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A CLOSE READING OF SŪRAT AL-SAJDA (Q23) AND ITS ENGAGEMENT WITH BIBLICAL TRADITION

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Abstract : The thirty-second sura of the Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Sajda ("the Sura of Prostration"), is a rather short text that has hitherto received comparatively little scholarly attention vis-à-vis longer suras, suras with more explicit biblical intertextuality, or even shorter yet more distinctive or peculiar suras. At first glance, there is little that distinguishes this chapter from its numerous parallels, and the tafsīr (exegetical) and asbāb al-nuzūl ("occasions of revelation") literature is relatively brief on its precise interpretation and relevance. To help fill this lacuna, in the present article I undertake a close reading of and commentary on Sūrat al-Sajda, along with providing my own translation of the Arabic into English. Throughout I argue three things: (A) a literary interpretation of Q 32 is greatly enhanced through familiarity with biblical themes, which the sura frequently and creatively engages;[1] (B) the sura is best characterized as an eschatological proclamation drawing upon the Jewish/Christian post-biblical tradition; and (C) and somewhat relatedly, the Medieval exegetical tradition (tafsīr) often does little to elucidate a literary and historical meaning and context of this sura.

INTRODUCTION

The thirty-second sura of the *Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Sajda* ("the Sura of Prostration"), is a rather short text that has hitherto received comparatively little scholarly attention *vis-à-vis* longer suras, suras with more explicit biblical intertextuality, or even shorter yet more distinctive or peculiar suras. At first glance, there is little that distinguishes this chapter from its numerous parallels, and the tafsīr (exegetical) and *asbāb al-nuẓūl* ("occasions of revelation") literature is relatively brief on its precise interpretation and relevance. To help fill this lacuna, in the present article I undertake a close reading of and commentary on Sūrat al-Sajda, along with providing my own translation of the Arabic into English. Throughout I argue three

things: (A) a literary interpretation of Q 32 is greatly enhanced through familiarity with biblical themes, which the sura frequently and creatively engages;[1] (B) the sura is best characterized as an eschatological proclamation drawing upon the Jewish/Christian post-biblical tradition; and (C) and somewhat relatedly, the Medieval exegetical tradition (*tafsīr*) often does little to elucidate a literary and historical meaning and context of this sura.[2]

Sūrat al-Sajda does not involve long biblical narratives such as some other suras (for example, Q 12 or Q 18), but I argue that the sura nonetheless suggests that the biblical expressions and motifs are woven into the very fabric of the Qur'an.

Sidney Griffith aptly and succinctly notes that the Bible "is at the same time everywhere and nowhere in the Arabic Qur'ān."[3] The Qur'ān never directly quotes the Bible, although in a few instances it does come hauntingly close,[4] and scriptural intertextuality remains central to the Qur'an's religious message. Characters and episodes from the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and other bits of religious lore (be it midrashic or from apocrypha) are frequently appealed to as the text advances its own unique claims.[5] Although early attempts at tracing the Qur'an's relationship to biblical literature were often polemical in nature, studies of this kind need not speak of borrowing or stealing in a derogatory manner.[6] Moreover, earlier polemical approaches to the Qur'an often do not take ample consideration for the Qur'an's creative rhetoric.[7] The Qur'an employs biblical motifs for its own rhetorical and theological purposes.

Accordingly, scholars do not speak of earlier lore as sources of the Qur'an, but of the Qur'an's relationship to this lore. Even when conceding the text's creative agency, however, scholars continue to approach the Qur'an use of this biblical material in diverse ways.

Gabriel Said Reynolds speaks of the Qur'an's "biblical subtext," which he defines as "the collection of traditions that the Qur'ān refers to in its articulation of a new religious message."[8] He continues: "The key, then… is the nature of the relationship between the Qur'anic text and its Jewish and Christian subtext. For this I speak of the Qur'an in conversation with a larger literary tradition…It is meant to reflect the notion of the Qur'an as a homiletic text…animated by its allusions to, and interpretation of, its literary subtext."[9]

