IGNORING THE BIBLE IN QUR'ANIC STUDIES SCHOLARSHIP OF THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Abstract: This article discusses the major factors behind an oddity in the development of Western Qur'anic studies, the lack of attention to the relationship between the Qur'an and Biblical tradition in the latter half of the twentieth century. This topic represented an important focus in the field up until the 1930s, after which it was relatively neglected throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. It has been taken up again with renewed energy in the present century. Several factors contributed to this development, including the historical configuration of the field of Qur'anic studies into separate research silos, the dispersion of the nucleus of the field in Germany after the National Socialist Party gained power in 1933, the desire to carry on Christian–Muslim dialogue, and the decrial on the part of religious studies scholars of philological obsession with origins and facile theories of influence along with a concomitant move to focus on Muslim commentaries on the Qur'an.

Keywords: Qur'an, Bible, Qur'anic studies, Islamic studies, religious studies

The Qur'an's relationship to the Biblical tradition is undeniable. Some of the most prominent indications of the close ties between the Qur'an and Biblical texts are the roles played by Biblical characters in the Qur'an, the centrality of Biblical religious concepts such as sin, the Afterlife, heaven, hell, the Day of Resurrection, and the Day of Judgment, the use of Biblical terminology, and the adoption of figures from Biblical salvation history such as Noah, Abraham, and Moses as models for the Prophet Muḥammad. The investigation of this relationship has been affected, and sometimes hindered, by theological, ideological, and

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other historical factors, both within Islamic tradition and without. A historical examination of the European tradition of Qur'anic studies reveals that examination of the relationship between the Bible and the Qur'an experienced a long hiatus in the latter half of the twentieth century during which few advances were made. The following remarks attempt to explain some of the factors responsible for this development, which had fundamental effects on the portrayal of Islam and the conception of the relationship between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This essay does not attempt to provide a complete history of Qur'anic studies, even for this period, much less a comprehensive survey of modern Qur'anic studies (Reynolds 2010: introduction; El-Badawi 2013: introduction; Stewart 2017; Sirry 2019; Sirry 2021: 135–143). To explain the gap, however, it must pay selective attention to the broader field of Qur'anic studies both before, during, and after the period of concern.

I. Introduction

Modern scholarship on the relationship of the Qur'an to Biblical tradition may be said to have begun in earnest with the work of Abraham Geiger (1810–74), founder of Reform Judaism, who published *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen* in 1833. This signaled a break with earlier scholarship that went back to the Qur'an translations of the twelfth century and was carried out more or less within the framework of Christian polemics against Islam (Daniel 1960; Tolan 2002; Bobzin 2004; Cecini 2020). Overall, much of this scholarship may be characterized as part of a long debate that turned on the question of whether Jewish or Christian material exerted the dominant influence on the Qur'an (Bell and Watt 1970: 184). A few exceptions, authors such as W. St. Clair Tisdall in *Sources of the Qur'an* (1905), recognized both contributions equally, and scholars writing in a related trend adopted a compromise position, seeking influence in various forms of "Jewish Christianity" (Schoes 1949; Daniélou 1958; de Blois 2002; Crone 2015, 2016; Sanchez 2018). This debate has continued until the present day, even though it should be obvious that both traditions exerted a substantial influence on the Qur'an. The culmination of this trend of scholarship is represented by the work of Heinrich Speyer, *Die biblische Erzählungen im Qoran*, which presents an extensive summary of the results of research on the parallel texts to the Biblical material in the Qur'an up to the late 1930s, when Speyer finished revising the work, which had been his dissertation (Speyer 1931). Scholarship on the relationship of the Qur'an to the Bible was largely neglected, let alone advanced, after that point, throughout the remainder of the twentieth century, until being taken up again, with a great deal of energy, in the twenty-first century.

II. The Great Dispersal of Qur'anic Studies

In the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century until the late 1930s, Germany was the undisputed center of Western Qur'anic studies. European investigation of the Qur'an was never limited to just one, single center but took place in clusters of instruction and mentoring that were interconnected by scholarly exchange through students, colleagues, academic journals, and private correspondence. The most important nodes in this network were the figures of Theodor Nöldeke in Strassburg, Josef Horovitz in Frankfurt, and Gotthelf Bergsträßer in Munich. The number of scholars and students involved was never very large, but they were sufficient to create an intellectual community, and this community fell apart in the 1930s. The causes were the rise to power of the Nazi party, the disruptions of World War II, and human mortality. In the 1930s, the Nazi party succeeded in controlling university appointments and removed professors who were Jewish or of Jewish descent, as well as professors who were "enemies of the Reich". Publishers were not allowed to publish works by Jews. In addition, the generally oppressive political climate and the growing danger to and restrictions on Jews and others who refused to conform to Nazi ideology caused many scholars to flee to England, Israel, the United States, and elsewhere.

The figure of Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930) looms large in the history of Oriental studies, and not only because he wrote the single most influential work for the study of the Quran for over a century. His command of the Semitic languages, including Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, and Ethiopic was astounding, and he wrote grammars of Arabic and Syriac in addition to hundreds of studies on a wide variety of topics in Oriental studies. His main teaching took place at the University of Strassburg, a model university of the German Empire established after the acquisition of Alsace-Lorraine from France as part of the settlement after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. Nöldeke taught there from 1872 until his retirement in 1906, at the age of 70. Among his students were many of the most prominent Orientalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including Eduard Sachau (1845–1930), Carl Brockelmann (1868–1956), Christiaan Snouck-Hurgronje (1857–1936) from the Netherlands, Edward Denison Ross (1871–1940) from England, and Charles Cutler Torrey (1863–1956) from the United States. Several of Nöldeke's students were involved in Qur'anic studies, including Friedrich Zacharias Schwally (1863–1919), to whom he entrusted the task of producing an updated version of his *Geschichte des Qorans*. Hartwig Hirschfeld (1854–1934) received his doctorate at Strassburg in 1878 and published his dissertation as *Jüdische Elemente im Ḳorân. Ein Beitrag zur Ḳorânforschung* (Berlin: Selbstverlag, 1878), with a revised edition as *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Ḳorân* (Leipzig: Schulze, 1886) and an English translation as *New Researches*

into the Composition and Exegesis of the Quran (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1902). Israel Schapiro (1882–1957) completed his doctorate in 1907 and published it as *Die haggadischen Elemente im erzählendeder Teil des Korans* (Leipzig: Fock, 1907). Charles Cutler Torrey (1863–1956), an American who studied in Strassburg 1889–92, wrote a dissertation that would be published as *The Commercial-Theological Terms in the Koran* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1892). Torrey went on to become a professor of Semitic studies at Yale from 1900 until 1932 and published *The Jewish Foundations of Islam* in 1933 (Foster 1999). Hirschfeld left Germany for England, and Schapiro emigrated to the United States, where he became the director of the Semitic division of the Library of Congress, 1913–44. Strassburg thus fostered an important community of scholarship on the Qur'an, including the study of Biblical material in Islam's sacred text. At the end of World War I, Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France, and the University of Strassburg along with the rest of the province. Thereafter, other German universities became the premier centers of Oriental studies.

The leading nexus of Qur'anic studies after the teaching of Nöldeke in Strassburg shifted to the University of Frankfurt-am-Main, the main heir to the academic tradition of the University of Strassburg, and to the University of Munich (Hammerstein 1989). The Jewish scholar Josef Horovitz (1874–1931) was appointed as the first professor of Semitic Studies at the University of Frankfurt in 1915 and continued there until his death in 1931. During this period, Horovitz was also involved in the founding of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, traveling there in 1925 and 1926 to attend the opening ceremonies and serving as its first director, remotely, from Frankfurt. He had many influential students, including S.D. (Fritz) Goitein (1900–85), Richard Ettinghausen (1906–79), Heinrich Speyer (1897–1935), Ilse Lichtenstädter (1907–91), Johann Fück (1894–1974), Willi Heffening (1894–1944), Martin Plessner (1900–73), and others. Ilse Lichtenstädter, who left Germany in 1933 for England and then the United States, wrote several pieces on the Qur'an, although her main interest was Arabic poetry (Lichtenstädter 1975; Lichtenstädter 1991).[8] S. D. Goitein completed his dissertation in 1922 on prayer in the Qur'an, but he left Germany in 1923 for Israel, where he taught at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In 1957, he relocated to the United States to accept a position in the Department of Oriental Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, and upon his retirement in 1971 became a member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. Though he later would write several pieces on the Qur'an connected with his dissertation, his departure from Germany spelled a rupture with the intellectual projects of his mentor; his focus turned primarily to the study of the Cairo Geniza. Richard Ettinghausen completed his dissertation on polemics in the Qur'an in 1931 and published it in 1934. He left Germany soon after that for England and later settled in the United States, where

he pursued a brilliant career in the history of Islamic art (Jäger 2008). Yet another student of Horovitz was Yosef Yoel (Josef Joel) Rivlin (1889–1971), a Jew from Palestine who taught Hebrew in the Yishuv and came to study in Frankfurt in 1922–27. Through Horovitz's recommendation, he became a research assistant at the newly established Hebrew University in 1927 and professor in 1929. His dissertation was published as *Das Gesetz im Koran. Kultus und Ritus* in 1934 (Rivlin 1934). He went on to publish a Hebrew translation of the Qur'an in Jerusalem in 1936 (Rivlin 1936).

