then So Be It,'" 68–73.

In his initiative, ad-Dimashqī made an interesting theological standpoint reflective of a *Logos-Kalima*-Christological leaning. He associated the Qurʾān's rejection of the crucifixion with the Qurʾānic claim that ʿĪsa b. Mayram is Allah's Word and Spirit. Ad-Dimashqī offered "an indirect, yet quite accurate, [Christological] exegesis of the Qurʾān's negation of the death of Jesus on the cross."[62] This marrying of the Qurʾān's stance on the crucifixion with the Qurʾān's other *Kalima*-centered Christology-like attestation is worth pondering to check whether this Muslim theological view expresses a genuine, inherent, and not just exegetical, Qurʾānic view.

On the other hand, the debate's text relates that Abū Qurra perceptively apprehended this *Logos/Kalima* Christological leaning of his Muslim conversant. So, he erects upon it a Christian elaboration that used Q 4:157–158 to demonstrate a congruence with the Christian (Orthodox) understanding of Jesus as the divine *Logos* who belongs to the heavenly realm. Abū Qurra avoided any discussion about death in relation to deity, abstaining frankly from associating Jesus as God's Word and Spirit with it. He even conceded that if the crucifixion was merely figurative (*tashbīhan*), or phantasmal for that matter, this will not be a problem:

٣٨٣. إن كانَ صليبُه تشبيهًا كما تزعُم فهو مثل ذلك، وإن كانَ حقًّا فقبولنا لهُ حَقٌّ

383. If His crucifixion was figurative as you claim, then so be it; and if it was real, then our acceptance of it is true.[63]

Instead, what Abū Qurra did was focusing on God's lifting of Jesus up to the heavenly realm. He combined Q 4:147–158 with Q 3:55 (which says that Jesus was raised up to heaven by God and will be appointed the judge of the two worlds).[64] Instead of lingering long at associating the *Logos/Kalima* with death on a cross, Abū Qurra focused on Jesus's ascension to heaven by God on the basis of a christological perspective shaped after the association the Muslim conversant made between Q 4:157–158 and the Qurʾānic understanding of Jesus as Allah's *Kalima wa Rūḥ*. What he ends up saying is that "the immortality of the crucified is ineradicable," for "Jesus had risen from the dead in an uncorrupted body and … He ascended to heaven as God's Word and Spirit; that is,

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62   Awad, "'If His Crucifixion Was Figurative as You Claim, then So Be It,'" 70.
63   Naṣrī, ed., *Abū Qurra*, IV.E.3.383, 170.
64   Naṣrī, ed., *Abū Qurra*, IV.C.322–323, 159; Awad, "If His Crucifixion Was Figurative as You Claim, then So Be It,'" 68.

exactly as the Muslim Book and Prophet testify."[65] Be that as it may, Abū Qurra concluded, "the Messiah is God's Word and Spirit, and God's Word and Spirit, then, is from Him and is not segregated from Him and She [i.e., God's Word and Spirit] goes back to Him."[66]

The text of this debate presents a good interreligious example of an interlocution between a Christian and a Muslim over the crucifixion on the basis of a *Logos/Kalima*-centered Christological hermeneutic of Q 4:157–158, which is derived from a genuine Qurʾānic understanding of Jesus as Allah's Word and Spirit. Is this a categorical denial of divinity in relation to Jesus? Not necessarily. It seems to be more like a *different* expression of it. Is this a polemic against Christology altogether? Abū Qurra, a mainline Christian theologian, does not seem to believe so. Eventually, this warrants a consideration of the Muslim familiarity with various iterations of *Logos*-Christology found during early Islam. One might even concur with Alexander Treiger's note that Muslims were not just clashing with, and polemically antagonizing, the surrounding indigenous cultures and religions. Rather, they were interacting with and absorbing them as well.[67]

In this sense, Jesus's death on a cross, as well as whether it is possible or not, are equally judged in the Qurʾān based on *theological* (what it means), even christological revisional criterion, and not on a history-based logic (did it happen or not). The Qurʾānic attestation in Q 4:157–158 emphasizes a theological intention and "the hermeneutical position here is the contextual approach with emphasis on a theological intention."[68] What such a theological intention can possibly be is a Qurʾānic attempt at defending the particular *Logos/Kalima* christological sense of connection to the divine realm, which the Qurʾān echoes as a qualified and revied version of Christology-like reasoning on the basis of the genuine Qurʾānic attestation of Jesus as God's "Word and Spirit

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65   Awad, "If His Crucifixion," 71.

66   Awad, "If His Crucifixion," 72. See also Naṣrī, ed., *Abū Qurra*, IV.E.3.389, 172, where Abū Qurra says:

389. قال: فكلمةُ الله وروحُهُ هي إذَن مِنهُ وليست هي مُنفَصِلَة عنه وهي راجِعَةٌ إليه.

67   Treiger, "Could Christ's Humanity See His Divinity?," 11. Treiger is right in reminding us that the mainline Christians, in turn, were keen on demonstrating to Muslims that their theological discourses are congenial and reconciliatory with the Islamic-Qurʾānic belief. This was what Patriarch Timothy I himself endeavored to achieve. Treiger rightly states: "Timothy's apologetic attempts to demonstrate to the Muslim rulers that *his* 'Nestorian' version of Christianity could be presented in terms acceptable to Muslims, and moreover that his was the *only* version of Christianity which could be so presented and which therefore was the only one worthy of the Muslims' support," *Ibid.*, 12.

68   As even Fonner himself confesses: *Ibid.*, 444. I am not sure how Fonner would reconcile this rather plausible note with his other claim mentioned earlier.

from Him." This Jesus, the *Kalima*, in the Qurʾān, is the only being, besides God *per se*, "who is given the [divine] power to raise the dead," as the Qurʾān says in Q 3:49 and 5:110.[69]

4   Concluded Implications: the Qurʾān's Reconciliatory Christology

Does the above analysis and discussion support the belief of some contemporary scholars that the Qurʾānic attestations suggest a Muslim affinity to Christian heretical, Gnostic-Docetic or other, theological views? Not necessarily. Does it, then, demonstrate a Qurʾānic disclosure of a Muslim familiarity with Christian mainline, Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian alike, Christian theology? Neither this is necessarily the case. Opting for one of these two possibilities and then arguing *from* them generates a history-focused hermeneutic, which is not the main goal of this study. Rather, this study avoids verifying or arguing for any particular historical scenario on which Christianity the Qurʾān engages. Rather, this analysis heeds the advice recently made by Gabriel Said Reynolds, as it concurs with his belief in the futility of the historiological investigation after which Christianity is related to in the Qurʾān, since we lack enough data to establish that one option was the true historical case and not the other. This essay heeds the warning that delving into proposing one of these scenarios alone would be "so focused on an Imagined historical context" that it makes us "miss the literary qualities of the Qurʾān," if not also the kernel of its theological alternatives.[70]

The article also agrees in principle with Suleiman Mourad's claim that "the denial [of the crucifixion/death] in the Qurʾān is not directed to its reality, but rather to its theological implications."[71] This is why Q 4:157–158 is read in light of the theological rationale that one meets in Origen's attending to Celsus's criticism in *Contra Celsum* and in light of the Docetic approach to *Logos*-Christology. Nevertheless, the article goes further than Mourad and others in suggesting that the Qurʾān may be doing this not necessarily to develop a polemic criticism against the mainline (Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian) Christian belief in Jesus's divinity or to offer its message as an absolute,

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69 John C. Reeves, ed., *Bible and Qurʾān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 36.

70 Gabriel S. Reynolds, "On the Qurʾān and Christian Heresies," in *The Qurʾān's Reformation of Judaism and Christianity: Return to the Origins*, 318–32, 319.

71 Suleiman A. Mourad, "Does the Qurʾān Deny or Assert Jesus's Crucifixion and Death?," in *New Perspectives on the Qurʾān*, 349–57, 350.

unequivocal obliteration of these discourses in support of Christian heretic alternatives. Mourad is right in noticing that what is usually perceived as the standard purpose and meaning of the Qurʾānic stance on the crucifixion is favored subjectively and preconceptually in some Muslim and Christian circles alike because it is "often used in an attempt to legitimize one's own [convictions] or prove the other [convictions] wrong." In other words, one must not eisegetically treat the Qurʾān as always polemical (or biased) text.[72]

It is this factor that legitimizes Griffith's (similarly to Reynolds in principal orientation) call for maintaining the "literary, or scriptural, integrity of the Qurʾān, however it came about," and to treat the Qurʾān as it conceives itself to be: "A Scripture in dialogue with preceding scriptures and traditions, and the lore of mainly Jewish and Christian communities in its midst, to which it alludes and on which it offers an often exegetical commentary."[73] This article does concur with the belief that this Qurʾānic dialogical-exegetical interaction with other faiths needs not always take the form of refuting and polemicizing against every item in other faiths' theological interpretations. It needs not to be red as a dialogue "with a seemingly ironic or even a satirically polemical intent, as it is presumed."[74] Instead, what if the Qurʾān's exegetical commentary is offered as a "revisional" and "propositional," suggestive discourse that aims primarily to be congenial with its very own theological content, rather than to antagonize other extra-Qurʾānic contents?[75]

It is not always the case that "the Qurʾān exaggerates and satirizes [the views of its opponents], both for the sake of rhetorical flare and in order to facilitate an effective refutation."[76] Nor is it necessarily always the case that the Qurʾān relates to other different theological views as "opponents" it needs to refute. The Qurʾān might simply be just developing its own particular

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72   Mourad, "Does the Qurʾān," 349.

73   Griffith, "*Al-Naṣārā* in the Qurʾān: A Hermeneutical Reflection," 321.

74   *Ibid.*

75   I think Angelika Neuwirth would not disagree with such a proposal. She seems call for it in her own terms when, for instance, she proposes looking at the Qurʾān "as a 'medium of transport' triggering and reflecting a communication. The *Qurʾān* in its emergent phase is not a pre-meditated, fixed compilation, a reified literary artifact, but a still-mobile text reflecting an oral theological-philosophical debate between diverse interlocutors or various late antique denominations." Angelika Neuwirth, "Two Faces of the Qurʾān: *Qurʾān* and *Muṣḥaf*," *Oral Tradition* 25, no. 1 (2010); 141–56, 142. What I do not agree with Neuwirth on is the identification of "the Qurʾān as exegetical" with "the Qurʾān as polemical-apologetical." Why should the exegetical commentary-centered role of the Qurʾān be associated with polemics and apologetics. Why cannot the exegetical role instead be expressive of interlocution and proposition?

76   Reynolds, "On the Qurʾān and Christian Heresies," 321.

theological understanding of commonly circulated theme in logical *interlocution* or theological *interaction* with the different views available about it. The Qurʾān might not be merely reflecting distinctive rhetorical strategies, but also seriously trying to contribute to the theological reasoning on a rather controversial issue and to offer what it particularly believes to be more tenable and plausible hermeneutics to it. From this perspective, one can fairly dispense with searching for a Docetist influence *behind* the Qurʾānic text,[77] yet one can still say that the Qurʾān could be familiar with the Docetist ideas and that such ideas did exist somehow, sometimes in some Arabian Christian speeches on the crucifixion, without these two possibilities clashing with each other and without finding ourselves forced to opt for one of them and reject the other. If we dispensed with searching *behind* the text for the extra-Qurʾānic source that influenced the Muslim attestation and shaped its stance, we can still speak about a self-determined Qurʾānic comment on Docetist-like ideas without any substantial theological problem or tangible depreciation of the Qurʾān's own, self-determined theological attentions.

Carlos Segovia echoes in 2019 something relevant to this point in a valuable forensic manner. He noticed that, in today's scholarship, the Qurʾānic attestations on Jesus's birth, life, prophetic mission and death, i.e., His biography, are treated to have merely "descriptive purpose," whereas all the Qurʾānic attendings to Jesus's divine sonship and relatedness to God are deemed the Qurʾān's polemic attack against Christian Christology and its counter-theology on Jesus.[78] Against this sweeping, presumptive reading of the Qurʾānic stance on Jesus as categorically and statically descriptive-polemic all the time, Segovia proposes that one should read the Qurʾān's various stances and attentions to Jesus's messianic relation to God and His divinity and sonship as textual attestations that do not necessarily belong to the same redactional layer. Within this framework, Segovia endeavors to explore a potential serious interlocution with Near-Eastern christological developments, orthodox or heterodox. This means moving in our hermeneutical approach from searching for "polemic-apologetic antagonism," or "influence-conflict" situation, into "contextual connection" and open interlocution with these Christologies.[79]

In the case of the crucifixion, the Qurʾān might neither necessarily be offering in Q 4:157–158 a polemic refutation that resonates with the rejection of Jesus's divine sonship, nor is it just echoing a view that influentially, implicitly determined its orientation. Perhaps this is not the focal attention here. Rather,

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77   Reynolds, "On the Qurʾān and Christian Heresies," 324.
78   Segovia, *The Quranic Jesus*, 1ff.
79   Segovia, *The Quranic Jesus*, 2.

it might be offering an alternative propositional understanding of Jesus's status as God's "Word and Spirit," which suggests rootedness in God's divine reality and echoes traces of Christian *Logos*-Christology; an understanding that rejects the crucifixion (i.e., the method, not the idea of death *per se*) because it does not harmonize with the Qur'ān's particular *logos*-like Christological views of ʿĪsa b. Maryam as God's *Kalima wa Rūḥ*. Therefore, we must differ with the belief that the major difference between the Muslim-Qur'ānic framework of reasoning and the Christian one is *Christological* in nature because (according to this belief) "for Muslims, Christology is not included in theology, but for Christians it is central."[80] Far from excluding a Christological interpretation from its theological perception of Jesus, the Qur'ān, as Q 4:157–158 reveals, tenders a "revised" or "qualified" Christological reading of Jesus's theological connotations that might be actually indirectly interlocuting with, rather than either supporting or refuting, orthodox and heterodox christological views that somehow existed in the early context of Arabia.

I reckon that Sidney Griffith is not far from the truth regarding the *Naṣārā* whom the Qur'ān addresses when he attempted to substantiate the hypothesis that,

> The mainline, Syriac-speaking Christian communities of Syria/Palestine and Mesopotamia, i.e., the so-called 'Melkites,' 'Jacobites,' and 'Nestorians,' as the later Muslims regularly called them, were in fact the principal communities from whom the Arabic-speaking Christians in the Qur'ān's milieu learned their faith and with whom they were in continuous communication from the mid to the late sixth century onward.[81]

Logos-Christology was actually accepted by the Christians of these mainline schools of patristic theology. So, the Qur'ān's "*kalimathu wa rūḥun minh*" might reflect the kind of affinity Griffith suggests above.

Nevertheless, we have in Q 4: 157–158 a Qur'ānic attempt at revising the orthodox Christian theology of the Cross because the Qur'ān does not find the idea of crucifying (still, not death) God's Word and Spirit congenial with the *Logos*-Christology which states that Jesus is no less than God's very own Word. The Qur'ān, then, is proposing a *revision* to Christian orthodoxy, not creating a

80   For instance, Warren Larson, "Jesus in Islam and Christianity: Discussing the Similarities and the Differences," *Missiology: An International Review* 36, no. 3 (2008); 327–41, 328. See the same approach in J. Dudley Woodberry, "The Muslim Understanding of Jesus," *Word & World* 16, no. 2 (1996); 173–78.

81   Segovia, *The Quranic Jesus*, 321.

satiric polemic against it. It aims at exegetically revising orthodox Christology by injecting into it what the Qurʾān suggestively deems plausible heterodox ideas echoing Christian Docetic perceptions of *Logos*-Christology. In this case, the *Naṣārā* the Qurʾān refers to are *both* orthodox *and* heterodox alike. For the Qurʾān, the stance on these two groups of Christians, mainline and marginal, is not shaped after binary "either-or," but reconciliatory "both-and" logic. In the case of the crucifixion, the Qurʾān proposes an understanding that reconcilably marry Christological elements from both campaigns because the Qurʾān believes they synchronize with its *Kalima*-centered understanding of ʿĪsa b. Maryam.

Aloys Grillmeier once described the condition of the various theological views in early Christianity in the following words, "In the account of the second century until [early third century], we may have had the feeling that the Christian message contained merely a number of individual truths placed in simple juxtaposition."[82] Could it be the case that the Qurʾān in 4:157–158 is placing different theological views on Jesus and the crucifixion in simple juxtaposition; the thing which the Qurʾān believes to lend service its own private Christology-like association of ʿĪsa b. Maryam with God as "*kalimatahu wa rūḥun minhu*?" Unless we come to read the Qurʾānic text with a ready-made presumption of its sheer polemic role, nothing necessarily hinders seeing a Qurʾānic version of a *Logos*-like christological stance on Jesus in these verses.

If Christian and Muslim scholars conceded with me such a possibility, they would probably disagree with, or at least forensically examine, Bernard Heyberger's emphatic statement:

> It is impossible to proceed ... by extracting an expression or a verse from the Qurʾān and attributing to them a Christian meaning. It is impossible, for instance ... to infer from the fact that Jesus Christ is called *Rūḥ Allah* (Spirit of God) and *Kalimat Allah* (Word of God) that the Qurʾān acknowledges his divinity.[83]

Heyberge raises high the flag of the "impossibility" stance without explaining clearly or sufficiently to us, what makes such options truly *impossible*? Why this would be an extraction of a verse from the Qurʾān and injecting it with Christian meaning? What if such a meaning is intrinsic to the inner logic, or

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82   Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 1:79.

83   Bernard Heyberger, "Polemic Dialogues between Christians and Muslims in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 55 (2012); 495–516, 512.

"rhetoric" (to use Griffith's expression) of the Qurʾān *per se* in the first place? What if calling Jesus God's "Word and Spirit" is a deliberate and authentic Qurʾānic conviction? Why is it also impossible to associate the Qurʾānic speech on Jesus in terms of *Kalimat* and *Rūḥ* Allah with a stance on divinity? Is it because Jesus's divinity in Christian theology is substantially associated with the notion of "sonship?" But, in the very same Tradition, it is also equally associated with the notion of *Logos*. Rather, what if the Qurʾān is acknowledging a relatedness of Jesus as God's Word to God as such in a manner that does not echo the understanding of divinity found in ontological-causal Christian Christologies, but in a manner that relates Jesus's status as God's own Word and Spirit to God's depth of divine power and wisdom? Why is such a possibility impossible, Qurʾānically speaking? What if the Qurʾān truly means what it states when it claims that Jesus is no other than *Kalimat Allah*, with all this understanding's theological implications?

In 2018, the comparative theologian, Klaus Von Stoch ably demonstrated that the Qurʾānic attestation on Jesus, the son of Mary, can contribute to the improvement of the Christian understanding of Jesus of Nazareth. Von Stoch engages seriously the inquiry about whether "the Qurʾānic understanding of Jesus of Nazareth … can be integrated into Christian theology without abandoning one's own claims of truth," and whether "the Qurʾānic approach to Jesus of Nazareth can be accepted and whether it can be granted a place in reflection on Christian belief."[84] To this inquiry, Von Stoch convincingly responded by saying:

> The Qurʾānic judgments concerning Christology cannot be unequivocally classified as anti-Christian, even though they may appear anti-Christian at first sight … the Qurʾān is inviting Christians to a revision of their ideas and concepts without being in complete contradiction to them.[85]

This article totally concurs with Von Stoch's conclusion and proposes that the Qurʾān seems to be on the trajectory of an endeavor to bring about an alternative christological and soteriological interpretation of Jesus's death and crucifixion, which it proposes will aid Christians in exiting the labyrinth of their Christological controversies and discrepancies. This article attempted to

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84   Klaus Von Stoch, "Reflecting on Approaches to Jesus in the Qurʾān from the Perspective of Comparative Theology," in *How to Do Comparative Theology*, ed. Francis X. Clooney and Klaus Von Stoch (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 37–58, 39.

