

The Hidden Origins of Islam

Bibliographic data-

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The author's goal is to "make clear that the beginnings of Islam will only be able to be understood on the basis of historical sources, not from later interpretations, and when historical and philological questions are investigated on the basis of those sources." (p. 12)

CONCEPTS:

- **History of Early Islam 1**
- **History of Early Islam 2**
- **Character of Early Islam 1**
- **Character of Early Islam 2**

EXPLANATION:

History of Early Islam 1

- The first 2 "Islamic" centuries lie in the shadows of history with no witnesses whatsoever
- Before the idea of a Hijra, Arabian-Christian reckoning of time began with the year 622
- The name Muawiya means 'The Weeper,' & may be a nom de guerre of a "malcontent"
- Muhammad received his revelation in the cave Hira & spent 1 month each year there
- Mu'awiya belonged to the Quraysh, the holy family of the prophet of the Arabians
- Mu'awiya paid tribute to Constantinople in 659 to buy time to secure his leadership with Arabs
- A movement to unite all Christians of the Arabian Empire understood Jesus as the Muhammad
- Coins bearing the name Abd Allah and the Muhammad appear without any names of ancestors
- The Islam of Abd al-Malik derives from the Arabian understanding of Syrian theology
- Abd al-Malik made the emperor see him as a competitor in the debate over the nature of Christ
- Sassanian defeat in 622 ended a 1000 year division of the Near East into Iranian & Roman areas
- Competing with Constantinople, Abd al-Malik continued Sassanian & Roman ways of authority
- The Dome of the Rock replaced Mu'awiya's shrine of John the Baptist as the central holy place
- Emperor claimed "Servant of Christ" & Abd al-Malik claimed "Speaker for God" (Khalifat Allah)
- The authority of Buddhist temple leaders as viziers in Baghdad is attested by many coins
- Al-Ma'mun 813-833 took up the title Khalifat Allah after an absence of more than a century
- The Arabs regarded 4 Gospels as a falsification of their original one-volume Diatessaron
- The inscription "Muhammad (bn) 'Abd Allah" once meant the "chosen/praised servant of God"
- The year 622 of Byzantine victory over the Sassanians started the self-rule of the Arabians
- The "chosen/praised servant of God" is "the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the apostle of God"
- During al-Ma'mun (832-833) Muhammad bn Abd Allah became the new movement of Islam
- Aramaic was the lingua franca of the Near East region more than a millennium preceding Arabic

History of Early Islam 2

- 'Muhammad (is) the servant of God and his messenger!' should be "'praised be the servant..."
- The Qur'an does not deny the crucifixion as a historical fact; but the claim of Jesus' opponents

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- We need Syro-Aramaic to understand the Qur'an at all in the way it was to be understood
- Late Sira biography took Muhammad as a personal name giving Muhammad I & "Muhammad II
- Historical Islam (Islam II) began at the earliest in the middle of the eighth century
- 8th century Christians call Muhammad an Arab prophet because this name was strange for Christ
- The stone that lies in the Dome of the Rock under the cupola symbolizes the tomb of Christ
- Islam I" was pre-Nicene Syrian-Arabian Christianity - Islam II" replaced the Bible with the Qur'an
- The Qur'an is at least partially the work of a group or of a community
- People said the young Christian slave Djibr taught Muhammad much of what he revealed
- Islam falsifying the Gospel is like pagan critics-Celsus, Porphyry, Emperor Julian & Manichaeans
- The Qur'an is the "most strongly self-referential holy text in the history of religion
- Jerusalem is the context of Islamic anti-trinitarian & Christological polemic at Dome of the Rock
- In 710 there did exist, among other writings, a "writing on the Cow" distinct from the Qur'an
- Extremely succinct character is shown by the author of "Heresy 100" in his knowledge of Islam
- The end of the 7th century and start of the 8th is a key moment in the history of the Qur'an
- Raja b. Haywa was administrator & "spiritual advisor" for construction of the Dome of the Rock
- Al-Hajjaj wrote Abd al-Malik is more greatly honored by God than Muhammad & the prophets
- Different "Qur'anic" traditions existed in different parts of the empire, in Hijaz, in Syria & Iraq
- At stake in the hadith is the "composition" of the texts and their being organized into a whole
- Al-Hajjaj is said to have stated "I only work by inspiration"
- Al-Hajjaj sent out official Qur'ans to the various capitals without the approval of the caliph

Character of Early Islam 1

- Goldziher showed most hadiths were total forgeries from the late 2nd & 3rd Muslim centuries
- A group of Soviet Islamologists show a remarkable similarity Wansbrough, Cook, & Crone
- Every legal tradition must be taken as a fictitious expression formulated at a later date
- Conservative scholars accept the unreliability of the Muslim sources & more radical conclusions
- Jerusalem in early Islam did not undermine Mecca since Islam did not yet have a cultic centre
- Promotion of Ismail & Mecca was at its height when the Abbasids assumed power & for 80 years
- Large parts of the sira and hadith were invented to account for the difficulties in the Qur'an
- Classical Arabic is a construction, even if it is not a construction ex nihilo
- Arabic used various scripts until it felt the need to have its "own" script, sacred book & language
- Arabic writing emerged like Hebrew after the Babylonian exile to distinguish exiles & other Jews
- Ibn Mas'ud refused to destroy his copies of the Qur'an in accordance with Uthman's order
- The Qur'an contains pre-Islamic material older than the oral tradition of the text
- After 622 Heraclius restructured the empire so West Syria & Palestine were no longer provinces & turned over to Arab princes who were more or less confederated & responsible to pay tribute
- For approximately 300 years a Hellenistic Christianity existed right alongside Syrian Christianity
- Syria accepted Chalcedon superficially-could not do much with the council's technical definitions
- Empress Theodora was inclined to Monophysitism so Theodore "of Arabia" was consecrated as bishop in 542 & Jacob Baradaeus in 544 as "Bishop of the Arabs" & established it in east Syria
- The Syrian thought-world (like Jewish) is oriented to history and not, as in the Hellenistic tradition, to "being" or "essence," that is, to the nature of God, humanity, and the cosmos
- Tatian spoke of the divine Logos coming forth "in the beginning" from God through an act of will as His first-born work-God appeared in human form-humans are born in imitation of the Logos

Character of Early Islam 2

- Arius is the next theologian in whose works one can see directions in Syrian theology
- West Syrian theologians had to find ways to formulate Christianity under the Nicene definitions

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- The unity of the God-Logos & the human Jesus consisted on God's side of the election of Jesus & grace & on Jesus' side of obedience unto death (not through death), ethical proof of worthiness
- It was a long time before Chalcedon was accepted in the Byzantine church; the decisive factor was the theology of Cyril of Alexandria—the unity of the God-man expressed in terms of essence
- Before Nicaea theologians were not concerned with binitarian or Trinitarian concepts, 2-nature Christology & incarnational soteriology - people could simply be Christians the east Syrian way
- Syrian thought was formulated with great clarity: the title "Son of God" is a title of honor and no "essential" name as in Nicaea - God has given it to that one on whom he has had favor
- Around 600 Syrian & Antiochene theology became Hellenized
- Western & Syrian Christianity emphasized different matters in soteriology & so too the Qur'an
- The theology represented in the Qur'an is pre-Arian, or at least not touched by Arianism
- Muhammad is only 4 times in the Qur'an, in Medinan suras, and connection to a specific person is often difficult to discern — does it relate to Jesus, Moses, or the Arabian prophet?
- The Qur'an & Muhammad knows nothing of a fourfold gospel as east Syria used the Diatessaron
- Ishmaelites remained in Christianity of their beginnings against Jews & Christians "led astray"
- Not recognizing Muhammad as Jesus, John of Damascus saw Ishmaelites as Christian heretics.
- Passages entered the Qur'an no longer representing early Syrian-Arabian Christianity, but the beginnings of a new religion (Islam) which are not very numerous, but of great import for their effects & are from end of the 8th century or early 9th century (just prior to the time of al-Mamun) - the oldest extant & datable manuscript of the entire text is from the later 9th century.

Foreword

"The Islamic literature of the ninth century also contributes to current narratives of the later history of the spread of Islam, although only a few 'witnesses' from the first two Muslim centuries are extant. Usually, the difficulties these sources create are not mentioned. Josef van Ess is a notable exception. He admits that there are only a few early witnesses and, for the first century after the Hijra, only a few inscriptions, such as those on the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, on the Umayyad mosque in Damascus, and in numismatic legends. Further, he admits that all (later) Islamic texts stand "under suspicion of projection." Consequently, he refuses to present the first century at all; rather, he begins with the second, although he also states that the same problems exist for this century, in that there are hardly any "original texts" to be found.' In other words, the first two "Islamic" centuries lie in the shadows of history, and it remains inexplicable how the development of a large Islamic empire could have left behind no witnesses whatsoever, even among groups from whom we might expect such traces, such as the enemies of the Arabs, the many Byzantines known for their literary skills and output, and the Jews and Christians living under the alleged Islamic authority." (p. 9)

"In addition, it will become clear that, long before the appearance of the idea of a Hijra, there was an Arabian-Christian reckoning of time, which began with the year 622 and was only later "converted" to a Muslim meaning. Until approximately the end of the eighth century, so it seems, Arabian-Christian tribal leaders governed the regions of the Near East and of North Africa—indeed, **the Umayyad leaders and even the early Abbasids were Christians**. It was not until the second century after the Hijra that the idea of Muhammad seems to have been loosened from its original connection (namely, to Jesus) and then isolated as a conception unto itself. Further, this process of detachment seems to have experienced both an expansion of the idea, to include a Christian apostle-prophet named Muhammad, and an

intermediate stage that served as a conceptual bridge, namely, the worship of a certain 'Ali ("exalted"), who took over normative functions in a more concrete way and in the place of the distant and transcendent Muhammad (Jesus). In the eighth century, and more fully in the ninth, the developing independence of the Muhammad idea made it possible to bind it with (or to establish it as the foundation for) the idea of an Arab prophet of this same name, an idea that had already been transmitted through history to some degree, and through this process gained its own independent shape. **This also bound the Muhammad idea to the Arabian holy places of Mecca and Medina.** All of this seems to have **served the interest of the creation of an Arabian identity for the Abbasid Empire.** At this time, then, the biographical works and the collections of Hadith about the Sunna appeared. **All of the available traditions concerning earlier Arabian rulers and controversies were then woven into a continuing history of the Islamic religion and the development of its empire.** The older veneration of 'Ali was repressed and survives only among the Shiite traditions. From the perspective of the history of religions, one recognizes here a fascinating process in the emergence of a new religion. The individuals in question, just like the redactors of the Pentateuch, infused their religion into a "canonical" time of beginnings, in which they then grounded and legitimated it. This interpretation, argued among these contributions most strongly by Volker Popp, and deepened by Christoph Luxenberg (although already suggested by Yehuda D. Nevo and Judith Koren), is not simply a subjective opinion; rather, it is supported here by the only sources able to express themselves in terms of history. What is the relationship, though, between this thesis and the Quran, whose texts are attested—with a few exceptions—only in the early eighth century and in a defective script, and whose Muslim "canonization" was not complete until approximately one hundred years later? One should always remember that the Qur'an appeared in a time and a place (Iraq) when the entire surrounding region was still Christian (and Jewish). Can it have been created as the foundational document of a new religion at that time? Or did it become so only later? Gunter Luling has most recently argued that, **before Muhammad, there was a sort of "Ur-Qur'an," consisting of hymns arising from an Arian milieu; these hymns were later edited by Muhammad and early Muslim communities.** These initially hypothetical arguments have been supported through the work of Christoph Luxenberg, albeit using completely different methodological starting points. Luxenberg has shown the following: 1) the Quran emerged in a region that was linguistically Arabic/Syro-Aramaic; 2) **a multitude of passages represent Syriac words and sentences written in Arabic letters;** 3) that the grammatical structure of the Arabic of the Quran betrays Syriac influences throughout; and 4) **some original Arabic words were misinterpreted through the development of the "fuller" writing, that is, the fixing of the consonants through diacritical points, a process that took place as much as two hundred years later.** Completely new readings and expressions often emerge from these investigations into the Qur'anic text, readings which point to a Christian background. Luxenberg has also found that the Qur'an not only stems from a region linguistically Syro-Aramaic, but that it is also, at least in large parts, based on an originally Syriac text. He points to four written characters that were either nearly identical or extremely similar in the Syriac and Arabic scripts and therefore capable of being mistaken for one another—but which served as indicators of different consonants in the two written languages. He argues that these characters were preserved in the transfer of the original Syriac text into Arabic, which means that they were not then converted into the correctly corresponding Arabic characters. This phenomenon points to the use of a text originally written in Syriac." (pp. 10-11)

PART ONE: The Early History of Islam

Chapter 1 – The Early History of Islam, Following Inscriptural and Numismatic Testimony - Volker Popp

“Concerning the naming of Mu’awiya on the Darabjird coins, his Aramaic name is written following the East Aramaic (Mandaean) tradition. The question must remain open concerning how much the name MAAWIA, that is, ‘The Weeper,’ is a *nom de guerre* in the sense of a “malcontent.” This type of name is known from the late Sassanian period. For example, the Sassanian general and conqueror of Jerusalem (614) called himself Shahr-varaz, that is, ‘Boar of the State,’ who inhabited the city in such a way that he lived up to his *nom de guerre*?’ One should also consider the possibility that the name MAAWIA could be a *laqab* (Arabic for a nickname, an epithet, sometimes also in the sense of a conversion name). If this is the case, then we must reckon with the possibility that the true name of the ruler remains unknown to us, and that only a personal characteristic of his, or perhaps the opposite thereof, has been transmitted to us. It is also possible that the nickname “The Weeper” should be considered under the rubric of the *nomina boni auguris*. Behind this derogatory nickname may lie the extremely old, and not only Semitic, conception that a derogatory nickname serves as a deception and provides a protection against the evil eye (cf. (Qur’an sura 113:5). In addition, the lack of a personal name could stand in the old Semitic tradition, in which silence concerning one’s actual name can minimize the possibility that someone else can manipulate the bearer of the name. The coins from Darabjird are dated to the year 41. The depiction on the coins follows the Sassanian tradition. Mu’awiya is called Amir-i-wlwyshnyk’n on his coins made in Darabjird. ” (p. 28)

“The Prophet of the Arabians received his revelation when he retreated into the cave with the name Hira. He made it his practice to return to this cave yearly, spending one month in religious practices. There were approximately two hundred years between the affairs of the *ibad* in al-Hira in Iraq, about which Rothstein wrote, and the revelation in the cave Hira, if one follows the traditional history and Ibn Hisham’s (d. 828 or 833, depending on one’s source) possibly Active biography of the prophet. The conception of al-Hira as a place in which revelation was communicated apparently became an independent tradition, and ultimately became the *topos* of the location of the revelation, regardless of which revelation was intended. ” (p. 33)

“What may be difficult for the followers of the traditional conceptions to explain is the naming of the “era of the Arabians.” In the understanding of the traditions of Islam and Islamic studies, Mu’awiya is hardly an exemplary Muslim, even if he is undoubtedly Muslim, because he belonged to the Quraysh of the theological history, the holy family of the prophet of the Arabians. He is also one of the founders of the *taqiyya*, because he—following the traditional literature—knew how to conceal his support for the prophet of the Arabians for quite a long time. Even if Mu’awiya’s use of Christian symbols and behavior toward Christians as an extremely Christian ruler may have made obligatory his understanding of the use of *taqiyya*, by naming his own method of dating as an ‘era of the Arabians’ rather than as an “era of Islam” or an “era of the Hijra,” he nonetheless betrays the fact that the prophet of the Arabians, as well as the “era of the Hijra,” are not yet known to him.” (p. 40)

“However, the proper time for the action against Constantinople had not yet come. Mu’awiya first had to secure his leadership among the Arabian emirs. For this reason, he effected a cease-fire in the West and concluded a treaty with Byzantium in 659, although the latter did subject him to the payment of tribute.’ Iran, the last Sassanian, Yazdgard III, began to reign in 632, after four years of conflict over the throne—and ten years after the surprising beginning of the decline of the Sassanians as a world power. In the year 20 of the Arabian era, the year Heraclius died, and nine years before Yazdgard met his end in Merv, coins were already being minted for Arabian generals in the Sassanian style. Further, in the year 26 of the Arabian era, the emir Salim b. Ziyad had coins minted in Darabjird, the former Sassanian royal

residence in the region of Persia. His relative 'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad was also minting coins in this year in Zaranj. In the year 41, Ziyad b. Abi Sufyan had coins minted in Darabjird as well." (p. 48)