Horovitz intended to undertake a systematic treatment of Biblical material related to the Qur'an. In the introduction to *Koranische Untersuchungen*, published in 1926, Horovitz wrote that he would not be treating some topics in detail because two of his former students had treated the Old Testament narratives and the New Testament narratives in the Qur'an. He did not mention their names, and he remarks that these works had not yet been published (Horovitz 1926: 10).[14] By the first of these two students Horovitz apparently meant Heinrich Speyer, a native of Frankfurt who had completed his dissertation at the university there in 1921. Speyer, who taught in Breslau after finishing his dissertation, had a significant background in Biblical studies (Speyer 1929). *Die biblische Erzählungen im Koran* was a comprehensive examination of the Biblical passages that are related to the Old Testament material in the Qur'an. This work drew not only on the books of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament but on other works, including the Mishnah, the Talmud, Midrash, and so on. It is arranged topically, according to Biblical salvation history, treating, in chronological order, the figures of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Saul, David and Solomon, and the Hebrew prophets. It includes two topical sections, on creation and the tower of Babel, as well as a discussion of parables. As Franz Rosenthal has explained, Speyer's work was published between 1937 and 1939. The date given in the edition, 1931, was a deliberate subterfuge designed to get around the German ban on the publication of works by Jewish authors (Rosenthal 2008). In 1933, the new Nazi government established the *Reichsschrifttumskammer* (The Imperial Chamber of Letters) as a subsidiary of the *Reichskulturkammer* (The Imperial Chamber of Culture). It was led at first by Hans-Friedrich Blunck (1888–61), who accepted the position on condition that Jewish writers not be excluded from membership. Nevertheless, Jewish writers were removed from the organization beginning in the latter half of 1934. Blunck was replaced in 1935 by Hanns Johst (1880–1978), and the last Jewish members, such as Martin Buber (1878–1965), were removed in that year. Without membership, Jewish writers had no right to further professional activity (*Recht zur weiteren Berufsausübung*). Also during the years 1934–36, the Börsenvereins der Deutschen Buchhändler (The German Publishers and Booksellers Association) was incorporated into the *Reichsshrifttumskammer*, and Jewish members were similarly excluded (Damm 1993: 26–58).

The other student Horovitz mentioned was apparently Ludwig Bachmann, who completed a dissertation under Horovitz's supervision in 1925 with the title *Jesus im Koran*. This work was never published, and it is less well known (Bachmann 1925). Writing the introduction to *Biblische Erzählungen* shortly after the untimely death of Horovitz, Speyer referred to Horovitz's mention of his students' forthcoming work. He stated that Horovitz had planned to undertake a comprehensive work on the types of material in the Qur'an; his examination of the punishment stories (*Straflegenden*) in *Koranische Untersuchungen* was not an "individual investigation" (*Einzeluntersuchungen*), but part of a larger project that would include Old Testament narratives, law, eschatology, and liturgy. Horovitz, Speyer reports, had entrusted some of these topics to his students (Speyer 1931: x). Horovitz himself was working on eschatology. The Old Testament narratives, law, and liturgy evidently refer to the dissertations of Speyer, Rivlin, and Goitein. Speyer evidently omitted mention of Bachmann's work on Jesus. Nevertheless, Horovitz's remark suggests that it was supposed to complement Speyer's work, and he must have intended the two works, together, to serve as a comprehensive treatment of the Biblical material in the Qur'an.

The nexus of Qur'anic studies was certainly set back by the death of Josef Horovitz in 1931, but it was destroyed by the policy of *Gleichschaltung*, "Enforced Coordination", a plan to bring all facets of German society in line with the political principles of the Nazi Party (Hammerstein 1989). Hitler became Chancellor of Germany on 30 January 1933. The new Nazi mayor of Frankfurt, Friedrich Krebs, who held the post from 1933–45, dismissed all Jewish municipal employees in March 1933, even before it was required by law. Peter F. Drucker, who worked at the University of Frankfurt as a graduate assistant in the law faculty describes the situation in early 1933, just after Hitler's assumption of power.

> Frankfurt was the first university the Nazis tackled, precisely because it was the most self-confidently liberal of major German universities, with a faculty that prided itself on its allegiance to scholarship, freedom of conscience, and democracy. The Nazis knew that control of Frankfurt University would mean control of German academia altogether. So did everyone at the University (Drucker 1994: 161).

Shortly after 25 February 1933, the entire teaching staff of the university were summoned to a faculty meeting to hear the address of the new Nazi commissar for Frankfurt.

> The new Nazi commissar wasted no time on the amenities. He immediately announced that Jews would be forbidden to enter university premises and would

> be dismissed without salary on March 15. This was something no one had thought possible despite the Nazis' loud anti-Semitism. Then he launched into a tirade of abuse, filth, and four-letter words such as had rarely been heard even in the barracks and never before in academia … words the assembled scholars undoubtedly knew but had certainly never heard applied to themselves. Next the new boss pointed his finger at one department chairman after another and said: "You either do what I tell you or we'll put you into a concentration camp". There was dead silence when he finished … A few of the professors walked out with their Jewish colleagues; most kept a safe distance from those men who, only a few hours earlier, had been their close friends (Drucker 1994: 162).

The legal basis for purging the universities of Jews as well as of "politically unreliable" professors was the "The Law for the Reestablishment of the Professional Civil Service" (*Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums*), enacted on 7 April 1933, which stipulated the removal of all "non-Aryan" officials and enemies of the Reich (Hartshorne 1937: 175–177).[23] The effect was enormous overall, for by 1938, thousands of scholars had been removed from universities in Germany and Austria, but it was particularly devastating at the University of Frankfurt, which lost 32.3% of its teaching staff. In this, it was second only to the University of Berlin, which lost 32.4% (Hartshorne 1937: 94).

This development spelled the effective end of the Oriental Seminar over which Horovitz had presided, including a dedicated group of scholars involved in Qur'anic studies. Horovitz's teaching was taken over temporarily after his death by his student Martin Plessner. Then, Gotthold Weil, another Jewish scholar, was appointed to the professorship, but he was officially dismissed in 1934 as a consequence of the civil-service law. Johann Fück, one of Horovitz's non-Jewish students, spent several years teaching at Frankfurt but left in 1938 to accept a position in Halle. Some of the Jewish students had already left in the 1920s; the rest did so in the 1930s. The work of the Oriental Seminar was not reestablished on a sound footing until the appointment, in 1949, of Helmut Ritter (1892–1971), who had returned to Germany from Turkey and would remain at Frankfurt until 1956 (Hammerstein 1989: 220, 798–802; Jäger 2008b; Goitein 1934; Levy 2020).

Another important nexus of Qur'anic studies scholarship gathered at the University of Munich around Gotthelf Bergsträßer (1886–1933), who had studied Semitic languages and Oriental studies in Leipzig with renowned Arabist August Fischer (1865–1949), who held the chair of Oriental Studies at the University of Leipzig 1900–30 and had interests in Qur'anic studies (Fischer 1906a, 1906b, 1911, 1912, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1935, 1937). Fischer also supervised the dissertation of Robert Roberts, *Das Familienrecht im Qoran*, which was published in an expanded form as *Das Familian-, Sklaven- un Erbrecht im Qorān* (Roberts

1907; 1908). After completing his studies in Leipzig, Bergsträßer spent the years 1915–19 in Istanbul and then taught in several universities in Germany before accepting a position in Munich in 1926. Though his training had focused on the grammar of the Arabic and Semitic languages more than the Qur'an per se, and he completed his 1911 dissertation on a Qur'anic topic, *Die Negationen im Ḳur'ān: Ein Beitrag zur historischen Grammatik der Arabischen* (Bergsträßer 1911; 1914).[27] At Munich, he conceived of a large project to work toward a critical edition of the Qur'an, for which he published a plan in 1930 (Bergsträßer 1930).[28] He worked assiduously on the medieval Islamic sources that would facilitate this endeavor, publishing *Nichtkanonische Koranlesarten im Muḥtasab des Ibn Ǧinnī* in 1933 (Bergsträßer 1933). He edited the biographical dictionary of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429) on Qur'an readers, *Ghāyat al-nihāyah fī ṭabaqāt al-qurrāʾ* but died before its publication (al-Jazarī 1935). He also edited *Mukhtaṣar fī shawādhdh al-Qurʾān* of Ibn Khālawayh (d. 370/980) (Ibn Khālawayh 1934).

Otto Pretzl (1893–1941) was Bergsträßer's student and energetic collaborator. He completed Bergsträßer's edition of al-Jazarī's biographical dictionary of the Qur'an readers. Bergsträßer had undertaken to complete and publish the third volume of the second edition of Nöldeke's *Geschichte*, after the death of Schwally, who had published the first two volumes in 1909 and 1919. He had completed two parts in 1926 and 1929, but when he died unexpectedly in 1933, Pretzl took up the remaining work, and the complete third volume was finally published in 1938. Pretzl published three works by the medieval expert on the Qur'anic text Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dānī (d. 444/1053): *Kitāb al-Taysīr fī al-qirāʾāt al-sabʿ*, *Kitāb al-Muqniʿ fī maʿrifat marsūm maṣāḥif ahl al-amṣār*, and *Kitāb al-Naqṭ*, on the tradition of the seven readings of the Qur'an and on the orthography and pointing of the text (al-Dānī 1930; 1932).[32] Otto Pretzl was appointed to Bergsträßer's professorship when the latter died, and he took up the *Apparatus Criticus* that Bergsträßer had started, publishing a description of the project in 1934 (Pretzl 1934).[33] Also involved in this project was another student of Bergsträßer, Anton Spitaler (1910–2003), who completed a dissertation on the Islamic systems for counting the verses of the Qur'an (Spitaler 1935).[34] Like the works of Pretzl on the works of al-Dānī, this was intended to contribute to Bergsträßer's project. The death of Pretzl in 1941 put an end to this strand of Qur'anic studies scholarship; Anton Spitaler did not continue to focus on Qur'anic topics in his own research.

In hindsight, it seems that the project of Bergsträßer and Pretzl could have outlived their activity because it involved an additional collaborator who lived outside of Germany and survived World War II intact. Arthur Jeffery was an Australian scholar who taught at the American University in Cairo from 1921 until 1938 and focused his scholarly attention on the Qur'an. He began working with

Bergsträßer in 1926 (Jeffery 1937),[35] and the reports of Bergsträßer and Pretzl on the *Apparatus Criticus* in 1930 and 1934 both named him as an important collaborator. He wrote the forward for Bergsträßer's edition of Ibn Khālawayh's *Mukhtaṣar fī shawādhdh al-Qurʾān*, and he traveled to Munich to attend Otto Pretzl's inauguration as Bergsträßer's successor in November 1933. In addition to his *Foreign Vocabulary in the Qurʾan*, Jeffery published *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qurʾān: The Old Codices* in 1937, a work that included an edition of *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif* by ʿAbd Allāh b. Sulaymān Ibn Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 316/929) and was entirely in line with the project of Bergsträßer. From 1938 until 1959, Jeffery taught at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Already in 1934, Otto Pretzl reported that Jeffery had agreed with Oxford University Press to publish a new edition of the Qur'an that would fulfill many of the desiderata of Bergrsträßer's original project, since it was envisaged to include a critical apparatus and a detailed discussion of Qur'anic variants (Pretzl 1934: 6–7). Unfortunately, Jeffery never completed the work, and his teaching in New York did not produce a new generation of Qur'anic studies experts.