85   Von Stoch, "Reflecting on Approaches," 52–3.

demonstrate that discerning the revisionary, propositional, and reconciliatory characteristics of the Qurʾānic attestations (regarding the Crucifixion or other aspects) not only invite us to realize the serious dialogical, interlocutional and connectional (not just the apologetic) nature of the Qurʾān. It also, unravels truly "the fascinating development of the Qurʾān's complex, multi-phased [but also multi-faceted] theology, which … amounts to much more than a simple call to monotheism."[86]

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86 Segovia, *The Quranic Jesus*, 25. Elsewhere, Segovia proposes sort-of an *evolutionary* and chronologically successive evolvement of the Qurʾānic stance on Christianity and the Christians that proceeds as follows: "There is in the Qurʾān (1) *identification* with Christianity … (2) *sympathy* towards it, and then a gradual *withdrawal* from Christianity that ranges from (3) *polemic* against it … to (4) its *rejection* and *replacement* … by something else." Carlos Segovia, "A Messianic Controversy behind the Making of Muḥammad as the Last Prophet?," at www.api.semanticscholar.org/corpousID:207794803, 2015 (consulted on August 29. 2022, 12:35 PM). I do not entirely agree with Segovia's consideration of the various attestations of the Qurʾān on Christianity as an expression of a *chronological* or *sequential* evolutionary process. These multi-faceted stances might have co-existed and intermingled from the beginning of the Qurʾānic composition, and their diversity was not shaped after a sequential systematically constructed process.

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An Islamic Approach to the Veil of Ignorance and the Original Position

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Abstract

One critique of John Rawls' theory of justice is the inconceivability of the "original position," as it is impossible to conceive of a self without all particular features. When this problem is considered, we try to imagine the position of contracting parties with no definite idea of the good, helping us understand the correspondence between the conditions of the original position and the contracting parties' ideas of the good. This article focuses on the unacceptability of the conditions of the original position, with its implicit veil of ignorance, as it is related to Islam. Islamic thought cannot accept Ralws' conditions due to Islam's universal command to follow the dictates of God and specific religious norms. Alternatively, the international original position presented in *The Law of Peoples,* with access to particular types of the good, is more appropriate for the Islamic context, exemplified through the idea of Kazanistan, with its Islamic form of government and membership in the Society of Peoples.

Keywords

نظرية "حجاب الجهل" و"الموقف الأصلي" في ضوء الإسلام

أزريت بونيشيف

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الملخص

إن أحد الانتقادات الموجهة إلى نظرية "جون راولز (John Rawls)" للعدالة هو استحالة تصور "الموقف الأصلي،" وذلك لأنه من المستحيل تصور الذات بدون كل سماتها الخاصة. وعندما نفكر في هذه المشكلة، فإننا نحاول أن نتخيل موقف الأطراف المتعاقدة اجتماعيًا دون تصور مشترك للخير، وهو ما يساعدنا في فهم التطابق بين شروط الوضع الأصلي وتصورات هذه الأطراف للخير. ويرفض هذا البحث قبول شروط الموقف الأصلي في الإسلام، بما تحمله من حجاب ضمني من الجهل. فلا تستطيع رؤية الإسلام قبول شروط راولز بسبب حثه على اتباع أوامر الله وبعض التصورات للأحكام الشرعية. ومن ناحية أخرى، فإن الموقف الدولي الأصلي المقدم في كتاب قانون الشعوب، مع إمكانية الوصول إلى أنواع متعددة من الخير، هو أكثر ملاءمة للسياق الإسلامي، والذي يتجلى في الفكرة الافتراضية لـ"كازانستان،" مع صبغتها الدينية في نظام الحكم ومشاركتها في جمعية الشعوب.

الكلمات المفاتيخ

راولز – نظرية العدالة – الإسلام – عدم القدرة على التصور المعياري – الشريعة الإسلامية

Introduction

John Rawls's (d. 2002) ideas regarding the just foundations of the "basic structure of society" have fundamentally influenced the development of political philosophy. Contemporary works on liberalism cannot disregard his legacy, and his ideas have become a starting point for finding new approaches in the field.[1] In *A Theory of Justice*, published in 1999, Rawls presented the idea of the "original position," a hypothetical situation where contracting parties must

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[1] Paul Kelly, "Justifying Justice" in *The Social Contract from Hobbes to Rawls*, ed. David Boucher and Paul Kelly (London: Routledge, 1994), 242.

arrive at principles of justice shared by all. During this process, the parties are deprived of knowledge of particular facts such as social status, historical facts, and political or religious beliefs. This hypothetical situation is thus a simulation of the possible course of reasoning for contracting parties.

One essential argument against the "original position" is that it is an overly individualistic conception of the self. Communitarians argue that the absence of a primary connection to a certain type of moral good under the veil of ignorance renders the self empty. Humans can fundamentally reconsider their life plans without changing their basic identity. Whatever type of good one chooses, one can immediately abandon it and return to the conditions of the original position. As a result, the moral good becomes something that can be possessed and changed when needed.[2] Thus, from a communitarian perspective, Rawls's model for defining the principles of justice presupposes a notion of a self devoid of content. It is impossible to conceive of a self devoid of all particular features. The inconceivability of the original position implies its impossibility. Impossibility here is not understood in a factual sense since Rawls himself points out at the outset that this is a hypothetical situation. What is meant is the logical inconsistency of the original position or that the kind of inconceivability underlying the argument violates the relation between the epistemic and modal domains, that is, between conceivability and possibility.[3]

This paper will analyze the extent to which the requirement to leave all religious beliefs and sources behind the veil of ignorance is conceivable from the Islamic point of view. Islam's focus on using sources such as the Qurʾān in formulating the validity of legal provisions makes Islam an important example of how the original position is conceivable for a particular religious group.[4]

1   The Original Position and Accepting Its Conditions

The original position and the embedded veil of ignorance are important to ensure procedural justice, without which no agreement can be reached on the just foundations of society's basic structure. Epistemologically, the original

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2   Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 62.

3   David Chalmers, "Does Conceivability Entail Possibility?" in *Conceivability and Possibility*, ed. TS Gendler and J. Hawthorne (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 159.

4   Mohammad Fadel, "Istihsan is Nine-Tenths of the Law: The Puzzling Relationship of Usul to Furu' in the Maliki Madhhab," in *Studies in Islamic Legal Theory*, ed. Bernard Weiss (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 161; Wael Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 68.

position is a definite tool "that enables us to envision our objective from afar" and considers ideas and principles insofar as they meet the criterion of impartiality so that private interests do not take precedence over considerations of justice.[5] Having satisfied all the principles of the original position regarding lack of access to particular knowledge, the contracting parties will adopt two principles of justice.[6]

One trend in decision theory aims to show that utilitarianism, not the principle of difference, is chosen in the original position.[7] The original position concept also has practical applications. For example, it can serve as a rhetorical tool in support of compassionate solidarity, thereby influencing the guiding principles of healthcare organizations.[8] An equally important area of research is how the orientation of the original position has been transformed in Rawls's later writings. The notion of "public reason," which is fundamental to *Political Liberalism* and *The Idea of Public Reason Revisited*, changes the original position in the theory of justice. Citizens engaged in certain political activities must justify their decisions on fundamental political issues by appealing only to public values and norms. Therefore, it becomes possible to limit the rights of a particular group or individual to maintain an equal scheme of basic liberties for all.[9] These restrictions were not adopted under the conditions of the original position, but such decisions are made based on public reason.

In all these works, the conditions of the original position and the veil of ignorance are implicitly accepted. After accepting these conditions, it is important to study which principle of justice is chosen, how real problems can be solved using the original position as a thought experiment, or by tracing how

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5   John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999), 19.

6   Ralws defines these two points as (1) Each person has the same indefeasible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all, and (2) Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: (a) They are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and (b) They are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society. See John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples: With 'The Idea of Public Reason Revisited'* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 42–43.

7   Johan Gustafsson, "The Difference Principle Would Not Be Chosen Behind the Veil of Ignorance," *Journal of Philosophy* 115, no. 11 (2018), 588–604; Hun Chung, "When Utilitarianism Dominates Justice as Fairness: An Economic Defence of Utilitarianism from the Original Position," *Economics & Philosophy* 39, no. 2 (2018), 308–33; Thijs De Coninck and Frederik Van De Putte, "Original Position Arguments and Social Choice under Ignorance," *Theory and Decision* 94, no. 2 (2023), 275–98.

8   Michał Zabdyr-Jamróz, "The Veil of Ignorance and Solidarity in Healthcare: Finding Compassion in the Original Position," *Diametros* 43 (2015), 79–95.

9   Jon Mandle, *Rawls's 'A Theory of Justice:' An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 80.

the position of the original position itself undergoes a change in real policy. Even the classical communitarian argument accepts the condition that the contracting parties must abandon their comprehensive doctrines as part of the thought experiment, thereby agreeing to carry it out, but the original position cannot be conceived because it contains a contradictory conception of the person, and for this reason the original position is inconceivable.

This study will take a different approach to the original position and its conceivability. How do the contracting parties, as representatives of citizens with comprehensive doctrines, agree to accept the conditions of the original position and the veil of ignorance as an instrument for choosing the principles of justice? This is especially true of comprehensive doctrines that rely on religious texts, like the Qurʾān or Bible, that would be inaccessible behind the veil. This paper uses Islam as an example of such a doctrine for which specific religious texts are fundamental. Islam contains not only prescriptions for personal worship but also principles of justice for society as a whole.[10]

Demonstrating that the impossibility of access to religious texts fundamentally connected to this group's notion of justice and their identity can prove the normative inconceivability of the original position for this group. This stands in contrast to the original international position presented by Rawls in The Law of Peoples, where access to the content of comprehensive doctrines and religious texts is available, which would be normatively conceivable for Muslims.

The question of identity is a fundamental one. When one attempts to conceive the original position according to the classical communitarian argument, one must imagine that the contracting parties have no definite idea of the good. This paper asks its readers to go back to the stage of trying to conceive of the original position itself, to the stage where a particular group with its comprehensive doctrine agrees to the terms of this thought experiment as a precursor to the attempted conceiving. It is important to distinguish this stage as separate because the classical communitarian argument is formulated from the original position only after agreeing to its conditions. Separating the stages helps to look from the outside at the acceptance of the terms of the original position by a particular comprehensive doctrine. Will Muslims accept the conditions of the original position? One must understand the relationship between specific religious textual sources and their abandonment because of the veil of ignorance to answer this question.

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10   ʿAlī al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya* (Damascus: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2007), 13.

2 Foundations of the Islamic Approach to Justice and Normative Conceivability

The Islamic approach to justice and law is based on two verses of the Qurʾān; the first is: "Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing."[11] The second verse is: "O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result."[12] These verses are devoted to Islamic politics and government and discuss the need to fulfill the duties entrusted to rulers concerning ordinary people properly. People, in turn, must obey the rulers, but with the condition that their rule is by the laws of Allah and the Sunna of the Prophet.[13]

Islamic law is founded on two basic sources: the Qurʾān and the Sunna.[14] The provisions of Islamic law are derived from the Qurʾān as the primary source of divine revelation. For example, the answer to the legality of usury is: "But Allah has permitted trading and forbidden interest."[15] The Qurʾān explains the basic and universal provisions of religion, creed, and law. The Sunna explains specific provisions, conditions, and restrictions. For example, in the Qurʾān, one finds the command to pay the obligatory tax (*al-zakā*), while the Sunna provides the exact amount of the tax and the property from which it is paid. For this reason, these two sources are inseparable, for one cannot be fully understood without the other.

A Muslim must follow the norms and principles of Islamic law in all areas of life: family life, economics, politics, and so on. This applies not only to specific laws or court rulings but also to the basic structure of society. For a Muslim, abandoning Islamic law is tantamount to abandoning the Qurʾān and Sunna. This leads to a blurring of the essence of Islam and makes it contradictory for a person to identify as a Muslim while simultaneously denouncing Islamic law.[16] The following verse emphasizes the need to return to the two foundations of

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11   Qurʾān, 4:58.

12   Qurʾān, 4:59.

13   The Sunna refers to the words, traditions, and practices of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon Him).

14   Hallaq, *An Introduction,* 16; John Burton, *The Sources of Islamic Law: Islamic Theories of Abrogation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 9–10.

15   Qurʾān, 2:275.

16   ʿAlī al-Shurbajī, et al. *al-Fiqh al-Manhajī ʿala Madhhab al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī,* 3 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 2012), 1:20.

Islam in solving all legal problems and issues, as they are the only just and good ones: "But no! By your Lord, they will never be [true] believers until they accept you [O Prophet] as the judge in their disputes, and find no resistance within themselves against your decision and submit wholeheartedly."[17]

In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls mentions one of Locke's fundamental principles: if one person has a Creator, he must obey Him. The principle of obeying God's commands in the Lockean sense is universal because it does not presuppose any particular religious denomination, legal system, or text. Therefore, there is no violation of the criterion of universality in the sense of the original position.[18] Here, one can observe a crucial difference between the universal approach to following God's commands mentioned by Rawls and the Islamic approach to law. In Islam, following God's commands is understood in a specific and universal sense. The universal, understood in the way that Rawls mentions, is always given specific content. For example, the injunction not to engage in usury cannot be derived *a priori* but only by reference to specific, definite sources: the Qurʾān and the Sunna.[19]

The unification of the universal and the specific raises the question of the conceivability of the original position not in the epistemic and modal keys but in the normative one. What is important is not the question of the conceivability of the parties in the original position with the constraints imposed by the veil of ignorance but the first step of agreeing to the conditions of this hypothetical situation or thought experiment. In Islam's case, the original position's inconceivability begins with normative issues. A formalized argument can be presented as follows:

1. The original position is a hypothetical situation similar to a thought experiment.
2. The original position implies the rejection of particular types of good for the basic structure of society.
3. The original position is the criterion of objectivity and justice of the principles chosen by contracting parties.
4. The testimony that only the norms of Islamic law are genuinely just and must be implemented is fundamental to Islamic identity.
5. Conceiving the original position is a rejection of implementing Islamic legal norms into the basic structure of society.
6. The original position is normatively inconceivable for a Muslim.

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17   Qurʾān, 4:65.
18   Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 114.
19   It is important to note that the particular in the case of Islam is understood as divine revelation, not the derivation of specific principles in the tradition of natural law.

The argument from normative inconceivability is based on the example of Islam, but it can be universalized to apply to comprehensive doctrines for which specific texts are fundamental.[20] The difference between this argument and the argument from the epistemic inconceivability and modal impossibility of the parties in the original position lies in the different stages of consideration. The classical argument proceeds from the inconceivability of the parties in isolation from specific conceptions of the good. The argument presented in this article focuses on the unacceptability of the conditions of the original position itself, with its implicit veil of ignorance. The result of the latter argument is not simply the "emptiness" of the identity of the contracting parties, but the unacceptability of the conditions of the original position and the normative rejection of the stage of conceiving the situation itself by a particular religious group.

In other words, the very process of agreeing to such a thought experiment is invalid. An important difference between this argument and the classical communitarian argument from inconceivability is that normative inconceivability does not imply modal impossibility. Normative inconceivability concerns only the particular group that refuses to participate in this thought experiment, which does not mean that the original position itself is normatively inconceivable or logically inconsistent for other groups or that it is modally impossible in general.

It is important to understand how ideas concerning the basic features of Islam relate to specific legal relationships. The parties in the original position cannot know "the particular comprehensive doctrines of the persons they represent."[21] In Islam, there is the law of delegation and representation (*wakāla*), whereby the delegate acts on the authority of the principal to perform a certain type of action.[22] One of the conditions for the validity of representation is the observance of the permissibility of the matter entrusted. The representation of Muslims in the context of the original position cannot fulfill this condition. Muslims cannot normatively implement non-Islamic principles into the basic structure of society. The inadmissibility of this action on the part of Muslims also means that it is impossible to appoint a representative who could make such a decision. According to the original position, particular principles of comprehensive doctrines cannot be introduced into the basic

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20   In Jewish law, for example, the need to consult the Talmud to resolve a legal issue is fundamental to Orthodox Judaism. See Joseph David, *Jurisprudence and Theology in Late Ancient and Medieval Jewish Thought* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2014), 27.

21   Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 15.

22   al-Shurbajī, *al-Fiqh al-Manhajī*, 3:320.

structure of society. Thus, Muslims as a group would not be represented at all in the original position.

The argument presented is also more broadly applicable. In *Political Liberalism*, the discourse focuses on maintaining the stability of a just society and how to achieve it, rather than on ideal theoretical constructs.[23] One of the book's main questions is: "How is it possible for there to exist over time a just and stable society of free and equal citizens, who remain profoundly divided by reasonable religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines?"[24] The answer must solve the problem of stabilizing a just political regime in the midst of plurality and contradiction of different doctrines. Such pluralism is a particularly acute problem in contemporary societies. The concept of "overlapping consensus," already introduced in *A Theory of Justice*, is the way to achieve the desired just stability.[25]

Maintaining a socially just society, from Rawls's perspective, requires refusing to incorporate any particular comprehensive doctrine into the basic structure of society. The "generic" liberal principles (including the two principles of justice) underlying society must be metaphysically, epistemologically, and morally neutral. Citizens may fully engage in various particular "higher-order" religious, cultural, and other practices outside the political sphere. The distinction between the equality of citizens based on a neutral conception of political justice and the possession of particular comprehensive doctrines allows us to identify the "higher-order interest" as the primary realm of human self-fulfillment.

Through overlapping consensus, this distinction can be preserved in the face of reasonable pluralism. Citizens who hold particular rational doctrines will support the stability of a society based on a neutral conception of justice for reasons derived from the principles of their comprehensive doctrines. For example, Protestants may support liberal political principles because of the principle of separation of civil and religious authority, while virtue ethicists may support government assistance to the poor.[26] Whether the principles of justice are upheld depends on the content of particular comprehensive doctrines.

Overlapping consensus allows citizens to freely practice reasonable comprehensive doctrines while leaving the underlying principles of society neutral.

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23   John Rawls, *Political Liberalism: Expanded Edition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).
24   *Ibid.*, 4.
25   Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 387.
26   Samuel Freeman ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 36.

According to Rawls, this relationship between freedom and neutrality allows for stability. This neutrality means that both the overlapping consensus and the original position are political, not metaphysical since it is not a question of accepting the truth of any particular doctrine. The aim is to create a society with neutral principles of justice at its foundation, where particular beliefs cannot be part of its basic structure and undermine its stability and overlapping consensus.

Whether we interpret *Political Liberalism* as a continuation or a departure from the ideas of *A Theory of Justice*, we must agree that the importance of the original position and the veil of ignorance for overall intention has been reduced.[27] At the same time, the relevance of the argument that there is a gap between the epistemic and modal domains with respect to the parties of the original position loses its relevance. The focus is not on the representation of the contracting parties according to the criteria of the veil of ignorance but on the notion of overlapping consensus, which does not involve this kind of thought experiment.

In this respect, the argument from the normative inconceivability of the original position is not valid. One can imagine a society in which Muslims accept its basic principles, where access to specific religious texts and the principles of the comprehensive doctrine will be ensured. It is even possible to imagine that these principles would even be supported by specific principles of Islam. However, this argument has a different application to overlapping consensus.