"A new Christian movement, intended to unite all the Christians of the Arabian Empire, was announced by the demand that an understanding of Jesus as the Muhammad be adopted. This demand was preceded by another. Namely, that Jesus be conceived as Abd Allah. The point of this demand was to give Christian theology in the Orient a leitmotif that could be employed over against Byzantium as a unifying program for the Christians in the former Byzantine east and the former eastern Sassanian Empire." (p. 52)

"Consequently, it is not necessary that we assign coins with the inscription abd Allah to an emir named 'Abd Allah b. Amir. If what appears on a coin is intended as a name of an emir, generally speaking, the name of the father also appears. This is true of Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah, who minted coins in Herat in year 67 of the Arabian era. This is the first time that the personal name Muhammad appears in historical records. The use of this name became current among the Arabians only after the mission of 'Abd al-Malik. Further, it is only the coins bearing the name of the 'abd Allah and the Muhammad that appear without any names of ancestors. Gaube also recognized this phenomenon in the case of the muhammad', he avoided assigning its meaning to an emir named Muhammad b. (name)." While, according to him, it is possible that this title does concern the prophet of the Arabians himself, Gaube's recognition at least remains in the realm of history and not that of speculation." (p. 53)

"The Muhammadanism of 'Abd al-Malik cannot simply be equated with Nestorianism. His Muhammadanism derives much more from the Arabian understanding of Syrian theology. Further, this Arabian understanding of Syrian theology did not arise in the Nestorian imperial church of Iran; rather, as the tribal religion of the Mesopotamian and Iranian Arabs, it became a constitutive part of their ethnicity." (p. 57)

"In defending Muhammadanism, 'Abd al-Malik's autocephalous Arabian Church of the Arabian Empire saw the possibility of keeping the Christological debate open. During this period it had seemed that the emperor and his primary church officer, the patriarch of Constantinople, had fought and directed the Christological controversy; indeed, at the end of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, held in Constantinople in 681, the collection of church leaders had acclaimed Emperor Constantine IV thus: "Many years to the emperor! You have expressed the essence of the nature of Christ. O Lord, protect this lampstand of the world!" However, in 'Abd al-Malik the Tradition of the See (Patriarch) of Antioch reentered the scene. He made the emperor understand that he saw himself as a competitor in the debate over the nature of Christ. He entered the debate with an Ekthesis of his own and, in the year 72 of the Arabian era (691-692), had it inscribed in the Temple shrine he had built in Jerusalem called Qubbat al-Sakhra ("The Repository of the Rock")." (p. 58)

"This pragmatic approach was necessary to ensure smooth activity at the governmental level in a region that was unified for the first time in a millennium (since Alexander the Great and his Diadochi). It was a land mass from Egypt in the west to central Asia, on the border of China, in the east. This corridor rematerialized as a result of the radical change initiated by the victory of Heraclius over the Persian armies in **622. This victory led to the dissolution of the Sassanian dynasty and, as a result, ended the nearly thousand-year division of the Near East into an Iranian portion and a Hellenistic/Roman portion.** The result of this change, which has endured even until today, was the migration of the Arabian Muhammadanism from the East into the West. This dynamic movement, which according to traditional Islamic scholarship had its origin in the preaching of the prophet of the Arabians, did not spread to Syria

from Arabia, in fact, but from Iran. Or rather, Muhammadanism did not move from south to north, but rather from east to west. The idea of a south to north movement, an idea arising from the early third century of Islam, is actually a portion of the religious history of the movement. The protagonist of this conception is Khalid b. al-Walid, who understood the connection of Mecca to this historical dynamic. The historical literature of the third century portrays this hero as the leader of a conquering army from Mecca into eastern Arabia. The army continued under his leadership into the homeland of Abraham in Chaldea, and then to al-Hira, the center of the Nestorian Christians in Mesopotamia. From there they proceeded further west to Arran, the endpoint of Abraham's migration as portrayed in the Bible.

Crossing the Jordan River at Yarmuk, they went on into Palestine, which was the "Promised Land" to the Arabians as well—as descendants of Ishmael. Finally, they conquered the Arabian (Nabataean) city of Damascus. It is important to note that victory in battle is a topos in this historical literature as divine approval of the conquest." (pp. 67-68)

"As a competitor with the emperor in Constantinople, 'Abd al-Malik did not shy away from the continuation of Sassanian and Roman traditions of authority. Although the nearly life-size statue of an Arabian ruler, found in the vicinity of Jericho in Khirbat al-Mafjar, cannot be unquestionably attributed to him, it shows nonetheless that the traditional ideas concerning the depiction of a ruler, as well as those concerning the construction and erection of statues of a ruler, had not disappeared even by the end of the first century of the Arabian era." (pp. 68-69)

"In connection with the erection of the Dome of the Rock as the temple of the "New Zion" and as the center of an Arabian-Muhammadan-Christian imperial church, we must make mention of the depiction of the Solomonic temple's "hardware" on Arabian copper coins of that time. There was a special issue of copper coins concerning **'Abd al-Malik's haram, the Dome of the Rock, which replaced Mu'awiya's haram, the shrine of John the Baptist in Damascus, as the central holy place of the Arabian Empire.** The coins from Damascus had pointed to the veneration of John in Damascus by depicting the "Head of the Baptist"; the new coins, however, in depicting the various vessels of the temple, no longer pointed to a single prophet, but quite broadly to the entire "Zion" complex." (p. 72)

"The emperor called himself "Servant of Christ" (servus Christi) on his gold coins; his opponent in Jerusalem called himself "Speaker for God" (Khalifat Allah). The emperor was a "new David" as the conqueror of the Persian "Goliath"; in replacing the regime of a King Saul, the Arabian ruler was a "new David," making use of the conceptual world of the Old Testament. Of course, Mu'awiya was intended in this mention of "Saul": a prince warring and yet erring (in the view of the Arabian Church of the Arabian Empire. Just as for the emperor in Constantinople, so also for the Arabian ruler of the East, the Old Testament was the source for the idea of the role of the emperor. The definition of the Arabian ruler's authorization as the "Speaker for God" {Khalifat Allah) presupposes a change in the Byzantine emperor's understanding of his own role. Beginning in 629, Heraclius no longer called himself autokrator, in imitation of the idea of the Roman emperor, but rather basileus, or "king." This change is only understandable when one brings in the religious background of the new form of legitimation of authority. The use of the title basileus, a term in itself connoting a lower rank (rulers had formerly bestowed this title upon their vassals), not only represented a Hellenization of the form, but also an understanding of authority based upon a subordination under the authority of Christ. The (vassal-title) basileus was to be understood as that of an earthly, Christian vassal of a heavenly ruler. The Christian background is clear as soon as one quotes the title in its entirety: pistos en Christoi basileus ("the king who is faithful in Christ"). It was only as a mumin (Gk. Pistos) in Christ that Heraclius was equipped for rulership. It was only as a "Speaker for God" {Khalifat Allah) that 'Abd al-Malik could rule following the understanding of his Arabian Church of the Arabian Empire. The orthodox emperor was justified in

exercising rule by virtue of his subordination to a heavenly ruler; the Arabian lord of orthopraxy, on the other hand, received his legitimation to rule in a defense of the interests of the Muhammad. The Muhammad stood in the tradition of authorization, which Allah had distributed since the time of Adam to his representatives {wall al-‘amr) and deputies {wall Allah).” (pp. 74-75)

“Otherwise, the inscription speaks at length concerning just and unjust taxation, the just exercise of authority; equal distribution of money; and the care of widows, orphans, and the needy—but most especially of respect with regard to family relationships. What a difference between the “publicness” of ‘Abd al-Malik’s Ekthesis on the Dome of the Rock, directed toward the “people(s) of the book,” and the hermetic position taken by this text! Just how far has one come from the desire to come to an understanding, as found at the time of al-Walid? From that period one may still read the note in the text found in the shrine of John in Damascus and dated to the year 86 of the Arabian era.” (p. 89)

“The Buddhist temple leaders’ authority as viziers in Baghdad is attested by many numismatic witnesses. The names on these coins allow one to see the descent of the viziers from Buddhist leaders in eastern Iran. For example, the leader of the Buddhist cloister near Balkh called Nawbahar (from the Sanskrit nava vihara, or “new temple”) bore the title of *parmak*, or “leader, Chief.” This cloister was known as far away as China; the Chinese pilgrimage literature even mentions it. Incidentally, the statues of Buddha in Bamiyan, recently destroyed by the Taliban, were further testimony to the presence of Buddhism in the region of eastern Iran.” (p. 92)

“In the inscriptions of this issue of coins that name the Alid as the successor, al-Ma’mun calls himself Khalifat Allah. Here we again see the caliph’s protocol in the form we know from ‘Abd al-Malik, albeit under different circumstances. The term Khalifa had by this time already been often used in connection with the Abbasids. The phrase Khalifat Allah, on the other hand, first appeared in the time of al-Ma’mun in connection with coins that name the Alid as the successor to the throne. The idea of the Khalifat Allah as a spokesperson for God was a reaction on the part of the Marwanid Abd al-Malik to the claim of the Byzantine emperor in presenting himself as a *servus Christi*. Al-Ma’mun took this formula up again, but he filled it with new life by using it in contrast to the claims of the Alid. The Alid exchanged with al-Ma’mun; the Alid imam became the amir, and the legacy of Ali’s claims became the legacy of worldly authority. Once he had put the Alid aside, **al-Ma’mun once again took up the title Khalifat Allah. After this role reversal was complete, only al-Ma’mun remained as both Imam and Khalifat Allah. John Walker was the first to point to this phenomenon, namely, that the title of Khalifat Allah reappeared in protocols after an absence of more than a century.**” (p. 94)

“The early existence of the New Testament in the form of a Gospel harmony—a comprehensive text in one volume—may have justified the later rejection of the translation of all four Gospels into Aramaic in the form of the fifth-century “Peshitta.” From then on, the complete translation of all four Gospels was regarded by the Arabians as a falsification of the original one-volume book.” (p. 96)

“After a military skirmish on Byzantine soil, the Imam went on to Damascus and visited the ruins of the Marwanid building complexes, as well as the masjid al-Walid, the prayer location that is today called “the mosque of the Umayyads.” It is not difficult to imagine that he would have read both inscriptions carefully, and that he would have accepted them as consonant with his own program. In the text of the Damascus inscription from the year 86 of the Arabian era, he would have read a confirmation of the work of the prophet of the Arabians, “Muhammad.” In the seventh line of the inscription. The text reads *wa-nabiyuna muhammad* (“And our prophet is Muhammad”). At the time of al-Walid, people had understood this quite differently. At that time the term Muhammad still referred to Jesus and

communicated the idea that “Our prophet (Jesus) is chosen/to be praised.” The expedition continued from there to Egypt. There the Imam stood in front of the pyramids, just as Napoleon would do nearly one thousand years later. Napoleon’s expedition had enormous consequences for scholarship. Which was the religion of the French Republic. As it continued, al-Ma’mun’s expedition was concerned with the Nile and its source. The ruler of Mesopotamia was standing on the banks of the river of strangers, the lifeblood of the second high culture of previous millennia. Here Moses had been set afloat, and here he had been saved. Al-Ma’mun saw it all with his own eyes. As the conclusion of his scholarly expedition through the world of the Qur’an, al-Ma’mun visited Jerusalem. In al-Quds (Jerusalem), al-Ma’mun was able to explain **the inscription in the Dome of the Rock. The inscription written on the inner portion of the octagon, on the southern side, was read to him as though it concerned a succession of a personal name and the name of a father: “Muhammad (bn) ‘Abd Allah.” This text had formerly been understood as referring to the “chosen/praised servant of God.”** However, due to the characteristics of Arabic writing, as well as the characteristics of the writing of Arabic names, in which the name of the father always follows one’s personal name, it was possible to see this text as proof of the existence of a “Muhammad, son of ‘Abd Allah.” (p. 99)

“TITULATURES: The title Khalifat Allah (“Speaker for God”) first appears in inscriptions on coins from the time of ‘Abd al-Malik. The tide functions here as an answer to the Byzantine imperial protocols of the time, which had begun to refer to the emperor as servus Dei. ‘Abd al-Malik’s successors did not retain this designation. It is only under al-Ma’mun that the title next appears in coin inscriptions. Namely, in the year 201 of the Arabian era (817). Al-Mamun had also taken on the tide Imam in the year 194 of the Arabian era (810). Consequently, al-Ma’mun called himself Imam only beginning in the year 194 (810) and Khalifat Allah beginning in the year 201 (817). The purported early use of these tides and functions in the protocols of the “caliphs” is not supported by the testimony of the inscriptions. The references in the historicizing literature (Tabari et al.) appear then to be later retrojections into a mythical early period. SYSTEMS OF DATING: The datings follow an “era of the Arabians.” **This system begins in the year 622, the year of the Byzantine victory over the Sassanians. The self-rule of the Arabians dates from this year forward.** In the year 20 of the Arabian era (641), the Christian Arab Maavia (in Arabic, Mu’awiya) took up the succession after the death of the Byzantine emperor Heraclius as the ruler of the formerly Byzantine east. In his inscription from the baths of Gadara in Palestine, he used the system of dating traditional for that time and place: first he gave the era of the city (colonia), then the date following the Byzantine tax year, and finally the date following the era of the Arabians. It is impossible to determine from the inscriptions when the understanding of dating following an era of the Arabians was changed into a dating following the Arabian festival calendar, and thereby the era of the prophet of the Arabians. **This impossibility is due to the fact that the Hijra of the prophet of the Arabians, well known from the traditional literature, is nowhere mentioned in the inscriptions.**” (p. 102)

“THE SERVANT OF GOD: ‘Abd al-Malik’s inscription in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem from the year 72 of the Arabian era (691-692) gives the first datable reference to a change in the religious state of affairs. In the inner portion of the octagon. The part of the inscription appears which, in the style of an Ekthesis, calls for debate concerning an agreement regarding the understanding of the text (duty to Islam). This call is directed to Christendom as a whole: Ya ahla I-kitab (You people of the written text!). **Concerning Christology, the text argues that the apostle of God is an Abd Allah, a “servant of God.” The “servant of God” is muhammadun, “chosen/praised.” The “chosen/praised servant of God” is the masih Isa bn Maryam, “the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, is the apostle of God.’** In addition, the inscription of the unknown ruler on the house of prayer in Medina, dated to the year 135 of the Arabian era (753), also speaks of the ‘praised servant of God’ as “apostle.” The conception of Jesus as a “servant of God” and “praised/chosen” is first documented in coin inscriptions in the region of Iran between the

years 38 and 60 (658/659-679/680). ISLAM: In the period under consideration, the movement which stood for the establishment of an understanding of Jesus as the “chosen/praised servant of God” disintegrated. **During the rule of the Abbasid caliph al-Ma’mun, around 217-218 of the Arabian era (832-833), the conception of a Muhammad bn Abd Allah (“the Praised One, son of the Servant of God”) as a messenger of d became anchored in the realm of a new national-religious movement of the understanding of Islam. ”** (p. 103)

Chapter 2 – A New Interpretation of the Arabic Inscription in Jerusalem’s Dome of the Rock - Christoph Luxenberg

“This present essay is concerned with the inscription on the inner side of the octagon on the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. The inscription is over 240 meters long, was written in Arabic using the Kufic monumental script, and was created with gold-colored mosaic stones on a green background. According to an inscription on the outer side of the octagon, this sacred building, which has heretofore been considered the earliest Islamic building, was erected in the year 72 (if this number does not have merely a symbolic character) of the Arabian era (beginning in 622 CE and later called “Hijra”) by ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, the fifth caliph of the Umayyad dynasty (and ruling 685-705 CE, following Arabian historiography). This article presents a new attempt to analyze the text of this inscription in a historico-linguistic way, following the methods first developed in the work *Die syro-aramaische Lesart des Koran*. Besides using Arabic, this book began foundationally from **the Aramaic language, which was the lingua franca in the entire Near East region for more than a millennium preceding Arabic**. The translation of the Bible into Syro-Aramaic (Psitta/Peshitta), which was already current in the second century, determined (as in other cultures) the place of Aramaic as the language of cult and culture before the rise of Islam for the Arabs who lived between the Tigris, the Nile, and the Arabian peninsula. This study achieved fundamentally new results with the help of investigations into individual passages of the Qur’an. In light of these linguistic analyses, the results allow one to expect new semantic content from the inscription inside the Dome of the Rock. Further, this content will open the way for conclusions relevant in the fields of theology, the history of religions, and the history of linguistics. That this dated inscription is older than the oldest Qur’anic manuscripts known to us does not, nevertheless, allow us to recognize any linguistic structure that varies from the Qur’anic language, because the majority of the inscription can also be found in the canonical text of the Qur’an. This phenomenon provides another reason why the methods mentioned above are to be employed in the following textual analysis.” (pp. 125-126)