For Reynolds, the Qur'an follows the same literary tradition as Late Antique Syriac Christian homiletic corpus. In other words, he reads the Qur'an as a corpus of intertextual homilies employing prominent biblical themes circulating in Late Antiquity, an approach he finds more fruitful than reading the Qur'an chronologically or through the interpretations of later exegetes.[10] Emran El-Badawi likewise contends that the Qur'anexhibits a discernable and direct relationship with biblical traditions, arguing that the text re-appropriates and challenges material from Aramaic Gospel traditions. He describes this feature of the Qur'an as "dogmatic re-articulation," via which the Qur'an expresses its own theological arguments in direct conversation with earlier traditions, particular those of Syriac Christianity.[11]

Angelika Neuwirth is also interested in the Qur'an's relationship to Jewish and Christian religious traditions, but she particularly highlights the intercommunal character of the Qur'an's genesis. She envisions the Qur'ans development of biblical characters, episodes, and themes to be directly related to the early Muslim community's interactions with other religious communities. The Qur'an is therefore an artifact of this communal exchange, which plays out diachronically in the qur'anic corpus.

She further argues that the Qur'an is consequently deeply entrenched in the wider context of interreligious and intertextual dialogues of Late Antiquity.[12] Aziz al-Azmeh, in line with Reynolds, El-Badawi, and Neuwirth, emphasizes the Qur'an's position within the broader context of Late Antiquity. However, al-Azmeh tends to downplay the significance of

the Qur'an's "Biblicisms," and rejects any notion of either borrowing or even intertextuality. He asserts that the Qur'an does not employ biblical themes in a direct relationship wither earlier texts and traditions, or even simply because they were widespread in its own historical milieu; in other words, there was no contiguous development between the Bible and the Qur'an. Al-Azmeh instead underscores the Qur'an's selective appropriation ("Qur'ānisation") of " *figures* , loci, fragments, narratives, and templates," which are used as "secondary narrative mythopoeia."[13] He tempers the significance of literary intertextuality, claiming that biblical traditions had little determining factor on the shape of the text, which only incorporates biblical motifs to suit its own requirements in during the process of its composition.

It is not my intention in this article to fully contest any of these approaches to the Qur'an's engagement with biblical lore. I am not particularly focused on questions of chronology, nor do I inquire into the precise nature of the early Muslim community's engagement with Christians and Jews. However, I follow El-Badawi and Reynolds in accentuating the importance of reading the Qur'an through the lens of biblical material, which the text deliberately re-articulates in an extensive, homiletic fashion. I find reading the Qur'an—and Q 32 for our purposes here—in this manner to be more insightful than reading the text in light of medieval interpreters. Additionally—and keeping with all four the aforementioned scholars—I would stress the importance of reading the Qur'an as a Late Antique document. Indeed, a critical study of the Qur'an benefits from a comparative reading of the religious traditions circulating in its initial milieu—the religious traditions of Late Antiquity.[14] One salient feature of this period is the pervasive presence of apocalyptic movements.

Attention to the eschatological and apocalyptic character of the qur'anic proclamations is gaining renewed traction in academic scholarship. Paul Casanova argued that Muhammad viewed himself primarily as a prophet of the end times,[15] an argument that was picked up by Tor Andrae, who highlighted Muhammad's eschatological piety.[16] Stephen Shoemaker has likewise recently and avidly made the case that "imminent eschatology stood as one of the primary tenets" of Muhammad's message in particular and early Islam in general.[17] He also effectively endeavors to contextualize this intense eschatological sentiment within the broader cultural, religious, and imperialistic context of Late Antiquity.[18] Shoemaker therefore emphasizes the degree of continuity between the eschatology of the Qur'an and earlier monotheistic traditions:"Muhammad thus appears as a monotheist prophet within the Abrahamic tradition who called his followers to renounce polytheism, to submit to the divine laws, and to prepare themselves for the impending doom: altogether, it is a portrait rather familiar from the Jewish and Christian scriptures.[19]"

Nicolai Sinai departs from the aforementioned authors in asserting that qur'anic eschatology is intended to spur its audience to reform rather than anticipate the precise time of arrival of Judgment Day.[20] He states, to this effect, that:

> *What the early Qur'an is primarily interested in, then, is not in foretelling when and under which historical circumstances the world will come to an end. Rather, it is concerned to confront its hearers, through the artful deployment of a whole range of literary techniques, with the Judgment they will ultimately have to face and to convince them that this basic fact necessitates a fundamental makeover of the way they live and act. I take it that it is primarily to inculcate such an eschatologically tinged outlook on the world that several Qur'anic verses make the dramatic announcement that the Day of Judgement is, or has drawn, 'nigh.'* [21]

Such employment with eschatological rhetoric fully resonates with Syriac Christian homilies, which frequently employed the fear of judgment and damnation to galvanize parishioners toward performing good deeds and living righteously. I see the eschatological

message of Q 32 performing a similar function, and it is for this reason that I place this sura within the broader tradition of biblical and post-biblical eschatological preaching.