Achieving the stability of a liberal society through an overlapping consensus must be distinguished from a simple consensus as a *modus vivendi*. The mere acceptance of basic principles of justice on the basis of the current social balance of power is not sufficient. In this case, there can be no question of stability, because the acceptance of basic, neutral principles of justice occurred because of contingent circumstances. The question is whether overlapping consensus can be achieved in the case of Islam. The original argument can be modified and formalized as follows:

1. Overlapping consensus is the acceptance of the justness of liberal society's basic neutral principles by comprehensive doctrines.
2. Overlapping consensus is distinct from *modus vivendi* as the actual balance of social forces.
3. The testimony that only the norms of Islamic law are truly just and must be implemented is fundamental to Islamic identity.
4. Increasing the scope of Islamic law is mandatory for a Muslim.

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27   Mandle, *Rawls's,* 23.

5.   Overlapping consensus is a refusal to apply comprehensive doctrines to the basic structure of society.
6.   Overlapping consensus in the case of Islam is unattainable.

In the case of overlapping consensus, it is necessary to achieve recognition of the justness of the basic liberal principles underlying society. In this context, recognition means refusing to incorporate particular principles of comprehensive doctrines into the basic structure. If one agrees with the neutral character of the justness of these principles, then one must refuse to implement comprehensive doctrines into the basic structure. Universal and specific principles, in the case of Islam, are inextricably linked. The universal injunction to follow the commandments of God finds application in specific legal decisions in various spheres of society: politics, economics, family law, and so on. Muslims should strive for maximum implementation of the norms of Islam in these areas.

There is an inversion of the basic ideas underlying the overlapping consensus.[28] Comprehensive doctrines precede the liberal concept in the acceptance of justice. In the case of Islam, all provisions, whether universal or about a particular statute, must be reconsidered if they do not conform to the comprehensive doctrine. The political interpretation of the original position and the overlapping consensus do not negate the need to examine the compatibility of each individual statute with Islamic principles and the requirement to broaden its scope whenever possible. For this reason, the need to respect the *modus vivendi* neutrality of the overlapping consensus is not valid in the case of Islam.

This argument does not imply that consensus is impossible. It is only a matter of overlapping consensus, while the possibility of consensus in the *modus vivendi* format is one of the arguments' results. Both arguments against normative conceivability and the attainability of overlapping consensus emphasize an important feature of Islamic political theory: the permanent normative primacy of Islamic legal principles, both concerning the basic structure of society and specific legal rulings.[29]

3   The Particularistic Approach to the Argument

In contrast to the communitarian argument from the inconceivability of parties in the original position, the argument presented here proceeds from a particular comprehensive doctrine. This approach has its epistemological

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28   Rex Martin, "Overlapping Consensus" in *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon*, ed. John Mandle and David Reidy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 591.
29   Burton, *Sources of Islamic Law*, 14.

peculiarities. One of the most important is that it does not prove a universal but a particular inconceivability of the original position and the unattainability of an overlapping consensus from an Islamic point of view.

However, this approach has important implications for universal argumentation. In the original position as a hypothetical situation and thought experiment, it becomes clear that some groups cannot be represented there since the implementation of specific features of comprehensive doctrines and access to them is impossible by default. This impossibility of implementation entails the unattainability of overlapping consensus. Only consensus as *modus vivendi* is valid for some groups.

The need for correspondence between comprehensive doctrines and the basic principles of justice in a liberal society in *Political Liberalism* makes it necessary to examine the internal content of comprehensive doctrines. If in the case of Islam, their compatibility with the overlapping consensus format is unattainable, then the question arises as to which other comprehensive doctrines are also incompatible. Creating such a complete table of compatibility or incompatibility for most comprehensive doctrines might show that the original idea of stability for a liberal society requires the exclusion of a large number of social or religious groups. Ultimately, Rawls's argument might conclude that comprehensive doctrines with liberal underpinnings can provide stability for a liberal society. This result seems far from the original goal where most non-liberal comprehensive doctrines would provide stability and be part of an overlapping consensus.

4   The Law of Peoples and Two Steps of the Veil of Ignorance

The need to achieve stability on the right grounds changes the features of the veil of ignorance. In *Political Liberalism*, the idea of overlapping consensus links the acceptance of principles of justice to the content of comprehensive doctrines, thereby making the approach more dependent on contingent circumstances than *A Justice Theory*. Moving to the level of international relations, Rawls continues to give greater agency and importance to comprehensive doctrines.

In order to solve the global problems of poverty, wars, and unjust governments, Rawls presents a modification of the principle of the veil of ignorance in *The Law of Peoples*. The veil of ignorance in the local original position deprives all parties of particular knowledge about their comprehensive doctrines. In the case of Islam, this ignorance leads to the impossibility of implementing the principles of Islamic law in the basic structure of society, which makes the

original position normatively inconceivable for a Muslim. The international original position requires two steps.

The first stage in the case of a liberal society is the local choice of principles of justice behind the veil of ignorance. In the second stage, the representatives on the international stage are again behind the veil of ignorance. However, they no longer represent groups but peoples. They do not know the strength, prosperity, and amount of land held by the peoples they represent, but the fundamental difference from the local original position is the knowledge of the principles of justice implemented in the basic structure of the represented peoples.[30] They know whether they represent a liberal people or the hypothetical "Islamic people of Kazanistan."

The existence of different approaches to the definition of justice and the need to create international just institutions that could solve the problems of war, hunger, and human rights violations leads to the introduction of a new category of political regime: decency. Kazanistan is an example of a decent people. It protects basic human rights: life, property, freedom of religion, speech, and so on. But unlike liberal people, where comprehensive doctrines cannot be the basis of politics, in Kazanistan the principles of the basic structure of society are Islamic. The enumerated human rights are interpreted in the light of the Qurʾān and Sunna and apply to all areas of society. For example, freedom of speech does not include blasphemy and, despite freedom of religion, only Muslims can hold some public offices.

Recognizing certain people as decent requires meeting two criteria. The first is that war should not be a means of resolving foreign policy issues. Negotiation, economic cooperation, and goodwill should guide foreign policy. The second consists of three points. First, the possession of a decent consultation hierarchy where all social and religious groups are represented as institutional layers to ensure that the rights of all members of society are respected. Second, "a decent system of law must be such as to impose bona fide moral duties and obligations."[31] It is the existence of a legal system that will regulate relations between people. The third point is the existence of an administrative and judicial system that will guide decision-making "by a common good idea of justice."

Kazanistan fulfills all the necessary criteria. It is a non-military people, as it accepts diplomacy as the basis for resolving foreign policy issues. The incorporation of Islamic law into the basic structure of society entails the recognition of fundamental human rights. The requirement that all laws and judicial

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30   Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, 32.
31   *Ibid.*, 65.

decisions conform to the principles of the Qurʾān and the Sunna means that these sources of law must not be transgressed, which entails the independence of the judiciary in the face of executive authorities.[32]

By describing the structure of decent peoples, one can understand why Kazanistan would adopt the following principles of the Society of Peoples:[33]

1.   People are free and independent, and their freedom and independence are to be respected by others.
2.   People are to observe treaties and undertakings.
3.   People are equal and are parties to the agreements that bind them.
4.   People are to observe a duty of non-intervention.
5.   People have the right to self-defense but no right to instigate war for reasons other than self-defense.
6.   People are to honor human rights.
7.   People are to observe certain specified restrictions in the conduct of war.
8.   People have a duty to assist others living under unfavorable conditions that prevent them from having a just or decent political and social regime.

This article will not elaborate on the correlation of each principle with the internal structure of Kazanistan. In the context of the argument from normative inconceivability, the article is interested in the difference between the veil of ignorance in *The Law of Peoples* and *A Theory of Justice*.

The fundamental difference between the two approaches to the veil of ignorance is that there are two stages. There is an initial local stage of the veil of ignorance for liberal peoples where all knowledge of particular conceptions of the good is absent. In the second stage, representatives of liberal peoples are aware of the liberal foundations of their societies. The first stage of the original position with the veil of ignorance does not occur in the case of Kazanistan. Kazanistan is represented in the international arena with the knowledge that this society is Islamic and has a particular concept of justice.

All people don't need to be liberal for the principles of international relations proposed by Rawls to be realized. They can be decent. The absence of such a requirement makes the whole project a "realistic utopia." Otherwise, it would only be a utopia. The idea that the norms of Islamic law are just and must be implemented is fundamental to Islamic identity. To expect a rejection of implementation in favor of the veil of ignorance would contradict the whole approach of the project.

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32   ʿAlī al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya*, 115.
33   Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, 37.

For Rawls, the principles of international relations presented here are "the ideals and principles of the foreign policy of a reasonably just liberal people."[34] It is important to note that they are as liberal as decent. The possibility of interpreting each provision in terms of a local conception of the good does not make them exclusively liberal. They might be described as Islamic, such as in the case of Kazanistan, or Christian in a case where that religion is at the heart of politics.

The possibility of recognizing these principles as Islamic in the case of Kazanistan is closely linked to the judicial system, where the interpretation of international relations principles is made in the light of the Qurʾān and the Sunna. Examples of specific interpretations of human rights in Kazanistan could be where freedom of religion means that non-Muslims can be excluded from holding certain public offices.

The fact that these principles are Islamic and liberal means that the international original position with its veil of ignorance is not normatively inconceivable, as it does not fulfill the requirement of rejecting particular approaches to the good. Kazanistan is an Islamic people and is aware of the normative primacy of the Qurʾān and the Sunna over other sources of law. Acceptance of the Law of Peoples principles comes after they correlate with these sources. Thus, the veil of ignorance proposed by Rawls for international relations is more appropriate to the Islamic approach to justice, law, and politics. This applies not only to the international original position but also to the local original position. The local original position should also have this structure, namely the possibility of access to particular sources of law.

For the local original position to be normatively conceivable for Muslims, it is necessary to allow for the possibility of appealing to particular sources of law behind the veil of ignorance. At the same time, the lack of knowledge about wealth, social status, and historical facts is not normatively inconceivable. If it is possible to arrive at common principles in the international arena under such conditions, it is also possible at the local level.[35] Access to Islamic legal sources, which play a fundamental role in determining the validity of a particular approach to justice at the local level, leads to the normative conceivability of the local original position.

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34   *Ibid.*, 10.
35   The problem arises when transferring federal principles of international relations with territorially defined actors to the local level. In the local original position, the parties do not have their own territory. However, the non-territorial approach to federalism can solve this problem. Different actors with a generalized political system can exist without territorial division. For example, Muslims can have access to Sharīʿa courts in certain cases. See Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

However, in the context of the argument from normative inconceivability, it is interesting to look at one clause of the international agreement enumerated above: people have a duty to assist others living under unfavorable conditions that prevent them from having a just or decent political and social regime. The actors who accept these principles are liberal and decent peoples. They are well-ordered because they have the necessary political and legal institutions to be considered just or decent. There are also outlaw states, societies burdened by unfavorable conditions, and benevolent absolutist societies. These peoples are not a part of the Society of Peoples.

The task of well-ordered peoples is to help other societies in difficulties to develop basic liberal or decent institutions and to become part of the international community of well-ordered peoples. Liberal and decent peoples must help develop such institutions.[36] The question is whether these basic institutions will be liberal or decent. Since only the norms of Islamic law are truly just and must be implemented, the scope of Islamic law must be expanded. This includes peoples living under unfavorable conditions. Kazanistan will try to implement Islamic principles rather than liberal ones when helping such societies.

The absence of a direct conflict between liberal and decent peoples can mean that peoples living under unfavorable conditions can become the site of conflict (not necessarily armed conflict). If a liberal society does not have a comprehensive doctrine implemented in its basic structure, decent peoples do. This can lead to the desire to spread this comprehensive doctrine to peoples living under unfavorable conditions. At the same time, for Rawls, the principles of the Society of Peoples are primarily liberal, and a liberal foreign policy may insist on the implantation of liberal institutions in societies without a stable, just, or decent political system.[37]

From a theoretical point of view, it is important for Rawls's conception that everyone has a liberal or decent basic structure. The desire to extend a particular comprehensive doctrine or liberal institutions need not necessarily have negative consequences. It may lead to an intensification of the obligation to help other less fortunate people. If this ultimately leads to the establishment of sustainable liberal or decent basic institutions, then the principles of *The Law of Peoples* will be fulfilled. In this respect, it is equivalent for Rawls whether these societies become Islamic or liberal.

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36   Gillian Brock, "Decent Societies," in *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon*, John Mandle and David Reidy, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 185.

37   Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, 60.

Conclusion

Rawls's political philosophy is valuable for its fundamental yet clear assumptions, such as the original position or overlapping consensus. This clarity makes it possible for other political theories to elucidate their positions by comparing them with these principles. Thus, applying Islamic principles, where the Qurʾān and Sunna are basic legal sources, to the original position or overlapping consensus makes it possible to highlight the notion of normative inconceivability. It is expressed in the unacceptability of conceiving a situation in which non-Islamic principles would be chosen as the basis of the political structure of society. This inconceivability also finds its basis in the more practical foundations of the social contract, where Muslims themselves cannot be represented under the conditions set out by Rawls.

The critique of Rawls from the position of a particular comprehensive doctrine differs from the universal critique from an epistemological point of view. However, such a critique exposes weaknesses in the original argument. Increasingly, such particularistic critiques from inconceivability by different comprehensive doctrines can show that the chosen approach cannot achieve its goals, whether it is adopting neutral principles of justice or achieving stability through overlapping consensus.

There is a transformation of the veil of ignorance in *The Law of Peoples*.[38] Decent peoples with a consultation hierarchy where the rights of social and religious groups are protected do not go through the local original position. Various comprehensive doctrines are implemented in the basic structure of such societies. Rawls gave the example of Kazanistan, which has an Islamic form of government. A representative of Kazanistan in the international original position is not aware of the level of economic or military prosperity. Still, he is aware of the Islamic principles of justice that underlie the society.

Such knowledge preserves the normative primacy of Islamic sources of law in adopting Rawls's principles of international relations. This approach to the veil of ignorance is more appropriate for representing Islam and Muslims both internationally and locally. For this reason, the argument proposed in the article against the local original position with the veil of ignorance is not valid for the Society of Peoples.

Well-ordered societies should help people living under unfavorable conditions to establish liberal or decent primary institutions. In such a case, the normative primacy of Islamic principles for Kazanistan in the sense of the

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38   *Ibid.*, 10.

proposed argument would lead to desire to establish Islamic institutions in such societies. Rawls's description of the structure and principles of the Society of Peoples as an extension of the liberal theory of justice could lead to a conflict of interests. However, from a theoretical perspective, it does not matter in this sense whether Islamic or liberal principles are implemented since they will ultimately lead to fulfilling the principles and provisions of the Society of Peoples.

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Critique of European Christianity and Modernity in the Writings of Sanaullah Makti Tangal, a 19th Century Islamic Scholar from Kerala

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Abstract

This article explores Christian-Muslim debate in 19th-century South India through the writings of the reformist Islamic scholar Sanaullah Makti Tangal (1847–1912). Tangal spent most of his time critiquing the blurred boundaries of Western conceptions of religion, modernity, and secularism, in ways not unlike much later scholars such as Talal Asad and Saba Mahmoud. The distinctiveness of Tangal's approach was the construction of an alternative Islamic modernity that could take the place of Western Christian norms. Modernity, in Tangal's eyes, was not a token of rationalism or secularism, but a tool for purifying Islam in Kerala from unwanted elements adopted from local cultures. This article also places Tangal's thought against the backdrop of the theological and philosophical debate introduced to Kerala by the colonial administration between scholars who endorsed or rejected the European reconstruction of religion.

Keywords

نقد تصورات استعمارية للدين والحداثة في كتابات "سناء الله المكتي،" عالم ومفكر من القرن التاسع عشر من ولاية كيرالا، الهند

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الملخص

يتناول هذا البحث الحوار المسيحي – الإسلامي في جنوب الهند أثناء القرن التاسع عشر من خلال كتابات العالم المسلم "سيد سناء الله المكتي (1847–1912)." وقد قضى المكتي معظم حياته في انتقاد الحدود الضبابية للمفاهيم الغربية للدين والحداثة والعلمانية، بطرق لا تختلف كثيرًا عن علماء لاحقين مثل "طلال أسد" و"صبا محمود." ما يميز نهج المكتي هو محاولاته لبناء حداثة بديلة للمعايير المسيحية الغربية تلائم سياق الإسلام. وفي نظر المكتي، لم تكن الحداثة رمزًا للعقلانية أو العلمانية، بل كانت أداة للتخلص من العناصر غير المرغوب فيها عند مسلمي كيرالا التي جاءت من الثقافات المحلية. ويضع هذا البحث فكر المكتي على خلفية الحوار العقائدي والفلسفي الذي شجعته الإدارة الاستعمارية في كيرالا بين مؤيدين ومعارضين للمشروع الأوروبي لإعادة النظر في الدين.

الكلمات المفاتيح

سناء الله المكتي – كيرلا – النهد البريطانية – الاستعمار – الإسلام – الحداثة

Introduction[1]

Jean Luc Nancy's term "return to theology" has catalysed a radical rethinking of the philosophical pretext on which the relationship between religion

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[1] Though geographically united, the three regions of Kerala, Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar, exited as separate political entities during the colonial period. Travancore and Cochin remained as princely states, while Malabar was a district under the British-ruled Madras state. Tangal's religious activities covered all these regions.

and modernity has been discussed.[2] Manifesting in western and non-western scholarship alike, Nancy's theory encourages the adoption of a more or less explicit confessional standpoint regarding religion and theology.[3] The writings on relgion generally present theology as something that has same essence today what it had in the ancient or middle ages, albeit with different extensions and functions. Another dominant perspective of understanding contemporary religions, termed the "return of religion," finds expression in discussions on challenges posed by populist religious movements to "secular-liberal" traditions.[4] "Return of religion" and "return to theology" have little in common, as the former's frame of reference is not social, but metaphysical and theological.

Much has been written about the "return of religion" in the specific context of Islam, modernity, and secularism in Kerala. Renewed attention to the historical entanglement between Christianity and secularism has been one of the primary ways in which new scholars of Islam in Kerala have investigated the current antagonistic relationship between the liberal tradition and Islam in the state.[5] Consequently, a huge cache of literature has been produced providing further possibilities for studies on how a variety of secular concepts, practices and institutions emerged placing Islam as their significant "other," although critical scholarly reflections on theology are relatively rare. Many recent debates revolving around theological developments in both Christianity and Islam in Kerala tend to trace their origins to two events in the 19th and 20th centuries: the rapid spread of Semitic faiths through conversion and religious reform. However, the reduction of religious developments to conversion, particularly as a form of escape from caste-based oppression, underestimates

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2   Christopher Watkin, "Nancy Neither/Nor: Jean Luc Nancy's Deconstruction of Christianity," *Research in Phenomenology* 37, no. 1 (2007); 136–143.

3   *Ibid.*

4   The "return of religion" has been well reflected in the works of scholars like Talal Asad and Saba Mahmood, who argue that rather than representing mutually opposite domains, the modern categories of "religion" and "secularism" are mutually dependent. Both are of the view that the dominant understanding of "secular," even in the non-Western world, endorses a particular genealogy of development tracing to the modern imaginary of Western Christianity. See Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity: Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

5   Muhammad Shah Shahjahan and PK Sadique, "Religion, Rebellion, and Sovereignty: Malabar Rebellion and the Problem Space of Political Theology," Political Theology Network, published 29 July 2023, https://politicaltheology.com/symposium/religion-rebellion-and-sovereignty-malabar-rebellion-and-the-problem-space-of-political-theology/.

the dynamics that the Semitic theologies – both Christian and Islamic – characterized during the early modern period.

In addition, a theological conflict had emerged in the shadow of modernization, a process introduced by the colonial administrations in Kerala. This was between those who endorsed the modern European reconstruction of religion and those who did not. This conflict was more visible in the narratives of religious experiences of people who left Hinduism and embraced Christianity or Islam in their search for a norm in religion. This article keeps in mind the experiments and motivations which led to people reorienting their religious views. It is also of the view that observers should seriously consider the coexistence of such experiments with other internal conflicts and motivations that brought change in people's moral, religious, and aspirational lives to fully understand the conversions that took place during this period.