“In the sequence that follows, one can see the second portion of the Sahada, the Islamic creed (so to speak), but only if one takes the gerundive muhammad(un) (“the one who should be praised” or “the one who is to be praised”) as a personal name. In its context the sentence reads: muhammad(un) ‘abd(u) llah(i) wa-rasuluh(u). According to the traditional conception, one can understand this sentence only thus: **‘Muhammad (is) the servant of God and his messenger!’** However, when connected with the preceding nominal doxology derived from the same verbal root –la-h(u) l-hamd(u) (to him [belongs] praise), which relates to God, the gerundival participle muhammad(un), which is connected thereunto, should be read as **“praised be the servant of God and his messenger!”** Therefore, by using this gerundive, the text here is not speaking of a person named Muhammad, which was made only later metaphorically into a personal name attributed analogically to the prophet of Islam. This is true not only because the supposed copula “is” does not appear in the text but even more because the gerundive here, as a verbal form, makes an additional copula superfluous. Syntactically, then, the sentence should be understood thus: ‘Praised be the servant of God and his messenger!’ The synonymous expressions

mumajjad(un) and mubarak(un), meaning “praised (be). Blessed (be),” are still current in Arabic (including Christian Arabic) as, for example, in the well-known biblical and liturgical hymn: mubarak(un) al-ati bi-smi r-rabb “Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Psalm 118:26/Matthew 21:9). If one were to create the parallel expression muhammad(un) al-ati bi-smi r-rabb, one would certainly not understand it as “Muhammad (is the one) who comes in the name of the Lord!” ” (p. 130)

“A forthcoming contextual and philological analysis will show that **the Qur’an does not deny the crucifixion as a historical fact; it refutes more precisely the claim of Jesus’ opponents have killed the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of God.**” The Qur’an answers: “But they did not kill him,” “and (in this sense) they did not crucify him” (i.e., the crucifixion did not result in the definitive death), “rather it appeared to them” (as if they had killed him through crucifixion); “those who dispute about this are in doubt (as to his death)”; they have in this regard no (revealed) knowledge, but just conjectural considerations” “for they did not really kill him” (and not “they did not really crucify him”); (158) God raised him to Himself (after his resurrection, as now attested in sura 72:19). A deeper founded philological analysis of these passages will follow elsewhere.” (p. 136)

“PRE-NICENE SYRO-ARABIAN CHRISTIANITY: The inscription is directed to the “People of the Scripture” (ahl al-Kitab). Indeed, in the Qur’an this description can refer to both Jews and Christians; however, according to the context, it is clear that Christians are the intended audience. By this teaching ‘Abd al-Malik defends his faith both in Christ as the “servant of God” (abd Allah) and also in the one God, over against the Trinitarian teaching of the followers of Nicaea. ‘Abd al-Malik is defending thereby a pre-Nicene Syrian Christianity, a version of Christianity that one should not refer to generally as “Jewish Christianity” but rather, more accurately, as “Syrian-Arabian Christianity.” Further, this religious-theological symbiosis is accompanied by a linguistic symbiosis, as we see in this inscription and in the language of **the Qur’an, whose original version was put together entirely in the Syriac script (a way of writing Arabic called ‘Garshuni’ or ‘Karshuni’)**. Consequently, without Syro-Aramaic we cannot understand this “mixed language” at all in the way it was to be understood.” (p. 140)

““MUHAMMAD I” AND “MUHAMMAD II”: This textual analysis has shown that the gerundival participle muhammad was not originally a personal name, but rather a commendation (“praised be”) connected with the servant of God, namely, Jesus, son of Mary. It is only because later individuals understood this commendation as a personal name and assigned it to the prophet of Islam in the later “Sira,” the biography of “the Prophet,” that we must distinguish in the future between a Muhammad I” and a “Muhammad II.” This distinction raises new historical problems. The inscription on the Dome of the Rock cannot be used to defend the position that “Muhammad II” lived from 570 to 632 CE, as the ‘Muhammad’ named there was entirely referring to Jesus, son of Mary— that is, “Muhammad I.” It is the task of historians to discover whether ‘Muhammad II,’ about whom the “Sira” has so much to report, actually lived shortly before the appearance of the biography of the Prophet (ca. mid-eighth century), or whether he should be seen merely as a symbolic figure. The first name of his father, “Abd Allah,” which may in fact be similarly symbolic, reflecting the expression “servant of God” from the Dome of the Rock, helps to suggest this latter possibility. ISLAM I” AND “ISLAM II”: This textual analysis has also made clear that, by the expression “islam,” no proper name is intended, but rather a conformity with “the Scripture.” Because this “Scripture,” following the Christological content of the inscription, refers to the Gospel, it cannot then also refer to the Qur’an, even if we find portions of the exact historical error to see in this expression (“islam”) and in this context the beginning of “Islam” as we know it. **Therefore, the speculation is confirmed that historical Islam began at the earliest in the middle of the eighth century.** However much the Qur’an may have existed partially before the rise of historical Islam- possibility that the inscription on the Dome of the Rock suggests—it seems to have

been the liturgical book of a Syrian-Arabian Christianity. **Even if written Christian sources from the first half of the eighth century speak of a “Muhammad” as the “prophet of the Arabs,” this phenomenon is to be explained as that this Arabian name for Christ was simply not current among Aramaic- or Greek-speaking Christians. Therefore, this metaphor, which would have sounded strange to them, must have seemed to be the name of a new prophet.** Regardless, there was no talk at this time of “Islam.” Consequently, over against the practice of Islamic historiography up to this time, we must also distinguish in the future between “Islam I” and “Islam II.”” (pp. 14-142)

“The expression “Dome of the Rock” (or “Cupola of the Rock”), still current today, comes from the Arabic form in which it has come down to us: quijfyat as-sahra. This expression contains two pieces of information. First, the Arabic qubba derives from the Syro-Aramaic qubbta, to which word belongs the variants qebbuta (“cupola”). The Thesaurus, 11:3452, gives the meaning for this word as “de area in qua corpus sancti repositum est” (“the cupola in/under which the body of a saint is stored”). The Arabic qubba corresponds to this term in the Islamic tradition as the word for a mausoleum dedicated to a wall ‘friend of God’ = “saint”). Second, the word as-sahra (“the rock”) refers to **the stone that lies in the Dome of the Rock under the cupola, surrounded by a low railing. This stone, under which lies a crypt, symbolizes the tomb of Christ,** which was reported in at least three of the Gospels according to the Syriac Peshitta) to have been hewn out of a rock (Mt. 27:60; Mk. 15:46; Lk. 23:53; in Jn. 20:1 the text is concerned with the stone that had been rolled away from the tomb).” (p. 143)

“Finally, the later Islamic exegetes believed that they saw a reference in the misunderstood passage in sura 4:157-58 to the direct ascension of Christ to heaven (not noticing the other Qur’anic passages that contradicted this understanding); as a result, they connected this ascension, at least in Islamic folk belief, with a reminiscence that had its origin in a Christian story. This story goes as follows: **If one visits the Holy Land and wants to see the place atop the Mount of Olives (east of Jerusalem) from which Christ ascended to heaven, one will be let into a walled courtyard, in the middle of which a medium-sized stone rises up just a bit from the ground. There one will be pointed to two depressions hewn into the rock, which are supposed to be the footprints that Christ left behind at his ascension. Incidentally, this same legend is told to the visitor to the Dome of the Rock. There, though, the footprints are supposedly those of the white horse “Buraq,” on whose back “the Prophet” (Muhammad II) is to have made his journey to heaven.** This legend is important for the history of religions, in that it reveals a reminiscence of Christ stemming from the Christian period and yet still present in Islamic folk belief. Further, the transfer from “Islam I” to “Islam II,” and that from “Muhammad I” to “Muhammad II,” become apparent in that the Islamic tradition, in agreement with the later theology of “Islam I,” reinterpreted the original Christian (“Islam I”) symbolism of the Dome of the Rock. This reinterpretation took place in two stages. In the first step, **the Dome of the Rock, which previously had been known as the site of Christ’s burial and resurrection, was also said to be that of his ascension (as ‘Muhammad I’).** Only later did the second step occur, by which the ascension, to which both the Gospel and the Qur’an bear witness and which they both relate to Christ, was transferred legendarily to “Muhammad II.” My conclusion, then: according to the foregoing philological analyses of the inscription on the Dome of the Rock, **“Islam I” was a pre-Nicene, Oriental Christian, Syrian-Arabian form of Christianity. This form of Christianity most likely survived in the region of Mesopotamia until the end of the Umayyad dynasty (ca. 750), and perhaps even longer.** This explains why Jerusalem was the destination for pilgrimage before Mecca enjoyed the same honor. This also explains the spacious precinct that lies around the Dome of the Rock and served to receive these pilgrims. With the Christological doctrine presented in the inscription on the Dome of the Rock, “Islam I” desired to bear witness to its own orthodoxy with regard to Christian theology, against the opinions of Nicaea that were defended in the nearby Constantinian Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is in this way

that we can speak of the fidelity to the “Scripture” on the part of “Islam I.” **Islam II” refers to the turn from the (Christian) “Islam I” and, consequently, from the “Scripture.”** Other changes that resulted included the turn from Jerusalem to Mecca and the replacement of the “Scripture” (i.e., Bible) with the (Arabic) Qur’an. These changes can only be explained in political terms. **When the Abbasids took power, they wanted nothing more to do with their Umayyad opponents or with their religion.** From this perspective, and from this point in time (ca. 750), “Islam II” slowly appeared as an exercise in “community building” (“Gemeinbildung”) and was then put through politically. **It is only because the Abbasids made “Islam II” their national ideology that one can explain historically why Christianized Arabian tribes were suddenly forced to submit to “Islam II.”** In this reconstruction, the meaning of the inscription on the Dome of the Rock has now become clear in its relations to historical linguistics and the history of religions; **ironically, by means of its misunderstood expressions “Muhammad” (I) and “Islam” (I), the understanding of this inscription seems to have provided the parameters for “Muhammad II” and “Islam II.”** The lack of a trustworthy literature from this period in order to explain the historical phenomena in question does not make life easy for the historian attempting to discover “truth.” The enlightening inscription on the Dome of the Rock, however, is far more valuable; its language, which has been misunderstood up until today, has protected it from manipulation. Historians should be thankful for this situation, because it has “revealed” to us, truest sense of the word, a bit of historical truth by means of this new historico-linguistic interpretation.” (pp. 144-145)

Chapter 3 – On the Origin of the Informants of the Prophet - Claude Gilliot

“The topic of the so-called Informants of the Prophet ultimately begs the question of a Qur’an (“lectionary”), or of the Qur’an before the Qur’an (al-qur’an), or rather of the various versions or stages of the Qur’an qua text. This is so because, **as time has gone on, we have been personally convinced that the Qur’an is at least partially the work of a groups or of a community.** In this essay we will not treat of the topic of the informants in its entirety (that has already been done), even though we have found more material in the meantime. What interests us most specifically here is the origin and the language of the informants.” (p. 153)

“We are familiar with at least two versions of Ibn Ishaq (d. 150/76 7) concerning the informants of Muhammad. In Ibn Hisham (Ibn Hisham, Abu M. ‘Abd al-Malik, d. 218/833) it is said that **Muhammad “often sat on Merwa before the booth (mabi’a) of a young Christian who was named Djibr and was a slave of the Benu-l-Hadrami, so that people used to say that Djibr taught Muhammad much of what he revealed.”** The other version is that of Tabari, who says through his chain of tradents, M. b. Humayd/Salama/Ibn Ishaq: “The messenger of God often sat, according to what has been transmitted to me, on the hill of Marwa with a young Christian servant whose name was Jabr. He was a slave of the banu al-Hadrami, and the people used to say, ‘By God, much of what Muhammad teaches comes merely from Jabr the Christian, the servant of the banu al-Hadrami.” (pp. 156-157)

“When the Quran cites the New Testament, it mentions the Injil, as though there were only one single Gospel. **The topic in the Islamic tradition of falsifying the Scriptures, and especially the New Testament or the Gospel, reminds one of specific critics of early Christianity from the pagan world. Including Celsus (who wrote ca. 178), Porphyry, the Emperor Julian (ruled 361-363), and the Manichaeans.** Tatian (ca. 120-173) and Marcion (ca. 85-160) reacted to these criticisms, in that they sought to present a single Gospel text. Consequently, **Tatian’s Diatessaron was the only translation of the gospel in Syriac until the beginning of the fourth century. Further, it remained for centuries the only Gospel text that was used in the liturgy. There are a few places in the Qur’an where one finds similarities with the**

Diatessaron, such as the parable of the sower (sura 48:29); passages concerning the youth of Mary, John, and Jesus (suras 3:35-48; 19:3-36); and a section on the crucifixion of Jesus (sura 4:157). Van Reeth offers a possible solution to the relationship between the Paraclete and Ahmad (sura 61:6). In his commentary on the Diatessaron, St. Ephrem identifies the Paraclete with Jesus on multiple occasions. In this case the Qur'an is much closer to the Diatessaron and to Manichaeism, in both of which the Paraclete possesses a prophetic function. The identification of Muhammad with the Paraclete was explicitly discussed in the Islamic tradition, including by Ibn Ishaq, who used the Syriac word *menahhemana* (which corresponds to the Arabic *qaim*, from *nahem*, "to raise from the dead"). In this tradition, Muhammad is the prophet of the end of the world. Supposedly, Muhammad gave himself five names, in this order: "I have multiple names: I am Muhammad; I am Ahmad; I am the Eliminator (*al-tahi*), for through me God will eliminate the unfaithful; I am the Gatherer (*al-hashir*), for the people will be gathered to my feet; I am the Last (of the prophets) (*al-aqib*).” One can even ask whether the name "Muhammad," which was most likely not his original name, does not come from a type of "mimetism concurrentiel," or a competition with the Paraclete, who was understood as the "last Prophet. In connection with the Diatessaron, Mani, and the Manichaeans—who wanted to emphasize the unity of the Gospel message—the topic of the "Informants" is a suggestion to us that a Syriac lectionary (*qeryan*), or at least portions thereof, was known in Mecca." (pp. 162-163)