In what follows, I first provide my own translation of *Sūrat al-Sajda*.[22] I attempt a rather literal translation of the Arabic—even though it sometimes results in awkward wording in English—so as to better capture the flow of the original language. In my translation I also attempt to correspond the end of the verse with a translation of the final word in Arabic, to make it clear which words may have been added for the sake of the rhyme. The translation is followed by some brief comments about composition and structure, which in turn leads to a verse-by-verse commentary of the entire sura, wherein I highlight the relevance of biblical knowledge to the sura's eschatological rhetoric.

Q 32 AL-SAJDA - THE PROSTRATION

Separated Letters

1. Alif Lām Mīm.[23]

Introductory Affirmation of the Revelation

2. The sending down of the Scripture, in which there is no doubt, from the Lord of the worlds.
3. Or do they say, "He has fabricated it"? No! It is the truth from your[24] Lord, so that you may warn a people to whom no warner has come before you, so that they may be guided.

Exaltation of God and His Creative Power

4. [It is] God who created the heavens and the earth, and whatever is between them, in six Then He mounted the throne. You have no ally and no intercessor other than Him; will you not take heed?
5. He directs the affair from Heaven to the earth; then it ascends to Him in a day, the measure of which is a thousand years of what you count.
6. That One is the Knower of the Unseen and the Seen, the Mighty, the Merciful.
7. The One who made good everything He created, and began the creation of humankind from clay.
8. Then He made his[25] progeny from an extract of despicable
9. Then He fashioned him and breathed into him some of His Spirit, and made for you hearing, sight, and hearts.[26] Little do you give thanks!

Eschatology and Defense of the Resurrection

10. They say, "When we are lost in the earth, shall we be in a new creation?" Rather, in the meeting with their Lord they are unbelievers.
11. Say: "The angel of death, who is entrusted with you, will take you— then to your Lord you will be returned."
12. If you could see when the sinners hang their heads before their Lord: "Our Lord, we have seen and heard, so return us and we will act righteously. Surely (now) we are certain."
13. If We had willed, We would indeed have given every soul27 its guidance. But My declaration has proven true: "I shall indeed fill Hell with jinn and people altogether!"
14. "So taste! Because you have forgotten the meeting of this Day of yours, surely we have forgotten you! Taste the punishment of eternity for what you were doing!"

Contrast Between Believers and Unbelievers

15. Only believing in Our signs are those who, when they are reminded of them, fall down in prostration and glorify their Lord with praise, and they do not behave arrogantly.
16. Their sides forsake their beds, calling upon their Lord out of fear and desire. And from what We have provided them, they contribute.
17. No one[28] knows what comfort of the eyes is hidden for them in payment for what they have done.

18. So is the one who believes like the one who is wicked? They are not equal!
19. As for those who believe and do righteous deeds, for them are gardens of the refuge, as a hospitality for what they have done.
20. As for those who act wickedly, their refuge is the Fire. Whenever they want to come out of it, they will be returned to it, and it will be said to them: "Taste the punishment of the Fire which you were calling a lie!"
21. And We shall indeed make them taste the nearer punishment, before the greater punishment, so that they may return.
22. Who is more iniquitous than the one who is reminded of the signs of his Lord, then turns away from them? Surely upon the sinners We are shall take vengeance.

The Example of Moses and the Children of Israel

23. And indeed We gave Moses the Scripture—so do not be in doubt of the meeting with Him—and We made it[29] a guidance for the Children of Israel.
24. And We appointed from them leaders, guiding by Our command, when they were patient and were, of Our signs, certain.
25. Surely your Lord—He will distinguish between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning what they differed.

Signs for the Unbelievers

26. Does it not guide them, how many generations We have destroyed before them, among whose dwellings they walk? Surely in that are signs indeed– will they not hear?
27. Do they not see that We drive water to the barren earth, and bring forth crops by means of it, from which their livestock and they themselves eat? Will they not see?