Along with the Nazi purge of German universities, Qur'anic studies were plagued by premature deaths. Many brilliant, prolific, and promising scholars did not have as lengthy publishing careers as one might have hoped. Nöldeke was an exception, for he reached the age of 94, outliving most of his ten children, and continued to write and publish widely in various sub-fields of Oriental studies until his final years. Many other scholars in the field did not survive nearly as long, and some had their lives regrettably cut short. Friedrich Schwally, a student and very close disciple of Nöldeke, died in 1919 at the age of 55. Josef Horovitz died while walking to the university on 5 February 1931, at the age of 56. Bergsträßer died in a mountaineering accident in 1933 at the age of 47. Heinrich Speyer, a student of Horovitz, died in 1935 at the age of 38. Otto Pretzl, a student of Bergsträßer, died at the age of 48 in 1941 in an airplane crash during World War II. One can only guess what they would have accomplished had they lived longer. One supposes that had Speyer, Horovitz, and Bergrsträßer lived longer, and had the first two left Germany in the 1930s, the history of Qur'anic studies for the remainder of the twentieth century would have looked quite different.

Overall, then, two critical centers of Qur'anic scholarship were shattered by the rise to power of the Nazi party and the events of World War II, one led by Josef Horovitz in Frankfurt, and one led by Gotthelf Bergsträßer and then Otto Pretzl in Munich. The more important center for awareness of Biblical material in the Qur'an was in Frankfurt, for the emphasis in Munich was on the history of the text. According to Goitein's obituary, Horovitz was focusing primarily on the Qur'ān in the decade before his death, and he was "full of plans and projects" when death overtook him. In a letter dated 12 December 1930, Horovitz reported

that he planned to complete the book *Das Weltbild des Korans* (The Worldview of the Qur'an), including a discussion of eschatology, for which he had already gathered the material (Goitein 1934: 122). In the longer term, he was preparing, together with his students, to write a complete commentary on the Qur'an. In the same letter of 12 December 1930, he wrote:

> I believe that we are drawing near to the time when a Koranic commentary can be taken in hand. The path to this is, in my opinion, a monographic treatment of the various areas: narratives, law, polemics, eschatology, hymn and prayer, personal matters and allusions to contemporary events, style, and worldview (Goitein 1934: 122).

The dissertation topics of Speyer, Bachmann, Goitein, Rivlin, and Ettinghausen suggest that Horovitz was directing his students to cover systematically the major types of texts that occurred in the Qur'an and that this was intended to provide the basis for a combined, comprehensive study. The works of Ludwig Bachmann and Heinrich Speyer in particular show the attempt to treat the Biblical material in the Qur'an systematically.

Several of the scholars who studied with Nöldeke in Strassburg and with Horovitz in Frankfurt were Jewish and owed some of their linguistic preparation and training in textual analysis to study in Jewish environments and institutions. They were also involved with the modern approach to investigation of the Jewish tradition associated with the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* trend, which exerted an important influence on the development of Qur'anic studies through such figures as Abraham Geiger, Gustav Weil, Josef Horovitz, and others (Hartwig 2013: 297–319; Lewis 1968; Rosenthal 2008; Neuwirth 2008; Heschel 1999; 2018). Many members of both groups of scholars had broad backgrounds in Oriental studies, including knowledge of Semitic languages besides Arabic. Some had extensive backgrounds in Biblical studies. For these overlapping reasons, several of the scholars who were involved in Qur'anic studies were experts in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac and had the ability to investigate Biblical texts in detail. Outside the Germanophone area, in France, England, and the United States, the areas where German scholars fled, the study of the Middle East was not configured in the same way, especially after the middle of the twentieth century. Specialists in Arabic and Islam increasingly tended not to be trained in the other Semitic languages, and this led to neglect of the Biblical material in the Qur'an. The lack of interest in Biblical material in the Qur'an may also be connected to an additional, more general factor, the view that Islam and Islamic culture were somehow separate and independent of other religions and cultures. This isolationist view was related not only to a lack of language skills but also to the institutional separation of Islamic studies from other fields (Rosenthal 2008: 113).

During the second half of the twentieth century, there was little or no intellectual community in which Qur'anic studies was pursued. Figures such as Montgomery Watt in Scotland, Régis Blachère in France, and Rudi Paret in Germany worked nearly entirely on their own. Qur'anic studies had become a cottage industry, and the tiny number of scholars in the field had the result that the interests of a few individuals exerted a tremendous influence on what was investigated and what was not.

II. The Historical Configuration of Qur'anic Studies

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Western Qur'anic studies formed what became essentially five large sub-fields, exemplified by sub-genres of works in which scholarship was pursued. These sub-fields were not hermetically sealed off from their neighbors but were often not well integrated, so that advances made in one were often not incorporated into the others. The structure of the field created a situation in which the study of the relationship between the Qur'an and Biblical texts was pursued within one sub-field of scholarly work. The five large categories are the following: 1) introductions to the Qur'an, 2) works devoted to the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad, 3) investigations of the Qur'an's relationship to Biblical literature, 4) studies of commentary on the Qur'an, and 5) translations of the Qur'an. One may also mention another cognate genre, that of introductions to Islam, including works by Joseph Morgan (*Mohammedanism Explained*, 1723), Charles Forster (*Mohammedanism Unveiled*, 2 vols., 1829), John David MacBride (*The Mohammedan Religion Explained*, 1857), Duncan Black Macdonald (*Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence, and Constitutional Theory*, 1903), Ignaz Goldziher (*Vorlesungen über den Islam*, 1910), D.S. Margoliouth (*Mohammedanism*, 1912), H. A. R. Gibb (*Mohammedanism*: *An Historical Survey*, 1949), and so on. It is of some interest that the sub-genres of the introductions to Islam, the biographies of the Prophet Muḥammad, and the translations of the Qur'an were all found in the English translation of the Qur'an by George Sale, along with his introduction (1734); that work exerted a profound influence on later scholarship, especially in English. A number of works combined a biography of the Prophet with an introduction to the Qur'an, including works by Sprenger (*The Life of Mohammad, from Original Sources*, 1851; *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammad: Nach bisher größtentheils unbenutzten Quellen*, 1861–65, revised ed. 1869), Grimme (*Mohammed*, 1892–95), Muir (*The Life of Muhammad and History of Islam to the Era of the Hegira*, 1858–61), and others.

As seen above, Germany was the undisputed center of Qur'anic studies scholarship throughout the nineteenth century and from the turn of the twentieth century up until the 1930s, and specialists in Germany and Austria did the most to establish the five scholarly traditions just mentioned. It is surprising to what extent they

have operated as separate fields. It is particularly notable, for example, that many of the scores of translations of the Qur'an into European languages have been produced by scholars who did not focus on Qur'anic studies and in many cases carried out their task in radical isolation from the other traditions of Qur'anic studies scholarship. Many other points could be made about the relationships among these five categories of scholarship, but for the present discussion, the central point overall is that they were not pursued in a programmatic and comprehensive way as subsections of a unified field of study. They did not create an integrated legacy that could be passed on to future generations of scholars.

If it were not for the development of these five sub-genres of Qur'anic studies scholarship as distinct categories, the relative lack of attention in introductions to the Qur'an to the sacred text's connections with Biblical literature would be quite surprising, but it is less shocking when one understands that this was due in part to the standard articulation of the field. The modern scholarly genre of introductions to the Qur'an was inaugurated by Gustav Weil (1808–89), who published his *Historisch-Kritische Einleitung in den Koran* first in 1844, followed by a second edition in 1878. The work consists of three parts, the first on the life of Muḥammad, the second on the Qur'an proper, and the third on Islam. Though Weil was writing a bit over a decade after Abraham Geiger's work on the Jewish sources of Qur'anic material, he did not take up the topic of Biblical influences on the Qur'an in his introduction. However, he wrote a separate work *Biblische Legenden der Muselmänner. Aus arabischen Quellen zusammengetragen und mit jüdischen Sagen verglichen*, published in 1845. This work resembled that of Geiger to a limited extent but focused primarily on extra-Qur'anic, Islamic texts. Weil had also published a biography of the Prophet, titled *Mohammed, der Prophet*, in Stuttgart in 1843. Already in the 1840s, then, Weil's oeuvre shows a divide between three genres invested in what came to be viewed as three distinct types of study: the biography of the Prophet, the introduction to the Qur'an, and the study of Islamic literature's connections with Biblical material (Johnston-Bloom 2014, 2018).

The importance of Nöldeke's *Geschichte des Qorans* in the history of Western scholarship on the Qur'an can hardly be overstated. Published in 1860, it made a great leap forward, facilitated in part by access to manuscript collections in Germany and by the publication of *al-Itqān fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾan*, the major work on Qur'anic studies by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) (al-Suyūṭī 1857). It continued in the footsteps of Weil's introduction, and like that work, was more closely related to the existing scholarship on the life of the Prophet Muḥammad than to the field of Geiger's study. Despite the work's size, it treats the relationship of the Qur'an to Biblical tradition briefly and dismissively. Nöldeke makes the bold statement at the outset of the work that most of the material on which the Prophet

Muḥammad's mission was derived from Judaism. He states that not only most of the narratives but also many of the teachings and the laws in the Qur'an were of Jewish provenance. The Christian influence on the Qur'an, in Nöldeke's view, was much less pronounced (Nöldeke 1860: 5–6). He does not say exactly how the derivation occurred, but he concludes that the Prophet could not have read the Bible directly and suggests that the transmission of material to the Qur'an was entirely oral (Nöldeke 1860: 7–8). Nöldeke does not devote a section of the work to a discussion of the specific texts from Biblical traditions to which the Qur'an is related, whether Jewish or Christian, despite the fact that he was aware of Geiger's work. He only mentions *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthum aufgenommen* in a footnote, expressing the hope that an expert in ancient Arabian life, Islam, and the literature of Judaism would take up once more the topic of Geiger had addressed (Nöldeke 1860: 5 n. 2). He had the conscious view that Geiger had focused on a distinct area of research that somehow did not fit into the scheme of his own study. This may have been due, ultimately, to the way the contest for which he submitted the original version of *Geschichte des Qorans* was framed: they had asked for the history of the text of the Qur'an (Déroche 2015). Later, when Nöldeke taught students like Schapiro and Hirschfeld who had a significant background in Jewish religious literature, he presumably encouraged them to investigate texts from Jewish tradition and the Qur'an.