Scholars have also heavily debated the validity of the over-generalized "caste-based oppression leads to conversion" theory, with a range of opinions challenging it from Christian communities in Kerala. The concern with popular conversion narratives is reflected in the republishing of several autobiographies and memoirs of converts to Christianity, constituting a considerable volume of conversion literature in Malayalam.[6] For example, *Autobiography of a Local Missionary* (*Oru SwadesabŌdhakante Atma Kadha*), the autobiography of Yakob Ramavaraman, a protestant missionary associated with the Basel Mission, was reprinted in 2007 almost 150 years after its first publication in 1874.[7] While narrating his personal experience Ramavarman, a convert from the royal family of Cochin, presents his story as an outcome of his long term experimenting with various faiths. Another Ramavarman with similar royal lineage embraced Christianity, accepted the name Constantine Ramavarman, and left Cochin to propagate his new faith across the world around the same time.[8] In a report published in the 1930s, Basel Mission provided many such testimonials of converts, mainly from upper-caste Hindu communities, with the purpose of emphasizing the point that people converted to Christianity based on their search for truth. For example, a lower-caste Munshi, whose service was utilized in translating the Bible and became a Christian, narrated in the accounts of Hunt on Anglican Churches in Travancore and Cochin.[9] He

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6   Udaya Kumar, *Writing First Person: Literature, History and Autobiography in Modern Kerala* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2016), 1.

7   Put into print originally in article form in a monthly entitled *KeroḷŌpakari*.

8   Paul Manalil, *Yakob Ramayarmante Atma Kadha* (Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Academy, 2008), 177.

9   W.S. Hunt, *The Anglican Church in Travancore and Cochin 1816–1916* (Kottayam: Church Missionary Society Press, 1920), 71.

was baptised by Archdeacon Robinson at Calicut in the name of Joseph Fenn.[10] Later, he authored a witty political satire on idolatry called *The Axe of Folly*, which was in wide circulation among the evangelists of the region. There are also accounts of the conversion of a group of carpenters, school teachers, and government employees from the Jewish community in Cochin who were baptised after expressing their allure to Samuel Ridsdale's (a Chaplain based in Cochin) public preaching.[11] The major purpose of this literature was to assert that converts had an agency of their own, and that they acted in their own best interests.

Although it is a well-known fact that caste-based oppression constituted the main reason in most of the cases of conversion to Christianity and Islam in the 19th and 20th centuries, theological debates taking place during this period also had an important role in stimulating the process. In particular, the 19th century witnessed a considerable increase in number of people who were attracted to Christianity because of the newfound theological turn visible in the community. In 1800, Francis Buchanan reported that the majority of converts were Nairs and Shanars.[12] Writing six years later, the Scottish theologian Claudius Buchanan reported the case of a priest who had formerly been a Namboodiri Brahmin.[13] The establishment of a series of theological seminaries and educational institutions, including CMS College in Kottayam, the first institution of higher learning in the state founded in 1816, also augmented the process further.[14]

In the second half of the 19th century, European missionaries, with the establishment of the Malayalam printing press, the translation and publication of the Malayalam Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, English-Malayalam and Malayalam-English dictionaries, and the Malayalam periodical *The Summary of Knowledge* (*Vidhya Sangraham*)[15] made deep inroads into the Malayali intellectual sphere.[16] Consequently, there were conversions of a similar nature from the educated classes at the close of the 19th and the beginning of the

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10   Vinil Paul narrates the experience of this Hindu Brahmin convert to Christianity, Vidhwan Kutti who left Hinduism and embraced Christianity attracted to the theological debates initiated by the Christian missionaries. See Vinil Paul, "'Deepu' Sultan Makti Thangal and Vidwhan Kutti," *Madhyamam Daily*, 26 September–23 October 2023, 37–39.

11   Hunt, *Anglican Church*, 46 & 161.

12   The Cānār community of Travancore.

13   Cited in Hunt, *Anglican Church*, 46.

14   Hunt, *Anglican Church*, 10–12.

15   The first educational journal in Malayalam, published in 1864 by the Church Mission Society through the CMS College Kottayam.

16   K.M. George, *Christianity in India Through the Centuries* (Hyderabad, India: Authentic, 2007), 182–83.

20th century. The "conversion narratives," however, were seldom interested in understanding that the conversions were partly an outcome of intellectual appeal. The agency of converts appeared more constrained and encumbered in such narratives.

Though there are not many instances discussed, theological considerations in the context of conversions to Islam have largely been ignored in the conversion narratives. Popular debates often constituted a complete or partial negation of a rigorous and deeply-layered philosophical reflection on the questions of agency, individual autonomy, and subjectivity that, at least in certain cases, motivated converts. The developments in theological debates in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that made the promise and potential for considerably higher number of people to convert to Islam from other religions, mainly Hinduism, are largely unaddressed.

Unlike in Christianity, there was an absence of a coordinated effort or movement in Islam to proselyte people from other faiths. Nonetheless, there was a phenomenal surge in literature in the fields of science, Islamic theology, and philosophy. This surge resonated in the publication or republication of texts in medicine, astronomy, mathematics, architecture, and Islamic jurisprudence. For instance, *Ain al-Qibla Vivādam*, a dispute over the actual position of Qibla, spawned an enormous amount of works in Islamic jurisprudence, astronomy, and mathematics favouring and opposing the positions of scholars on both sides of the controversy.[17]

In the early 20th century, religious reform emerged as one of the most important intellectual movements in Kerala. In general, it can be said that this philosophical turn in religious discourse was almost entirely based on texts that originated in the Arab world, Central Asia, as were in wide circulation in Kerala. The reform movement is taken by many scholars as the forebear of universal norms such as reason, scientific thinking and freedom, all of which are essentially social in nature, not theological. Following the traditions loaned from Egypt called *tanwīriyya*, which had an overwhelming emphasis on the social side of reform rather than the theological one, some of the pioneers of the movement like Vakkom Maulawi advocated for social amity, mobility of the Muslim community through modern education, and economic uplift. Whatever initiatives were made on the theological front did not go beyond prescriptions such as women's entry into the mosque, the translation of the Qurʾān into Malayalam, and the complete or partial switch of Friday sermons from Arabic to Malayalam, which were primarily social in character.

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17   M.H. Ilias and Shamahad Hussain, *Arabi-Malayam and Lingustic-Cultural Traditions of Mappila Muslims of Kerala* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts, 2017).

One of the key contributors to the development of this reformist Islamic theological discourse was Sanaullah Makti Tangal, a former employee of the British administration in Malabar. He was one of the unique thinkers from the non-Western world who was always critical of the blurred boundaries of Western modernity and Christianity which of late scholars like Asad and Mahmood have attempted to expose, taking cues from the experiences of both European and non-European contexts. For Tangal, Western modernity and secularism, a necessary corollary of the former, does not entail a total rejection of theological prominence in everyday life, but inherits an essential Christian frame of reference in the name of "dissociation" of it from religions. Therefore, the re-reading of Tangal in the contemporary context coincides with increasing criticism of Western modernity for its alleged connection with Christianity and the reconceptualization of the secular.

As occurred in similar contexts, the Kerala Muslim community's encounter with modernity began as a hostile one, with the colonial powers on one hand and modern education with the backing of Christian missionaries on the other. The community displayed a variety of responses to modernity as something brought in by Europeans. Some eagerly appropriated the elements of modernity, while others raucously rejected it. The former represented a kind of embrace of European modernity, identified mainly with elites educated in the Western system of education, who viewed adherence to certain practices of Islam as major causes of decline of the Muslim community.[18] The latter was a rejectionist approach represented mainly by the *'ulamā'* who believed that the main cause of Muslim decline was the erosion of Islamic values and piety in the wake of the re-orientation of Muslim culture along Western lines.[19] Still, a third reaction stood for synthesis, and the adherents of this position maintained the view that Islam was not a hindrance to modern scientific thinking and progress. Tangal represented this third category of scholars.

1   Tangal, a Brief Biography

Sanaullah Makti Tangal was born in 1847 in Veliyancode, a village in Southern Malabar of the erstwhile British Madras State and died in 1912 in Cochin.[20] He

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18   Khan Bahadur Muhammad, *Mappilmār Engottu* (Calicut: Mathrubhumi, 2014).

19   Ilias and Hussain, *Arabi-Malayalam*.

20   Tangal traces his ancestry to the Sayyids of Hadhramaut through his father's clan which is believed to have come and settled in Malabar from Yemen, through his maternal grandfather who was a scribe for the British government to the Mughal family. See K.K. Muhammad Abdul Kareem, *Makti Thangalude Jīva Caritram*, (Calicut: Yuvatha Book House, 1997), 12.

was first introduced to traditional Islamic learning and Sufism by local scholars. After elementary education, he joined institutions of higher learning in the Islamic curriculum. Thanks to his proficiency in English and Arabic, the British Administration appointed him as Excise Inspector in Malabar. Through his wide reading of Arabic and European literature, he was exposed to the world of reform and other philosophical currents prominent in the Western world that resulted in a process of personal and ideological transformation.

Tangal's religious activity began from Cannanore in northern Malabar, where he initiated a movement called *Muhammadīya Sabha* for promoting modern education among local Muslim youth and purging non-Islamic accretions from the community. The emergence of Tangal as one of the most significant Islamic scholars of Malabar coincided with the colonial penetration of the sub-continent by the British. However, Tangal did not challenge colonial expansion. Rather, he maintained a cordial relationship with the British administration.[21] Tangal resigned from the service of Excise Inspector in 1882 to spend most of his time popularizing basic principles of Islam and the universal brotherhood that it envisages through publications and public lectures. He then moved to Kochi, the city which was the pivot of Christian missionary activities and the printing of missionary literature in pre-independence Kerala. Tangal's arrival at Cochin corresponded with a politically and intellectually turbulent era. At Cochin, he faced a challenge that earlier reformers had not, namely the onslaught of European Christianity and modernity.

Tangal devoted much of his writings to polemics and preaching. His fame came chiefly from his role as a controversialist, who engaged in effectively debating with the traditional *ʿulamāʾ* and Christian missionaries. This article explores the intellectual life of Tangal and his attempt to problematize the idea of Western modernity for its alleged intimacy with the Western Christian theological tradition. This is done mainly by examining the cross-religious theological debates between Christianity and Islam towards the end of the 19th century.

The rediscovery of Tangal by contemporary Muslim and non-Muslim scholars can be connected to the reformulation of the basic presumptions of secularism and religion through the works of Talal Asad and Saba Mahmood. Many scholars from the Islamic world have ventured to critique modernity and secularism from different vantage points, but what is perhaps more topical about Tangal's attempt is his search for an alternative from within Islamic theology. Modernist scholars have long acknowledged the reform traditions of the West, claiming that Medieval Islamic thought was preserved only until modernists

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21   *Ibid.*

could re-establish the connection. However, from the outset of his writing, Tangal critiqued modernity and developed a line of thought independent of Western philosophy, producing a set of specifically Islamic arguments.

Chiefly because of his antagonist approach towards rituals and festive traditions like saint-martyr worship (*nerca*) and the ritual honoring of the Prophet (*mawlid*), which were once central to the "lived Islamic traditions" in South India, Tangal is considered to be the pioneer of Islamic revival in Kerala. Tangal currently enjoys a massive following among Salafis, although he never revealed his affiliation with this movement in his works.[22]

2   Activities of Christian Missionaries in the 19th Century

For most of their history, the Eastern churches in Kerala showed little interest in missionary activities and paid scanty attention to proselytizing people of other faiths. Their strong caste consciousness – that they were high-caste people – and the belief that their social standing vis-à-vis the Hindu upper-castes would be compromised if they admitted lower-caste people to their community is often said to be the cause of their reluctance.[23]

Although the first Protestant Mission to India was begun by the Danes in their territory of Tranquebar on the South-East Coast in 1705, European missionaries landed in Kerala only towards the end of 18th century.[24] The first targets of their proselytization were people affiliated with Syrian Church. In 1816, the Church Mission Society (CMS), began to work in Travancore with a view to "reform" the Syrian Church in the region.[25] By the beginning of the 19th century, the British administration appointed Colonel Munro, the British Resident in Travancore, to reach out to the ancient churches. Thomas Norton, Benjamin Bailey, Joseph Fenn, and Henry Baker were pioneers among the missionaries who tried to reach out to the Syrian Christians and build a strong friendly Christian community that supported the British administration in Kerala.[26] Under the leadership of Bailey, the CMS mission published a complete translation of the Old and New Testaments in 1829.[27]

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22   K.K. Sakkariya Swalahi, *Gulf Salafikaḷum Keraḷatile Islahi Prastānavum* (Palakkad: Islahi Publishing House, 2002), 74.

23   Hunt, *The Anglican Church*, 45.

24   Hunt, *The Anglican Church*, 51.

25   Bengt Sundkler, *Church of South India: The Movement Towards Union* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1954), 128.

26   George, *Christianity in India*, 182–83.

27   Hunt, *The Anglican Church*, 40.

One of the first missionaries in Cochin was Rev J. Samuel, who arrived there in 1834 as missionary to the Jews in India. C.M. Augur writes, "[T]he purpose of his [Samuel's] coming was mainly to introduce Christianity for educating the Jews and giving them [the Jews of Cochin and Travancore] moral training and to bring them to higher degree of civilization and gradually do away with the blemishes with which their character had been stained through public papers."[28] Later, the Church of Scotland Mission to Travancore and Cochin, formed in 1833, was assigned with the purpose of converting a small community of Jews in Travancore and Cochin.

Conflict soon developed between Western missionaries and the Syrian Church in Travancore and Cochin. The missionaries began intervening in the internal affairs of the Syrian Church in the name of "reform," which led to a synod at Mavelikkara in 1836 calling for an open rejection of the reform proposals put forward by the missionaries on the grounds that they were unable to do anything in the matter of faith without the permission of the Patriarch of Antioch.[29] This statement of the Syrian Bishops came to be known later as *Mavelikkara Padiyôla*.

The Basel Mission Society (BMS) laid the foundation for protestant missionary work in Malabar by proselyting Christian faith among the lower caste communities, especially the *Tiyyās*. The most active agent in promoting the Western Christianity in the region was Frederic Spring, a chaplain of the East India Company stationed at Thalaserry who translated portions of scriptures and the Book of Common Prayer into Malayalam using its northern Malabar dialect.[30] During the early decades of 19th century, significant progress was made in translating the Bible and other liturgical texts that were then printed in Malayalam. The missionary activities in Malabar gained further momentum when Herman Gundert, a German missionary based in Thalaserry, took over the leadership of Basel Mission. Gundert was a renowned scholar and linguist best known for his compilation of the Malayalam grammar book, *Malayaḷabhāsha Vyākaranam*. Agents of the BMS are also credited for publishing the first news daily in Malayalam, *Rajyasamācāṛam* in 1847, the first work of Kerala history in Malayalam, *Kerala Pazhama* in 1868, the first text of geography in Malayalam, *Malayalarājyam* in 1870, and the first Malayalam dictionary in 1872.

The activities of European missionaries in Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar invariably converged on certain activities such as the popularization of "standardized" Malayalam and its replacement of Syriac as the main liturgical

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28   C.M. Agur, *Church History of Travancore* (Madras and Vepery: SPS Press, 1903), 131–32.

29   George, *Christianity in India*, 176.

30   Hunt, *The Anglican Church*, 177–78.

language, the establishment of schools and colleges with the backing of the British administration and governments in the princely states, and the dissemination of inexpensive Christian literature for mass proselytization.

European missionaries claimed to be the agents of Enlightenment and embarked on a mission to reform the Eastern Churches along Eurocentric lines by "giving spiritual enlightenment to them so that they would enlighten others." In the missionaries' writings, the Eastern churches and their practices enjoyed an assumed inferiority before the Western traditions.[31] They identified non-Western religious traditions as lacking rational rigor and critical perspective, and therefore of no universal relevance.[32] Along with Christians of Syrian traditions, Muslims were also the targets of missionary disparagement. M. Gangadharan noted that, "the European missionaries preached sermons in places wherever people assembled. They published and distributed pamphlets and booklets belittling Islam, and persuaded Muslims and people of other faiths to abandon their religion and embrace Christianity."[33] However, the traditional *'ulamā'* in Malabar were either unaware of or paid little attention to the content of these sermons.

3   Tangal's Critique of Western Modernity

Most scholarship on Tangal can be divided into three categories. The first places him as the pioneer of an Islamic reform movement, spending little time on his critique of European modernity and secularism for the alleged backing of Christianity it enjoyed.[34] This view fails to recognize the effect that cross-regional developments in theology had on Tangal's ideas. Another set of scholars view Tangal as a social reformer, highlighting his contribution to the promotion of modern education among Malabar Muslims who lagged far behind other communities.[35] This group of scholars focus on specific aspects of Tangal's works and speeches inculcating the need of modern education and

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31   Hunt, *The Anglican Church*, 63.

32   *Ibid.*

33   M. Gangadharan, "Sanaullah Makti Tangal: Jnānam Kondu Poṛutiya Pariṣkartāvu," in *Makti Tangal Sampŭrṇa Kritikal, Makti Tangalude Sampūrna Kritikal*, ed. K.K. Muhammad Abdul Kareem (Calicut: Vachanam Books, 2006), 13.

34   Abdul Kareem, *Makti Thangalude*.

35   Muhammad Niyas Ashraf, *Islamic Reformism and Malayāḷi Ummah in Nineteenth-Century Colonial Kerala, Southwest Indian Ocean* (Lund: SASNET Publications, 2020).

learning Malayalam, the lack of proficiency in which was found to be the root cause of the community's backwardness.[36]

A third group of scholars, and perhaps the most significant, sees Tangal's puritan thought as an Islamic parallel to Protestantism which set in motion the development toward rational modernity in the West.[37] His polemics against saint worship has been compared with the Protestant attack against the Catholic Church during the Reformation. Some writers also draw parallels between Tangal's insistence on the importance of proof texts from the primary sources, Qur'ān and Hadith, and the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*. Other scholars even suggest that what Tangal did was not a complete dismissal or non-engagement with the Western way of understanding secularism. Rather, Tangal suggested a change in the terms of engagement with it.

Quite early in his career as an Islamic preacher, Tangal made use of the printing press, which was then in an early stage in Kerala. His share in Muslim printing activities exceeded those of his contemporaries. Crucial to the uniqueness of his agenda was the use of "standardized" Malayalam language and printing technology to address educated Muslims. The importance of print for the early Muslim reformers motivated Tangal to choose a different path than that of a missionary. Rather, he became a religious publisher and gained a much wider following. He began publishing *ParŌpakaṛi*, a monthly in Malayalam in 1885, with the purpose of countering literature denigrating Islam and defaming the Prophet published in the Christian publications such as *Keraḷopakaṛi*.[38] While traditional scholars of the period paid little attention to intellectual developments outside the Islamic world, Tangal remained aware and well-informed of even the minutest developments in other religions.

Among Muslim scholars in Kerala two approaches prevailed in dealing with the question of knowledge production. Some critiqued the "primacy of reason" and emphasized a return to the medieval Islamic roots of modern knowledge, especially science, and traced its origins to the Abbasid period. Others emphasized the seemingly miraculous advances that modern science had made. This group called for a different sort of engagement with reason; not as an invention of modern Europe, but something integral to the process of constructing Islamic knowledge. They were against the tendency to reduce the roots of

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36   The poor growth of Malayalam was partly due to the overwhelming presence of Arabi-Malayalam, a linguistic fusion of Arabic and Malyalam devised and used widely by the Mappila Muslims of Kerala.

37   Roland Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends* (London and New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1991).