"SUMMARY: Many of the reports in the Qur'an did not sound particularly new to the minds of many of the Quraysh, as **the Qur'an itself, the "most strongly self-referential holy text in the history of religion,"** states (sura 25 [Furqan]:4-5). One can see this in its style, for the rhyming prose of the text is very noticeable when one leaves out the *i'rab* endings in order to hear how the texts were probably originally spoken. Consequently, people like Musaylima and others were ridiculed in the early Islamic traditions. This is also the reason that Muhammad and his companions fought against some poets. The soothsayers and the poets were able to do similar things: "... they say: We have heard. If we wish we can speak the like of this" (sura 8 [Anfal]:31, in Pickthall's translation). This self-referential character of the Qur'an reflects not only a process of communication, as Angelika Neuwirth has often emphasized, but also the fact that the Quraysh do not seem to have been much impressed early on by the Quran's language and style. This only seems to have happened when Muhammad became so strong that he nearly succeeded in gaining an authoritative position over the tribes. What interests us here, though, is the actual content of these reports or statements in the Qur'an. The Arabian peninsula was no *terra deserta et incognita*; its people lived in relationship with their surroundings, most especially with the Aramaic, Jewish, and Christian cultures nearby (e.g., Syria, Hira, Anbar). Much of what the Islamic tradition has handed down concerning the informants of Muhammad is not absolutely historical, for the so-called occasions of revelations (or "cause of revelations," *asbab alluzill*) also contain apologetic strands, and this impacts directly on "the informants of Muhammad." Nearly all of these people became Muslim and confirmed, from the Islamic standpoint, the truth of the Muhammadan revelation. Those surrounding Muhammad also had a hand in this, including Khadija, Waraqa b. Nawfal, and then the Jew Zayd b. Thabit. If we were to take, however, Christoph Luxenberg's book and combine it with the material presented above, we would have good reason to accept that the "piste arameenne," the Aramaic trail, is one of the possible and also written trails to follow that lead to the one lectionary (*qeryan*) that existed before the Arabic-Islamic lectionary (*al-qufan*), or better yet, before the various stages of this lectionary. Luxenberg's book stands in the tradition of the "variant readings" of the Qur'an, if we distinguish between three types of variations: 1) "the minor variation," comprising various readings of the same consonantal structure; 2) "the major variation," comprising variations in the consonantal structure, such as those in the so-called non-'Uthmanic codices; and 3) "the very major variation," which involves an Arabic-Aramaic transformation of the consonantal structure. Before Luxenberg, G. Luling had noticed something of the same thing with his theory concerning hymnology (as

did Tor Andrae and others before him, including Aloys Sprenger, Wilhelm Rudolph, et al. even if his method was not wholly convincing. Unfortunately, his book was almost completely ignored, especially in Germany, perhaps not only because his method and his theory concerning hymnology did not always convince people, but probably also because of the “Noldeke-ian,” and “Spitaler-ian” dogma of the “classical language” of the Qur’an, a dogma that was so strongly influenced by the Islamic imagination concerning the language of the Qur’an. Our Orientalist forebears did not allow themselves to be so influenced by this dogma; for example, Friedrich Leberecht Fleischer wrote, “We do not share the exclusively philological and religious perspective of the Arabian lexicographers. Our question does not concern the purest Arabic, the most correct. And the most beautiful; our question is simply ‘What is Arabic at all?’” The neo-Romantic school of Orientalism, with its motto of “God is beautiful!” was not awakening at that time—neither on the Rhine, nor on the spree, nor on the banks of other rivers, at least not in the held or Qur’anic studies” (pp. 163-165)

Chapter 4 – ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwan and the Process of the Qur’an’s Composition - Alfred-Louis de. Premare

“John of Damascus, who was active in the Umayyad administration at the time of Abd al-Malik, was of the opinion, in “Heresy no. 100,” that **the doctrine of the prophet of the new religion had been influenced by an Arian monk.**” (p. 191)

“A historian studying these texts might envisage three hypotheses concerning the content of the inscriptions on these monuments, which have parallels within the Qur’an: 1. The texts were composed directly for the monuments in question, and were reused later, with some slight modifications, in the final composition of the Qur’anic text; 2. They represent fragments that were still scattered, attesting to the existence of a sort of Ur-Qur’an, still being drafted, selected, and assembled, some of which at the same time could have been used in the inscriptions on the monuments; 3. They were actual “quotations,” taken from a fully formed Qur’an that is the one we now have today. Although none of these hypotheses seems sufficient to prevail over the others, based only on the inscriptions, it seems to me, based on the analyses offered below (II, III), that one can exclude the third hypothesis. **It is in Jerusalem, in any case, in the place that stood as the symbol of eastern Christianity, where the Islamic anti-trinitarian and Christological polemic, as expressed in the inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock, has its true *sitz im leben*.** We might be able to extend such an affirmation to the *la ikraha fi l-din* text that appears in the foundation inscription of the Damascus mosque.” (p. 193)

“Two Christian works of that same period refer to Islamic writings known to be the authoritative scriptures for the new religion. The Monk of Beth Hale In a *Disputatio* composed in Syriac by an anonymous monk from the Beth Hale Monastery in Mesopotamia, the author conducts a dialogue, in a fashion reminiscent of some Iranian texts, with a Muslim notable from the entourage of the emir Maslama (d. 120/738), son of ‘Abd al-Malik, and the governor of the Jazira in 91/710. This detail, together with other information. Allows us to assign the composition of the work to the first two decades of the eighth century. The Christian apologist makes a clear distinction between the writings he attributes to Muhammad (Mhmd); a distinction is made between 1) the laws and commandments to be found “in the Quran that Muhammad has taught you,” and 2) other laws and commandments to be found in three different writings by Muhammad, including “the writing of the Cow [*surat al-Baqara*]. He does not provide any more details on the content of this text. On the other hand, the Arabic word *sura*, as its Syriac counterpart *surta*, from which it is probably derived, may refer, as is generally the case in the Qur’an itself, to a fragmentary “writing,” rather than what we now call *suras*.” Further, the title of

the suras as we know them are late, and are thus not present in the oldest manuscript fragments of the Qur'an. It is therefore likely that the writings referred to by the monk do not correspond completely to what we now know as the sura called "the Cow." It appears, in any case, that **around 710, there did exist, among other writings, a "writing on the Cow" distinct from the Quran.**" (pp. 194-195)

John of Damascus The second work is the "Book of Heresies," written in Greek around 735 by John of Damascus, one of the Fathers of the Church. He had followed his father in the service of the Umayyad administration between 700 and 705 (ah 81-85), during the last years of the reign of 'Abd al-Malik. It would appear that "Heresy 100", which concludes his work and concerns "the cult of the Ishmaelites", or Islam, is the product of knowledge he had acquired at the time from existing Islamic writing. The Arabic word Qur'an is not mentioned, rather the Greek word "biblos," a "book" composed by Muhammad based on a writing (so-called coming from Heaven) in the words of the polemicist, who discusses its origin and content, essentially in a theological context. What he mentions about this biblos in relation to the polemic against Christian Christology is summarized with precision, and we also have parallels existing between certain passages in the inscriptions on the Dome of the Rock and in the Qur'an. He also refers to various texts written by Muhammad, and it is difficult to say whether he considers them as part of the biblos mentioned above. They have different names, which correspond to their respective subjects (e.g., "The Cow," "God's She-Camel," "the Table," "The Woman"); these are not, property speaking, "titles". "The woman's writing concerns, among other things, the laws regarding polygamy and repudiation, the latter being illustrated by the story of Zayd's repudiation of his wife for the benefit of Muhammad. It is "in the same writing", he reports, that there appears there the commendation to go unto one's wife in such-and-such a way, as one plows a field. We know now that, in the definitive text of the Qur'an, this image occurs in sura 2, al-Baqara, together with the legal norms governing repudiation, and that mention of Zayd and his wife occurs in sura 33, Ahzab. These themes, gathered in "one same writing," titled "Woman," leads us to think that we are dealing with a text that is organized quite differently from the current sura 4, titled "Women.' Another text is referred to at length; it is titled "God's she-Camel", and it, too, is attributed to Muhammad. Lie subject of the she-camel, in the definitive text of the Qur'an, is spread out among various passages, far from one another, without leading to a single grouping within a particular sura under the heading "God's she-camel." Further, the writings to which John refers include, on the subject of the she-camel, some elements that are not found in the pages of the Qur'an on the same subject, including the fact that a she-camel cannot pass between two mountains because there is not enough space; that she is without a father and a mother; that she nurses people with her milk, that she has a baby camel; and that following the murder of her mother the young camel cries to God and is raised to Heaven. The polemicist discusses all these details—and mocks them. **We have spoken of the "extremely succinct character" shown by the author of "Heresy 100" in his knowledge of Islam, or even of "mistakes that are more intentional than involuntary." At best, and without meaning to question his "solid information," these variations from the Qur'an have been perceived as "imprecisions in the details," or a blending with oral sources in the development of the stories of Zayd or of God's she-camel, whereas John says explicitly that such elements are to be found in some of Muhammad's "writings."** Such judgments are a projection onto the information provided by John in his own time, of which we now know from the current textual corpus of the Qur'an, as if the latter were the measure of everything on the historical and literary level. We do have, in places other than the work of John of Damascus, and essentially in the same period, visible traces of what he says concerning the "writing about God's she-camel." Such traces exist most notably in what was transmitted by Muqatil b. Sulayman (d. 150/767), as an explanation (tafsir) of those Qur'anic passages where there is mention of "God's she-camel" (naqat Allah). We find here the following themes: the she-camel has neither father nor mother (min ghayri nasi); she is close to giving birth (ushara), she emerges from a stony cliff (sakhra); people feed on her milk {fi laban) when she is

standing still, drinking the water given to her; the young camel (fasil) cries for help after the murder of its mother, it is saved, and it mysteriously disappears. An analysis of these texts, as they have reached us, allows us to easily perceive within them, due to their disorganized character, what is a tafsir of Muqatil, introduced most frequently by yam, yaqulu, or innama, or by qala Muqatil. On the other hand, a certain number of themes are not introduced by such openings, and these appear without an obvious link with the contents of a text that they do not intend to explain, but that forms a part of the same text. The most significant passage concerns verses 155-58 of sura 26, al-Shuara. In the light of what is said by John of Damascus, and taking into careful consideration that which is reproduced from Muqatil, the hypothesis that the latter contains traces of a text earlier than the various current Qur'anic passages on the she-camel of the Thamud, acquires a clear shape. According to such a hypothesis, this text is not an exegetical gloss added after the Quranic passages, as one might surmise; rather, the Qur'anic passages can be seen as the later result of mental labor aimed at the redaction, selection, and stylistic reorganization of the text, and carried out during the final composition, based on various preexisting texts not yet formally fixed and rendered immutable. On the other hand, Muqatil is not the only one in whose writings we find the different motifs referred to by John of Damascus concerning the text about God's she-camel. But he is the earliest, and he shows it to us in what is, effectively, a raw first state. Al-Tabari (d. 310/923) later gives us a well-composed sampling of ancient Arab legends in his Qur'anic commentary titled Jami al-bayan. He refers each time to transmitting sources that are all contemporaneous with John of Damascus: al-Suddi (Kufa, d. 127/745), Ibn Ishaq (Medina, al-Hira, Baghdad, d. 150/767) and, to a lesser extent, al-Hasan al-Basri (Basra, d. 110/728). All this would lead one to think that such narratives were no longer just orally transmitted, but that some had been set down in writing, on the model, which, according to John of Damascus, was attributed to Muhammed. " (pp. 195-197)

"INTERNAL HISTORICAL AND LITERARY SOURCES: Based on the elements presented and analyzed above, **the period between the very end of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth century constitutes a key moment in the history of the Qur'an.** It is in the light of such elements that we must view what is said by the Arab historical and literary sources of the time. Ibn Abi Dawud al-Sijistani, in his Kitab al-masahif, places himself squarely in the camp of the traditionists, who believe that the Qur'an was entirely formed and officially sanctioned at the time of 'Uthman, and by his fiat. Yet he dedicates a number of pages of his work to the scriptural work carried out under the direction of al-Hajjaj b. Yusuf, governor of Iraq, a liege of Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (ah 65-85 [685-705 CE), then of his son and successor, al-Walid (ah 86-96 [705-715 CE). This is one of the first indications of its importance. In the field of Arab historiography, however, there are sources of information other than those specifically concerning the study of the Quran, and these are generally less conditioned by the attitudes typical of the traditional, and freer in the transmission of their akhbar. This applies, in particular, to biographical and genealogical works, works of adab, and historical-geographical works. I shall rely in particular on such literary sources, exercising the necessary critical caution, as one should do when viewing the information being transmitted and the nature of the works in which we find them." (pp. 197-198)

"ABD AL-MALIK B. IMARWAN (AH 65-86/685-705 CE) The Theological and Political Background: The caliph is necessarily involved in scriptural issues, first of all in his institutional role, as political power is indissolubly linked to its religious legitimacy. All Umayyads, beginning with Uthman, are not only aware of their role, but they also bestow upon themselves the title of "God's Caliph, khalifat Allah. References and quotations provided by R Crone and M. Hinds in this matter, beginning with Uthman, are of particular significance. The attestations concerning 'Abd al-Malik are especially striking. The title khalifat Allah does not appear following his name on the inscription in the foundation stone of the Dome of the Rock, only the epithet of amir al-muminin. Some coins of the period, however, do contain that title.

Although such numismatic use of “khalifat Allah” does not appear to have lasted for long. We also have some evidence of the attribution of that title to ‘Abd al-Malik by the main poets of the time: al-Farazdaq, Jarir, and al-Akhtal; we even find it in Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyat, despite the latter’s having been linked for a certain period with the Zubayrids, the principal opponents of the Umayyad dynasty. This might be explained by taking into account the larger context, as marked by a number of significant events, such as the foundation of the Dome of the Rock, a symbol of Islam’s prestige and triumph over the Christians; the imposition of the jizya on the non-Muslim population as a whole; the Arabization of the administration; the creation of a currency that was clearly Arab and Muslim; and, finally, the recognition of the legitimate role of ‘Abd al-Malik as caliph. The traditionists have dated this legitimization process to the time of his victory over ‘Abd Allah Ibn al Zubayr, in the year AH 73, now referred to as “the year of unity” (‘am al-jama’a). In the circumstances of a fitna which was undergoing a continuous renaissance, particularly in Iraq, al-Hajjaj b. Yusuf, the governor of that region, was particularly keen to praise the stature of Abd al-Malik as “God’s Caliph.” He is viewed as the principal author of a sort of theologico-political doctrine aimed at justifying the actions and decisions of the caliph: He [al-Hajjaj] had a pure Arabic language, he was eloquent and well-versed in the law [kana fasihan balighan faqihan], wrote Ibn Hajar about him; he said that obedience to the Caliph in his every demand was compulsory [fard] for the population, and he even debated that very point. Numerous letters by **al-Hajjaj** have been quoted by historians. In one of these, addressed to Mutarrif b. al-Mughira, governor of al-Mada’in (Ctesiphon) in Iraq, who was making peace with those who took part in the kharijite revolt of Shabib b. Yazid, in 77/696, he wrote: **“Abd al-Malik is God’s caliph concerning His servants, and he is more greatly honored by Him than Muhammad and the other messengers.”** Another of his letters is quoted, this one addressed to Abd al-Malik, “in which he praised the stature of the Caliphate, and he said that **the Caliph, in the eyes of God, was better than the angels, closest (to God), even closer than the Prophets who were sent....** ‘Abd al-Malik, says the informer, was surprised, and said ‘I would have liked it if some kharijite had been present, to be able to oppose him at least through this letter!’” One might think that the caliph is here being depicted almost as a pawn in the hands of the powerful governor, and some of these akhbar could simply be a reflection of the anti-Umayyad propaganda of the Abbassids. Other akhbar show, on the other hand, that ‘Abd al-Malik remains the master of the game. 3. We have many examples of this, which I cannot dwell upon at length here. It shows, essentially, that al-Hajjaj is merely a servant of the caliph, the object of his favor due to his effectiveness in repressing the dissidents in Iraq, yet he is just as likely, under different circumstances, to incur the caliph’s displeasure or simply be “put back in his place.” Further, **‘Abd al-Malik, in Syria, has other very influential advisors: Raja b. Haywa, the administrator of, and “spiritual advisor” for, the construction of the Dome of the Rock;** his personal secretary, Qabisa b. Dhu ayb, in charge of the mint and the postal systems; and finally, Ibn Shabib al-Zuhri, who was to become the principal mentor of his successors in the recording of the collections of religious traditions. These three personages were not only high officials, they were also scholars working in Syria in the service of the caliph and advising him on important matters, such as the construction of the Dome of the Rock, the creation of the new currency, and the management of the writings and Traditions that were circulating. They could not have been unaware of the composition of the religious scriptures. Yet a careful study of each of these three would require going beyond the scope of the present article.” (pp. 198-200)

“Were the authors thinking more particularly about interventions by **Abd al-Malik, it is said, made the following remark: “I am afraid of dying during the month of Ramadan. That is the month in which I was born, it is the month in which I was weaned, it is the month in which I gathered together the Qur’an [jamatu l-Qur’an], and it is the month in which I was sworn allegiance [as the caliph].” And he died at mid-Shawwal, when he no longer was worried about the possibility of dying (during Ramadan).** This information has been used as an indication of the role played by Abd al-Malik in the

composition of the Qur'anic texts, quite apart from its anecdotal and literary aspects, which deserve to be analyzed in themselves. **Yet, as the verb jama'a, "to gather" (in a mushaf), is also used with the meaning of "memorizing/learning by heart," one may also understand it as a reference to his memory of learning, as a child, after he had been weaned.** In any case, we would still need to establish the nature of the "Qur'an" he learned by heart when he was a child. Thus we must rely on other information in order to try to understand the role assigned in the ancient texts to 'Abd al-Malik in the matter of the Qur'an. An early indication may be found in Ibn Sa'd. It is quite interesting, especially if we keep in mind his habitual reserve concerning the actual writing down of the Qur'an." (pp. 200-201)