The second volume of Friedrich Schwally's (1863–1919) reworked version of Nöldeke's *Geschichte*, published in 1919, includes an additional chapter not found in the first edition, titled "Recent Christian Research on the Qur'an". He refers in this section to the work of Abraham Geiger and other Jewish scholars (Nöldeke and Schwally 1919: 193–219), a reflection of the idea that modern critical investigations in Biblical studies represented a "Christian" project, even though some Jewish scholars participated in it. At the outset of a sub-section of this chapter devoted to "Individual Studies on History and Interpretation" (Nöldeke and Schwally 1919: 208–217), he addresses Geiger's work and mentions that Hartwig Hirschfeld and Israel Schapiro have, after a long break caused by lack of interest or sufficient training in Arabic on the part of Jewish scholars, revived the line of inquiry begun by Geiger (Nöldeke and Schwally 1919: 208–209). He then complains that all the material Schapiro has assembled from haggadic sources unfortunately does not tell us anything about the Qur'an itself but only about its "interpretation" (Nöldeke and Schwally 1919: 209). Beyond that, Schwally does not go into any detail regarding the relationship of the Qur'an to particular texts from Jewish or Christian tradition. For many decades, Nöldeke's *Geschichte* was the only substantial introduction to the Qur'an available in the European languages. Even in the expanded second edition, it devoted only limited attention to Biblical material.

Régis Blachère (1900–73) published his *Introduction au Coran* originally in 1947; a second edition was published in 1959. He did not shy away from using Christian terminology, notably referring to the ʿUthmānic recension of the Qur'an as "the Vulgate" (Blachère 1947; 1959). Nevertheless, Blachère's introduction says next to nothing about the Bible, especially regarding its possible influences on the Qur'anic text.

The *Introduction to the Qur'an* of Richard Bell (1876–1952), published posthumously in 1953, represents a significant break with the model of earlier introductions. Bell's work addresses the sources of the Qur'an most directly in a section bearing the heading "Narratives" (Bell 1953: 161-165). He writes,

> It is in the narrative portions of the Qur'an that its dependence upon the Bible, especially upon the Old Testament, is most evident … the great bulk of the material which Muḥammad used to illustrate and enforce his teaching was derived from Jewish and Christian sources, and was meant to reproduce what was contained in the revelation given to the People of the Book (Bell 1953: 161).

Here, two things have changed from the characterization given by Nöldeke. First, the exclusive emphasis on oral sources does not appear, and secondly, a more equal footing is established between Jewish and Christian sources. Bell assumes that the Biblical material that influenced the Qur'an is related ultimately to the books of Genesis and Exodus and less frequently to the historical books of the Old Testament. He notes that the birth of John in Sūrat Maryam (Q. 19:2–15) might derive from the Gospel of Luke but that other elements of the birth of Jesus must derive from apocryphal gospels, especially the gospel of James. He cautions, however, that they did not derive directly from the Biblical books (Bell 1953: 163). They were always remolded, and, he adds, "practically all these narratives have an admixture of Talmudic or other extra-Biblical material, or show traits which can be explained only by statements which occur in Jewish or Christian tradition" (Bell 1953: 163–4). Bell suggests that "lay" informants were responsible for such narratives as those of the fall of Adam, the People of the Cave, Moses and al-Khiḍr, and Dhū al-Qarnayn (Bell 1953: 164). He reports that the story of the People of the Cave in Sūrat al-Kahf (Q. 18) derives from the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus and that the stories of Moses and al-Khiḍr and Dhū al-Qarnayn, in the same surah, derive from the Romance of Alexander; both texts circulated widely in Eastern Christian communities (Bell 1953: 165). Bell adds that the Prophet would have been better able to gain familiarity with the contents of the Old Testament while at Medina, because local Jews would have had scholars and rabbis among them. However, he expresses the opinion that Muḥammad did not acquire intimate knowledge of the New Testament (Bell 1945; Bell 1953:

165). Among introductions to the Qur'an available until recently, Bell's discussion of these texts to which Qur'anic material is closely related is by far the most sustained and specific. Unfortunately, its potential impact was soon to be curtailed.

Richard Bell's *Introduction* was reworked by William Montgomery Watt (1909–2006) and republished in 1970, with several subsequent printings. By default, Watt's version became the standard introduction to the field of Qur'anic studies for scholars working in English until the twenty-first century. Watt made several changes to Bell's text; the new edition was advertised as having been "completely revised and enlarged", but this was an exaggeration.

Bell, *Introduction to the Qurʾan*, 1953	Watt, Revision of Bell's *Introduction*, 1970
I. The Historical Situation and Muḥammad	Chapter One. The Historical Context
	Chapter Two. Muḥammad's Prophetic Experience
II. The Origin of the Qur'an	Chapter Three. The History of the Text
III. The Form of the Qur'an	Chapter Four. The External Form of the Qur'an
IV. The Structure and Style of the Qur'an	Chapter Five. Features of Qur'anic Style
V. The Compilation of the Surahs	Chapter Six. The Shaping of the Qur'an
VI. The Chronological Order of the Qur'an	Chapter Seven. The Chronology of the Qur'an
VII. Stages of the Growth of the Qur'an	Chapter Eight. The Names of the Revealed Message
VIII. Contents and Sources of the Qur'an	Chapter Nine. The Doctrines of the Qur'an
	Chapter Ten. Muslim Scholarship and the Qur'an
	Chapter Eleven. The Qur'an and Occidental Scholarship

The structure of Watt's reworking of Bell's *Introduction* reveals two main differences. Most of Watt's chapters correspond directly to chapters in Bell's original work, but Bell's chapter I. "The Historical Situation and Muḥammad", has been split in two, the first on "The Historical Context" and the second devoted to "Muḥammad's Prophetic Experience". Here, Watt adds material addressing the Prophet's psychology, a topic that he stresses, and arguing that Muḥammad was indeed a sincere Prophet. The other main difference is that Bell's Chapter VIII. "Contents and Sources of the Qur'an", has been replaced with three chapters, Nine, Ten, and Eleven, on "The Doctrines of the Qur'an", "Muslim Scholarship and the Qur'an", and "The Qur'an and Occidental Scholarship", respectively. "The Sources of the Qur'an" is conspicuously missing. It has dropped out of Watt's revision, both in the chapter titles and in the content.

Bell's list of sources of the Qur'an was much too short and lacked detail, but it represented a significant leap from what Nöldeke had presented. What is more disconcerting, however, is that the specific information that Bell provided was entirely removed by Watt from what was now Chapter 11 – "The Qur'an and

Occidental Scholarship". Instead, he included a sub-section, "The question of sources" (Bell and Watt 1970: 184–196), under the broader heading of "Problems facing the non-Muslim scholar" (Bell and Watt 1970: 181–186).[63] There, Watt brushes aside the question of the sources of the Qur'an, while belittling concern with this type of inquiry. Citing the example of *Hamlet*, he argues that knowing the sources on which Shakespeare drew in writing *Hamlet* does little to enhance one's appreciation for the play. He mentions the work of Abraham Geiger but states that Western scholars have been overly obsessed with this type of inquiry. He does not discuss any specific secondary works in this section or name any of the specific Biblical texts or other works in Jewish and Christian traditions that might be considered sources of material found in the Qur'an.

An overview, then, shows that the main works that provided introductions to Qur'anic studies in the Western tradition, including Weil's *Einleitung*, Nöldeke's *Geschichte des Korans*, Blachère's *Introduction au Coran*, and Bell's *Introduction to the Koran*, paid surprisingly little attention to the relationship of the Qur'an with the texts of Biblical tradition. Of the four, Bell's work included a dedicated section in which he devoted some attention to the topic, but unfortunately, Watt censored and removed that material. I attribute Watt's act of censorship primarily to his concern with inter-religious dialogue. Watt was a devout Christian. His father was a minister of the Church of Scotland, and he himself became an Anglican priest. He was ordained as a Scottish episcopal deacon in 1939 and a priest in 1940, he was employed by the church between 1939 and 1946, and he served as an honorary curate throughout much of his subsequent career. He authored several works devoted to inter-religious dialogue and Christian-Muslim relations: *Truth in the Religions: A Sociological and Psychological Approach* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963); *Islamic Revelation in the Modern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969); and *Islam and Christianity Today: A Contribution to Dialogue* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983). He was a regular contributor to the quarterly journal *The Moslem World*, which had been founded in 1911 specifically for purposes of dialogue and evangelism by Christian missionary Samuel Marinus Zwemer (1867–1952). This aspect of Watt's work was carried on by the Anglican bishop Albert Kenneth Cragg (1913–2002) (Cragg 1956, 1971, 2006).

In the foreword to his reworked version of Bell's *Introduction*, Watt makes his sentiments clear when he discusses Bell's habit of referring to the Prophet Muḥammad as the author of the Qur'an.

> Bell followed his European predecessors in speaking of the Qur'an as Muḥammad's own, at least in his *Introduction*. Various remarks he made to me, however, lead me to think that he would have had a considerable measure of sympathy with the views I have expressed about Muḥammad's prophethood,

> most recently in *Islamic Revelation in the Modern World*. With the greatly increased contacts between Muslims and Christians during the last quarter of a century, it has become imperative for a Christian scholar not to offend Muslim readers gratuitously, but as far as possible to present his arguments in a form acceptable to them. I have therefore altered or eliminated all expressions which implied that Muḥammad was the author of the Qur'an, *including those which spoke of his "sources" or of the "influences" on him*. (Bell and Watt 1970: vi) (italics mine).