38   Paul, "'Deeppu' Sultan Makti Thangal," 38.

modernity and reason to a single European origin, as it underestimated the long and persistent influence Islamic thought had on Western philosophy during the Middle Ages. However, both approaches invariably did not see introduction of reason and science as a challenge to an Islamic understanding of the world. Rather, their opposition was more political in nature. For Muslim scholars, modernity was not a disembodied set of ideas. Rather, it was associated with the imperialist expansion of Christian Europe, which threatened Islam in many respects. Tangal favored the second approach as he engaged with Christian missionaries to de-mystify misconception that the primacy of reason is solely the preserve of modern Christian Europe.[39] However, he was also critical of the excessive use of reason and anti-rationalism and skepticism, a position that was popular among the *ʿulamāʾ* in Malabar.

Politically, Tangal was not against colonialism. Rather, he believed that the colonial administration facilitated modern education for marginalized communities including Muslims. Therefore, unlike most of the Islamic scholars of his time, he shunned any association with the anti-colonial movement and maintained an understanding that British colonialism, with its reform of education and bureaucratic practices, facilitated a radical transformation of Indian society. However, Tangal saw the colonial administration's support of European Christian missionaries as harmful to the Muslim subjects in India. He, thus, displayed a selective response to colonialism, eagerly appropriating certain features while harshly objecting others. Tangal remained a British loyalist throughout his life and showed no reluctance to praise the British administration, particularly as he took advantage of the liberty granted by it to preach, publish, and disseminate religious literature freely.[40]

Beyond Indian thought, two major strands in the Islamic contributed to the making of Tangal's world of ideas. The first was the call for strict adherence to the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth* and the life of pious ancestors promoted by Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), Muhmmed b. Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792), and the Northern Indian reformer Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan (d. 1898).[41] Perhaps the most striking commonality in these scholars was their view that present and impending threats of colonialism should be countered by posing a challenge to Western intellectual domination. Each scholar articulated the need to reorient the community

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39 Musthafa Thanveer, *Thanaullah Makti Thangal: Prabodhakanum, Pariṣkartāvum* (Calicut: Kerala Nadwa, 2017).

40 Thanveer, *Thanaullah Makti Thangal*, 46.

41 Tangal depended mainly on the Arabic work *Isfar ul-Haqq*, written by Rahmatullah Kairanawi al-Hindi (1818–1891), to counter Christian criticism of Islam and contest the doctrine of the trinity.

in the context of the colonial challenge and, more significantly, the need for a renewal of Islamic traditions akin to the early period of the religion.

4   The Metaphor of the Axe

Tangal's opposition to European missionaries was not purely defensive. He also criticized their core beliefs such as faith in the trinity.[42] Citing the Old Testament, he argued that the prophets from Adam to Moses never believed in the trinity. In his most famous treatise, *KadŌṛa kudŌṛam*, Tangal wrote, "God has no beginning and end, God was not borne anywhere to any parents, had no sons and no daughters, does not belong to any place, and is completely invisible to all Creation including humans, and God takes no assistance in and no companion in creation."[43]

Written in the form of an imaginary dialogue between a Muslim scholar and a Christian pastor, *KadŌṛa kudŌṛam* tried to expose "the baselessness of the Christian faith in the trinity." In the same work, Tangal metaphorically used the Malayalam word for axe (*kudŌṛam*) as the pen that takes the form of an axe while attacking the doctrines of Western Christianity. Tangal subtly compared the trinity with a tree and claimed that his writings had the sharpness to chop the tree of the trinity.[44] This was also a call for the Muslim community in Malabar for a non-violent struggle in dealing with British colonial domination and to resort to the pen in place of arms.[45]

Tangal defended his arguments with extensive references to the biblical sources.[46] Citing verses from Bible, Tangal published a booklet in 1892 entitled *Christīya Ajneya Vijayam adhava Parkkalītta Porkkaḷam* that provoked missionaries by saying that "both the Old and New Testaments have clear reference to a prophet of *Paran* to come, a successor to Moses and the purest form of a

42   Paul, "'Deeppu' Sultan Makti Thangal," 38.

43   Sanaullah Makti Tangal, "KadŌra KudŌram" in *Makti Tangalude Sampūrna Kritikal*, ed. K.K. Muhammed Abdul Kareem (Calicut: Vachanam Books, 2006), 34–8.

44   Sanaullah Makti Tangal, "Narīnarabhicāri" in *Makti Tangalude Sampūrna Kritikal*, ed. K.K. Muhammed Abdul Kareem (Calicut: Vachanam Books, 2006), 637.

45   The Muslims of Kerala waged a series of violent agitations against the British which culminated in the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. Also, it is important to note that Yusthus Joseph, known as Vidhwan Kutti, who embraced Christianity in the 1860s, published a reply to Tangal's arguments in *KadŌra KudŌram* under the title *Visudha Venmazhu* (Holy White Axe). See Paul, "'Deeppu' Sultan Makti Thangal," 38–9.

46   J. Jabir, "Makti Tangalum, Christumata Ghandanangalum," in *Proceedings of Kerala Muslim History Conference* (Calicut: Muslim Heritage Foundation, 2015), 659–62.

human being, but this fact has been kept completely hidden by the later interpreters of the Bible.''[47] Tangal went further to challenge Christian missionaries and declared, "I offer an *inam* or reward of Rs. 200 to those who would counter this fact based on biblical evidence."[48]

Tangal's *The Prophet's Coin* (*Nabi Nānayam*) was written in response to Gundert's 1891 work entitled *The History of Muhammad* (*Muhammad Caritram*). In this work, Tangal offered a sharp criticism of the Western perception of Islam and the portrayal of the religion and Prophet Muhammad in a 'distorted' manner."[49] This book had the explicit aim of demystifying the European imagination of Islam and the Middle East and enlightening the Muslim public on the history of Islam as a conscious counter-measure to the colonial teaching of the religion.[50] This was done by listing a set of works published in Europe and outlining their negative portrayal of Islam and the Middle East. The list included *An Apology for Mohammed and the Koran* (John Davenport, 1869) and *The Life of Mohammed* (William Muir, 1861), two major works that were pivotal in setting the tone of anti-Islam literature in the 19th century.[51] In a work of a similar sort titled *Note of Incentive* (*Sammānakurippu*), Tangal narrated the history of European modernity as not of continental origin but borrowed from scholarship prevalent in the Islamic world before the advent of colonialism. Tangal critiqued European modernity for its intellectual hegemony that caused the extinction of other knowledge systems.

According to Tangal, Western modernity dismissed Christianity as a religion but appropriated its values and saw it as the source that formed the origins and future of the modern world. He recognized that, in many crucial respects, modernity was the secularization of Christian ideals. Although he understood modernity this way, many of Tangal's works viewed the notion of progress as the triumph of reason over superstition. By questioning the categories of modernity and secularism, Tangal's work addressed the ambivalent relationship between them in the Western conception. His prose in Malayalam lavishly used a variety of symbolic forms, metaphors, and funny compositions to

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47   Sanaullah Makti Tangal, "Pārkaleeta Porkkaḷam" in *Makti Tangalude Sampūrna Kritikal*, ed. K.K. Muhammed Abdul Kareem (Calicut: Vachanam Books, 2006), 101–5.

48   *Ibid.*

49   G. Arunima, "Imagining Communities – Differently: Print, Language and the (Public Sphere) in Colonial Kerala," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 43, no. 1 (2006): 43–63.

50   The first chapter of the work provides a detailed description of the history, geography and tribal structure of the Arabian Peninsula and briefly showed how knowledge about the region has been distorted by colonial scholars.

51   Thanveer, *Thanaullah Makti Thangal*, 74.

criticize the proponents of European modernity and scholars in the Muslim community who rejected the prominence of reason in religion outright. Tangal's satirical expressions often acted as mediating channels for his own religious experiences, through which he could successfully communicate with a larger section of the population.

Tangal's critique of Christian missionaries developed within a specific historical situation and religious project that necessitated an urgent need for the *'ulamā'* to respond to European missionaries.[52] However, Islam was not the only target for missionaries; similar concerns were widely shared among the scholars of Hinduism.[53] The situation compelled Chattampi Swamikal to publish a Hindu critique of European Christianity entitled *Critique of Christianity* (*Kristumata Cedanam*) as a rejoinder to the missionary literature that contained disrespectful content on the Hindu Gods and religious practices in the 1890s. Being one of the first modern Islamic missionaries in Kerala, Tangal designed his speeches and writings in the form of dialogues or *khandanam*, a popular mode of debate that existed in Kerala where arguments and counter-arguments are arranged in series using the framework of comparative theology.

In his thought, Tangal had to face criticism from Christian missionaries, a group that enjoyed the tacit backing of the British administration, as well as orthodox groups within the Muslim community. At times when European missionaries filed a series of cases against Tangal, none from his community came out to lending support. Because of his uncompromising stance against traditions such as the veneration of saints, his rejection of traditional Sunni schools of jurisprudence (*madhhab*), and repeated calls for the independent interpretation of religious sources (*ijtihād*), Tangal constantly suffered verbal and sometimes even physical attacks from supporters of *'ulamā'* of other streams.

A meticulous analysis of Tangal's works reveals that they also sought to ask how Western Christians themselves modified and updated their faith to make pace with the modern Western world. According to Tangal, Christianity was reshaped by its encounter with the West. He even tried to see the concept of the trinity as a European construct, tracing its popularity to the spread of Christianity in Europe in the fourth century CE and more specifically to the Roman Emperor Constantine, the Synod of Nicaea, and the series of synods that followed it which, according to Tangal, collectively re-fashioned the Christian faith in favor of the trinity.[54]

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52   Jabir, "Makti Tangalum."

53   Paul, "'Deeppu' Sultan Makti Thangal,".

54   Thanveer, *Thanaullah Makti Thangal*, 51.

A final work of Tangal published in 1892, *Kristīya Vijnānīyam* or *Pārkalītta Porkkaḷam*, facilitated a deeper consciousness regarding the supposed anti-thetical division between Islam and Christianity, completely influenced by the West and an increasing awareness of the necessity of identifying and rectifying this influence explicit especially in the interpretations of the New Testament.[55] Tangal widely referred the critical sources on Christianity in his arguments against Western Christianity, rather than relying on Islamic sources.[56] His grasp of Christian theological literature helped him critically analyze the Bible and Western interpretations of it in circulation mainly in the European continent.

Conclusion

Through his works, Sanaullah Makti Tangal relentlessly asserted that the domi-nant approaches to religion and modernity during his time were grounded in the European experience. He felt that Muslims must reimagine such ideas and relocate them in a non-Western context. The distinctiveness of Tangal's idea of modernity was in large part of a result of his opposition to the Western con-struction of religion and his attempt to free both ideas from Western Christian norms and building norms of an alternative, and original, Islamic modernity. In addition, Tangal believed that modernity was not a token of rationalism or secularism. Rather, it was a useful tool for purifying Islam in Kerala from unwanted elements adopted from local cultures. He identified modern edu-cation as a specifically "modern" tool for this process that would reconcile between the Islamic tradition and the effects of modernity.[57] His understand-ing of the genial relationship between Islam and modernity problematized many aspects of conventional thinking.

When approaching religion, a reading of Tangal's works reveals a dualistic strategy of offering an understanding of Islam compatible with modernity and the achievements of science but also deeply engrained in an anti-Western ide-ology. For example, Tangal saw the ideas of religion and rationality as inextri-cability connected to European understandings of religion which took shape in the 18th and 19th centuries. He was of the firm belief that 19th-century

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55   A Compilation of texts and speeches that Tangal delivered with the intension of coun-tering European Christian missionaries. Tangal wrote that the "Parkalitta" mentioned in the New Testament is Prophet Muhammad and people are hiding this fact. He offered a reward of Rs. 200 for anyone who wrote an objective response to his arguments.

56   Ashraf, *Seethi Sahib*.

57   *Ibid.*

thought viewed religion as a primitive or pre-modern human condition and detached from modern legal and scientific thinking. Tangal was perhaps the first religious scholar from Kerala to respond to the increasing popularity of rationality in modern Europe.

Finally, Tangal kept keen interest in the study of history of Europe, the knowledge of which he exhibited through his writings. He was deeply respectful of the European Enlightenment and reform tradition for the prominence it gave to the cause of reason. Tangal wished to have ripples of the same trends echo in Islamic societies, renewing the Islamic faith and reorienting Islamic values and principles to the fundamental texts and reason.[58] Tang's position on the usefulness of European reform ran in stark contrast to his efforts of refuting European missionaries which he staunchly believed distorted the fundamentals of the Christian faith to make it adjusted and appealing to the political aspirations of dynasties in power in medieval Europe. Taking the concept of trinity to task, Tangal illustrated the genealogy of development of Christianity from a West Asian religion to a European one adjusted to the political and socio-cultural milieus of Europe with the patronage of state power.

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58   Ashraf, *Seethi Sahib,* 5.

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مراجعات الكتب

∵

Philo of Alexandria: On the Life of Abraham. Introduction, Translation, and Commentary

إبراهيم أبو الأنبياء، الشخصية التوراتية والمسيحية والقرآنية، ينتسب إليه أتباع الرسالات الثلاث، ويعقدون صلتهم الكتابية والروحية معه في العهد القديم والعهد الجديد والقرآن الكريم، وعلى الرغم من هذه المرجعية المشتركة الكبرى؛ فإن الصورة السياقية تتباين في نقاط ترتبط بالطابعين الزمني والتاريخي الخاص بالشخصية الإبراهيمية كتابيًا، وتأويل مجريات الأحداث بعيدًا عن السياق الكتابي الديني، خاصة بالنسبة إلى النص التوراتي؛ إذ يعلل هذا الاختلاف والتضارب بسبب الفارق التاريخي بين زمن الواقعة زمن التدوين، كما يقول ''جان سيتزر'' في حديثه عن النبي إبراهيم، فضلًا عن تعدد مستويات النص الذي غلبت عليه الأبعاد الاجتماعية الحضارية في المنطقة، كذكر دويلات المدن الآرامية، وتقاليد المنطقة الدينية التي امتزجتْ بكثير من التعاليم الإبراهيمية، في مقابل الجانب الديني الأبرز في شخصية إبراهيم القرآنية. ومن هنا تم اختيار عرض ومناقشة هذا الكتاب المهم عن حياة النبي إبراهيم من خلال تأويل فيلون الإسكندري لها، للمقابلة بين رؤيتين تخص تلك الشخصية، بين ماهو كتابي وتفسيري من جهة، وفلسفي من جهة أخرى، فقد جمع فيلون وفق ما يذكر مؤلفا الكتاب بين الجانبين ''اللاهوتي والفلسفي،'' وطغى أحدهما على الآخر، وغاب في مواضع عدة البعد الشفوي ''التوراتي'' لتلك الشخصية، الذي اختلط في كتب تفسيرية يهودية مع معطيات بيئة المنطقة ووعيها وثقافاتها، فتعددت

القراءات، واتفقت الأحداث والرؤى العامة بين المفهومين التوراتي والقرآني للشخصية، وتباعدت في تأويلها وقراءتها لأحداث النصوص الدينية الخاصة بالنبي إبراهيم.

يعرض كتاب "في حياة إبراهيم: المقدمة، والترجمة، والتعليق" لمؤلفيه "إلين بيرنباوم" و"جون ديلون" في 409 صفحات عبقرية فيلون الفلسفية والتفسيرية والأدبية. وقد شكّل تقديم فيلون للشخصيات الكتابية الأولى أنوش، وأخنوخ، ونوح، وإبراهيم، وإسحاق، ويعقوب مدخلًا للتعرف عليها وقراءتها في شكل رموز وحالات وقوانين غير مكتوبة، قبل المزج بين التفسيرات الحرفية والأخلاقية والرمزية أثناء الحديث عن حياة إبراهيم وإنجازاته، في صورة سيرة ذاتية خاصة كتابية، أو سيرة ذاتية يونانية – رومانية تفسيرية لشخصية إبراهيم.

يبين مؤلفا الكتاب "إلين بيرنبوم" و"جون ديلون" الأسباب التي تكمن وراء أهمية هذا الإنتاج في سياق أعمال فيلون الخاصة، والتفسير اليهودي والمسيحي المبكرين، والفلسفة القديمة التي توفر معنى فكر فيلو وتوضحه، بما في ذلك فكرته المحيرة بأن أسلاف إسرائيل لم يكونوا شخصيات بعينها، بل يمثلون معادلًا موضوعيًا لقوانين ونماذج في حد ذاتها. كما يُعتبر كتابه "في حياة إبراهيم" واحدًا من أعماله المهمة التي كتبها لشرح قصة حياة النبي إبراهيم، وتفسير الأحداث التي وقعت فيها، وفقًا للفلسفة اليهودية الهلنستية، دون إغفال الجانب اللاهوتي في قراءة سيرة هذه الشخصية.

يتناول فيلون قصة النبي إبراهيم كما وردت في الكتاب المقدس اليهودي (هالتناخ)، ومن ثم يقوم بتفسير الأحداث بطريقة فلسفية، ساعيًا إلى توضيح المعاني الروحية والفلسفية لأحداث قصة النبي إبراهيم، ومركزًا على الجوانب الأخلاقية والروحية للتجربة الدينية. ويقدم وجهة نظر فلسفية مبنية على تفسير وفهم عميقين للتقاليد الدينية اليهودية. وبالتالي؛ فإن الكتاب يعكس فهمًا عميقًا للفلسفة الهلنستية والتأثيرات الثقافية المحيطة بحياة فيلو في عصره، مما يمنحنا نظرة فريدة للكيفية التي فسّر بها الفلاسفة اليهود القصص الديني في هذا السياق الثقافي والفلسفي.

وقد قسَّم المؤلفان الكتاب إلى أجزاء متفرعة لعدة فصول تتناول توثيقًا للأحداث ضمن سياقاتها الدينية والتاريخية، على النحو الآتي:

الجزء الأول: المقدمة. يتناول هذا الجزء من الكتاب الفصول الآتية:

– مكانة الرسالة في أعمال فيلون من خلال شرح موضع الرسالة ضمن أعمال الفيلسوف فيلون الإسكندري، وَيسلط الضوء على مكانتها وأهميتها ضمن مجموعة كتاباته ومساهمتها في تطور أفكاره ومعتقداته.

– مكانة الرسالة في حياة فيلون وكيف أثرت في تجاربه ومساره الفكري والروحي، وفي ثقافة المجتمع الذي عاش فيه.

– النوع والأهداف والجمهور: يتمحور هذا الفصل حول تحديد نوع الرسالة وأهداف كتابتها، والجمهور المستهدف بها، مما يساعد في فهم السياق الثقافي والديني الذي كتبت فيه الرسالة.

– البنية والمحتوى والمقاربات التفسيرية: يشرح هذا الفصل البنية العامة للرسالة، ومحتواها، والطرق التفسيرية التي اتبعها الكتاب في فهم المواضيع المطروحة وتفسيرها.

– استخدام الكتاب المقدس وتفسيره: يستعرض الفصل آلية استخدام الكتاب المقدس في الرسالة، وكيفية تفسيره وتطبيقه في الحياة اليومية والمسائل الدينية والأخلاقية.

– المواضيع الأساسية: يُلخص المواضيع التي نُوقِشَتْ في الرسالة، مما يعطي فكرة عن محتواها والمواضيع التي تناولتها.

– التأثيرات الفكرية والثقافية: يتناول هذا القسم أثر الرسالة في المجتمع والفكر الإنساني على مر الزمان.

– السمات المشتركة والمميزة وآثارها: يتناول هذا الفصل السمات المميزة والمشتركة في الرسالة بالمقارنة مع أعمال أخرى، وكيف تؤثر هذه السمات في استقبال الرسالة وفهمها.