Final Apocalyptic Polemic Against Unbelievers

28. And they say, "When is this victory, if you are truthful?"
29. Say: "On the Day of Victory, their belief will not benefit those who disbelieve, nor will they be spared."
30. So turn away from them, and wait;[30] Surely they (too) are

COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURE

Each verse ends in the rhyme scheme of –ūn, though in qur'anic saj' words ending in a long ī + consonant are considered to match this scheme, as is found in v. 2 (-mīn), v. 6 (-hīm), v. 7 (-tīn), v. 8 (-hīn), v. 13 (-'īn), v. 23 (-'īl), and v. 28 (-qīn).31 Angelika Neuwirth argues for a tripartite division of this and other Meccan suras.32 Carl Ernst likewise notes the following concerning the middle and later Meccan texts (within which Q 32 is usually classified): "Many exhibit a ring structure, beginning and ending with parallel sections that praise God, list virtues and vices, debate unbelievers, and affirm the revelation; the third section normally concludes with a flourish containing a powerful affirmation of revelation. The second part, in the middle of the sura, is typically a narrative of prophecy and struggle that highlights the crucial choices facing the messenger's audience." [33]

By ring structure, Ernst is referring to a chiastic structure, commonly found in Semitic texts like the Hebrew Bible, by which a text might generally be arranged with topics A, B, and C, as A1-B1-C-B2-A2. Such an interpretation of the structure of the text has also been thoroughly applied to *Sūrat al-Mā'ida* (Q 5) by Michel Cuypers.[34] Indeed, one may attempt such a structural arrangement of Q 32, or to divide it into three sections as is undertaken by Neuwirth. However, such an enterprise would ultimately remain a little contrived, and necessitates an imposition upon the text as to how the interpreter assumes the text must be arranged or structured. The beginning and ending of Q 32 are parallel only in a rather loose sense, and provides no clear lines of division into a tripartite structure. Indeed, Neuwirth was forced to split her first

division into two separate sub- sections containing rather diverse material.[35] Thus I have here forgone any definitive conclusions regarding the structure of Q 32, and attempted to construct a structure derived from the text itself, rather than trying to arrange it into any conceptual scheme.

Sūrat al-Sajda (Q 32) has, both traditionally and by modern scholars, been assigned to the so-called "Meccan" period of the proclamation of the Qur'an.[36] Theodor Nöldeke classified Q 32 as belonging to the "Third Meccan Period," in which period the "style, language, and treatment of subjects that developed gradually during the second Meccan period appear fully developed in the third period."[37] He considered it to be the seventieth sura to be revealed, whereas the Egyptian chronology places it as the seventy-fifth.[38] Under Nicolai Sinai's study of chronology through the criterion of increasing mean verse length (MVL), Q 32 would indeed seem to fall alongside other later Meccan material.[39] Hirschfeld dubbed Q 32 as part of the "Descriptive Revelations," which harbor a strong concern for demonstrating the signs of God.[40]

Notwithstanding the consensus on its Meccan origin, there have been some arguments that this sura also includes later interpolations, usually identified as "Medinan" insertions. Muqātil ibn Sulaymān of Balkh (d. 150, or 155, or 158 AH/ ca. 767 CE)[41] believed that v. 16 was revealed concerning the Ansār ("Helpers") in Medina, but adds that others argued that vv. 16–18 are all Medinan.[42] Ibn Qutayba (d. 276 AH/ 889 CE), on the other hand, argued that all verses were from Meccan except vv. 18–20.[43] Suffice there was little agreement on this point, and Nöldeke rejects the perspectives that v. 16 or vv. 18–20 were Medinan.[44] There is little internal evidence for such a division, and such arguments originate externally from the text itself.[45]