Watt's comment indicates that he edited Bell's *Introduction* on account of the increased contacts between Muslims and Christians, which required, he felt, that the text be presented in a manner that would not offend Muslims. The two features that Watt believes would be offensive to Muslims are statements suggesting that Muḥammad was the author of the Qur'an and any discussion of sources of or influences on the Qur'an. So, while Bell was interested in Jewish and Christian influences on the Qur'an (Bell 1926, 1945),[66] and though he included a discussion of this topic in his *Introduction*, Watt's version of the text effectively removed the discussion entirely.

The relative neglect of this topic did not stop with Watt's work in 1970. Alford T. Welch's extensive article "al-Ḳurʾān" in the Second Edition of *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, published in 1986, and many subsequently published introductions to the Qur'an ignored the role of Biblical texts in Islam's sacred text (Welch 1986; Nagel 1983; Bobzin 1999; Cook 2000; Mattson 2008, 2013). The situation that obtained was analogous to that of having the chapter on acids and bases missing from all the available chemistry textbooks in the English language. The continued absence of this topic in introductions to the Qur'an constituted a decided shortcoming in the formation of students and scholars of the Qur'an, and it recalls the days when Biblical scholars were loath to consider the implications of Gilgamesh and Ancient Near Eastern literature generally for the interpretation of the Bible. This situation has changed in recent years. Neal Robinson's *Discovering the Qur'an* (1996) does not devote a particular section to Biblical connections but refers regularly to specific Biblical texts (Robinson 1996). Since 2005, several introductory works have paid attention to Biblical material in the Qur'an (Déroche 2005; Ernst 2011; Sinai 2017). These issues have now been resolved to a large extent, thanks to the publication in 2010 of Angelika Neuwirth's *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike. Ein europäischer Zugang* (The Koran as a Text of Late Antiquity: A European Approach), which provides a comprehensive introduction to the Qur'an and focuses throughout on its various and complex connections with Biblical literature and the Late Antique milieu (Neuwirth 2010, 2019).

IV. The Question of Oral Transmission

One of the concrete points brought out by Abraham Geiger and later scholars in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was that much of the Biblical material in the Qur'an did not derive directly from the books of the Hebrew Bible but rather from extra-Biblical texts such as the Midrash on Genesis, The Life of Adam and Eve, or the Infancy Gospel of Thomas. The Qur'an contained very few direct quotations from the books of the Bible. Moreover, there were discrepancies between the Biblical versions of stories and their Qur'anic versions. The reception of Geiger led to the widespread idea that the mode of transmission from earlier, Biblical material into the Qur'an was entirely oral. Biblical material, it was envisaged, had entered the realm of folklore, and it was through folklore that it ended up in the Qur'an. As Jacob Lassner puts it, "Suffice it to say, Geiger regarded Muḥammad as incompetent of interrogating Jewish sources at first hand. It was through a folkloric oral tradition that the Muslim Prophet and his followers grasped the sublime history of God's chosen people" (Lassner 1999: 129). That would explain how there came to be discrepancies between Qur'anic versions and Biblical versions of stories and why the books of the Bible were overlooked in favor of less canonical versions. This view concerning the oral transmission of Biblical material discouraged to a certain extent the investigation of specific texts that could help to explain the versions of Biblical stories that had ended up in the Qur'an. Some viewed this as a hopeless effort, given the wide range of variations found in folkloric traditions. Especially because the prevailing view was that the Qur'an derived from earlier texts through indirect, oral transmission, scholars such as Nöldeke could view the investigation of such matters as somewhat divorced from their own efforts to understand the explicit text of the Qur'an.

V. Reactions to Facile Theories of Influence

One of the fascinating and surprising byways of European Oriental scholarship is the connection between German and Austrian Arabists and India. The Austrian Orientalist Aloys Sprenger (1813–93) spent the years 1843–57 in India, where he served as the principal of Delhi College and then the secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta. During this time, he edited Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's (d. 852/1449) *Biographical Dictionary of Persons Who Knew Mohammed* (Calcutta: Bishop's College Press, 1856), *Soyuti's Itqân on the Exegetic Sciences of the Qoran in Arabic* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1857), and al-Tahānawī's *Dictionary of the Technical Terms used in the Sciences of the Musulmans* (Calcutta: Lees' Press, 1862). He also published a biography of the Prophet Muḥammad in English: *The Life of Muḥammad* (Allahabad: Presbyterian

Mission Press, 1851), which he would later expand into a three-volume biography of the Prophet in German. Both the Arabic editions and the biography played profound roles in advancing Qur'anic and Islamic studies in nineteenth-century Europe. Josef Horovitz taught at the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh from 1907 to 1914, before returning to Germany to assume the position of professor of Semitic languages at the University of Frankfurt (Johnston-Bloom 2018). Another episode in this tradition was the teaching of Johann W. Fück in Bengal in the 1930s. Johann W. Fück (1894–1974) had completed his studies at Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg and the University of Frankfurt in 1921 with a dissertation on the *Sīrah* of Ibn Isḥāq (d. ca. 151/768). After working as a lecturer in the Hebrew language from 1921 to 1930, he served as a professor of Arabic and Islamic studies at the University of Dhaka in Bengal from 1930–35.

The time Fück spent in Bengal had a profound impact on his views of Islamic culture, and it was this experience that was largely responsible for the views he expressed in his 1936 article on the originality of the Prophet Muḥammad, published in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* the year after his return from Bengal (Fück 1936; Ende 1976). In this essay, he decried the obsession of Western scholars working on the Prophet and Qur'anic studies with tracing features of the Qur'an and Islamic religion to Jewish and Christian sources. In his view, such connections were overly susceptible to subjective judgment. He calls attention to the fact that in Charles Cutler Torrey's assessment, early Islam was entirely the product of Jewish influence, while in Karl Ahrens' assessment, it was entirely the product of Christian influence: the two were directly contradictory because their methods were unreliable. In Fück's estimation, the scholarship of Josef Horovitz was less one-sided, more objective, and better grounded in the evidence. Furthermore, such studies had the effect of portraying Islam as entirely derivative. Fück argued for a mode of study of the Prophet and of Islam that recognized their fundamental originality rather than stressing their derivative nature.

It is no simple matter to trace the influence of Fück's article, but it has been suggested that it had a stifling effect on studies of the sources of the Qur'an in the middle of the twentieth century. It fostered a focus on the life of Muḥammad, perhaps under the influenced of scholarship on the life of Jesus, which also developed during that period (Neuwirth 2008: 18–19). Tor Andrae, Hans Birkeland, W. Montgomery Watt, and Rudi Paret focused on the experiences and psychology of the Prophet Muḥammad. Such discussions formed, in fact, the bulk of Watt's additions to Bell's *Introduction*. As in many of the cases discussed here, there is something eminently sensible about Fück's criticisms of earlier scholarship, and there was nothing wrong with the scholarship that he envisaged or helped foster. However, as in many other cases in the history of Qur'anic scholarship, the reaction was not one of moderation. Partly because the field was so small, the

encouraged changes in direction led to an occlusion, such that scholarship on the relationship of the Qur'an to Biblical texts ceased to be pursued. Fück's concerns dove-tailed with those of scholars like Watt who were concerned with inter-faith dialogue, but I do not believe that Fück was concerned first and foremost about the relations between Islam and Christianity in the framework of religious dialogue. Rather, he seems to have been concerned with the possibility of inter-cultural understanding within a broader framework of open-minded, rational dialogue.

VI. Attention to Qur'anic Commentary in Approaches to Islamic Scripture

The neglect of the topic of the Biblical connections of the Qur'an in the last three decades of the twentieth century may also be attributed, to some extent, to the institutional configuration of Islamic studies in North America. North America in the second half of the twentieth century witnessed the flourishing of area studies, which, moving away from traditional Oriental studies, foregrounded modern history and secular approaches and paid relatively little attention to religious topics. Theories of modernization then current predicted that religion would retreat more and more from the public sphere and become less and less influential as culture in the Middle East and elsewhere became increasingly "rational". Political and social history, peasant revolts, bread riots, and "the Islamic city" were the emphases of the day, rather than theology, *hadith*, or the Qur'an. Against this background, the torch of Islamic studies, including scholarship on the Qur'an, came to be carried by scholars in the field of religious studies. The history of religions approach and the study of comparative religion offered a way for religious studies, which had been dominated historically by Protestant theology and Biblical studies, to include the investigation of Islam and other world religions, and scholars working in this discipline came to write on Islamic topics.

The work of scholars in religious studies tended not to focus on the Biblical sources of the Qur'an, and, in some cases, they actively discouraged such investigations. The reason for this was rooted in their reaction to the dominant position of a Christian theological worldview in historical religious studies. Scholars aspired to treat non-Christian religions sympathetically as traditions deserving respect and intimate understanding without condemning them as misguided, irrational, or falling short of the high spiritual ideals of Christianity. Though they came to the topic from a different point of view and had different goals in mind, these scholars' concerns overlapped with those of Christian scholars who were committed to Christian-Muslim dialogue. The two groups agreed on the avoidance of certain controversial topics, including the Biblical sources of the Qur'an.

Among the most influential scholars in the efforts to incorporate non-Christian traditions into the field of religious studies was Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916–2000).