– نص الرسالة: يستعرض هذا الفصل النص الأصلي للرسالة، على نحو يساعد في حسن قراءته وفهمه.

– مجموعة من الملاحظات تتعلق بالطريقة المستخدمة في الترجمة والتعليق: يقدم بعض الملاحظات التي تتعلق بالطريقة المستخدمة في ترجمة النص والتعليق عليه، ويوضح العوامل التي تؤثر في فهم النص وترجمته.

يذكر المؤلفان في هذا الجزء أنّ فيلون الإسكندري كان فيلسوفًا يهوديًا ومفكرًا هلنستيًا من القرن الأول قبل الميلاد (حوالي 20 ق.م–50 م)، وهو ابن إحدى أبرز العائلات في المجتمع اليهودي الكبير والمؤثر في مدينة الإسكندرية في ذلك العصر. كما شغل شقيقه، جايوس جوليوس ألكسندر، منصبًا حكوميًا، فضلًا عن كونه مديرًا لممتلكات جوليا أوغسطا، والدة الإمبراطور تيبيريوس. وبالتالي، فقد أصبح معروفًا لدى عائلة الإمبراطور من خلال وسطاء هيروديين. علاوة على ذلك، يشير اسمه ولقبه إلى أن العائلة كانت مرتبطة بطريقة ما بجايوس جوليوس قيصر. كما استغل ألكسندر موقفه واتصالاته وأصبح ثريًا بشكل استثنائي، إذ قام بتغطية تسعة أبواب للهيكل في القدس بالذهب والفضة، وهو فعل يشهد على موارده الهائلة واهتمامه باليهودية.

تتناول أفكار فيلون العديد من المواضيع، مثل الإيمان، والتضحية، والعبادة، والعدالة، وأهمية الحياة الروحية في تحقيق الاتحاد مع الله. كما يقدِّم الكتاب وجهة نظر فريدة تربط

بين التراث الديني اليهودي والفلسفة الهيلينية. وهو يعدّ مصدرًا مهمًا لدراسة المنهجية التي حاول بها توسيع فهم الدين والروحانية من خلال تكامل العقائد اليهودية مع الفلسفة اليونانية في وقته. تكمن أهم العوامل التي جعلت فيلون مقبولًا لدى المسيحيين في الطريقة التي جمع بها بين الفلسفة اليونانية (المدرسة الأفلاطونية الوسطى)، وعلم التفسير. فالطابع التفكيكي في فكره وحجم أعماله يجعلان كتاباته مصدرًا مهمًا لفهم عدة تقاليد فلسفية هيلينستية. كما يجعل الجمع بين المدرسة المذكورة وعلم التفسير اليهودي فيلون مهمًا لدراسة الغنوصية أيضًا، خاصةً بالنسبة للعلماء الذين يروجون فكرة أن نظم الغنوصية المسيحية في القرن الثاني كانت لها جذور مهمة في الدوائر اليهودية.

في السياق ذاته، يقدم تفسيراته لقصة إبراهيم، ويبرز الجوانب الروحية والأخلاقية التي يمكن استخلاصها من تلك القصة. و يسعى إلى توضيح دور الفلسفة في فهم الأحداث الدينية والروحية، وكيف يمكن توظيف الحكمة في خدمة التقدم الروحي. كان فيلون على قناعة بأن قوانين الكتاب المقدس، مكتوبة كما هي، في خمسة كتب، يُطلق الاسم على الكتاب الأول، ويتم تسجيل عنوانه باسم ''التكوين،'' الذي يتحدث عنه فيلون في الجزء التمهيدي، ويتناول فيه مواضيع عدة، مثل السلام والحرب، والإنتاجية والعقم، والجوع والوفرة، والدمار الكبير الذي تسببه النار والماء في الأرض، أو على العكس تمامًا، أي الإنجاب وتربية الحيوانات والنباتات بفضل تلطيف الهواء وفصول السنة، أو الحياة المتنوعة للبشر، سواء أكانت حياة فاضلة أم جاحدة.

وبما أنَّ بعض هذه الموضوعات يعدّ جزءًا من أجزاء العالم الأوسع، في حين تشكّل الأحداث الأخرى وقائع تجري داخله، ويمثل العالم حالة الكمال والاستكمال لكل ذلك؛ فإنه قد كرس الكتاب بأكمله للحديث عنها.

وهكذا، قام مؤلفا الكتاب بتفصيل ما ورد عن فيلون متّبعين الطريقة التي ذُكر بها ترتيب خلق العالم. وبما أن الخطوة الأولى نحو المشاركة في الخيرات تتمثل في الأمل؛ فإن ذلك يحدث بواسطة الروح التي تحب الفضيلة، والتي تسعى إلى تحقيق التفوق الحقيقي، ولذلك أطلق اسم ''إنسان'' على النبي موسى بصفته أول محب للأمل، مانحًا له ذلك الاسم كمرتبة شرف خاصة باعتباره مصدر ''كل الحكمة.''

أما **الجزء الرئيسي الثاني** في الكتاب فيركز على ترجمة رسالة فيلون حياة إبراهيم، وقد أدرج المؤلفان فصول هذا الجزء وفق مراحل حياة ابراهيم كما يأتي:

- **الفصل الأول:** المقدمة، شرح فيها المؤلفان مقدمة عمل فيلون ''حول حياة إبراهيم.'' كما أوردَا عدة نقاط مهمة، مثل مكانة الرسالة في أعمال فيلون وحياته، والنوع والأهداف والجمهور المستهدف للرسالة، بالإضافة إلى بنية العمل ومحتواه والمقاربات التفسيرية المستخدمة.

– **الفصل الثاني:** حياة إبراهيم، يتناول هذا الفصل حياة النبي إبراهيم بالتفصيل، بدءًا من هجرته وانتقاله إلى بلاد جديدة، ومغامراته ونزاعاته، وصولًا إلى وفاته وتأثيره في الأجيال اللاحقة. يُعد هذا الفصل النواة الأساسية للرسالة، حيث فُصِّلَت حياة إبراهيم وفقًا للمصادر والمقاربات التفسيرية المعتمدة.

ثم تأتي بعد ذلك ملاحظات النص والترجمة التي تحتوي على توجيهات وشروح للنص الأصلي وعملية الترجمة، تساعد في فهم أفضل للنص وترجمته وتفسيره. علاوة على ذلك، يتطرق هذا الجزء من الكتاب إلى تفسيرات فيلون المتعلقة بحياة النبي إبراهيم، فيتحدث عن الإيمان والطاعة، ويُبرز الإيمان العميق والطاعة الكاملة التي أظهرها إبراهيم تجاه إرادة الله. كما يتطرق فيلون إلى استعداد إبراهيم الواضح لتقديم ابنه إسحاق ذبيحة تعبيرًا عن إيمانه وطاعته له.

أما عن الرؤية الروحانية، فيستكشف هذا الجزء من الكتاب الجوانب الروحانية لحياة إبراهيم، مبرزًا لحظات التواصل المباشر بين إبراهيم والله. حين يعكس ذلك الجانب الخاص من حياة النبي الذي أثر في اتجاه حياته ومجتمعه. وفي الأخلاق والتحديات، يتطرق هذا الجزء من الكتاب أيضًا إلى التحديات التي واجهها إبراهيم، وكيف تصرف وتعامل معها بمرونة كبيرة وأخلاق عالية. ويستعرض الكتاب القرارات الصعبة التي اتخذها إبراهيم وكيف تشكلت شخصيته من خلالها، وينظر إلى كيفية تأثير حياة إبراهيم في التقاليد الدينية اللاحقة، وكيف أصبحت قصته مصدر إلهام للكثير من الأديان والفلاسفة.

أما الجزء التالي ''التعليق؛'' فقد ركز المؤلفان فيه على تأكيد ما ورد في الفصول السابقة لحياة ابراهيم ولكنهما تعمقا أكثر ضمن الفصول التالية في هذا الجزء، وفق الآتي:

– **الفصل الأول:** دراسة سفر التكوين في الكتاب المقدس ودوره في وضع قوانين الحياة والمبادئ الأساسية التي يجب اتباعها. كما يتطرق إلى الثالوث الأول حيث يُقسم هذا الفصل إلى ثلاثة فصول فرعية، مع التركيز على ثلاث شخصيات رئيسية وهم أنوش، وأخنوخ، ونوح، موضحًا دور كل منها في تطور البشرية وتعزيز القيم الروحية.

– **الفصل الثاني:** يتحدث عن أنوش، رجل الأمل، إذ يتناول حياته ودوره في نشر الأمل والإيمان بين الناس، وكيف كان محورًا لتجديد الروحانيات وإحياء الأمل في فترة زمنية معينة.

– **الفصل الثالث:** يتحدث عن أخنوخ، رجل التوبة والإصلاح، من حيث حياتُه ودوره في التوبة والإصلاح الديني والمعنوي، وأثره في الارتقاء بالبشرية نحو السمو الروحي والأخلاقي.

– **الفصل الرابع:** بتناول فيه شخصية نوح، رجل الكمال، في جيله، ساردًا حياته ودوره في تحقيق الكمال والاستقامة في فترة زمنية محددة، وكيف كان أنموذجًا للتفاني والإيمان في عصره.

فضلًا عن ذلك، يكرر في الجزء الثاني ما حدث في قصة حياة إبراهيم، ثم ينتقل إلى ما ذكره عن النبي موسى الذي أطلق عليه لقب ''الإنسان،'' لمن ينشد الأمل، ثم ينتقل إلى الترتيب التالي للأمل، المتمثل في التوبة عن الخطايا. فيوظف في هذا السياق شخصية النبي موسى الذي تغيَّرت حياته وتطورت من الأسوأ إلى الأفضل، ممثلًا الإنسان الذي يكون مرضيًا عند الله، لأن الله قد نقله من حالة السوء إلى حالة الرضا والإيمان، إذ يدل هذا ''النقل'' على التحول نحو الأفضل، لأنه تدبير من اللّٰه تعالى، مما يعني أنه تغيير ''نبيل ومفيد'' لسياق حياته وأحداثها.

أما عن الإنسانية في حياة إبراهيم؛ فيذكر فيلون الكثير عن تقواه، ويستشهد بأمثلة تعبر عن تعامله الرحيم مع الناس، ومع كونه غنيًا؛ كان بالغ التواضع، ومكرّمًا أينما ذهب من قبل جميع الذين تواصلوا معه، فضلًا عن كونه عادلًا ومتسامحًا وبالغ الكرم.

كما أوضح فيلون أن إبراهيم كان شجاعًا وماهرًا في الحرب، لا من أجل القتال، ولكن من أجل تأمين السلام للمستقبل. وقد ذكر العديد من الشواهد حول ما فعله مع الممالك المنتشرة فيما وراء نهر الفرات، دون سرد المصادر التي اعتمد عليها لتوثيق تلك الحوادث غير المؤكدة كتابيًا ولا أثريًا.

ثم ينتقل فيلون إلى توضيح سياق أوسع يتعلق بأعمال موسى وحياته. ويبدأ بنظرة عامة في محتويات كتاب التكوين ومناقشة أنواع مختلفة من القوانين، خاصَّة ما يسميه ''القوانين الحية والعقلانية،'' عبر منحى جديد من كتاب موسى – وهو سرد قصص التكوين التي تتبع حساب الخلق – وما كتبه عن بعض الشخصيات الكتابية المبكرة التي يعدها نماذج قائمة بذاتها.

علاوة على ذلك، يقدم فيلون مسوّغًا لوضع سفر التكوين في بداية الشريعة الموسوية وتكوينها. لقد عمل فيلون على فحص القوانين في تسلسلها الصحيح وهي الوصايا العشر، والأنظمة التي تندرج تحت كل واحدة من تلك الوصايا بحسب زعمه، كما يوضح فيلون أن تلك القوانين ''الحية والعقلانية'' قد أتت من أشخاص محددين يتم تسجيل كلماتهم وأفعالهم في كتب موسى المقدسة.

وهكذا تبرز التفسيرات التي قدمها فيلون وفق الترتيب والمنهج المتبعَيْن لديه أهمية الاعتماد على الترجمة اليونانية، فضلًا عن براعته في التفسير على الرغم من وجود اختلافات كثيرة بين النص العبري والنص اليوناني لسفر التكوين. أما ما يتعلق بالأثر في الفكر المسيحي، فيُلقي هذا الجزء نظرة على كيفية تأثير أفكار فيلون في التفكير المسيحي المبكر. كما يُظهر أهمية فلسفته وتفسيراته لدى المسيحيين في استيعاب كتاب العهد القديم، وبالتالي تحقيق التواصل بين الثقافتين، علمًا أن المؤلفين لم يتوقفا عند حالات التأثير المذكورة، أو طبيعة النصوص التي تعاملت مع النبي إبراهيم في العهد الجديد، وهي على ثلاثة أنواع، وخالفت في نهجها رؤية العهد القديم، وكيف تكوّنت فلسفة خاصة

مخالفة لما ذكر عند فيلون، فقد شددت المسيحية على الصفات السامية للنبي إبراهيم لتكون أنموذجًا للشخصية المسيحية العامة، وهذا ما نجده في رسالة يعقوب للعبرانيين، فضلًا عن الدور الذي لعبته هذه الشخصية بفضل مواعيد اللّه لخلاص الإنسان، كما ورد في الأناجيل الأربعة (متى: 21:22—22، يوحنا: 39:8—40). أما السمة المستمدة من تقليد العهد القديم، فتتمثل في المقابلة بين (عقدة إسحاق، الذبيح) و(الابن، ذبيحة اللّه).

يشير هذا الجزء من الكتاب إلى المصادر والمعلومات التي استخدمها فيلون في سلسلة تفاسيره، وإلى التفصيل المهم عن المراحل الثلاث في تاريخ الإنسان، التي تمثلها شخصيات مختلفة تعبر عن كل مرحلة من تلك المراحل:

1. وجود الجنس البشري الذي أنجبه الإنسان الأول المنحدر من الأرض ''آدم'' قبل الطوفان.

2. الجنس البشري الذي أنجبه ''نوح'' بعد الطوفان.

3. فرع من الجنس البشري: أي المجموعة المعروفة باسم ''إسرائيل،'' التي أنجبها الآباء، بدءًا من إبراهيم وإسحاق ويعقوب.

ومن ثم يمدح فيلون قدرة البصر في الجسم لكونها أنبل الحواس، التي يميز بها الإنسان الكون الفعلي. كما يشرح الجزء الثاني تفسيرات فيلون أثناء مقارنته بين بصر العين وبصيرة العقل، فيعلن أن الشخص الذي تحققت لديه رؤية ''الأب والخالق لكل الأشياء'' قد وصل إلى ذروة السعادة. كما يُظهر فيلون أن هذا التحقق يُيسر بواسطة اللّه نفسه وقواه، لكن يتأثر فيلون خلال التمييز بين البصر الجسدي والبصر الفكري (الرؤيا والرؤية) بشكل لا يمكن إنكاره بأفكار أفلاطون، محددًا الهدف من الرؤية المتمثل في ''الخير.''

أما فيما يتعلق بربط فيلون بين إبراهيم والتعلم، وإسحاق والطبيعة، ويعقوب والتعاليم؛ فإنه لايشرح سبب هذا الربط الثنائي، فيما يبدو أنه مستنِد إلى تفسيرات معقدة، قد يكون بعضها موروثًا من ثقافات غير يهودية ومرجعيات أخرى.

وهكذا، يربط إبراهيم بفكرة ''التعلم'' على أساس تفسير زواجه من هاجر ورحيله من كلدان بحسب الرواية التوراتية. فوفقًا لتأويل فيلون لزواج النبي إبراهيم من هاجر؛ تمثل هاجر ''الدراسات العامة،'' التي ذكر بعض موضوعاتها، مثل اللغة، والهندسة، والفلك، والخطابة، والموسيقى، وغيرها. و قبل أن يتحد إبراهيم، الذي يرمز إلى العقل، مع سارة – التي ترمز إلى الفضيلة والحكمة والفلسفة – كان يجب عليه أن يدرس ويشارك في تلك ''الدراسات العامة،'' المعبر عنه تجسيديًا في الكتاب المقدس من خلال زواجه من هاجر الجارية.

وأما الجزء الثاني من الكتاب فيذكر أن رحيل إبراهيم من كلدان يمثل حالة الرقي التي وصل إليها من الإيمان بالتنجيم وتساوي الخلق باللاهوت إلى اعترافه باللّه الحق. ليؤكد

في النتيجة انتقاله من الإيمان الزائف إلى الإيمان الحقيقي وذلك من خلال تغيير اسمه من "أبراهام" إلى "إبراهيم."

في كتابات أخرى، يفسّر فيلون أسفار الكتاب المقدس من خلال مقاطع عدة، ففي تفسيره لعبارة "آمن إبراهيم بالله،" يؤكد فيلون أن "الثقة بالله وحدها ليست أمرًا سهلًا." وفي هذا السياق، يصف فيلون إبراهيم بأنه "الأول ومؤسس الأمة."

ثم يحدد المؤلفان في الجزء الأخير من الكتاب مجريات حياة ابراهيم اللاحقة، ويتحدثان عن أبرز تلك المراحل، وفق ما يأتي:

أولًا، تقوى إبراهيم: يقدم جوانب من تقوى إبراهيم وتدينه، مظهرًا العلاقة القوية بينه وبين الله.

– فصل هجرات إبراهيم: يتناول هذا الفصل رحلات إبراهيم وهجراته إلى بلاد أخرى، مما يظهر قوة إيمانه وثقته بالله، دون أن يتناول تضارب المصادر في تلك الأحداث.

– فصل إبراهيم وسارة في مصر: يتناول هذا الفصل تجربة إبراهيم وسارة في مصر، والتحديات التي واجهاها وكيف تعاملوا معها.

– فصل زيارة الضيوف الثلاثة: يستعرض هذا الفصل زيارة الضيوف وضيافته لهم، والأحداث الملهمة التي جرت خلالها.

– فصل تدمير المدن السدومية: يتناول هذا الفصل تدمير المدن السدومية والأحداث التي سبقتها، ودور إبراهيم في هذه الأحداث.

– فصل ذبيحة إسحاق: يتناول هذا الفصل قصة ذبيحة إسحاق واختبار الله لإبراهيم، وكيف أظهر إيمانه الصادق وطاعته.

ثانيًا، إنسانية إبراهيم: يتناول هذا الجزء جوانب تمثل الصفات الإنسانية لإبراهيم وأبعادها، مما يبرز قدرته وسلوكه عبر التعاطف والتفاعل مع الآخرين.

– فصل النزاع مع لوط: يتناول هذا الفصل الصراع الذي نشب بين إبراهيم ولوط، وتعامله مع هذه الصراعات.

– فصل انتصار إبراهيم على الملوك: يتحدث هذا الفصل عن انتصار إبراهيم على الملوك والأحداث التي أدت إلى ذلك.

– فصل فضائل سارة ووفاتها: يذكر هذا الفصل فضائل سارة ووفاتها، والتأثير الذي تركته على حياة إبراهيم وعلى المجتمع بشكل عام.

وهكذا يستخلص فيلون الكثير من خلال تحليل عميق لشخصية النبي إبراهيم وأحداث حياته بمنظور فلسفي وديني، يعكس مفهومه للحياة الروحية والقيم الأخلاقية. فمن خلال تأصيل الإيمان؛ يستكشف فيلون مفهوم الإيمان وعمقه في حياة إبراهيم. كما يوضّح كيفية تطور الإيمان وكيف يتجلى في التفاعل بين الإنسان والله.