Twenty-nine suras of the Qur'an begin with individual letters such these, often termed al-hurūf al-muqatta'a ("the disconnected letters"). This particular sequence also appears at the beginning of Q 2–3, and Q 29–32, and Q 7 includes these three letters along with an additional sād. Commentators throughout the ages have posited various explanations for these letters, usually endowing them with particular theological significance or leaving their interpretation up to God.[46] Western scholars have pursued other explanations—such as the hypothesis that these letters identify sources for the scribes or serve as abbreviations of the basmala—though they remain speculative.[47] In Flügel's enumeration of the Qur'ans verses, these letters do not constitute an individual verse, instead appearing before the first verse (v. 2 of the Cairo Edition). This may in fact be closer to the actual history of the text, in which these letters were possibly added after its codification and collection. Hartwig Hirschfeld suggested that these letters may be abbreviations referring to the person from whom each chapter was collected, and likewise added after the redaction of the text.[48] Richard Bell posits that suras with the same combination of letters were originally intended to constitute a particular unit or group of texts when the Qur'an was put in its present shape. This would explain why chapters with similar letter-headings were kept together (such as Q 29–32), even if this would break up the general ordering of suras from longer to shorter. However, in the case of the unit texts with the letters A.L.M., Bell speculates that Q 2 and Q 3 were deemed too long to remain with Q 29–32, and so were moved to the front of the text, following al-Fatiha (Q 1).[49] Angelika Neuwirth, for her part, sees them as "representing the smallest elements of the acoustic performance of the word of God"; in other words, an invocation of a celestial alphabet preceding the recitation of the text and lend authority to the subsequent proclamations.[50]

'SEPARATED LETTERS': VERSE 1

1. *Alif Lām Mīm.*

INTRODUCTORY AFFIRMATION OF THE REVELATION: VERSES 2–3

2. The sending down of the Scripture, in which there is no doubt, from the Lord of the worlds.
3. Or do they say, "He has fabricated it"? No! It is the truth from your Lord, so that you may warn a people to whom no warner has come before you, so that they may be guided.

Several other suras begin with a similar phrase of "the sending down (*tanzīlu*) [or 'revelation'] of the book" (39:1; 40:2; 45:2; 46:2).[51] In these instances the qur'anic proclamation begins with a declaration of the divine origin of the subsequent speech, appearing as a standard formulaic for liturgical settings. Neuwirth views this introductory appellatory section to be comparable to the supplication litanies of a Christian church service.[52] Similarly, Droge notes that *rabb al-'ālamīn* mirrors Jewish liturgical expressions, which often use "Lord of the Worlds" (*ribbōn ha-'ōlamîm*) to address God.[53]

The Arabic leaves some ambiguity as to whether *lā rayba fīhi* is intended to mean "there is no doubt in it [in the Book]" (that is, no doubt in its contents) or "there is no doubt that it descended from the Lord." Muqātil ibn Sulaymān favors the second interpretation, that "there is no doubt that it descended [or 'was revealed']."[54] However, in light of parallel passages with this expression (Q 2:2 and 10:37, which does not include *tanzīl*), it seems that a reference to its contents is intended. Bell notes that this expression is also used for the Day or the Hour (in an eschatological sense) in other locations.[55]

Most translators and commentators interpret the particle mā in qawman mā atāhum min nadhīrin as a particle of negation (mā al-nāfiya).[56] This seems to fit best, as the Qur'an frequently envisions itself as a scripture in line with—even confirming—previous scriptures for a people without access to them. Hence its frequent emphasis on its own Arabic-ness, as it is an Arabic scripture for the Arabs in their own language (e.g., Q 12:2). However, it might also be possible, if unlikely, to translate mā as "what" or "that which," to arrive at the meaning "to warn them of that which a warner brought them before you" (thereby maintaining the sense of confirming previous revelations).

The designation of the Prophet or speaker as a "warner" (*nadhīr*) helps frame the eschatological importance of the proclamation; indeed, the final three verses of the sura also threaten the imminence of divine judgment. Identifying the Qur'an 's messenger as a "warner" is one of the most ubiquitous prophetological themes in the entire Qur'an .[57] The Prophet is a warner in so much as he cautions his interlocutors concerning the impending temporal punishment and eschatological judgment that would soon overtake them. In other words, this sura quickly identifies the speaker as an eschatological prophet forewarning of looming judgment and urging his people to take heed of God.

EXALTATION OF GOD AND HIS CREATIVE POWER: VERSES 4–9

4. [It is] God who created the heavens and the earth, and whatever is between them, in six Then He mounted the throne. You have no ally and no intercessor other than Him; will you not take heed?
5. He directs the affair from Heaven to the earth; then it ascends to Him in a day, the measure of which is a thousand years of what you
6. That One is the Knower of the Unseen and the Seen, the Mighty, the Merciful.
7. The One who made good everything He created, and began the creation of humankind from clay.
8. Then He made his progeny from an extract of despicable
9. Then He fashioned him and breathed into him some of His Spirit, and made for you hearing, sight, and hearts. Little do you give thanks!