Having studied Oriental languages in Toronto and Cambridge and taught from 1940 to 1946 at Forman Christian College in Lahore, he completed his doctorate in Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University in 1948 with a dissertation on *The Azhar Journal*. He subsequently taught at McGill, Harvard, and Dalhousie Universities. He also was ordained as a Presbyterian minister. Cantwell Smith became a leading figure in Islamic studies in North America, and his work exerted a tremendous influence on subsequent generations of specialists in Islamic studies. One of the major concerns evident in his publications was to hold up non-Christian religions as worthy of respect and sympathetic study, free of the constraints of nineteenth-century philology and of the obsession with origins and etymology. His goal was to expand the field of religious studies beyond its traditionally dominant foci of Protestant Christianity and the geographical regions of Europe and North America and to investigate the roles religion played in the lives of believers across the globe and throughout history (Smith 1962; 1963; 1967; 1976; 1977a; 1977b; 1981; 1989; 1993).[75]

Cantwell Smith presented a summary of his ideas regarding the study of the Qur'an in his presidential address at the meeting of the Middle East Studies Association in 1978 (Smith 1980). He made the case that Western scholarship on Qur'anic studies had not taken Islam's sacred text seriously as scripture. In their efforts to understand the Qur'an, Western scholars had privileged a certain place and point in time – Arabia in the seventh century – and had ignored the central role the Qur'an played in the lives of Muslims for centuries thereafter and over a large swath of the inhabited globe. Western scholars had thought that determining the origin of something provided the most satisfying explanation of it. However, as Cantwell Smith points out, language is always changing, and knowing what something used to mean often is not necessarily enlightening about its present usage. For example, the word "manufacture", etymologically, means to make something by hand, but in modern usage clearly no longer means anything of the sort (Saleh 2010). The Qur'an meant many things to many Muslims, and because it was their scripture, they resorted to it constantly, but Western scholars had dismissed all this as being of little interest. Cantwell Smith's point is that even if one were able to recover the meaning of the Qur'an entirely for seventh-century Arabia, that would still be only a small part of understanding the historical meaning of Islam's scripture.

Western scholars' focus on origins and their lack of understanding of the nature of the Qur'an as a scripture caused them to ignore the Islamic tradition to a shocking extent. The utmost affront to Islamic tradition in the Western study of the Qur'an, in Cantwell Smith's view, in addition to speaking of Muḥammad as "the man who wrote it", was the practice of producing translations that were arranged according to a putative historical order of the surahs, instead of in the canonical order of the sacred text as ordinarily used by Muslims (Smith 1980: 496). He remarks that they assumed that "Western readers would of course be interested in the form of this

work before it became a scriptural book for Muslims, not after". He also decries the Western practice of ignoring the monumental edifice of Muslim commentary on the Qur'an, the product of centuries of careful study by scholars who knew, better than modern Western scholars, what the text meant to the people of their time and so could provide valuable insights into the Qur'an's meaning as scripture. Western investigators regularly dismissed or rejected all this on the grounds that such works were late, and, as he points out, "late", for them, was a derogatory word.

In his address, Cantwell Smith mentioned the issue of the sources of the Qur'an briefly. He states that Western Qur'anic studies scholars wrote books on the sources of Muḥammad's ideas and engaged in the past in a debate over the preponderance of Jewish or Christian influence therein. In his view, this question was of little intrinsic interest. If one takes the Qur'an seriously as scripture, more attention should be paid to the factors that convinced Jews and Christians to appreciate the Qur'an and Islam enough to join the new religion and to the Qur'an's meaning as a guiding force in the lives of Muslims in subsequent centuries. In short, Cantwell Smith argued that scholars of religious studies should focus on what the Qur'an meant to Muslims of diverse periods, geographical regions, and linguistic traditions and pay attention to what set it apart from the scriptures of other traditions. They should refer to Islamic commentaries, they should not be obsessed with seventh-century Arabia, and they should examine the post-history rather than the pre-history of the text.

In making this plea, Cantwell Smith presented several compelling points regarding the blind spots, assumptions, and prejudices of Western Qur'anic studies up until his time. In some respects, he called for a grand project of reader-response criticism, something that had not been undertaken. Commentaries on the Qur'an were woefully understudied in Western scholarship, as were social uses of the sacred text. While Cantwell Smith did not mention other genres of what are termed *ʿulūm al-Qurʾan* "the Qur'anic sciences" – specialized studies of the orthography, variants, grammar, rhetoric, and other features of the sacred text – which could be included in the purview of his comments as well. Many writers on Qur'anic topics had actively dismissed, or at least ignored, Muslim commentaries on the Qur'an and related genres in their studies.

Religious studies scholars who wrote on the Qur'an in the late twentieth century, before the current surge in Qur'anic studies, include such figures as Reuven Firestone, William A. Graham, Jane D. McAuliffe, Andrew Rippin, and Brannon Wheeler. Though they were not all Cantwell Smith's students, and, though they may not view themselves as having been influenced by him in particular, their works collectively took up Cantwell Smith's challenge to take the Qur'an seriously as Islam's scripture and to treat it as such. William A. Graham wrote several publications mapping out some ramifications of recognizing the Qur'an's scriptural status, including

an article on the oral aspect of the Qur'an as scripture and a subsequent book on the oral aspects of scriptures, including the Qur'an, in world religions (Graham 1985, 1987). Andrew Rippin devoted many studies to Muslim scholarship surrounding the Qur'an, examining particular sub-genres of *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* such as *naskh* "abrogation", *asbāb al-nuzūl* "the occasions of revelation", *gharīb al-Qurʾān* "the rare vocabulary of the Qur'an", and so on, in addition to *tafsīr* (Rippin 1981, 1982, 1984, 1985, 1988a,1988b). Reuven Firestone wrote on the legends of Abraham and Ishmael in Islamic exegesis (Firestone 1990). Jane D. MacAuliffe wrote a monograph on the portrayal of Christians in Qur'anic commentaries throughout Islamic history, in addition to several other focused studies on exegesis (MacAuliffe 1982, 1983, 1991). Brannon Wheeler devoted a monograph to the examination of the exegesis of two passages related to the figure of Moses, Q. 18:60–101 and Q. 28:21–28 (Wheeler 2002). These works enriched scholarship in the fields of Qur'anic studies and *tafsīr*. Nevertheless, I would argue that this trend, and behind it, Cantwell Smith's pleas, tended to occlude attention to questions of the relationship of the Qur'an to Jewish and Christian traditions and especially to Biblical texts. Particularly because the number of scholars in the field was still very small, the fact that they concentrated on Qur'anic exegesis meant that other topics were not being pursued.

In some cases, a sense had arisen that scholarship which focused on *tafsīr* was more responsible than, or preferable to, treating the text of the Qur'an directly, either on account of the necessity of polite dialogue or on account of the respectful treatment of scripture required on the part of religious studies scholars. In the introduction to a 1988 edited volume on *tafsīr*, Andrew Rippin decried the obsessive focus of scholars of Qur'anic studies on reestablishing the "original meaning" of the text, suggesting that even the more tactful ways of referring to that setting and of avoiding references to Muḥammad as the author of the Qur'an did not overcome the problems inherent in the approach. These included the hopelessness of the task, for, he suggests, "the scholar will never become a seventh-century Arabian townsman but will remain forever a twentieth-century historian or philologian". They also included the uncertainty of any reconstruction arrived at, given the nature of the evidence, and the simplistic equation of the meaning in the original context with the *real* meaning, something that literary critics had regularly questioned. In Rippin's view, focus on *tafsīr* permitted scholars to avoid this hermeneutical impasse. Drawing on exegetical texts, one may undertake a history of Muslim readers' responses to the Qur'an, and that "appears to be a most appropriate, convincing, and rewarding task for the modern scholar of the Qur'an" (Rippin 1988b: 2–4).

In response to Rippin's suggestion, one could counter that while adopting such an approach might be appropriate, convincing, and rewarding, it nevertheless does not replace the need to study the Qur'an as it existed in the seventh century. Patricia Crone retorts that just as scholars cannot become seventh-century Arabian townsmen,

they cannot become tenth-century Iraqis or nineteenth-century Egyptians either, so the alternative course Rippin presents is not as radically distinct or as problem-free as he supposes (Crone 1994: 1 n. 2). Daniel Madigan makes a similar point, also arguing that the Qur'an itself may be conceived of as a commentary on the mission of the Prophet and the formation of the early community, so that the two sets of text involved and the corresponding modes of study are quite similar (Madigan 1995: 345–6). Moreover, there are a number of puzzles in the Qur'an which show that, even two centuries or so after the text was compiled, certain elements of it were considered strikingly puzzling and that the connection between the exegetes and the early setting had been lost. This poses problems of special interest for the modern investigator which cannot be solved simply by resorting to later commentaries (Crone 1994: 1–2).

Similarly, Brannon Wheeler expresses a preference for the study of Qur'anic commentaries in his assessment of developments in scholarship on the relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible (Wheeler 2002: 3). After discussing Reuven Firestone's work on Isaac and Ishmael in the Qur'an and Jacob Lassner's work on the Queen of Sheba in Islamic exegesis, he reports that earlier scholarship followed a model that tended to treat shared elements as borrowing or plagiarism, often suggesting that the Qur'an was derivative and in some cases revealing a desire to show the falsehood of Islamic claims that the Qur'an was revealed (Firestone 1990; Lassner 1993). In Wheeler's view, such recent studies represented a tangible advance:

> Helpful is the shift from the Qur'an to its exegesis, the shift from a model of borrowing to intertextuality, and the shift toward attributing purpose and intention to the Muslim exegetical use of and allusion to the Biblical passages and Jewish interpretation (Wheeler 2002: 5).

While one may agree especially with the last two points, the first appears odd. Why is it inherently better, more useful, or more helpful to focus on commentaries on the Qur'an than to focus on the Qur'an itself? Angelika Neuwirth has pointed out that such scholarship omits consideration of an important point – that the Qur'an, even before it was canonized and used as a scripture by the Muslim community, presented itself as a sacred text, so that understanding the Qur'an as a scripture necessarily involves investigation of its origins and the text itself, and not only the analysis of the Qur'an through later Muslims' understandings of the text (Neuwirth 2007: 117, 122).

The idea that the attention to *tafsīr* was the most responsible mode of Qur'anic studies appears to stem from one reception of Cantwell Smith's directive to religious studies scholars that they take the Qur'an seriously as a scripture. Studying the Qur'an through *tafsīr* was viewed as a satisfying way of capturing Islamic

understandings of the scripture. Wheeler's statement is just one of several indications in the scholarship of this trend which hint at the treatment of certain Qur'anic topics as off limits by some of the few scholars who were publishing in this field over several decades in the late twentieth century. This does not detract from the value of their scholarly production; there are compelling reasons to study the reception of the Qur'an by Muslims throughout history. Nevertheless, the views of scholars who adopted this approach help to explain the historical lacuna in the field of Qur'anic studies addressed here.