"Furthermore, what we know both from the external information noted above, and from external literary sources and internal information of a historiographical nature, corresponds, in general, to the contents of **the speech of Abd al-Malik, namely, the existence of different "Qur'anic" traditions in different parts of the empire, in Hijaz, in Syria, and in Iraq;** the existence alongside a Qur'an which had not yet stabilized, of other writings attributed to Islam's Prophet, which are distinct from that Qur'an; and, finally, the fact that 'Abd al-Malik, certain of his own legitimacy and of his role as khalifat Allah, decides and intervenes as the unifier of the community. Ibn Sa'd has gathered these elements in the general framework of the pilgrimage in the year AH 75. Such framing is doubtless a symbolic one. Yet, in that case, it is intended to show that the reign of Abd al-Malik, the legitimate caliph beginning in the year 73, and the one who presided over the pilgrimage of the year 75, was a significant moment in the composition of an official corpus called the Qur'an, consisting of writings that at the time were >till dispersed." (p. 203)

"THE SENDING OF THE MUSHAF TO THE CAPITALS OF THE EMPIRE: The first question to arise concerns the nature and content of the mushaf allegedly compiled in Medina on the initiative of 'Uthman, and supposedly set out to the capitals to unify the readings and to "officialize" the texts. Ibn Shabba, in his History of Medina, reports the following khabar. "'Abd al-'Aziz b. 'Amran told us. According to Muhriz Ibn Thabit, mawla of Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik, who had it from his father, who said: I was one of the guards of Hajjaj b. Yusuf. Al-Hajjaj wrote the mushaf. Then he sent them to the military capitals {al-amsar). He sent one to Medina. The members of 'Uthman's family disapproved of that. They were told: "Get out the mushaf of 'Uthman b. 'Affan, so that we may read it! **They answered: it was destroyed on the day when 'Uthman was killed.**" The distribution of the masdhif' all the military capitals by al-Hajjaj is invoked in a similar manner by the Egyptian historian Ibn Duqmaq (d. 809/1406): Al-Hajjaj b. Yusuf al-Thaqafi wrote masahif and sent them to all the military capitals [al-amsar]. One he had sent to Egypt. When he saw that, Abd al-Aziz b. Marwan went into a rage, for at the time he was serving as governor of Egypt for his brother Abd al-Malik. He says: "He permits himself and a mushaf to the very military district [jund] where I am serving. The author then recounts that the Umayyad governor ordered that a special mushaf be written for him and placed in the Great Mosque, yet he does not tell us what the work he ordered was based upon, other than to say that, once was completed, he submitted it to be vetted by the qurra. A1-Samhudi (d. 911/1506) quotes the khabar of Ibn Sabba, with a mistake in the name of Maslama. This quotation appears in a chapter in which author is asking himself **highly critical questions about 'Uthman's mushaf.** The latter, brought from Egypt, was allegedly kept in Medina, and he resists crediting the pious legend reported by the Andalusian traveler Ibn Iubayr on that subject,' mentioning three items of information based on the account of Malik b. Anas (d. 179/796), the imam of Medina: Malik said: "Reading from the mushaf at the Mosque was not done by people in the past. It was al-Hajjaj b. Yusuf who first instituted it..." Ibn Zabala said: "Malik b. Anas reported to me: 'Al-Hajjaj b. Yusuf sent the mushaf to the capitals. He sent a large one to Medina. He was the first to send masahif to the cities....'" Concerning al-Shatibi, he said the following: "**Malik also said: 'Uthman's mushaf has disappeared** [taghayyaba]. And we have found no information about it among the authoritative writers

[al-ashyakh].’ The latter remarks were already present in the Kitab al-Masahif of Ibn Abi Dawud, quoted from ‘Abd Allah Ibn Wahb (d. 197/813), one of the most ancient disciples and transmitters of Malik: Ibn Wahb reported back to us, and said, **“I interrogated Malik concerning Uthman’s mushaf, and he said to me: ‘It has disappeared [dhahaba].”**” (pp. 204-205)

“Thus, what is truly in play, what is at stake in the hadith, is the “composition” of the texts and their being organized into a whole. We know that at the time of the monk of Beth Hale and of John of Damascus, contemporaries of al-Hajjaj, there existed some parallel writings that were not yet a part of the Qur’an/biblos, including “the text of the Cow” and that of “the Woman.”” (p. 207)

“Al-Hajjaj and Inspiration: The governor of Iraq is presented to us not only as a political decision maker on Quranic matters, but also as someone who knew the Arabic language well and was an active participant in the scribes’ work: “When I heard al-Hajjaj reading, said one of his contemporaries, I realized that he had long studied the Qur’an.” A khabar reported by Ibn Abi Dawud places him at the scene, and in the act of dividing the texts of the corpus into reading portions ‘at al-Quran): “According to Mutahhar b. Khalid, Abu Muhammad al-Himmani said, “we worked on that project for four months, and al-Hajjaj read it every night.” One last khabar deserves mention. Around that same time a pious legend began to circulate. It was said that after Muhammad’s death, his slave Umm Ayman would not stop crying. Abu Bakr and ‘Umar went to see her, and asked her, “What makes you cry so? The Messenger of God has reached a place where everything is better for him than anything in this sublunary world.” She answered, “that is not why I am crying. I know well that God’s Messenger has left for something better than this lowly world. I am crying because the inspiration has stopped [abki ala l-wahy inqataa].” This story reached the ears of **al-Hajjaj, who is said to have stated “Umm Ayman lied: I only work by inspiration [kadhabat Umm Ayman: ma amalu ilia bi-wahy].”** The general framework within which Ibn ‘Asakir has placed this khabar is interesting to consider. The author-compiler begins by briefly recalling a reflection of al-Hajjaj on the caliph as superior to the prophets; he then places his statement concerning his “inspired” work at the center of the various versions of his speech in violent denunciation of the “rajaz of the Bedouin” of Ibn Mas’ud. His statement about inspiration, therefore concerns mainly, in his eyes, the governor’s work on the Quranic mushaf Al-Hajjaj could have believed that his work on the composition of the mushaf, in the service of one of “God’s Caliphs,” was superior both to angels and to prophets, especially in opposition to the Qur’an of Ibn Mas’ud, even though it might have been heard from the very mouth of Muhammad. As such, it deserved to be considered to have been inspired: the wahy had not stopped with the death of Muhammad. Is this not an implicit criticism, and a rejection of the Umayyad claims to superiority in relation to the Prophet? Or is it, rather, a recognition, also implicit, of the “imagined” role that they played in the composition of the Qur’anic mushaf? We might think that, in the case of Ibn ‘Asakir, it was both things at once.” (pp. 209-210)

“Al-Hajjaj and the Caliph: In this collection of akbar about the scriptural activities of Al-Hajjaj, the role of ‘Abd al-Malik seems to be rather downplayed. The governor of Iraq would appear to be acting of his own initiative: he has his own team of scribes; he decides what needs to be done; and, ultimately, it is he who sends the masahif to the great military centers of his empire. A number of akhbar show a desire to correct such an impression. Al’ mash confirmed that he had heard al-Hajjaj’s speech about the “rajaz of Beduin” while attending Friday Prayers with him, and he specifies that the governor had added, “Listen, therefore, and obey God’s Caliph, and to his chosen one, ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwan.” So it is in the service of God’s caliph that he worked in Iraq, most particularly on Quranic matters. The speech attributed to ‘Abd al-Malik concerning the mushaf of the people of Medina and on their fara’id follows the same line: it is the caliph’s role to endorse that which he considers good “for Islam.” In addition to the fact that “Abd al-Malik had his own experts in Syria, it is unthinkable that if, according to Malik b.

Anas, **it was al-Hajjaj who first sent out the official nasahif to the various capitals, he would have done so without the approval of the caliph.** We have no information about the date when the distribution of such codices might have been made. What Ibn Duqmaq says about the negative reaction of the governor of Egypt, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, brother of the caliph, might suggest a hypothesis. We know that ‘Abd al-Malik thought seriously about relieving his brother of his status as heir to the throne in favor of his own sons. According to al Mada’ini, al-Hajjaj had written to him to encourage him to do it, while, according to al-Waqidi, Qabisa b. Dhu ayb, the private secretary of the caliph in Syria, was against it. In any case, the governor of Egypt died before the decision could be made (ah 85/704 CE). We may have, in this, an indication of the fact that the formal refusal by ‘Abd al-‘Aziz to accept the mushaf sent to Egypt by al-Hajjaj may have played a role in the incitement by the latter, which led to his removal from office, and that this may have occurred during the last years of the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik. If we juxtapose the totality of the akhbar from different sources, we can at the very least notice a certain consistency. The role and function of “God’s Caliph” remain central and decisive. **‘Uthman, first legitimate representative of the Umayyad family, is its symbolic figure, even though all tangible trace of his mushaf “has disappeared,” and even though, in fact, ‘Abd al-Malik was the real decision maker.** In any case, this is the framework within which the Iraqi compilers of the akhbar wished to place the control exercised by al-Hajjaj over the work of the scribes. The latter, here represented by ‘Asim and al-A’mash, who lived on long after the death of al-Hajjaj, remain at the center of the scriptural work, as the history of the Qur’anic corpus does not stop at the time of ‘Abd al-Malik.” (pp. 210-211)

PART TWO: New Aspects for the Emergence and Character of Islam

Chapter 5 – A Personal Look at Some Aspects of the History of Koranic Criticism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries - Ibn Warraq

“The next great step in the critical examination of our sources for Muhammad and the rise of Islam was taken by the great scholar Ignaz Goldziher in his Muhammedanische Studien (Halle 1889, 1890). Goldziher showed that a certain amount of careful sifting or tinkering was not enough, and that the vast number of hadiths were total forgeries from the late second and third Muslim centuries. This meant, of course, “that the meticulous isnads which supported them were utterly fictitious.” Faced with Goldziher’s impeccably documented arguments, conservative historians began to panic and devised spurious ways of keeping skepticism at bay, by, for instance, postulating ad hoc distinctions between legal and historical traditions. But as Humphreys says. “In terms of their formal structures, the hadith and the historical Khabar [Arabic, pl. Akhbar, “discrete anecdotes and reports”] were very similar indeed; more important, many 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th century scholars had devoted their efforts to both kinds of text equally. Altogether, if hadith isnads were suspect, so then should be the isnads attached to historical reports.”” (p. 228)

“The ideas of the positivist Caetani and the Jesuit Lammens were taken up by **a group of Soviet Islamologists, whose conclusions sometimes show a remarkable similarity to the works of Wansbrough, Cook, and Crone.** N. A. Morozov propounded the theory that until the Crusades, Islam was indistinguishable from Judaism, and that only then did Islam receive its independent character, while Muhammad and the first caliphs were mythical figures. Morozov’s arguments, first developed in his Christ (1930), are summarized by Smimov: “In the Middle Ages Islam was merely an offshoot of Arianism evoked by a meteorological event in the Red Sea near Mecca; it was akin to Byzantine iconoclasm. The Qur’an bears the traces of late composition, up to the eleventh century. The Arabian peninsula is incapable of giving birth to any religion—it is too far from the normal areas of civilization.

The Arabian Islamites, who passed in the Middle Ages as Agars, Ishmaelites, and Saracens, were indistinguishable from the Jews until the impact of the Crusades made them assume a separate identity. All the lives of Muhammad and his immediate successors are as apocryphal as the accounts of Christ and the Apostles.” (p. 231)

“Schacht proves that, for example, a tradition did not exist at a particular time by showing that it was not used as a legal argument in a discussion that would have made reference to it imperative if it had existed. For Schacht, **every legal tradition from the Prophet must be taken as an inauthentic and fictitious expression of a legal doctrine formulated at a later date:** “We shall not meet any legal tradition from the Prophet which can positively be considered authentic.” Traditions were formulated polemically in order to rebut a contrary doctrine or practice; Schacht calls these traditions “counter traditions.” Isnads “were often put together very carelessly. Any typical representative of the group whose doctrine was to be projected back on to an ancient authority, could be chosen at random and put into an isnad. We find therefore a number of alternative names in otherwise identical isnads .. .” Another important discovery of Schacht’s that has considerable consequences only appreciated recently by Wansbrough and his followers is that “Muhammadan [Islamic] law did not derive directly from the Koran but developed ... out of popular and administrative practice under the Umayyads, and this practice often diverged from the intentions and even the explicit wording of the Koran. Norms derived from the Koran were introduced into Muhammadan law almost invariably at a secondary stage.” (p. 233)

“Even the most conservative scholars now accept the unreliability of the Muslim sources, but an increasing number also seem to confirm, however indirectly, the more radical conclusions of Wansbrough, Cook, and Crone. One of the most remarkable of the latter was Dr. Suliman Bashear, a leading scholar and administrator at the University of Nablus (West Bank). His generally radical and skeptical views about the life of the Prophet and the history of early Islam often got him into trouble, not only with the university authorities but also with the students, who, on one occasion, threw him out of a second story window (luckily, he escaped with minor injuries). Bashear lost his post at the university after the publication of his Introduction to the Other History (in Arabic) in 1984, whereupon he took up a Fulbright fellowship in the United States and returned to Jerusalem to a position in the Hebrew University in 1987. He fell seriously ill in the summer of 1991, was told to rest, but continued his research nonetheless. He died of a heart attack in October 1991, just after completing Arabs and Others in Early Islam.” (p. 235)

“All in all, the case of verse 2:114 gives support to Wansbrough’s main thesis, since it shows that from the mid-second [Muslim] century on Qur’anic exegesis underwent a consistent change, the main “impulse” behind which was to assert the Hijazi origins of Islam. In that process, the appearance and circulation of a tradition by the otherwise unimportant Ibn Zayd slowly gathered prominence. Simultaneously, other ingenuous attempts were made to find earlier authorities precisely bearing Ibn Abbas’s name for the same notion, while the more genuine core of the original tradition of Ibn Abbas was gradually watered down because it was no longer recognized after the “legend of Muhammad” was established.’ Bashear also indirectly complements the work of G. Hawting and M. J. Kister when he claims that, “on yet another level, literary criticism of the traditional material on **the position of Jerusalem in early Islam has clearly shown that the stress on its priority was not necessarily a function of the attempt to undermine Mecca but rather was independent of the position of the latter since Islam seems not to have yet developed one firmly established cultic centre.**” (pp. 236-237)

“For, **our attempt to date the relevant traditional material confirms on the whole the conclusions that Schacht arrived at from another field, specifically the tendency of isnads to grow backwards.** Time and again it has been demonstrated how serious doubts could easily be cast not only against traditions attributed to the Prophet and Companions but a great deal of those bearing the names of successors too. **We have actually seen how the acute struggle of clear national motive to promote the positions of Ismail and Mecca did flare up before the turn of the century, was at its height when the Abbasids assumed power, and remained so throughout the rest of the second [Muslim] century. Though we did not initially aim at investigating the development of Muslim hajj rituals in Mecca, let alone its religious position in early Islam in general, our enquiry strongly leads to the conclusion that such issues were far from settled during the first half of the second [Muslim] century.** While few scholars have lately arrived at similar conclusions from different directions, it is **Goldziher who must be accredited with the initial note that Muslim consecration of certain locations in the Hijaz commenced with the rise of the Abbasids to power.** Indeed we have seen how “the mosque of the ram” was one of such locations.” (p. 238)

“Juynboll once said that Wansbrough’s theories were so hard to swallow because of the obvious disparity in style and contents of Meccan and Medinan suras. There is indeed a difference in language, style, and even message between the so-called Meccan and Medinan suras. But all that shows is that there are two quite different styles in the Qur’an, and of course, **Muslim exegetes solved this problem by assigning one set to Mecca and the other to Medina, with considerable tinkering (verses from the “Medinese” suras assigned to Mecca, and vice versa). But why should we accept the Medinan and Meccan labels? What is the source or sources of this difference? To accept these labels is simply to accept the entire traditional Muslim account of the compilation of the Qur’an, the biography of the Prophet, and the Rise of Islam.** Again, this is precisely what is at stake: the reliability of the sources. The differences, if anything, point to a history far more extensive than the short life of Muhammad as found in the sira, and they do not have to be interpreted biographically through the history of the life of Muhammad in Mecca and Medina. There is nothing natural about the Meccan-Medinan separation. It is clear from Lammens, Becker, and others, that **large parts of the sira and hadith were invented to account for the difficulties and obscurities encountered in the Qur’an,** and these labels also proved to be convenient for the Muslim exegetes for the same reason. The theory of abrogation also gets the exegetes out of similar difficulties and obviates the need to explain the embarrassing contradictions that abound in the Qur’an.” (pp. 246-247)