ويوضح فيلون أن النبي إبراهيم ما كان قائدًا دينيًا فقط، بل تمتد رؤيته إلى الأفق الروحي، فيستعرض الكتاب تفسيرات فيلون للرؤى الإلهية التي يمتلكها إبراهيم، وآلية تأثير هذه الرؤى في حياته والمراحل اللاحقة له. كما يفصّل فيلون بشكل كبير القضايا الأخلاقية التي واجهها إبراهيم، بدءًا من قرار تقديم ابنه ذبيحة لله حتى التحديات الأخلاقية الأخرى التي واجهته. كما يقدم الكتاب جوًا من التأمل الفلسفي في الحياة، وكيف يمكن أن تكون الخبرات الروحية مصدرًا للفهم العميق للوجود، وكيف استطاع فيلون أن يركز على أهمية التفكير الفلسفي في سياق الحياة الدينية.

يذكر المؤلفان في النهاية أن الكتاب يمثل عملًا فلسفيًا ودينيًا عميقًا، ويقدم رؤية متأملة وفلسفية لحياة النبي إبراهيم، مُظهرًا أبعادها الروحية والأخلاقية بشكل متقن. يكمن الموضوع الجوهري في تأويلات فيلون من خلال تحويل مجريات الحدث الإبراهيمي بعيدًا عن المعنى السطحي، معتمدًا على الرؤية الرمزية اليهودية (سود)، فهو يرى أن سفر التكوين يمثل رمزًا لتقلب النفس الإنسانية وتبدلها من الحالة غير الأخلاقية إلى الحالة الأخلاقية، فقد ردّ كل حالة أخلاقية إلى موضوع، فـ"آدم" رمز للعقل، و"حواء" تمثل الحس غير العقلي، و"الأفعى" هي الغواية، و"هابيل" هو الخير، و"نوح" يمثل العدل، و"إبراهيم" يمثل المعرفة، و"يعقوب" الزهد، و"إسحاق" الحكمة الفطرية، ثم يتناول كل أنموذج ليفرعه إلى حالات الانتقال الاسمي والحياتي، وعلى الرغم من أن المؤلفَيْن ذهبا إلى أنه كان لاهوتيًا فيما تقدّم أكثر من كونه فيلسوفًا، وأن لاهوته حاضر في كل كتاباته إلى جانب البعد الفلسفي، لكنهما لم يقدّما مرجعية نصية وتفسيرية للجانب اللاهوتي الذي استند فيلون عليه، والتي خرج منها عن سياق النص ومكوناته، فصرف النظر عن الشكل الظاهري الحرفي للسياق أسقط مسألة طبقات النص عنده، وأدخله في تأويلات تقطع سياق النص، والعلاقة بين الدال والمدلول والمقام، إذ لايوجد أي سند تأويلي وتاريخي ولاهوتي يؤكد ماذهب إليه في العديد من القضايا، إذ كيف تتمثل العلاقة بين آدم والعقل؟ ونهر الفرات والعدل، والحكمة وموسى، وفي وصفه للأنهار الأربعة الواردة في سفر التكوين، وكذلك مايتعلق بالزواج من هاجر التي تمثل الدراسات العامة، بعيدًا عن مرجعيات النص في الإصحاحات (16 و17 و18)، التي تخالف المسميات التي أطلقها على سارة وهاجر حتى في التفاسير اليهودية، ولم تتم الإشارة من قبل المؤلِّفَيْن إلى أسباب غياب أي حضور للقصة الإبراهيمية الشفوية وتفسيراتها لدى فيلون، بالإضافة إلى المسميات التي أطلقت على النبي إبراهيم "حبيب الله،" "الخليل،" "الإنسان،" في حين وُظِّفت لديه أثناء الحديث عن النبي موسى، مع أن كتب المدراش خصصتها للنبي إبراهيم، فهو صاحب السماحة، والكرم، والعطف، والإنسان البسيط،، وهو شفيع أمته يوم البعث، وفقًا لما ورد في "مدراش ربَاه."

من الواضح أن الرمز لديه يمثل استعارة من الفلسفة اليونانية، وليست لاهوتية، ويتضح تأثره بأفلاطون في حديثه عن الروح والجسد، وتغير العلاقة بين إبراهيم وربه وتطورها، وتأثره بفيثاغورث في تفسيره للعدد في سياق سفر التكوين، وبالرواقية في تمثيل بعض الشخصيات بالزهد ومجاهدة النفس. وعليه فهو أقرب إلى التفسير الفلسفي في تناوله لشخصية النبي إبراهيم، وتأويل الوقائع الواردة في الجزء الثاني، والحديث عن رحلاته، والأحداث التي جرت معه.

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Hanafi Fiqh in Ifriqiya in the 3rd/9th Century. Scholarly Transmissions of Asad b. al-Furat from Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Shaybani

Hentati, Nejmeddine, ed. *Ḥanafī Fiqh in Ifrīqiya in the 3rd/9th Century. Scholarly Transmissions of Asad b. al-Furāt from Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī. Three Manuscripts from the Ancient Library of Raqqada-Kairouan: The Books of Prayer, Manumission and Theft and Brigandage*, 231 pp., Leiden: Brill, 2024, hardcover, ISBN: 978-90-04-54663-9, €125.00.

In his most recent book, Nejmeddine Hentati introduces his readers to the jigsaw structure that was in the early formation of the Mālikī school of thought in North Africa, specifically in Kairouan. This period witnessed the rule of the Banū al-Aghlab dynasty, during which both the Mālikī and Ḥanafī schools of thought established dominance, marked by times of coexistence conflict.

The manuscripts Hentati focuses on from this period shed light on the significant efforts made by Asad b. al-Furāt (142–213 AH / 759–828 CE) in transmitting both Mālikī and Ḥanafī jurisprudence. His meticulous attention to the most important works of the Ḥanafī school, particularly *al-Mabsūṭ* by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (131–189 AH / 748–804 CE), is noteworthy. *al-Mabsūṭ* stands out as a clear and precise text on Ḥanafī jurisprudence, forming the basis for later scholars and commentators. The title of the book, though lengthy, encapsulates its essence but could have been more focused to improve readability, such as: *An Overview of Ḥanafī Jurisprudence in Africa: Three Manuscripts from the Raqqada-Kairouan Library*.

Hentati divides the book into two sections. The first serves as an introduction, providing a historical framework, descriptions of the manuscripts, and translations of notable Ḥanafī figures mentioned in the book. These figures include al-Shaybānī, Ibn al-Furāt, Muʿammar b. Manṣūr al-Faqīh al-Qayrawānī, Sulaymān b. ʿImrān, and Muḥammad b. Ābān al-Ḥumayrī. The methodology of authentication for each manuscript is also outlined. The second part of the book contains the authentic text of the manuscripts, divided into three sections: The Book of Prayer, the Book of Deliverance and Administration, and the Book of Theft and Highway Robbery. Each section includes detailed chapters on specific topics within each book, providing a comprehensive view of Ḥanafī legal thought during this period.

An English introduction by Jonathan Brockopp describes the significance of the manuscripts due to their connection to al-Shaybānī. Brockopp provides a

brief historical overview of the authenticated manuscripts, emphasizing their importance to scholars of Islamic heritage.

Muḥammad al-Bahlī al-Niyāl first mentioned these manuscripts in 1963, with Joseph Schacht describing them in detail in 1967. Despite their Ḥanafī leanings, there has been confusion between these and the Asadiyah manuscripts compiled by Saḥnūn b. Saʿīd, a contemporary and rival of Asad b. al-Furāt. Brockopp notes that Miklos Muranyi pointed out that parts of Asad b. al-Furāt's manuscript in Kairouan are excerpts from the original book by al-Shaybani that Asad b. al-Furāt copied during his travels.

Several preliminary observations about the book are worth noting:

1.   Hentati's efforts in discovering and verifying these manuscripts are commendable. He provides compelling evidence that these manuscripts represent the Ḥanafī Asadiyya, challenging previous assumptions that they were Mālikī.

2.   The comparison between the contents of the three manuscripts and the original work by al-Shaybānī is thorough. However, this effort is extensive and may require multiple readings for full comprehension. Hentati's previous work on these manuscripts, in an article from 2015, could have been expanded with critical observations and comparisons.

3.   Hentati's assertion regarding Asad b. al-Furāt's transition to the Ḥanafī school is explored in depth. He distinguishes three stages of doctrinal and jurisprudential trends in Africa: dual affiliation, Ḥanafī dominance, and Mālikī dominance. While he leans towards Ḥanafī predominance due to political support, Brockopp's consideration of political factors remains speculative without strong evidence.

4.   Fourthly, Hentati's addition of the title *in Uṣūl al-Fiqh* to a portion of the manuscript is unclear and may not contribute to understanding its content.

5.   Finally, Hentati's comprehensive indexing of the book is appreciated, though limiting the indexing to the manuscripts and their contents would have been more useful.

Additionally, it may seem strange today to imagine a school of thought replacing the Mālikī school in North Africa, especially when historical evidence consistently shows the precedence of the Ḥanafī school in the region. However, the question arises whether Ḥanafī jurisprudence at this stage had its own doctrinal strength or was merely jurisprudence alongside other directives

and legislations borrowed from other schools. Did the Ḥanafī school possess the authoritative power of being strictly followed, or was it just one of the "transient trends?" Additionally, what were the political particularities that prompted politicians to choose the Ḥanafī school over others, or was the matter unrelated to jurisprudence?

The political explanation for the establishment of the Ḥanafī school, suggesting that the Aghlabid rulers contributed to spreading it and encouraging its establishment in Africa, raises questions about the manifestations of this encouragement. Did history leave us with any laws applied in Africa related to jurisprudence? This political interpretation remains unworthy of consideration if we neglect the scientific will of scholars and the practical impact of their scholarship.

Indeed, the Ḥanafī and Mālikī schools in the Maghreb were not two distinct schools but rather one, as they may be considered as two opinions originating from the same source and doctrine. The students who learned from Mālik's students were the same who learned from Abū Ḥanīfa and his students. Therefore, the difference between the two schools in Ifriqiya was not a result of a political or jurisprudential plan to create a political extension in other lands. Historical texts suggest that some Aghlabid rulers were ignorant of religious matters to the point where they could hardly distinguish between one school and another.

In summary, Hentati's work is a significant contribution to the study of Ḥanafī jurisprudence in North Africa, offering valuable insights into the scholarly transmissions of Asad b. al-Furāt. Despite some areas for improvement, this book is a vital resource for scholars of Islamic jurisprudence and history.

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New Methods in the Study of Islam and New Methodological Perspectives in Islamic Studies

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Aghdassi, Abbas and Aaron W. Hughes, eds. *New Methodological Perspectives in Islamic Studies*, 311 pp., Leiden: Brill, 2023, hardcover, ISBN 978-9004536623, $122.00.

1   على سبيل التقديم

تعرف الدراسات الإسلامية في السياق المعاصر جدلًا واسعًا بين الباحثين من الشرق والغرب على حد سواء، علمًا أنّ زوايا النظر وبواعث النقاش تختلف، كما تختلف طبيعة المواضيع ونوع الإشكالات المقصود معالجتها والتطرّق لقضاياها بالدرس والتحليل؛ وهذا الأمر راجع بالأساس إلى اختلاف نظر القارئ ومرجعيته الفكرية والدينية، ومؤهلاته العلمية وما إلى ذلك مما يمكن أن يكون ذا تأثير على فعل القراءة وإن في حدود ما. بل حتى الأسئلة تختلف، فسؤال طالب الدراسات الإسلامية في الجامعات العربية يختلف تمامًا عن سؤال طالب الدراسات الإسلامية في الجامعات الغربية على حد تعبير الدكتور رضوان السيد، (رضوان السيّد، الدراسات الإسلاميّة: التصدّع وإمكانات البناء، 2019) وعلّة ذلك اختلافُ السياق القائم، والمرجعية المصدور عنها، والمقصد المتوخى من وراء القراءة؛ وهذا ما خلف غزارة في الإنتاج، واحتفالًا بارزًا بالدراسات الإسلامية في الغرب على وجه الخصوص، وهو ما تفسره الأرقام الضخمة للمنشورات من الكتب، والمجلات العلمية، إضافةً إلى ما يُعقد في الباب من مؤتمرات وندوات في مختلف دول العالم، بحيث شكّل هذا الثراء تراكمًا علميًّا بات من الصعب تجاوزه اليوم في الدراسات الأكاديمية.

وإذا كانت القضايا المعرفية في مجال الدراسات الإسلامية ذات أهمية قصوى باعتبار ما تلامسه من مواضيع اجتماعية وفكرية وتربوية وغيرها، فما كان لسؤال المنهج أن يغيب عن القارئ في هذا الصدد، بحيث أصبح اقتراح بدائل منهجية جديدة لفهم الإسلام هو الهمّ الشاغل في الآونة الأخيرة لجملة من المفكرين والأكاديميين في السياق الغربي، وهو الشيء الذي لا يمكن أن يمرّ على المتخصصين في المجال من دون مساءلة وفحص

(رضوان السيد، الدراسات الإسلامية: استشراف واستئناف، 2020) بُغية الفهم والإسهام بما شأنه النفع والتيسير لطالب المعرفة.

في هذا السياق أتى الكتاب الأول يحمل عنوان New Methods in the Study of Islam وهو كتاب جماعي صدر سنة 2022م، من تنسيق الأستاذ ''عباس أغداسي (Abbass Aghdassi)''، أستاذ شعبة: تاريخ وحضارة المجتمعات المسلمة، وكذا الأستاذ ''Aaron W. Hughes''، أستاذ الدراسات الدينية بأمريكا، وهو بالمناسبة غزير الإنتاج في التخصص. ولقد أعقب هذا الكتاب بسنة واحدة كتاب جماعي آخر بعنوان: New Methodological Perspectives in Islamic Law، من تنسيق الأستاذين المذكورين أيضًا. والعنوانان يلفتان نظر القارئ إلى قضية بارزة، إنها قضية المنهج في الدراسات الإسلامية. وهذا ما سنسعى لتحليل القول فيه، والوقوف عند معاقده ومفاصله، حسبما يسمح به المقام في هذه المراجعة العجلى.

وجدير بالذكر في هذا المقام أنّ قضية المنهج في فهم الإسلام ليست حديثة الظهور، بل إنّها قديمة منذ استقرّ الإسلام دينًا ومرجعيَّة في الأحكام للمسلمين، فقد ظهر في التاريخ تيار الظاهرية الذي واجهه علماء الأصول من منطلق قصوره وعدم كفايته (ابن العربي، القبس، ...) كما برز تيار الباطنية الذي سعى إلى فهم النصوص الشرعية عن طريق التأويل غير المنضبط، وهو ما أفضى بأبي حامد الغزالي (ت. 505 هـ / 1111 م) إلى بيان تهافته في إنتاج المعرفة من خلال كتابه: فضائح الباطنية. ثم برزت فيما بعد مناهج مختلفة، مثل المنهج الفيلولوجي، والبنيوي، والتفكيكي، والتاريخاني، وُوجد من المفكرين – خصوصًا في السياق العربي الإسلامي – من دعا إلى إعمالها في فهم الإسلام رغم أنّ القصد من تأسيس هذه المناهج عند مؤسسيها وروادها هو تطبيقها على النصوص التاريخية والأدبية والفلسفية (نصر حامد، 2017) ثم ظهر الاستشراق فيما بعد، وما هو بمنهج في حد ذاته، لكنه اتجاه في دراسة الإسلام بمناهج ورؤى مختلفة، تباينت فيما بينها من حيث العلمية والأمانة والدقة في الوصف والتحليل.

2 الكتاب الأول: New Methods in the Study of Islam

واضح من عنوان هذا الكتاب أنّ القضية الشاغلة هي قضية المنهج المعتمد في فهم الإسلام ودراسته، والكتاب لا يحصر المسألة في منهج واحد، وإنما في مناهج كما يصرح بذلك عنوانه New Methods، وقد ضمّ بين ثناياه بحوثًا تروم النظر في اقتراح مناهج جديدة بديلة عمّا هو موروث سواء عن المسلمين أو عن غيرهم كما هو الحال بالنسبة للاستشراق.

يتمثل القصد من هذا الكتاب في أمرَيْن، أحدهما: الحاجة الملحة إلى فرز المناهج المتعددة التي انتصبت لدراسة الإسلام، وترتيبها حسب الأوْلوية، والتساؤل عن مدى جدواها في الواقع، والثاني – وهو القصد الرئيس من الكتاب – الاشتغال على فرضية مفادُها عدم وجود مكان للباحثين يجتمعون فيه من أجل التفكير المنهجي فيما يتعلق بأعمالهم الخاصة، وبالقدر نفسه من الأهمية بعمل الآخرين، ولقد كانت الرغبة أكيدة من أجل بيان القضايا المتعلقة بالمناهج من خلال التركيز على نقائص المناهج القديمة، وبيان الحاجة إلى مناهج جديدة لفهم الإسلام (New Methods, 2022) – وهذه نقطة التقاء تتقاطع فيها هذه الدراسات مع دراسة الباحث حميد مافاني النقدية لبنية الاجتهاد الأصولي في بحث له منشور ضمن كتاب جماعي بعنوان Islamic Law and Ethics, 2021، يدعو فيه إلى تجاوز البناء الأصولي للاجتهاد، وضرورة الانفتاح على علوم العصر الحديثة، وهي دعوى تُعوِزها الرؤية المنهجية والوظيفية العملية لتنزيل ما دعا إليه (Mavani, 2021).

لا يخفى على الناظر أنّ الخلفية الفكرية الموجهة لهذا العمل ترجع إلى القطيعة مع الماضي، وهي قطيعة في المنهج وليست قطيعة في المعرفة. وقد سادت هذه الرؤية خصوصًا في مجال العلوم الإنسانية في أواخر القرن الماضي من قِبل بعض المفكرين الذين رأوا أنّه لا سبيل إلى اللحاق بركْب التقدم الحضاري إلا بالقطع مع الماضي، وهو ما قام به جملة من المفكرين، مثل محمد أركون، ونصر حامد أبو زيد، والطيب تيزيني، وغيرهم. ففي هذا السياق التاريخي جاءت الدعوة إلى القطيعة مع المناهج القديمة، والقصد علم أصول الفقه على وجه الخصوص، وضرورة إعمال المناهج الحديثة في تأويل النصوص الدينية الإسلامية، كالبنيوية التي كانت في أوجها مع الفيلسوف الفرنسي ”رولان بارث (Roland Barth)“ والتفكيكية مع الفرنسي أيضًا ”جاك دريدا (Jacques Derrida)“ وغيرهما. ولا ضير في القطيعة مع منهج ما وتبنّي غيره، فقد حدث هذا غيرَ ما مرة في تاريخ العلوم، لكن بشرط إثبات القصور فيما يراد القطع معه، وبيان كفاية ونجاعة ما يراد إعماله.

اشتمل الكتاب الذي بين أيدينا على مقدمة وخمسة أقسام، حملت المقدمة عنوان: لماذا مناهج جديدة في دراسة الإسلام؟، وكان القسم الأول بعنوان: مناهج: قديم وجديد، والقسم الثاني بعنوان: دراسات سياقية، والثالث بعنوان: الإسلام والنقد، والرابع بعنوان: مقارنات جديدة، ثم الأخير بعنوان: صور من الإسلام المحلي. وكان مجمل البحوث اثني عشر بحثًا موزعة على هذه المحاور.