VII. Reactions to *Hagarism* and the Publications of Wansbrough

In 1977, Patricia Crone and Michael Cook published *Hagarism*, and John Wansbrough published *Quranic Studies* and *The Sectarian Milieu* in 1977 and 1978, respectively. All three works focused on connections between the Qur'an and early Islam on the one hand and Biblical traditions on the other. Each of the works could have sparked a reintegration of concern with the Biblical background into Qur'anic studies generally and provoked a renewed interest in the profound connections between them. However, that response did not materialize and ended up being delayed by decades.

Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World was intended to be a radical departure from earlier scholarship on the beginnings of Islamic history. It should be viewed as a type of thought experiment: since Islamic sources are biased and late, what would a history of the rise of Islam that is based on outside sources look like? *Hagarism* begins with the bold step of discounting traditional Islamic sources and privileging a small number of Jewish and Christian sources in Syriac, Greek, Aramaic, Armenian, and so on. The authors state in a forthright manner that their work is "a pioneering expedition through some very rough country, not a guided tour". *Hagarism* fully recognizes the intimate relation of Islam with Jewish and Christian traditions. It portrays the Islamic movement as passing through two stages, both heavily indebted to those traditions. In the early stage, Islam was a Jewish apocalyptic movement that aimed to restore the kingdom of Jerusalem, with ʿUmar serving as the messianic conqueror. The original movement adopted from Samaritanism a belief in the legitimacy of the Pentateuch to the exclusion of the later books of the Bible. In the later stage, reconciling to a certain extent with Christians in the region, the movement broke with its Jewish apocalyptic roots, adopted recognition of Jesus as the Messiah, and recast Muḥammad as the "Prophet like Moses" promised in Deuteronomy. Borrowing concepts from Samaritanism, it created an alternative sanctuary in Mecca to the Temple in Jerusalem, on the model of the Samaritans' Temple at Shechem, and it created the Islamic Imamate or Caliphate as a calque on the Aaronian priesthood. To complete the analogy

between Muḥammad and Moses, adherents of the movement found it necessary to create the Qur'an as a sacred text parallel to that which had been granted to Moses (Crone and Cook 1977: 3–28).

Hagarism includes many ingenious suggestions, but many seem to be drawn out of thin air or are large extrapolations based on brief comments in texts recorded by opponents of the Islamic movement whose access to information may have been extremely limited. The work represents an act of youthful iconoclasm against what the authors viewed as a smug and overly self-satisfied field. The picture of the early history of Islam that emerges if one adopts the tactic of relying almost entirely on outside sources resembles what one would produce if one wrote a history of the papacy drawing only on Protestant polemical works. While *Hagarism* did shake up the field in some sense, the reactions to it were negative and for the most part unproductive, simply railing against it as an attack either on Islam or on established scholarship in the field. The authors did not make the reception of their work any easier when they inserted iconoclastic quips into their analysis, such as the announcement in the preface that "This is a book written by infidels for infidels" (Crone and Cook 1977: vii). The reactions were written mainly by historians, such as Fred Donner's *Muhammad and the Believers*, which attempted to provide a narrative of early Islamic history that took both Islamic and non-Islamic sources, including the Qur'an, into account (Donner 2010). In recent decades, a group of scholars have resurrected *Hagarism* as a model, including Yehuda D. Nevo and Judith Koren, scholars of the Inārah group, Stephen Shoemaker, and others. In contemporary discourse, they have often been labeled "revisionists" (Nevo and Koren 2003; Shoemaker 2011; Ohlig 2013; Sirry 2021).

Hagarism raised many points that could have provoked fruitful investigations into the Biblical connections of the Qur'an. Such issues included the role that Jewish and Christian apocalypticism played in the early Islamic movement. While *Hagarism*'s sweeping claims about the nature of the early Islamic movement may be false, there is no denying that the Qur'an is strongly imbued with apocalypticism, at least some of which is related to Biblical tradition. The prominent status of the Pentateuch among earlier scriptures is arguably a salient feature of the Qur'anic text, as are the analogies between Muḥammad and Moses, the *hijrah* and the Biblical exodus, and the sanctuary at Mecca and the Temple in Jerusalem. *Hagarism* also points out the unresolved problem in Qur'anic prophetology created by the emphasis on Moses as the model prophet, on the one hand, and on Abraham and Ishmael as the authors of a proto-Islamic "Arabian" religion, on the other hand. Unfortunately, the reactions to *Hagarism* did not produce substantial engagement with these topics. It is possible that scholars in Qur'anic and Islamic studies were reluctant to respond to a work that was presented in an abrasive manner and repeatedly labeled as Orientalist,

or perhaps the work was understood as belonging to the field of history and not to Qur'anic or religious studies per se.

John Wansbrough was an heir to the German Orientalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in that he was interested in the Qur'an and Islamic material but had substantial training in Hebrew and in Biblical studies, in contrast to most of his peers in Islamic studies. Wansbrough's works show a profound influence of the methods and approaches of Biblical studies, and his two monographs may be interpreted as Qur'anic studies emulations of two seminal works in the study of the New Testament: Rudolph Bultmann's *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (1921; translated into English as *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 1962) and *Das Urchristentum im Rahmen den antiken Religionen* (1949; literally, *Original Christianity in the Frame of the Ancient Religions*, translated into English as *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting*, 1956). *Quranic Studies*, like *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, sought to explain how the Qur'an coalesced out of various strands of pre-existing prophetic logia circulating in oral form. Similarly, *The Sectarian Milieu* argued that the Qur'an drew on and was shaped by two pre-existing religious traditions, Judaism and Christianity, just as *Das Urchristentum im Rahmen den antiken Religionen* explained that early Christianity drew on and was shaped by Judaism and Hellenistic religion.

Like *Hagarism*, Wansbrough's works could have sparked renewed interest in the Biblical connections of Qur'anic material, but they did not. The reasons for the limited focus on Biblical material in reactions to Wansbrough's works were several. First, Wansbrough's focus was on structural and general conceptual similarities rather than on particular instances of borrowing. In his view, the Qur'an made use of Biblical language, tropes, concepts, symbols, and genres of text, but this was the consequence of a shared background and analogous forms. He was not interested in tracing specific connections between passages in the Qur'an and passages in Biblical literature. Second, Wansbrough did not explain his methods, which made it extremely difficult for other scholars in the field to engage with his work. It was poorly understood by most scholars in Qur'anic and Islamic studies for decades, and only recently has it become possible to address the implications of his work properly.

Because Wansbrough began *in medias res*, without explaining these assumptions and without arguing for or justifying them, scholars focused on other aspects of the work that were more concrete, such as his use of terms in Greek, Hebrew, and German without glosses, and his use of terms drawn from Jewish tradition, such as haggadic and Masoretic, in his classification of Islamic commentaries on the Qur'an, and especially the suggestion that the canonization of the Qur'an occurred outside the Arabian Peninsula and as much as centuries later than was generally supposed (e.g., Manzoor 1987),[97] Wansbrough simply assumed that the

background of the Qur'an was entirely within Biblical tradition. This strand of Wansbrough's thought was taken up by Patricia Crone, who argued that Mecca could not have been an important center of trade prior to the rise of Islam, and Gerard Hawting, who argued that what appeared to be pagan material in the Qur'an was likely the product of typical Jewish and Christian arguments against their opponents within Judaism and Christianity, whom they wished to characterize as irretrievable heretics (Crone 1987; Hawting 1999). Serjeant, in contrast, voiced strong criticisms of these views, arguing that the Arab element in the Qur'an was very strong and could not be easily dismissed (Serjeant 1978; Serjeant 1990; Crone 1992).[99] Madigan expressed the view that while Wansbrough's suggestions solved some hermeneutical problems, they created others, particularly with regard to locating the canonization of the Qur'an outside Arabia and as late as the third/ninth century, while ignoring or dismissing contrary evidence summarily (Madigan 1995: 353, 355–62).

Scholarship has only recently begun to address Wansbrough's other major assumption, that the canonization of the Qur'an recapitulated that of the New Testament (Stewart 2016; Graves 2016). One may argue that the most appropriate response to Wansbrough's work would have been to undertake a thorough comparison of those two processes, and this has yet to occur. Josef Witztum has made a foray into treating the Qur'ān's "synoptic problem", endeavoring to explain the implications of the existence of multiple parallel passages in the sacred text (Witztum 2014). The result was that, for the most part, an opportunity was lost; the publication of these works did not spark a wave of renewed interest in Biblical material in the Qur'an. It is only in the last decade that scholars have taken up this thread of response to *Hagarism*, *Quranic Studies*, and *The Sectarian Milieu*.

Epilogue

The general lull in Western Qur'anic studies in the latter half of the twentieth century and the concomitant lack of attention to the relationship between the Qur'an and Biblical tradition have now changed for good. The publication of Christoph Luxenberg's work on the "decipherment" of the Qur'an in 2000 may be recognized as a watershed moment in this development. Luxenberg's bold claim that the Qur'an was a document written in a mixed language between Arabic and Syriac, that it was heavily indebted to Christian tradition, and that attention to Syriac could solve numerous puzzles of interpretation presented by the text constituted a challenge to scholars of Arabic and Islamic studies, one that was much easier to grasp than Wansbrough's propositions (Luxenberg 2000, 2007; de Blois 2003). The urge to refute the work provoked a wave of intense study of the Qur'anic text, the early history of Arabic script, inscriptions in Arabia and surrounding

regions, early Islamic history, and the Qur'an's relationship with Christian tradition. Interest in the Syriac language grew by leaps and bounds. At the same time, the attack on the World Trade Center on 9/11 in 2001 gave an extra impetus to investigations of the Qur'an, as pundits in the West sought to explain what prompted Islamic terrorists to violence.

Already before the publication of Luxenburg's work, the way had been prepared. In 1999, the *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* was founded with the express purpose of creating a dialogue between approaches to the investigation of the Qur'an adopted in the West and the Islamic world. In connection with the journal, a biennial conference on Qur'anic studies was initiated at the School of Oriental and African Studies, also in 1999, and it has been held ever since. In 2012, the International Quranic Studies Association was founded in the United States. This organization holds an annual national meeting and a biennial international meeting, and it publishes the *Journal of the International Qur'anic Studies Association*.