Chapter 6 – Pre-Islamic Arabic—Koranic Arabic— Classical Arabic: A Continuum? - Pierre Larcher

“It is time to conclude. **Classical Arabic is a construction, even if it is not a construction ex nihilo.** At the center of this construction was put the i’rab, whereas the epigraphical material conserved does not allow us to deduce the existence of such an inflection (except for the pausal pronunciation of tanwinan into –a) but that there seems indeed to have been, among the qira’at, a caseless variant. The question of the i’rab therefore remains open. Even if for my part I think that it might be a feature of high antiquity, which was maintained for reasons, not syntactical but metric and prosodic, in the noetic register of the language, before being retained by reason of the prestige attached to this register by classical Arabic, still, other hypotheses cannot be excluded, notably the one that sees it as an innovation, an internal development in classical Arabic, consisting in a reinterpretation in case inflection of vowels of liaison {wasl}. This position, which originates in Arab grammatical tradition itself with Qutrub, died 206/821 was defended in the nineteenth century by Wetzstein; it is defended today, with a very great technical refinement, by Owens. A final example to illustrate both the concept proposed here of classical

Arabic and the alternative that follows for the history of the language: The treatises of Arabic grammar generally open with a definition of the utterance (kalam), and of its constituents (kalimat, plural of kalima). About the latter. The grammarians note that there exist three variants (lughdt): one, kalima, given as “Hijazi” and which is the one retained by classical Arabic; and two others, given as “tamimi,” namely, kilma and kalma. If we observe that 1. these three variants evidently coexisted a long time ago in the Arabic domain, and 2. Many Arabic dialects today (for example, the Arabic of Damascus kalme) prolong no less evidently the variant kilma, then classical Arabic is not a point of departure, but of arrival—not the base, but the result of a long and slow process of constitution (assuredly comparable to that of any other classical” or “literary” or “standard” language). Hence, we must go back to Fleischer’s program, that is to say, apprehend Arabic in its totality: als Gesamtsprache.” (p. 275)

Chapter 7 – From Syriac to Pahlavi: The Contribution of the Sassanian Iraq to the Beginning of the Arabic Writing - Sergio Noja Nosedá

“The Arabic of the northern central region used various scripts until it felt the need to have its “own” script, just as not long afterward it felt the need to have its “own” sacred book in its “own” language, as the Koran shows. How could these Arabs, who were so proud, use the scripts of others? The parallel with the Slavic world seems impelling: every Slav (or rather he who speaks”) calls the Germans “dumb” because they do not speak Slavonic, and St. Cyril and St. Methodius created an alphabet of their own to evangelize the Slavs. At the same time, both the attempt by the Syriac Church to spread Christianity Kata poleis and the rejection of this attempt must have had a massive impact: Syriac could not be adopted in toto.” (p. 300)

“This process of the emergence of Arabic writing was very similar to the process used by those who returned from the Babylonian exile. Wanting to distinguish themselves from those who had remained in the Land of Israel, and not being able to make them change the script, the veterans from Babyonia invented square Hebrew, imitating, in general, the square and rectangular shapes of the cuneiform. It should be recalled that the fact that ‘Abd Allah son of Malik al-Khuza and Yahya son of Khalid the Barmekid (the teacher of Harun al-Rashid) read the inscription of Hind in his monastery without difficulty would seem to demonstrate the identity of Arabic writing at the time when Islam emerged with what triumphed then, and existed over the centuries, within Islam.” (p. 302)

Chapter 8 – Early Evidences of Variant Readings in Qur’anic Manuscripts - Alba Fedeli

“The story of the manuscripts of Ibn Mas’ud that al-Nadim reported in the Fihrist has never been proven by any written evidence. Arthur Jeffery himself examined about 170 volumes and compiled his Materials only on the basis of quotations. The scriptio inferior in the palimpsest of Fogg and his print of the past words in Q 2:222, (wa-la taqra) bu al-nisa’a fi mahidhinna hatta yatata-hama, the same lectio that the Tradition traces to Ibn Mas’ud, are intriguing: it is evidence of a variant reading. However, it is groundless to say that it is fragment of one of the manuscripts of **Ibn Mas’ud, who refused to destroy his copies of the Qur’an in accordance with ‘Uthman’s order.** The nonstandard lectio found in the palimpsest is not to be considered as proof of the pre-‘Uthmanic period, because it was just in the fourth century that Abu Bakr b. Mujahid (d. 324/936) accepted only the readings based on fairly uniform consonantal text and he chose seven well-known Qur’an teachers of the second century and declared that their readings all had divine authority that the others lacked. This theory was made official only in the year 322/934 when the scholar Ibn Miqdam was forced to retract his view that the consonantal text

could be read in any manner that was grammatically correct. In the following year another Qur'an scholar, Ibn Shanabudh, was similarly condemned and forced to renounce his view that it was permissible to use the readings of Ibn Mas'ud and Ubayy. Such evidence, and all the other pieces of evidence found in manuscripts—particularly in palimpsests—is of great importance for all the scholars in Qur'anic studies, with all their prejudices of a mentality modeled by writing and printing. However, any evidence of a variant reading dissolves and disappears into the words: “Ne prenez-pas (n'apprenez pas) le Coran de ceux qui ne font qu'en copier des exemplaires!” (**Don't take [don't learn] the Qur'an from those who are only making copies of copies!**)” (pp. 324-325)

Chapter 9 – Leuke Kome = Laykah, the Arsians = 'Ashab al-Rass, and Other Pre-Islamic Names in the Qur'an: A Way Out of the "Tanglewood" - Gerd-R. Puin

“The exegetes of the Qur'an interpreted the word as “tanglewood,” which is not very convincing because in that case one must admit to errors of writing in two places in the text of the Qur'an. The other position is that the word is actually a (place-) name, one that had not entirely disappeared; the memory of the exact location to which it could refer, however, seems to have been lost. It is only with a look at the depiction of Arabia given by Ptolemaeus that one comes to the surprising realization that the Qur'an not only handed down the name of the ancient port city of Leuke Kome, but that it also, as providing a means of confirmation, gave the names of other places in the Nabataean kingdom. As a result, it is clear first of all that **the written Qur'anic text contains material that is older than the oral tradition of the text, that is, that it contains pre-Islamic material**; second, it is clear that occasionally the oldest written transmission preserved this older text even if the later exegetes, in their time of need, had to reach far too widely to offer their explanations or “corrections.” Generally speaking, then. It will be worthwhile to work out the oldest conceivable textual structure and pay attention to the fact that, in terms of its interpretation, the text is indeed adequate in its content.” (p. 352)

Chapter 10 – Syrian and Arabian Christianity and the Qur'an - Karl-Heinz Ohlig

“After the death of Alexander, the Parni nomads (from the steppes near the Caspian Sea) migrated south and founded the Parthian Empire, which was at first a vassal state of the Seleucids. In 238 BCE Arsaces I (ca. 297-211 BCE), king of the Parthians, declared his people's independence from the Seleucids. Just fifty years later, the Parthians were able to conquer Persia and Mesopotamia, an event that brought the Seleucid Empire to an end. Beginning in 66 BCE, the Parthians stretched their authority toward northern Mesopotamia; in the west, on the Euphrates, their empire bordered on the sphere of influence of the Roman Empire. In the period following, both the Parthians and the Romans sought to expand their areas of power; however. Despite occasional military victories and temporary acquisitions of land, for the most part the Euphrates remained the border between the two. From the beginning of their imperial reign, the Parthians preserved the governmental structures of the Seleucids. Greek remained the official language, and consequently Hellenistic traditions remained in force for a longer period than the Hellenes themselves. In the first century BCE, though, the central power of the state weakened, and the Parthian Empire became a feudal state with regional principalities. Beginning in this period, Hellenism was repressed, and Persian influences moved to the foreground. **One of the feudal states, Persia, declared itself independent under Ardashir (ruled 220-240 CE), who was the founder of the Sassanian dynasty**; as a result of this move, Persia was able to support the Parthian dynasty, which had been weakened as a result of its battles with the Roman Empire. From this period onward, eastern Syria belonged to the Sassanian Empire. The Sassanians pursued aggressive policies

toward their western neighbor, the Roman Empire, but the former spheres of influence remained largely unchanged. **It was only in the time of Khosrau I (531-579), who was temporarily able to possess Antioch and who drove the Christians out of Yemen, and under Khosrau II (591-628), who conquered Palestine and Egypt, that the conflicts with the Byzantine Empire reached their apex.** The Sassanian army was utterly destroyed in 622 by Emperor Heraclius of Byzantium. The Sassanian Empire was a strongly centralized state, with a social system marked by divisions resembling castes. Despite the Hellenistic traditions present in the empire, the Persian influences were stronger, and Zoroastrianism was the state religion. Manichaeism, which had arisen in the third century CE following the teaching of Mani (d. 274 or 277 CE), was repressed as a heresy. **Emperor Heraclius, however, structured the Byzantine empire after 622 in a different way. West Syria and Palestine no longer belonged to a province of the empire; rather, they were turned over to Arab princes who were more or less confederated and were responsible for the paying of tribute.** Only a few years after its defeat at the hands of the Byzantines, the Sassanian Empire fell apart as the result of a civil war. Here again, Arab-dominated powers took hold of the resulting situation, as large empires developed under Arab leadership, first under the Umayyads and then, after 750, under the Abbasids. **Islamic literature of the ninth century connected the development of Arabic sheikdoms and empires with the expansion of Islam. However, the historical sources from this period (coins and inscriptions) show that these empires were strongly influenced by Christianity for quite a long time.** An analysis of the Christian Syriac literature of the period also demonstrates these findings.” (pp. 363-364)

“CHRISTIANITY IN SYRIA: Christianity made its home in Syria quite early. Many of the writings of the New Testament originated in the Hellenized, bilingual west Syrian region; as was appropriate, given that this region belonged to the Roman Empire, these texts were written in Greek. In Antioch, a Hellenistic city founded circa 300 BCE by Seleucus I that was the later cultural center of west Syria, the followers of Jesus were first called Christians. In the second century CE, Christianity seems to have spread further to the east, namely, through Edessa into Mesopotamia, perhaps even to the area east of the Tigris. **Most likely, the people playing a role in the missionary work from Palestine into the East included those Palestinian Jewish Christians called “Ebionites”; these individuals were declared heretics in the West around 150 CE because of their Christology, namely, that they said Jesus was “merely human” (psilos anthropos).** These Jewish Christians likely had either been driven from the area, emigrated, or moved as part of their work as merchants. However, the **Christian mission oriented toward the region of Mesopotamia seems to have taken as its point of departure the Aramaic-speaking synagogue communities of the Parthian Empire.** This cultural location (in the synagogues), as well as the cultural relationship between the Jewish and Aramaic mentalities and languages, gave rise to the strong influence by Judaism and the Old Testament on the later east Syrian Christianity. This influence stood closer to the Palestinian beginnings of Christianity than Hellenistic Christianity, in which the ideas and thought patterns of a completely foreign culture were appropriated and made Christianity’s own. In this connection, it is also important that quite early (an exact date cannot be given at this point in the relevant scholarship) and through a slow process, a Syriac translation of the Old Testament appeared called the “Peshitta.” **The Gospels were read until the fifth century in the Syrian form of the “Diatessaron,” a gospel harmony put together by Tatian in the second half of the second century.** Also, episcopal structures developed quite early in the second half of the third century. Christians came into the Parthian Empire, and even more prominently into the Sassanian Empire which followed, by still another path. The military conflicts that broke out again and again in this period resulted, after (usually) short-term land gains by the Persians, in deportations of portions of the population, including Christians who then established their own congregations in east Syria. “These deported Christians, insofar as they consisted of Greek-speaking congregations, do not appear to have been integrated into the local Christian population until **the fifth century, for reports of the time speak of divided churches and of**

two hierarchies with Greek and Syriac/Aramaic as their respective liturgical languages The Syrian Christian mission also reached tribes of Arabians quite early, at first in the northern part of the Arabian peninsula, but above all Arabian kingdoms and tribes in Palestine and Mesopotamia, especially in the Euphrates River valley. Henri Charles conjectures that the fourth century was the time of the missionary work among these peoples, or if not, then certainly the fifth. From the characteristics of the Qur'anic material, **however, earlier periods, the third or fourth century, should be accepted, as I will shortly demonstrate.** There will be more to say later concerning the theological influences on the communities of Syrian Christians. What is important here first is that, **for approximately three hundred years, there existed a Hellenistic Christianity right alongside Syrian Christianity;** indeed, Hellenistic influences are recognizable in the area as a whole for an even longer period. These Hellenistic influences as well as the Persian influences in the area help to explain that. Even early in the Christian period, Gnostic movements were quite at home in region of Syria. For example, Marcionism spread into Syria and Osrhoene from the end of the second century onward. In addition, both the Ides of Solomon and the gnostic Gospel of Thomas appeared in Syria in the second century, as well as the "Song of the Pearl" in the apocryphal acts of Thomas and most likely also the Gospel of Philip. Further, both Books of Jeu, in which Seth plays an important role, as well as Sethian Gnosticism and the related Barbelo Gnosticism (transmitted in the Apocryphon of John) should be ascribed to this region. **This is certainly also true of the Mandaeans (from manda, "gnosis" or "knowledge"), who appeared in southern Iraq and Iran, and of their literature; these Mandaeans used the name "Nazoreans" as a marker of self-identification, and they are called "Sabians" in the Qur'an.** Manichaeism appeared in the third century in Persia and spread eastward to central Asia and westward as far as northern Africa and Italy. "Gnosticism" was a phenomenon of syncretistic Hellenism, in which an "understanding" of the basis of being, an important soteriological concept for Hellenists, was bound up with an ethical and cosmogonic dualism more or less radical, in this case one strongly influenced by Persian traditions. The negative valuation of the material and/or bodily was often (e.g., in Marcionism) connected with a Christological Docetism; the divine Logos only took on the appearance of a body, which he gave up again before the crucifixion. This dualism reveals strongly anti-Jewish impulses among the Gnostic movements in east Syria. These impulses derived from the region's widespread belief in the Old Testament creation story, that is, the story of a good creator and a good creation, against which Gnosticism had to array itself. This context may have been influenced by Jewish communities; however, because the conflicts primarily concerned Christian gnosis, it was most likely Syrian Christianity, in which the reception of the Old Testament was very developed. That called forth this polemic on the part of the Gnostic groups." (pp. 365-367)