The next section, an adoration of God and his creative power, begins with a rather unequivocal allusion to biblical tradition in v. 4. God creating the heavens and the earth (*al-samāwāt wa-l-ard*) is of course found in Genesis 1:1, but is also a common expression in Jewish and Christian scripture (cf. Isa 42:5, 45:18; Jdt 13:18). The six days of creation also echoes Genesis and biblical tradition, as is found in Genesis 1:1–31. Furthermore, sitting upon the throne seems to allude to biblical motif in which God rests on the seventh day after creation (i.e., on the Sabbath, Gen 2:2–3), a notion which is expanded upon in later Jewish tradition.[58] Thus a more direct parallel with Q 32:4 can be witnessed in the first half of Exodus 20:11: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it."[59] Bell, in light of the biblical undertone of this verse, considered it to be an early Medinan insertion, perhaps under the assumption that biblical material, or even biblical knowledge, had no place in Mecca.[60]

However, much of the medieval exegetical tradition seems to ignore or miss the Qur'an's employment of biblical material here. *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* simply relates that the first day of creation was Sunday, the last day was Friday, and that the last part of this verse is directed at the people of Mecca.[61] Al-Tabarī is likewise uninterested in the biblical subtext, except to the extent in which he mentions brief reports that specify that God mounted the throne on the seventh day.[62] Ibn Kathīr reports a hadith from Nasā'ī to Abu Hurayra, in which Muhammad took the latter's hand and relates the order of creation as follows: God created the earth/ground (al- turba) on Saturday, mountains on Sunday, trees on Monday, loathsome things (*al-makrūh*) on Tuesday, light on Wednesday, beasts/animals (*al- dawāb*) on Thursday, and Adam on Friday in the last hour of light. Indeed Ibn Kathīr's hermeneutics demand that he rely on prophetic reports rather than biblical tradition in his interpretation.[63] However, he does note that Adam (*Ādam*) was made from the "surface of earth" (*adīm al-ard*), similar to the word play behind the name in Hebrew in the Hebrew Bible.[64]

Note, however, that the Qur'an is not relating this biblical tradition for the purpose in which one finds it in the Bible itself; that is, the text is not doing so here to institute the observation of the Sabbath. Rather, as is made explicit at the end of the verse, it is to establish the absolute authority of God, apart from whom (such as other gods or angels) mankind would receive no aid.[65]

The exact implication of v. 5 is a little opaque, though an assertion of God's absolute power is clear.[66] Classical exegetes explore various options to interpret the verse, with many questioning whether it is the amr or angels (cf. Q 70:4, in which it is angels and the Spirit) that ascend to God, or upon the distance between the heavens and earth.[67] However it is doubtful whether the Qur'an intends for the contrasts between times to be taken literally. Similar idioms appear in the Bible, such as Psalm 90:4 "For a thousand years in your sight/ are like yesterday when it is past,/ or like a watch in the night."

It is likewise found in the New Testament, with 2 Peter 3:8: "But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day." This idea is found elsewhere in the Qur'an as well, e.g., Q 22:47: "Surely a day with your Lord is like a thousand years of what you count" and thus the Qur'an, like the Bible, is simply contrasting the sense of time between humanity and the Divine, rather than stating a precise chronological scheme.

Similarly, v. 6 is a rather direct proclamation about the omniscience of God. Paired with v. 5, the two verses are quite similar to Q 6:73, which contains both the reference to creation in six days and the poetic declaration of God's knowledge of both "the Unseen and the Seen (*al- ghayb wa-l-shahāda*)."[68] The commentary tradition develops theological motifs around this and similar verses.[69]