In 2007 the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities announced the funding of a long-term digital research project called Corpus Coranicum to investigate the history of the Qur'anic text. The project may be viewed as the resurrection, continuation, and expansion of the project Gotthelf Bergsträßer proposed in 1930, and it has made use of the archive of photographs that he had collected and which had been preserved, despite rumors that they had been destroyed by allied bombing in 1944 (Higgins 2008). In addition to examining numerous early manuscripts, the Corpus Coranicum project has undertaken a wide-ranging examination of texts from Late Antiquity and the milieu of the Qur'an, and the production of an extensive chronological commentary on the Qur'an's surahs. The project, still ongoing, has led to many important publications and has played an important role in the formation of scholars in the field (Corpus Coranicum: https://corpuscoranicum.de/).

A major impetus to the institutionalization of Qur'anic studies and a reflection of their tremendous popularity at the present moment is the large number of funded projects that focus on the Qur'an. The European Research Council has funded "The European Qur'an: *Islamic Scripture in European Culture and Religion 1150–1850*", led by Mercedes Garcia-Arenal, Jan Loop, John Tolan, and Roberto Tottoli and based at universities in Spain, Denmark, France, and Italy; "The Global Qur'an. Shared Traditions, Imperial Languages and Transnational Actors", led by Johanna Pink and based at Freiburg University in Germany; "The Qur'an as a Source for Late Antiquity", led by Holger Zellentin and based at the University of Tübingen in Germany; and "How Many Ways Are There to Read the Quran?" led by Marijn van Putten at Leiden University in the Netherlands, among others. In addition, other Qur'anic studies projects have been funded by national research agencies, including "Unlocking the Medinan Qur'an", led by Nicolai

Sinai at Oxford University, and "Education between the Qur'an and the Bible", led by Johanne Christiansen at Southern Denmark University, among others.

The last two decades have witnessed the publication of major reference works such as the *Encyclopaedia of the Quran*, edited by Jane D. MacAuliffe in 2001–6, *Le Coran des historiens*, edited by Muhammad Ali Amir-Moezzi and Guillaume Dye in 2019, handbooks or companions of the Qur'an by Wiley-Blackwell (edited by Andrew Rippin, 2006), Cambridge (edited by Jane D. MacAuliffe, 2006), Oxford (edited by Muhammad Abdel Haleem and Mustafa Shah, 2020), and Routledge (edited by George Archer, Maria Dakake, Daniel Madigan, 2021), and the *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage* by Muhammad Abdel Haleem and Elsaid Badawi (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

Many works published since 2000 have directly addressed the connections of the Qur'anic text with material from Biblical traditions. Relevant collected volumes include Gabriel Reynolds's two edited volumes *The Qurʾān in its Historical Context* (London: Routledge, 2009) and *New Perspectives on the Qurʾān: The Qurʾān in Its Historical Context 2* (London: Routledge, 2014) and *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu*, edited by Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden: Brill, 2011). Focused studies that address the Qur'an's connections both with Jewish and Christian traditions include Gabriel Reynolds' *The Qurʾān and Its Biblical Subtext* (London: Routledge, 2012), Emran El-Badawi, *The Qurʾān and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions* (London: Routledge Press, 2013); Holger Zellentin, *The Qurʾān's Legal Culture: The Didascalia Apostolorum as a Point of Departure* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); Shari L. Lowin, *The Making of a Forefather: Abraham in Islamic and Jewish Exegetical Narratives* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Carol Bakhos, *The Family of Abraham: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Interpretations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), Michael Pregill, *The Golden Calf between Bible and Qur'an: Scripture, Polemic, and Exegesis from Late Antiquity to Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). Also notable are Andrew Droge's *The Qurʾan: A New Annotated Translation* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2013) and Gabriel Reynolds' *The Qurʾan and the Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), which attempt to make available to a wide audience the many specific connections between passages and verses of the Qur'an and their Biblical parallels and counterparts (Droge 2013; Reynolds 2018). Angelika Neuwirth's masterful overview, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike*, which has been translated into English as *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity: A Shared Heritage*, has been mentioned above.

In North America, France, England, Italy, and Germany, not to mention in Turkey, Iran, Indonesia, and elsewhere in the Islamic world, there has been a tremendous surge in the volume of Qur'anic scholarship. Numerous scholars are

involved in the field, including many who identify Qur'anic studies as their main academic interest. Regular channels of communication among researchers have been established, and scholarship in the European nations and North America have been well integrated overall. Students entering the field can be trained by specialists in Qur'anic studies and earn their doctorates for work on various aspects of the Qur'an. The wide availability of manuals and substantial reference works makes it much less likely that the field will ignore entire swaths of inquiry in the future.

Recent Qur'anic studies scholarship that focuses on Biblical material has shifted its emphasis. Whereas earlier scholars were quick to identify elements of the Qur'an as borrowings and to identify any discrepancies between the Qur'anic and the Biblical version of an account as the result of confusion or errors in transmission, in recent decades scholars have envisaged the Qur'an as a text in dialogue with Biblical precedents. They have avoided the model implied by Abraham Geiger's title, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen*?, which suggested simple acts of lifting and inserting material. They may have had in mind particularly extreme statements like that of Hirschfeld: "The Qorân, the text-book of Islâm, is in reality nothing but a counterfeit of the Bible" (Hirschfeld 1902: ii). Instead, when the Qur'anic text modifies a particular feature of a Biblical account, they seek to determine what ideological or rhetorical purpose the text serves in its current form. A simple example may be seen in the Qur'anic references to God's creation of the world in six days. On the one hand, these passages suggest familiarity with the account of creation in Genesis or in commentaries on Genesis. On the other hand, they omit reference to God's resting on the last day and so do not provide an etiology for the establishment of the Sabbath. This clear difference between the two texts is not the result of garbled transmission or of a misunderstanding but rather reflects a doctrinal choice. Since God is transcendent and perfect, it would be theologically incorrect to suggest that He gets weary and needs to rest, so this aspect of the account in Genesis provoked modification. The reference to God's taking a day of rest in Genesis is replaced in the Qur'an with references to God's assumption of His throne. He assumed this position not to rest but rather to direct the Universe. As Donner points out, some scholars continue to produce studies with the former reductionist model of influence, but many have adopted the view that evident changes to Biblical elements in the Qur'anic text reflect complex, intentional, and theologically or ideologically motivated negotiations with Biblical tradition (Pregill 2007; Saleh 2010; Reynolds 2010; El-Badawi 2014; Donner 2019). Emran El-Badawi has aptly termed this phenomenon "dogmatic re-articulation" (El-Badawi 2014: 5–10).

Perhaps the most difficult issue facing studies of the relationship between the Qur'an and Biblical traditions is that of ideological division. First, heated debate continues regarding the original setting of the Qur'an's revelation; as

Goudarzi has put it succinctly, scholars disagree whether the Qur'anic milieu was *barely, partially, or thoroughly Biblicized*, and this has consequences for its interpretation (Goudarzi 2020: 425). Many scholars continue to pursue investigations that ignore the Qur'an's Biblical background entirely, and this is the approach adopted by many scholars of the Qur'an working in the Islamic world (Daneshgar 2020: 56–58). At the opposite end of the spectrum, many others now entertain the idea that the Qur'an ought to be examined in light of the Late Antique milieu, but this means quite different things even to those who accept the idea in general. For some, it means a radical mistrust of all Islamic sources, the treatment of "the Islamic narrative" as a conspiracy, and the interpretation of the Qur'an and early Islamic history through the testimony of non-Islamic sources alone. These scholars promote the severance of the Qur'an from its Islamic reception and seek to situate it exclusively, at least in Western academic settings, in Late Antique studies (Hughes 2021; Shoemaker 2011, 2021). A second approach is an emphasis on the examination of Biblical traditions for the interpretation of the Qur'an in order to correct an over-reliance on what came to be accepted as Islamic doctrine, but without the radical skepticism and rejection of all Islamic material adopted by scholars in the first group (Zellentin 2013; Witztum 2014). A third approach is to conceive of the Late Antique milieu broadly, both recognizing the influence on the Qur'an and also bringing the Qur'an into a civilizational conversation concerning scripture along with the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament (Neuwirth 2010).

The renewed focus on the relationship of the Qur'an to Biblical tradition has led to a widespread recognition of the intense connections between Islamic and Jewish and Christian scriptures. This development in scholarship is bound to bring about an increased awareness of the connections between the Qur'an and Biblical tradition but may not accomplish a sea-change in popular culture because it is opposed by vocal ideologists on both sides: bigoted, xenophobic, anti-Muslim Evangelists who would like to emphasize that Islam in no way resembles Christianity and triumphalist, defiant, or defensive Muslims who would like to stress Islam's fundamental difference from and superiority to Judaism and Christianity. Nor will a consensus easily be reached regarding the historical context in which the Qur'an arose or the extent and nature of the Qur'an's relation to Biblical tradition.

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Notes

1 However, Franz Rosenthal remarks, "Concerned as he always was with the Qur'ân, he never forgot his dissertation. As he once mentioned to me and also expressed in print, he hoped to find the time to return to 'Das Gebet im Qoran'. To my knowledge, more urgent and ultimately more important activities did not permit it" (Udovitch and Rosenthal 1985: 16).

2 It is clear that Horovitz dictated dissertation topics to his students. Goitein later wrote of Horovitz, "His guidance for my Ph.D. thesis, I believe, did not take more than ten minutes. Its topic was Prayer in the Koran. He said, 'Collect everything the Koran says about prayer, and try through critical examination to arrange it chronologically'. This, of course, I did. But my real concern was the prayers themselves, their religious purport, and, above all, their literary forms" (Udovitch and Rosenthal 1985: 6–7).

3 On the issue of the place of Jews in the German academic study of religion, see Heschel 1999.

4 Cantwell Smith exaggerates the evidence here, referring to "instance after instance" of translations that do this, when the main examples are three in number: John Meadows Rodwell, *The Koran in Translation with the Suras arranged in chronological order* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1861); Richard Bell (trans.), *The Qurʾan, Translated, with a Critical Re-Arrangement of the Surahs*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937) in English; and Régis Blachère, *Le Coran*, 3 vols. (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve, 1947–50) in French.

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