"Christianity was able to further establish itself even in these periods of persecution. The church in Persia had its own hierarchy; approximately eighty bishoprics were brought together to create ecclesiastical provinces led by metropolitan bishops. Consequently, the importance of the empire's capital, the city of Seleucia-Ctesiphon on the Tigris, grew. In a process quite similar to the development of Constantinople into a patriarchate, Seleucia-Ctesiphon's bishop soon held the leadership of the entire church in the Sassanian Empire under the title "Catholicos. **In 410 a synod was called in the capital city by the Sassanian king Yazdgird I (this was similar to the situation in the West under the Roman emperors); this synod was intended to reorganize ecclesiastical structures in the wake of the persecutions. Here it was decided to be rid of the double hierarchy of Aramaic- and Greek-speaking congregations; from that point forward there was to be only one Syrian-Christian hierarchy. The decisions of Nicaea were discussed and accepted; this was likely a requirement for the integration of the "Greeks."** To the bishop of the capital city was ascribed the highest office in the consecration of bishops, whereby he (with the agreement of the king) became the "Head of the East Syrian Church." **Before the end of the fifth century, he received the title of "Catholicos," and the Syrian church became**

autocephalous, merely the institutional formalization of a state of affairs already in force. The reception of the Council of Nicaea proceeded slowly and with some difficulty; this council was followed by other “Greek” synods, which remained without theological import whatsoever in East Syria. Around 400 the Syrian liturgy spread out from Nisibis into the entire region of East Syria; further, the nascent architecture of churches and holy places was independent of the West. Concerning the Christianization of Arabic tribes, “the state of the sources does not allow definite conclusions to be made, mainly because the Arabic and Turkish tribes were nomadic or at least seminomadic.” However, **the presence of an Arabian bishop in Hira is documented beginning in 410**. In the fifth century, Christianity was able to make inroads into the upper, Zoroastrian levels of society, a development that occasionally led to difficulties. By the end of this century, **perhaps due to the influence of the Zoroastrian obligation to marry, the influence of monasticism was reduced and celibacy was abolished**; even some leaders of the east Syrian Church, including the Catholicos Babai and his successor Silas (early sixth century), were married. At the same time, authority structures were taken over from the model of the Byzantine Church, and their apostolicity was claimed; this move indicated a deepening of the east Syrian Church’s autocephaly, not a division from the Greek church. **Beginning around 600, monasticism was able once more to gain a foothold in the East, and in the following century it was fully reintegrated into the church. The east Syrian Church had not supported the condemnation of Nestorius at the Council of Ephesus (431). Following the later testimony of Catholicos Timothy I (780-823), this meant that “in the East the faith remained as it had been.”** The forced emigration of Nestorian theologians and Christians from the West further strengthened Nestorian influences in the east Syrian ambit. The period following Ephesus also witnessed a spread of Monophysite theology in east Syria. For example, Rabbula, the bishop of Edessa from 412 to 435, who had taken part in 431 in Ephesus in the (“Nestorian”) synod led by John of Antioch, later turned to the Cyrilline Party and fought against Nestorianism. With this step, though, he came into opposition with the theological school of Edessa, whose leader Ibas deposed him as bishop in 435. Ibas, however, translated works of Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopuestia, and Nestorius into Syriac. In 486 a synod in Seleucia-Ctesiphon adopted a Dyophysite creed based on the teaching of Theodore. In addition all further Syrian synods in the sixth century saw themselves in relation to Theodore’s theology, while Nestorius did not play such a role. The school of Edessa, which was at this time the single center of education for the Persian clergy, was closed in 489 by the (Monophysite) emperor of the east Roman Empire. Teachers and students migrated to Persia, where they strengthened their “Nestorian” character. Later, **the Council of Chalcedon was accepted in this region (aside from its condemnation of Nestorius), although it was received only superficially; the Syrians were not able to do much with the council’s technical definitions**. Still another synod in 605 under the Catholicos Mar Gregorius strengthened the “Nestorian” character of the church in the Sassanian Empire. After the closing of the school of Edessa, many teachers and students settled in Nisibis, so that this city took over a leading role in theological education from that time into the seventh century. Here, as in Edessa, the writings of Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and (less often) Nestorius played a central role. In the meantime, Monophysitism had been able to spread even further, primarily in west Syria. The Monophysite Severus succeeded in becoming the patriarch of Antioch in 512, assisted in large measure by Byzantine politics helpful to his cause. However, in 519, under the rule of Emperor Justin I, he had to retire into Egypt, where he died in 538.” (pp. 368-371)

“With the support of Empress Theodora, who herself was inclined toward Monophysitism, Theodore “of Arabia” was consecrated as bishop in 542 by exiled patriarch of Alexandria, Theodosius (d. 566); Bosra was entrusted Theodore as his metropolitan see. Jacob Baradaeus (d. 578) was consecrated in 544 as “Bishop of the Arabs,” and he established Monophysitism in east Syria through visitation trips. Later Monophysites would call themselves “Jacobites” after this Jacob.... Because of the Syrian mentality’s relationship to Jewish ways of thinking, and also because of the use of the same language,

namely, Aramaic, there was a growing convergence between Jews and Christians around the year 700. At that time synods forbade Christians from taking part in Jewish festivals. “Such constantly repeated laws indicate that they were not being followed.” On the other side, **many Jews at this time converted to (Syrian) Christianity. However, the official Syrian Church and its liturgy (even until today) expressed a sharp anti-Judaism.**” (p. 371)

“STRUCTURES AND MODELS OF SYRIAN THEOLOGY AND ITS MENTALITY Pre-Nicene Theology: Not counting Gnostic fragments, only a few pre-Nicene literary witnesses survive from which one may discern the contours of a specifically Syrian theology. The most likely reason for this state of affairs was the deep cultural intermixing between “Greeks,” Jews, and Orientals. Indeed, it must have taken some time before the various specific Christian communities with theologies distinguishable from one another would have developed; one may say the same “or the process by which individuals would have arisen from these groups to put these theologies into written forms. Consequently, Syrian theology in the pre-Nicene period did not enjoy a tradition unbroken in terms of literary witnesses; however, there are enough texts—even if they are transmitted only in fragmentary form—that the most important structures are already recognizable. **Fundamental to the Syrian world (and comparable to Jewish understand) is a thought-world oriented above all to history and not, as in the Hellenistic tradition, to “being” or “essence” as such, that is, to the nature of God, humanity, and the cosmos.** God acted in history—through the prophets and through Jesus. **Humans can find salvation through following Jesus, through proving themselves worthy {Bewdhrung}, and not, as in Greek Christianity, through the “divinization” brought about by the God-man Jesus Christ.** ” (p. 372)

“As a student of Justin’s, Tatian spoke of the “divine Logos,” who was at the same time the hypostasis (original foundation) of everything. He came forth, however, “in the beginning” (Gen. 1:1) from God through an act of God’s will and was God’s “first-born work.” In Jesus “God has appeared in human form” (NB: there is here no accompanying conception of an “incarnation” of the Hellenistic order), and humans are born in imitation of the Logos. In addition to these borrowings from Hellenistic thought, however, Tatian also supported Syrian ideas: above all, freedom, the importance for salvation of temporal actions (the human soul is not “naturally” immortal, but only as a result of a correctly-practiced recognition of God), and a definite monotheism. In Tatian’s thought, though, many things remain either unclear or simply unimportant; this modern impression may be the result of the paucity of extant source materials.” (pp. 373-374)

“The foundations of Syrian theology are recognizable in Paul of Samosata’s writings. He taught “that ‘the Son’ only refers to the human being Jesus, in whom the Wisdom of God took up residence; further, that ‘the Spirit’ is nothing other than the grace which God ... granted.” God is an undifferentiated, unique being who reveals himself outwardly through his power, his organon, the Logos. Jesus is (only) a human being, although better than all other human beings, even than the prophets and Moses, and he is on account of this closely bound up with the Logos, a “power” of God. His “Christ-ness” rests in his “worthiness.” This also includes the idea that worthiness is the soteriological goal of all humans, and specifically of Christians; this worthiness is to be made manifest in following after Jesus. Two other prominent views of salvation at the time are not in view here: Paul advocates neither a Hellenistic-Christian divinization through the mediation of the God-man Jesus Christ nor the view of Latin theology of salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. **Arius is the next theologian in whose works one can see directions in Syrian theology. He was born around 256 or 260 in a location that remains unclear, although presumably somewhere in the larger region of Syria rather than in Lybia, as is commonly supposed.** Whether he was a student in Antioch of the priest Lucian must remain an open question; additionally, little is known with certainty of his life and thought.

Later, however, we know that he was active in the region of Alexandria as a presbyter, and that he stood in opposition to Alexander and Athanasius of Alexandria. Because he was condemned at Nicaea, his writings are only accessible in fragments and often in the quotations of his opponent Athanasius. T. Bohm has judged only three documents to be historically authenticated (a creed, a letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, and a letter to Constantine). Concerning the Thalia, partially transmitted by Athanasius in his Orations against the Arians, he suggests that there were later emendations. Nevertheless, one can safely accept that Athanasius reproduces Arius's thought correctly, as follows: **because the Logos came into being before the Aeons, but still "in the beginning," he is a creature—the most beautiful of all creation and the Demiurge. He can be called "divine," for lack of a better term, but he is not God.** God proper is conceived of as monarchical, following Syrian theological norms; Arius does not advocate any sort of "intra-God" subordinationism. How, though, could the creature "Logos," who later became incarnate in Jesus (with this doctrine Arius remains true to his Alexandrian surroundings) have been created to be so beautiful "in the beginning"? Here he offers a rare construction: because God in his foreknowledge saw that the Logos would later prove himself worthy in Jesus, the Logos-teaching in the Syrian "Christology of worthiness." (pp. 375-377)

"WEST SYRIAN THEOLOGY AFTER NICAEA: The Council of Nicaea condemned the Arian theses concerning the temporal beginning and the "creatureliness" of the Son of God. The council taught. First using biblical expressions, his full divinity (if still originating from the Father)—"God from God, Light from Light..."—adding thereunto the expression homoousios, meaning "of like nature." From that point on, life became more difficult for west Syrian theologians, because in the church of the emperor, one could no longer say that Jesus was the Son of God on account of his worthiness. He was so always. Nature, before all time (notice also: no longer from the "beginning"). Nonetheless, **west Syrian theologians were not ready to simply give up their type of Christianity; their challenge was to find ways to formulate this Christianity acceptably under the Nicene definitions.** As a result of these mental exertions, a specifically west Syrian theology arose at this time, a theology also called "Antiochene" after the cultural center of the area." (p. 377)

"**The unity of the God-Logos and the human Jesus (that is, that the one can be predicated of the other) was seen, therefore, as an existential (so to speak) unity; perhaps a better way to describe it would be as the "togetherness" of two subjects. This unity consisted on God's side of the election of Jesus and of grace, on Jesus' side of his obedience unto death (not through his death); that is, in ethical proof of worthiness.**" (p. 378)

"**It was quite a long time before Chalcedon was accepted in the Byzantine church; the decisive factor was most often a "Cyrillian" interpretation of the creed, one in which, following the theology of Cyril of Alexandria, the unity of the God-man was expressed strongly and yet latently in terms of essence.**" (p. 379)

"EAST SYRIAN THEOLOGY Witnesses up to the Beginning of the Fifth Century: In the midst of the east Syrian church, there were indeed smaller Greek-speaking congregations, and some of their more well-informed theologians may have known something of the discussions proceeding in the West. However, these theologians did not stand in direct confrontation with a Hellenistic theology in the majority, as was the case in west Syria. They did not have to defend their own theology or engage themselves with the theological expressions of the other side. **Consequently, one may assume that before Nicaea (and in general in east Syria before the synod of 410) there was not necessity for theologians to concern themselves with a binitarian or Trinitarian conception of God, with a two-nature Christology, or with an incarnational soteriology based on such a Christology (i.e., that humans are saved because of the**

incarnation of the Logos). Throughout this period, people were able simply to be Christians in the east Syrian way. Those ideas recognizable in Paul of Samosata—besides, that is, their forcedly antithetical components—likely became decisive for many Syrian congregations: a clear Monarchianism; a theology of worthiness; and a Christology of worthiness based thereupon, whereby Jesus' worth and importance for salvation rested in his obedience, and that he is consequently ("by adoption") the Son. This theology was often formulated by looking back to the Old Testament in a way that was poetic and full of images. This method avoided "terminological fixation and definition," for systematic reflection was not typical of the Syrian mode of thinking. **One Syrian theologian, Aphrahat (d. after 345), of whose life little is known, apparently knew nothing of Nicaea and used Old Testament motifs as his primary subject matter.** The Spirit of God rested on the prophets and on Jesus Christ; Christians also receive this Spirit at baptism and ought to live according to it. In a foundational study, Peter Bruns engaged the theology of Aphrahat." He pointed to the imagistic richness of the Syrian language, which sought to express "the form of Christ intuitively" by means of its "rich inheritance of oriental lyric poetry." In his seventeenth Demonstration, Aphrahat argues the thesis that the Messiah is the Son of God and rejects the Jewish criticism concerning his status as the Son of God. He brings forth a plethora of names for the Christ—indeed, the sheer number of terms forces the individual expressions in their exact meanings to fade a bit into the background—and clarifies the aforementioned naming of the Messiah as the Son of God: "For the venerable name of divinity was also granted to righteous people and to those who were worthy of that divinity. The people on whom God had good favor he called 'my children' and 'my friends.'" He mentions Moses, who was to be "as God" for Pharaoh (Exod. 7:1-2) and for Aaron (Exod. 4:16), as well as Israel, which is a "son" (Exod. 4:22-23; Hos. 1-2; Isa. 1:2; Deut. 14:1). He continues: "He said of Solomon, 'He will be for me a son, and I will be for him a father' (2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chron. 22:10). We also call the Christ the Son of God, through whom we have come to recognize God, as also he [God] named Israel 'my first-born son,' and as he said of Solomon, 'He will be for me a son.' We have named him [Jesus] God, as he also identified Moses with his own name." **Here, Syrian thought has been formulated with great clarity: the title Son of God" is a title of honor—one of many—and no "essential" name as in Nicaea; rather, it is to be understood in terms of salvation history. God granted Jesus this name as a result of his own favor: "For the name of divinity is given for greater honor in the world, and God has given it to that one on whom he has had favor."** D. W. Winkler agrees with Bruns here and summarizes thus: "The name 'Word of God' is meant to express that side of God which is turned toward the world, as God's speech of revelation, embodied through Christ. The 'Son of God' is that one through whom God becomes recognizable." The incarnation is thought of in terms of "enrobing" or "enclothing," an idea that was apparently valid not only for Jesus but also for other great players in the drama of salvation history." (pp. 380-381)

"Thus, from here on, Syrian theology was marked at its foundation by Byzantine" Trinitarian and Christological ideas, even if these were interpreted through an "un-Cyrrillian" and "Antiochene" lens. The work of Babai became the model for this theology. Consequently, ideas that were originally distinguished for their Monarchianism and Christology of worthiness were hidden by the appropriation of foreign vocabulary. **It is only in the emphasis on the unity of God despite a Trinitarian structure, as well as in the clean division of divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ, that the minimum standards of authentic east Syrian and Antiochene theology were preserved. In other words, around the year 600, Syrian theology, at least in its terminology, became Hellenized.**" (p. 385)