أغلب الدراسات الْمُدرَجة هنا تجمع بينها وحدة موضوعية، وهي هاجس المنهج في دراسة الإسلام، وإن لم تكن كلّ المقالات بنفس المستوى في تناول موضوع المنهج، خصوصًا في القسم الأخير الذي كان لبعض بحوثه طابعُ المحلية في عرْض بعض مظاهر الإسلام، وهو ما يجعل القارئ يتساءل عن مدى تعلقه بالمنهج والمنهجية! لقد كان السؤال المطروح في مقدمة الكتاب بدافع البحث عن مناهج جديدة في دراسة الإسلام؛

وهو ما يشي بكون المناهج القديمة لم تفلح في ذلك، وقد بقي هذا الجانب غامضا لدى محرر المقدمة، هل المقصود المناهج التي اعتمدها المسلمون في فهم نصوص الإسلام، أو المناهج التي اعتمدها المستشرقون في فهمه؟

على أنّ النظر في عناوين الدراسات الواردة ضمن الكتاب يوحي بأنّ هناك تسامحا في مفهوم المنهج، فقد يظنّ القارئ لأول وهلة أنّ المقصود به هو تلك الطريقة المسلوكة والخطوات المتبعة في الوصول إلى المعرفة، وهو ما لم يظهر على نحو واضح إلا في بحوث قليلة جدًّا، وهي تلك التي اندرجت تحت الدراسات السياقية، أحدها في تطور الفقه وأصوله، للكاتب "Ateeb Gul"، حيث رصد الكاتب علاقة التجاور والتجاذب بين العلمين، والثاني في الدراسات القرآنية للكاتب "Johanne Louise Christiansen" والذي سعى فيه لتحليل بنية القرآن في ضوء الاستعارة المفاهيمية ونظرية المزج المفاهيمي CMT and CBT. ولم تكن سائر البحوث – رغم اشتمالها على لفظ المنهج أو المنهجية – على نفس المنوال؛ مما يعني أنّ المقصود بالمنهج والمنهجية ذلك المعنى الدقيق الذي وقع الاصطلاح عليه. ومن الأمثلة على هذا البحث الذي قصد صاحبه معالجة العلاقة بين الثقافة وبين الدين والسياسة، وسعى من خلاله إلى نقد المقاربة الثقافية للإسلام، للكاتب "Housamedden Darwish" فهذا ضعيف التعلق بالمنهج بالمعنى الدقيق، ومثله في الكتاب دراسات أخرى على هذا المنوال. ولعلّ هذا هو السرّ في افتتاح الكتاب بمقالة "Aaron Hughes" تتضمن مفهوم المنهج والمنهجية، قاصدًا بذلك إعلام القارئ بعدم الجهل بالمعنى الدقيق للمنهج، ومشيرًا إلى معنى المنهجية التي تعني أنّ الباحث قد يختار في معالجة موضوع ما طريقةً خاصّةً في البحث ومختلفةً عن غيره، وهذا من الفروق الدقيقة بين المنهج وبين المنهجية.

لقد كان من القضايا ذات الأهميّة القصوى المطروحة في تلك المقالة ما تناوله الكاتب ضمن الحديث عن مناهج قديمة وأخرى حديثة، مركّزًا على أهمية الترجمة باعتبارها مقاربة معتمدة في نقل المعرفة الإسلامية، وهو بحث سعى من خلاله لعقد مقارنة بين الاستشراق من حيث هو منهج حديث في دراسة الإسلام وبين دعاوى أولئك الذين يسعون إلى استعادة الإسلام من غير أهله، والذين يرجعون إلى ما يعتبرونه "مناهج أصيلة" سبق اعتمادها في دراسة الإسلام، ثم يخلص الكاتب إلى أنّه لا شيء من تلك المناهج قديمها وحديثها يعتبر منهجًا صالحًا [طبيعيًّا] لدراسة الإسلام؛ وهو ما دفعه لاقتراح إمكانية التحقق من تلك المناهج، وذلك بالنظر في وقت ظهورها، وفي ثمارها المرجوّة منها.

لقد قدح الكاتب في كفاية المناهج المعتمدة عند المسلمين في فهم الإسلام. وعند الحديث عن المنهج المعتمد في ذلك عندهم فهو علم أصول الفقه بما يتيحه من آليات التفسير والتأويل لنصوص الشريعة، وهذا ما أكد عليه بعض المفسرين في مقدمات كتبهم، معتبرين أنّه نعم العون في الكشف عن المعنى المراد، (ابن جزيّ، التسهيل)، وأنّ القصور

الذي اتسمت به بعض التفاسير إنما جاءها من إغفالها علم أصول الفقه، والاقتصار
على ما ينقدح من ظواهر النصوص ببادئ الرأي. ولقد كان الأولى بالباحث – وهو يثير
هذه القضية – أن يبرز وجه القصور في هذا العلم على وجه الخصوص وعدم كفاية آلياته
ونجاعتها في الفهم السليم، بل حتى مقالة الباحث "Ateeb Gul" المخصصة للحديث
عن أصول الفقه في الكتاب نحت منحى آخر في المعالجة، ولم تتطرق لهذا الموضع رأسًا!

وإذا كان "Aaron Hughes" قد أكّد في بحثه على أهمية الترجمة باعتبارها منهجية
في فهم الإسلام، فإنّ ما ينبغي لفت الانتباه إليه هو الانحراف الذي قد يقع فيه المترجِم
عن المعنى الصحيح المقصود من اللغة المنقول منها إلى اللغة المنقول إليها، خصوصًا
عندما يتعلق الأمر بنقل المفاهيم المرتبطة بسياقات تاريخية ومقامية، فيكتفي بالبحث عن
اللفظ المقابل لما يُترجمه في اللغة المنقول إليها؛ ممّا يُفسد المعنى المقصود ويتسبب في
إتلاف جزء كبير منه (علي أومليل، 2013). والأمر هنا لا يتعلق بالمفاهيم الشرعية فحسب،
بل يشمل حتى المفاهيم في مجال العلوم الإنسانية.

لقد أفضى العمل في هذا الكتاب إلى فتح آفاق أخرى في تعميق النظر في قضية المنهج
في الدراسات الإسلامية، فأفضى ذلك إلى إصدار الكتاب الثاني، وهذا أوان بسْط القول
فيه.

3   الكتاب الثاني: New Methodological Perspectives in Islamic Studies

صدر هذا الكتاب بعد سنة من صدور الكتاب الأول وهو يحمل عنوان: آفاق منهجية
جديدة في الدراسات الإسلامية. والكتاب عبارة عن مزيد تعميق نظرٍ في صلب قضية
المنهج المنشودة في دراسات العمل الأول. فبعد النظر في المناهج المقترحة باعتبارها
بدائلَ، تأتي أعمال هذا الكتاب في نحو أربعة عشر فصلًا، موزعة على مدخل تمهيدي
وثلاثة أقسام، تدور في فلك البحث عن آفاق منهجية جديدة في الدراسات الإسلامية.

اشتمل المدخل التمهيدي على مقدمة الكتاب مع بحث مستقلّ عنها للكاتب Aron
Hughes بعنوان: "الإسلام و ...": التفكير في الإسلام من خلال فنّ المقارنة. فهو
بمثابة الرئيس الذي تعقبه أبحاث أخرى تسير معه في نفس الاتجاه. حمل القسم الأول
عنوان: الجندر، واندرج تحته بحثان راما معالجة مدى حضور المرأة في أعمال التراث
الإسلامي. واحتفل القسم الثاني والثالث من الكتاب بهاجس الحياة الاجتماعية المعيشة
ومدى انعكاسات الصبغة الدينية عليها، مع الاحتفال ببعض المقاربات المنهجية المعينة
على فهم ذلك، نحو المنهج الفيمونولوجي، وهو ما يبدو بارزا في عمل الكاتب "Emin
Poljarevic".

يمكن القول إنّ بحثَي القسم الأول يصدران عن اتجاهٍ ظهر في أواخر القرن العشرين، ونشط على نحو بارز في مطلع القرن الواحد والعشرين وما يزال، وهذا اتجاه يعتبر المرأة مُبعَدة من الإسهام في العملية التفسيرية والتأويلية للنصوص الدينية في الإسلام، وكذا من الاجتهاد فيها؛ مما أدّى إلى احتكار المعرفة وانحصار السلطة التأويلية في يد الرجال فحسب؛ وهو ما أفضى إلى فهم متعسف في حقّ المرأة، خصوصا عند المقارنة بين النصوص المتعلقة بالمرأة وبين بعض التأويلات لها من قبل الفقهاء والمفسرين (Eva Kepplinger, 2023). وليس هذا الاتجاه قاصرًا على الدراسات الإسلامية فحسب، بل يكاد يكون عامًّا في مختلف المجالات، وهو ما تدور حوله جملة من الدراسات المعاصرة (Jane Scharberg, 1997)، و (Charlotte Witt, 2006) و (Elasabeth S. Fiorenza, 2013).

وقد اهتمّ عبد الصمد بلحاج في بحثه الموسوم بعنوان Back to Critique: Islamic Studies and the Vicious Hermeneutic Circle بمسألة النقد في الدراسات الإسلامية من قبل بعض الباحثين الأكاديميين، مبرزا تراوُحها بين النقد بمفهومه العلمي وبين النقد باعتباره إيديولوجيًّا موجَّهة للفكر النقدي. وهذا التمييز بين هذين المقامين ممّا يمكن اعتبارُه من حسنات هذه الدراسة رغم الاختلاف في بعض تفاصيلها، ذلك أنّ النقد باعتباره إيديولوجيًّا لا ينتج معرفة صحيحة يمكن استثمارها والاستفادة منها، بل قُصارى أمره أن ينتج مواقف وتبريرات لأحكام سابقة على الشيء ليس إلّا، وهو ما يتنافى مع أعراف البحث العلمي.

تتمثل الحلقة المفرغة للتأويل في الدراسات الإسلامية – في نظر الباحث – في عدم القدرة على تجاوز المسافة الفاصلة بين القارئ في الوقت المعاصر وبين القراءات التي تقدّمها تفسيرات قديمة؛ ممّا يعني أنّ القارئ سيبقى داخل تلك الدائرة الضيّقة ولن يستطيع الخروج منها، وهذا هو وجه كونها دائرة مُفرغة. وسعيًا من الكاتب في تجاوز هذه المعضلة، يقترح حلّين يتمثلان في تبنّي مقاربتين برزتا في الدراسات الفرنكفونية، خصوصًا في فرنسا وبلجيكا، بينما لم يحتفل بهما أصحاب الدراسات الإنجليزية. تتجلّى المقاربة الأولى في الأنثروبولوجيا التاريخيّة لصاحبتها "Jacqueline Chabbi" التي ترى للعامل الاجتماعي أثرًا بارزًا في اللغة والخطاب وتطور المعاني تدريجيًّا، وهو ما يمكّن القارئ من وضع مسافة بين ما يُقدَّم له من تأويل قيل في زمن معيّن؛ ومن ثَمّ فلا حاجة للتمسك به مع خصوصًا مع تقدّم الزمان. وتتمثل المقاربة الثانية في إمكانية الاستفادة من الدراسات النقدية للكتاب المقدس بُغية صياغة مواضع للبحث في الدراسات القرآنية.

يبقى ما اقترحه الباحث رأيًا معروضًا على محكّ النظر العلمي ليثبت جدواه أو قصوره، وهو ما يقتضي إفراده بدراسة مستقلة تكشف بدقة عن بُنْية المقاربتَيْن وتفاصيلهما، ومن ثَمّ، الأخذ منهما والاعتذار عنهما.

وعلى الجملة، فقد قارب الكتابان موضوعًا جديرًا بالاعتناء والدراسة والتحليل، طالما أنّه يتعلق بالمنهج الذي يُنتج المعرفة في مجال الدراسات الإسلامية، كما أنّ مقدار الأبحاث المنجزة فيه تعبّر عن الاهتمام المتزايد في الوقت الراهن بالدراسات الإسلامية، إن على مستوى المعرفة أو على مستوى المنهج.

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The Rise of Critical Islam: 10th–13th Century Legal Debate

Soufi, Youcef L., *The Rise of Critical Islam: 10th–13th Century Legal Debate*, 274 pp., New York: Oxford University Press, 2023, hardcover, ISBN 978-0-19-768500-6, $96.82.

Formal debate serves as a central method of intellectual interaction. Two sides present their positions and proofs, competing to reach the truth of a given topic. At a debate's conclusion, one side is declared the "winner," while the other is left to ponder their position, either abandoning it or further honing their arguments for future encounters. In the contemporary Muslim world, debates between Islamic legal (*sharīʿa*) scholars often devolve into conflict, where one position is deemed the "correct" interpretation of God's will for humanity. At the same time, the other is cast aside as a falsehood that should be ignored. In many circumstances, inter-Muslim debates have fueled intolerance and even resulted in violence against those who hold the "incorrect" view of the religion.

This was not always the way Muslims and their scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) treated differences within their ranks. At the end of the classical period of Islamic history, a vibrant culture of disputation (*munāẓara*) flourished in the legal academies of places like late Abbasid Baghdad, creating a scholarly environment in which differences were understood, respected, and even celebrated as scholars vied to interpret the rules that the Muslim community was divinely ordained to follow. This culture of legal critique is the subject of Youcef Soufi's recent work, *The Rise of Critical Islam: 10th–13th Century Legal Debate*. Building on the work of the historian George Makdisi and his highlighting of the role *munāẓara* played in shaping the classical legal schools (*madhāhib*, sg. *madhhab*), Soufi focuses on a series of debates that occurred between the Shāfiʿī jurist Ibrāhīm b. Yaʿqūb al-Fīrūzabādī al-Shīrāzī (d. 476 AH / 1083 CE) and interlocutors in Baghdad, particularly the Ḥanafī Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Dāmaghānī (d. 478 AH / 1085 CE) and al-Shīrāzī's Shāfiʿī colleague, the infamous Abū al-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī (d. 478 AH / 1085 CE). These prominent jurists and representatives of their schools sparred on several issues, with the book analyzing questions of whether Muslim converts are required to pay old non-Muslim poll taxes (*jizya*), the ability of a guardian to force his daughter into a marriage, and the validity of prayer when a Muslim discovers that they were mistaken in determining its appropriate direction (*qibla*).

By observing the nuances of these debates and placing them within their social and academic milieu, Soufi draws out the contours of what he labels "critical Islam," an environment in which positions of a school were analyzed, debated, and sometimes modified cordially through *munāẓara*, part of a pious process of seeking God's law "as a means of intellectual growth, permitting an individual to better understand a question before her" (p. 22). Therefore, the book tells its readers the story of this phenomenon in Islam's intellectual history, from its beginnings to its heyday and ultimate decline.

The book is divided into three general sections. Part I includes chapters 1–3 and focuses on the definition and contours of the critical culture in classical Islam. Chapter 1 begins by emphasizing that scholars of eleventh-century Baghdad viewed *munāẓara* as a necessary process of religious devotion through which jurists "could discover what God wanted of His creation" (p. 35). Piety drove scholars to debate, with the result being to carry the burden of interpreting God's law and guiding lay Muslims. At the same time, however, scholarly debates were limited as they excluded viewpoints of the very lay Muslims that they intended to serve with their resulting rulings. When considering financial obligations during marriage, Soufi notes that jurists often focused on uniquely male experiences without entertaining the impact their ruling might have had – positively or negatively – on the wife. Chapter 2 then embarks on a genealogy of *munāẓara*, tracing its roots to early Muslim theological debates yet only finding its final form as a process of disputation with set rules and ethics during the early tenth century in Baghdad. Finally, chapter 3 expands on the work of chapter 1 and describes two foundations underpinning the *munāẓara* culture. The first was the shifting binary of juristic interpretation (*ijtihād*) and adherence to previous legal authority (*taqlīd*). Soufi argues that, although there were several questions on the limits of *ijtihād* during the classical period, the obligation for jurists to understand the textual and logical evidence behind legal rulings remained. Even if one were to engage in *taqlīd* of their legal school (*madhhab*), that could only be maintained if a jurist was confident and aware of the evidence for the opinions held by their school and teachers. The second foundation of *munāẓara* culture was the inherent uncertainty of Islamic law. Whether one adhered to the idea that there was only one correct answer to a legal question (*mukhaṭṭi'a*) or believed that all sincere jurists were correct (*muṣawwiba*), the only way that these answers could be accurately fleshed out was through open discussion, debate, and critique.

Part II of Soufi's work includes three chapters and delves into the specifics of the disputations engaged in by al-Shīrāzī. The first of these, covered in Chapter 4, was whether a convert to Islam was still required to pay the *jizya* that had accrued when he was not a Muslim. For al-Shīrāzī's interlocutor

al-Dāmaghānī, any past *jizya* was canceled when a person entered Islam. This was because the school's eponym, Abū Ḥanīfa, had long championed the equality of all believers and declared that no Muslim should be singled out by holding a debt that those born Muslim do not have to bear. al-Shāfiʿī, the eponym of al-Shīrāzī's school, held that past *jizya* remains a debt upon the new Muslim. However, he provided no significant information to justify this textually. According to Soufi, the silence of al-Shāfiʿī created an opportunity for later scholars within the Shāfiʿī school to engage in independent interpretation, creating a rich history of *ijtihād* that helped al-Shīrāzī develop his position of justifying the ruling through analogy (*qiyās*).

Chapter 5 then discusses the question of whether a marriage guardian (*walī*) could force a woman under his authority to marry a man without her consent. Within the Shāfiʿī school, it was a long-standing opinion that guardians could force marriages on the premise that they were looking out for the bride's best interests. However, al-Shīrāzī's close friend and colleague al-Juwaynī criticized forced marriage through his interpretation of Prophetic statements, advocating for the inherent social benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) of upholding a woman's autonomy in marriage. Through *munāẓara*, al-Shīrāzī challenged al-Juwaynī's positions, showing how even well-established views within a legal school could be questioned and scrutinized.

Chapter 6 concludes this section by elaborating on the possibility of debate and critique within a school by asking whether a Muslim's prayer was valid when they discovered that they had done so in the wrong direction after praying. This issue was never resolved in the Shāfiʿī school, with some invalidating and others validating prayers that were performed when unknowingly facing the wrong direction. al-Juwaynī and al-Shīrāzī, through *munāẓara*, took turns examining the evidence behind each position. Ultimately, the debaters never reached a formal resolution regarding the matter, leaving the opinion of the school open-ended. Through this example, Soufi presents an alternative to other contemporary scholars who view *munāẓara* as a mechanism to finally resolve doctrinal issues and settle upon a single approach. Instead, indeterminacy in some matters was deemed a valuable asset of Islamic law and preserved a geographically and intellectually diverse juristic discourse.

Finally, Part III of the book contains one chapter that discusses an element that ultimately led to the dissipation of classical *munāẓara* culture: temporal decay. According to Soufi, the common belief that knowledge, dedication, and piety declined over time made it possible for Muslims as early as the 12th and 13th centuries CE to see their societies as lacking in those who could engage in *munāẓara*. This position bolstered the views of those who advocated stricter adherence to previous legal authority and downplayed more open juristic

interpretation. For example, Soufi cites Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505 AH / 1111 CE), who stipulated that any person engaging in *munāẓara* must have the ability to engage with the law independently (*mujtahid*) yet simultaneously claimed that such scholars no longer exist. As a result, *munāẓara* faded into the background of Islamic legal discourse, and the culture of adherence (*taqlīd*) became more prominent.

In conclusion, *The Rise of Critical Islam* is an essential addition to studying Islamic intellectual history and holds important lessons for Muslims today. At a point often described by many as the peak of Islamic intellectual prowess, Muslims embraced alternative opinions and engaged in a culture of debate not necessarily aimed at reaching a definitive conclusion. Rather, despite its limitations, *munāẓara* enriched the academic culture and provided a space for scholars to hone their skills and question authority in a respectful, pious setting. Although many observers, including Soufi, have noted that the contemporary Muslim world has diverged significantly from that ideal, "there was no inherent quality of Islam that made the ascendance of the vision of decaying time or the subsequent acceptance of *taqlīd* inevitable" (p. 191). Therefore, Muslims today may find inspiration in the culture of *munāẓara* that flourished in Abbasid Baghdad and re-discover a method of religious discourse that is tolerant of others and open to internal critique.

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