"THE INFLUENCES OF A SYRIAN-ARABIC CHRISTIANITY ON THE QUR'AN The Syrian-Christian Shaping of the Quran: From a historical-critical point of view, **it is incomprehensible to argue that, of the theological problems and ideas communicated in the Qur'an, those which had quite a long history in the Quran's Christian milieu were "discovered" anew, so to speak. It is much more the case that they**

were taken over and appear in the Qur'an text in the proclamations that connect quite consciously with the "Book" (the Old and New Testament), those that confirm this 'Book,' and those that want to establish its correct interpretation against that of other "People of the Book." In large parts, the Qur'an seems to want to be something like a new, Arabic-Christian Deuteronomy. **Just like Moses—the most-mentioned informant in the Qur'an—the preacher continually impresses correct teaching and correct standards of behavior upon his audience.** His hearers/readers appear to know the "Book," for in many places the Qur'an indicates that its statements are familiar to the audience. **The text addresses itself to those who know the traditions of the Bible, and it wants to hinder or reverse the ways in which these traditions lead people in the wrong direction.** The various Christian traditions that obtained in the east Syrian region and that contended with one another (often for long periods of time) have left traces behind in the Qur'an. For example, **the polemic of Syrian theology against Jacobite-Monophysite conceptions is reflected in the Qur'anic rejection of a Trinity made up of God, Jesus, and Mary (sura 5:116-117).** Similarly, encratic traditions may be visible in the Qur'anic rejection of the (SS. 5:91; 2:219; for the other position, see S. 16:67), in rigid commandments concerning fasting, in the restrictions on women, and in radical ideas of criminal law. Further, the opposition to the Jews is likely an inheritance of Christian anti-Judaism, and so on. Many points remain to be discussed, including how much the rejection of the crucifixion of Jesus, the claim that the crucifixion was a sham, and the claim that Jesus was simply translated to heaven (SS. 3:55; 4:156-159)—despite the fact that his death is elsewhere acknowledged (S. 5:117), and even his death and resurrection (S. 19:33)—go back only to Gnostic-docetic ideas. Do these ideas also have roots in Arabic conceptions of protection, which an employer (in this case, God) must give to his employee (cf. the Punishment Stories)? Another possible source is the beginning of the development of conceptions of a translation to heaven (cf. S. 3:52-54)—as in the Shia—so that Jesus was whisked away and his substitute (Muhammad or Ali) took over his role. Salvation by means of the cross does not appear in the Qur'an in any form. Is this phenomenon an Islamic peculiarity—a demarcation from Christianity—as it often has been and will continue to be understood? **Is the cross then, as it appears from S. 4:156-159, a point of controversy as a symbol of Christian salvation, so that the Qur'an becomes a non-Christian, even an Islamic book? One must consider, however, that there had always been, from the beginning of Christianity, varying models of soteriology.** For Hellenistic Christianity, for example, the most emphasized fact was that God became human. By which action we ourselves, following antique ideas of exchange, become divinized. Consequently, the incarnation is the central datum of salvation. While the cross shows clearly how deeply human God indeed became. In the Latin West, on the other hand, and in European Christianities until today, the saving death of Jesus on the cross stands in the foreground, through which our guilt was taken away and we were "saved" and/or justified. It was still otherwise in the Syrian theology of worthiness. Strongly related to Jewish-Christian thought, this theology placed discipleship and ethics at the fore. Jesus is the Christ because the Word of God or the Spirit of God rested upon him more than on the prophets or Moses, so that he proved himself worthy as far as the death on the cross (not through this death). To do the same is what is demanded of all Christians. **To say it another way, it is a truncation of Christian thought on salvation to limit it to Latin/Western pattern. Syrian Christianity was indeed Christianity in all its ways, even if it emphasized different matters in its soteriology; this same also true for the concepts in the Qur'an.** Recently, many authors have defended the opinion that **most of the theological statements in the Qur'an in—for example, the conception of God, Christology, and eschatology—arose from Syrian traditions of Christianity.** Jesus was taken seriously, as in Syrian theology, in the historical role that he took up in the larger mission of God. It has been observed for a somewhat longer period, for example, that **at least the Meccan portions of the Qur'an express foundational ideas which correspond to (Syrian) Christian missionary preaching:** "These foundational ideas remind one most especially of the pattern of an ancient Christian missionary preaching, as for example Paul's speech at the Areopagus as narrated in Acts 17. Because of this, Tor Andrae put forward

the attractive hypothesis that Muhammad once heard a Christian missionary sermon, and that this experience provided his decisive motivation.” Here it is not only some theological statements but rather the concept at the core of the Qur’an that is traced back to Christian models. Consequently, one must accept that the reception of the Old Testament and/or its apocrypha and topoi also occurred by the mediation of Syrian Christianity, less so from Jewish communities themselves. All aspects of this reception that could be presumed to come from a Jewish-Christian influence are also to be found in Syrian Christianity, with its strong affinity to the Old Testament, its preference for the pattern of Moses and the prophets, and so on. As a result of the Qur’an’s rough rejection of Trinitarian ideas and Jesus’ identity as the Son of God, many scholars have argued the thesis that Qur’anic passages in this time have been shaped by Nestorian conceptions. First of all, however, these scholars overlook the fact that, after the Council of Ephesus in 431, Nestorian influences are recognizable in the east Syrian region. But that it was the writings of Diodore of Tarsus and, above all, Theodore of Mopsuestia, that were read, accepted, and commented upon in the centers of learning for Syrian theology. Consequently, it would be better to speak of an “Antiochene” theology. Secondly, these scholars also do not note that even this influence of Nestorian thought waned after 600, as the central Trinitarian and Christological terminology of the tradition of the Greek councils was taken on and adapted—a “Hellenization” of east Syrian Christianity. These ideas were neither reflected upon nor discussed as in the Hellenistic theological tradition; rather, they were simply passed on. It is only in the Dyophysite interpretation of these ideas that the old Antiochene conceptions lived on. Thirdly, these scholars overlook the fact that **the Antiochene theology of Diodore, Theodore, and even of Nestorius did not contest either a predication of divinity for the Logos—homoousios—or the acknowledgement that Jesus Christ was the Son of God or the Logos; in contrast, they wrote mostly of the God-Logos.” They contested “only” an essential unity of the Logos and Jesus and presented “only” another model of unity: a connection of the two on the grounds of election and worthiness (in short, the “acceptance” of Jesus by God) – an “existential” unity. In most places in the Qur’an, on the other hand, and in contrast with Antiochene theology, a binitarian conception of God appears; only once is there a Trinitarian depiction to be found. Consequently, and bound up with this, the predication of Jesus as the “Son of God” is sharply denied. To sum up: the Qur’an is neither Antiochene nor Nestorian, even if it has been shaped by Syrian theology.” (pp. 386-389)**

“THE PRE-NICENE SYRIAN FORM OF QUR’ANIC THEOLOGY: How should the aforementioned peculiarities be explained? Many passages in the Qur’an seem to represent an early form of Syrian theology. There is indeed a pre-Nicene Syrian theology present in the Qur’an, a theology that was defended against the Syrian theology of the seventh and eighth centuries, that of the “People of the Book” contemporary to the Qur’an. **Nicaea does not appear in the Qur’an; if it is there at all, it is seen only in a negative light in the positions of those being led astray; that is, of the Syrian theology of the seventh and eighth centuries. This pre-Nicene Syrian theology was still being defended in the East shortly before the middle of the fourth century in the person of Aphrahat. It was present until the year 410 in the entire east Syrian Church, except for Edessa (see Ephrem the Syrian), which belonged at that time to the Roman Empire. Finally, it was present among the common people and in the regions lying outside the ambit of the ecclesiastical and theological centers for at least decades longer.** Pre-Nicene” Syrian theology defended a decisive Monarchianism on question of God: (the one) God alone has authority. This concept is directed polemically in the Qur’an against the developments current at the time of its appearance, for God shares power with no one at all. This Unitarian monotheism, defined by concerns about power and authority, also ludes the conception of a “Sonship of God” that is “physical,” an idea that had developed in east Syria (at the latest) in the seventh and eighth centuries. Paul of Samosata, who lived in an Antioch that was at his time fully Hellenized, and west Syrian theologians working after Nicaea, shared a common challenge, namely, the developments that occurred

in Hellenistic Christianity. However, early Syrian theology had to confront these challenges even before them, dealing with the “simple” New Testament statements that Jesus is the Son of God and that he is the incarnate Logos. Syriac Christians before Nicaea had understood “Son of God” and “Logos” as “powers” of the one God—the so-called dynamic monarchianism. The Logos, Wisdom, the Spirit, and so on—for the Syrians gathered many such names together—did not compromise the uniqueness of God, but rather they are he himself in his actions and works, no separate “hypostases.” In this respect one finds no Arian echoes in the Qur’an—contra Gunter Luling, et al.—because Arianism saw the Logos as time-bound and creaturely, but nonetheless as its own “hypostasis and as the Demiurge. **The theology represented in the Qur’an is also pre-Arian, or at least not touched by Arianism.** There are a few passages in the Qur’an, from which one can proceed directly to a dynamic Monarchianism. One surprising sentence—that is, one that does not fit in its context—is S. 17:85: “The Spirit is the Logos of my Lord. But you [pl.] have retained only a little knowledge.” This passage fits nicely with pre-Nicene Syrian theology, in that the Spirit is explained as the Logos, but as the Logos “of my Lord”—like a dynamis of the Lord. Even more closely aligned is S. 16:2: “He sends the angels down with the Spirit of his Logos upon the one whom he chooses from among his servants. These heavenly beings are to announce to humanity that “there is no other God besides me.” Here the Logos and the Spirit become like angels that represent God’s actions outwardly, following the Jewish angelology that had been taken over into Christianity (e.g., Clement of Alexandria [d. before 215] described the Logos and angels as one thing and Origen [d. ca. 250] explained the two cherubim [i.e., angels] on the Ark of the Covenant as the Logos and the Spirit). They are known purely for their function: these aforementioned powers of God come down to humans with the assignment to speak to humans in the place of God. Sura 40:15 also reflects pre-Nicene Syrian theology: “He sends the Spirit of his Logos upon the one whom he chooses from among his servants.” The Logos and the Spirit were the most important powers for describing God’s actions to humans. This is clear from S. 10:3, which describes God as taking his seat on his throne after the six days of creation “in order to direct the Logos.” The Logos seems—as in early Christian theology—to be the more important character, with the Spirit a bit subordinate; as was common in this early period, angels were mentioned along with them. One may compare here S. 19:17: “And we sent our Spirit to her [Mary].” The Logos, the Spirit, and the angels are “powers” of the one and the same God. These passages, and others, show that pre-Nicene dynamic monarchianism came to expression in the Qur’an, and that it was preserved by the Qur’an’s redactors. Consequently, the Qur’an criticizes later formulations that defend binitarian and Trinitarian ideas. It was also necessary in the Qur’an, as it had already been in earlier Syrian Christology, to reject any notion that Jesus was “physically” or “materially” the Son of God. The idea that Jesus was only a human being, of course, differed from that of the Syrian Christianity contemporary with the Qur’an. As it says in S. 3:45: “[At that time] when the angels said, ‘Mary! God is announcing to you a word [ed. Note: “Logos”] from himself, whose name is Jesus Christ and who is the Son of Mary.’” Sura 4:171 calls Jesus the “Word of God” and the “Spirit of/from him.” Here, though, the text seems only to refer to the special election and mission of Jesus, in the sense of Syrian Christology (God’s Logos and Spirit rested upon him); these ideas revealed themselves already in the virginal birth and were the basis on which Jesus proclaimed the Gospel. Many texts in the Qur’an contend mightily with the claim that Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus is (only) one sent by God (e.g., S. 5:75). In addition, the Qur’an also reflects a unique form of an even earlier Syrian Christology, namely, the confession that Jesus is the “servant of God.” One sees this idea in S. 72:19 (which Paret, in his German translation of the Qur’an, falsely connected to Muhammad), as well as in S. 19:30, a self-referential statement of the Christ-child: “I am the servant of God.” It is possible that the Qur’anic rejection of an “adoption” or “acceptance” of Jesus as the “Son of God” should be understood in this connection (cf. SS. 2:116; 0:68; 18:4; 19:88-91; 21:26; 23:91; 72:3). In pre-Nicene Syrian theology (see here, e.g., the usage of Aphrahat), the expression “Son of God” was not used exclusively as an honorific title for Jesus, as it was later (and even in Syrian theology), so that there was no reason to take hold of

the later Antiochene model of unity based on an “adoption” (with only Jesus as the son). Appropriate to its pre-Nicene time frame, it was not yet required, as it would be in later west Syrian Christology, to reflect a model of unity deriving from a theology of worthiness. Christology of worthiness finds expression in the Qur’an insofar as Jesus has meaning in the proclamation and completion of the will of God; he says at S. 3:51, “God is my and your Lord. Serve him! That is a straight path.” In addition, all of us come to salvation as we prove ourselves worthy; that is, as we fulfill our duties (an idea found throughout the Qur’an; cf. S. 3:57: “To those, however, who believe and do what is right, he [that is, God] will give their full reward”). There are other aspects of the Qur’an that point to early Syrian influences. The importance of the Old Testament is quite apparent in the Qur’an. From time to time one can surmise that the Preacher, who is most often spoken to by God with the pronoun “you,” sees himself typologically as Moses (who was also an orphan, was at one time “on a false path,” and was needy; see S. 93:6-8). **Indeed, the term “Muhammad” is mentioned only four times in the Qur’an, always in Medinan suras, and seems to be an honorific title (the “highly honored one”) whose connection with regard to a specific person is often difficult to discern in the Qur’an—does it relate to Jesus, Moses, or the Arabian prophet? Further, the Qur’an, or as H. Busse writes, Muhammad, “apparently knows nothing of a fourfold gospel.” In east Syria, at least into the sixth century, the Diatessaron was still in use. Is the accusation that Christians have falsified the Scriptures directed against the repression of the Diatessaron in favor of the four gospels of the Peshitta? ” (pp. 389-392)**

“THE ARABIZATION OF A PRE-NICENE SYRIAN CHRISTIANITY That pre-Nicene Syrian theology is still to be found in the Qur’an in the seventh and eighth centuries shows clearly that Arabs had already accepted Christianity in an earlier period. Apparently, the originally nomadic or seminomadic tribes did not give up this foundation in the later periods. As the Qur’an clearly shows, they did not go along with the later, post-Nicene development of Syrian Christianity (which was forced upon it through its contacts with Byzantine Christianity, despite all its autocephaly), although they did continue to use the language in their worship services, at least until the linguistic Arabization of the early eighth century. **They remained in their original religion, in the Christianity of their beginnings, and they stood by its concerns and defended them aggressively against Jews and Christians “who had been led astray.”** This was true even after the victory of Heraclius over the Sassanians in 622, when they themselves became politically independent and were able to build larger and larger empires. It was only their own interrelation of the text that was unquestionably a product of revelation. **From this point of view it becomes plausible that the Byzantine-leaning theologian John of Damascus (d. 735) would have described the “Ishmaelites”—that is, those Arabs who saw themselves as connected to suras of the prophet Muhammad—as Christian heretics.** The Christianization of Arabs in the Syrian and Arabian regions was rarely—as in the urban milieu of early Christianity—a matter of the conversion of individuals or even multiple individuals. As was appropriate, given the social structure of the time, tribal leaders and their tribes decided to take this step together; one may compare here the Christian mission among the German tribes. Consequently, one cannot avoid admitting, in terms of the sociology of religion, that in this situation many old, Arabian, “pagan” traditions would have lived on under the cover of a Christianity that was binding on an entire tribe and was therefore superficial. In this connection one finds many examples in the Qur’an: the belief in jinn, sorcery (cf. SS 113 and 114), and lesser gods and goddesses (cf. S. 53:19-20); inherited societal norms (cf. concerning the relationships between men and women or legal statutes [e.g., the lex talionis]; tales from the homeland (see, e.g., in a part of the Punishment Stories or the notes concerning a certain female camel); or even memories of important places like Mecca or Yathrib. It also appears that the originally nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes practiced their Christianity as a “lay religion,” that is, without a noteworthy clerical class; if so, this would point to a very early period of Christianization. The only exceptions to this in the Qur’an are the traces left behind by monasticism. From this set of circumstances, one can more readily understand the foundationally “folk”

nature of the remembrance and editing of biblical and apocalyptic material in the Quran. There were no “specialists” at work here. When Arabs visited Christian worship services, these were carried out entirely by priests who were ethnically Syrian. This context may help explain the “flattening out” of the Syrian theology of worthiness to a “payment for services rendered” ethic, as can be found in the faith of common people in Christian churches even until today. The uniqueness of the reception of Syrian Christianity, however, makes clear the following, my most important observation on the Qur’an. These Christianized tribes apparently brought with them into their Christianity a very strong conception of legal structures (rulership and obedience, the legitimation of authority) and contract-related regulations. Through this conception, the considerable humane (with regard to content) and often thorough-going reflection of biblical and Syrian theological traditions was withdrawn in favor of formal and structural schemata of order. One’s relationship to Allah was expressed as *din*, that is, as a contract, in agreement with the Scripture (Islam). As the Qur’an shows, this concept, expressed thusly, was polemically set up in the seventh and eighth centuries against the other variants of Judaism and Christianity as the correct path. Insofar as this Arabian (non-Monophysite) Christianity, for which the (late) Qur’an presents simply the only source, was foundationally shaped by the rubrics and expressions of pre-Nicene Syrian Christianity, it nonetheless betrays a quite unique, even “Arabian,” form, one that was oriented toward structures and matters of justice. It then became the bedrock of the ideology of the tribe, and soon the empire, as Arabian authority reached wider and wider. LATER ADDITIONS It appears that, **as time progressed, other passages also entered into the Qur’an, passages that quite clearly no longer represented an early Syrian-Arabian Christianity, but rather reflected the beginnings of another religion, a new religion, namely, Islam.** Texts of this kind are not particularly numerous, but they are present nonetheless, and they have been of great import in terms of their effects. **They should perhaps be reckoned to the end of the eighth century or the beginning of the ninth; that is, to or just prior to the time of al-Mamun.** An empirical answer to this question is difficult, primarily because **the oldest extant and datable manuscript of the entire text arises from the later ninth century**, while the earlier texts—mostly fragmentary editions—have not been satisfactorily published and certainly have not been investigated the perspective of textual criticism (for example, must one see them as fragments?). Consequently, the questions must remain open in this area; they can be answered only in the future. At the present time one has recourse only to the many observations arising from the histories of spirituality, culture, and religion. These studies, however, make it necessary to accept that later additions were made.” (pp. 392-394)

Contributors