The pious elevation of God, and particularly of his creative power, continues in v. 7. Translators differ on how to translate the form IV *(af'ala pattern*) verb *ahsana* : Droge and Jones have "made well," Quli Qara'i has "perfected,"[70] Abdel Haleem has "gave everything its perfect form,"[71] and the Study *Quran* uses "made beautiful,"[72] All of these fit well with dictionary definitions of this term and its root.[73] However, I have elected to render it "make good" to emphasize its possible biblical antecedent from Genesis 1, in which God is said to see that all creation was "good" (*tôb* in Hebrew). Genesis 1 ends as follows: "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). If this is indeed what is intended here in v. 7, then the association with creation is stronger in light of v. 5 above, which alludes to creation in six days. The creation of humankind from clay is, of course, also an allusion to biblical topoi. In Genesis 2:7 man is made "from the dust of the ground," and in Job 33:6 Elihu tells Job "See, before God I am as you are; I too was formed from a piece of clay." That mankind is clay and God the potter is likewise a theme in both Isaiah (Isa 29:16; 45:9; 64:8) and Jeremiah (18:4, 6), as well as a motif adopted by Paul in Romans 9:21. Most *mufassirūn* (exegetes) clarify that this verse is in reference to the creation of Adam, with divergent understandings of ahsana.[74]

Verse 8, like v. 9 following it, continues the description of God's creation of mankind from humble origins. Whereas creation began with clay, the children of humankind are created through "despicable water" (*mā' mahīn*).[75] This association with water may otherwise be related to Genesis 1 and the primordial water at the beginning of creation. 2 Peter 3:5 likewise notes that "an earth was formed out of water and by means of water," and later Christian traditions develop the theme that everything was created from water.[76]

The completion of the creative process of humankind in v. 9 is again strikingly biblical in character, even including a cognate shared by Arabic and Hebrew. Just as here God "breathed [*nafakha*] into him some of His spirit," so too in Genesis 2:7, wherein it notes God "breathed (*Hebr. nāpaḥ*) into his [man's] nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being" (cf. Wis 15:11). Psalm 33:6 likewise notes that all creation came into being through the spirit (*rūaḥ*) of God, a theme which is further developed in Christian tradition. Mary receives the Spirit of God (Luke 1:35, cf. Q 21:91; 66:12), and Jesus breathes on his disciples to endow them with the Holy Spirit after his resurrection (John 20:22).

In short, this passage employs biblical creation themes, which the Qur'an employs to affirm qur'ānic dogma.

ESCHATOLOGY AND DEFENCE OF THE RESURRECTION: VERSES 10–14

10. They say, "When we are lost in the earth, shall we be in a new creation?" Rather, in the meeting with their Lord they are unbelievers.
11. Say: "The angel of death, who is entrusted with you, will take you— then to your Lord you will be returned."
12. If you could see when the sinners hang their heads before their Lord: "Our Lord, we have seen and heard, so return us and we will act righteously. Surely (now) we are certain."
13. If We had willed, We would indeed have given every soul its guidance. But My declaration has proven true: "I shall indeed fill Hell with jinn and people altogether!"
14. "So taste! Because you have forgotten the meeting of this Day of yours, surely we have forgotten you! Taste the punishment of eternity for what you were doing!"

The sura here shifts to a defense of the resurrection, building upon the previous discussion concerning creation to which a comparison is inevitably drawn. Indeed the *mufassirūn* explain "we have gotten lost in the earth" (*ḍalalnā fī l-arḍ*), correctly, as a metaphor for death, adding that these nameless opponents were doubting the resurrection.[77] Gabriel Reynolds notes that the manner in which Q 32:9–10 describes the resurrection

from the dead as a "new creation" is biblical (Rev 21:5–6; cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15), and finds "salient precedents in the writing of Syriac fathers."[78]

Of additional interest here is the use of the particle *bal* , which is a little odd. *Bal* usually functions as a retraction particle, a particle which contradicts whatever precedes it and confirms that which follows.[79]

However, the statement in the first part of the verse is not, from the perspective of the Qur'an, untrue. Humanity would become a new creation after death. The text as a whole *affirms* the resurrection and second creation. One would think that a more fitting response would be "indeed!" Nonetheless, the Qur'an here simply seems to be negating the incredulous attitude on the part of the unbelievers, rather than undermining their words themselves.

Since the primary charge against the unnamed interlocutors in the previous verse was their disbelief in the final judgment, v. 11 resumes with expounding upon this "meeting" with God. Bell again believed that this verse was "entirely Medinan," perhaps because of the particular "angel of death" (*malak al-mawt*) mentioned only here, but there is little to suggest this.[80] As we have seen, even a Meccan sura may contain substantial familiarity with the biblical traditions and motifs. Indeed, this verse seems to be drawing upon Christian and Jewish tradition. Proverbs 16:14 relates that "A king's wrath is a messenger of death [or, 'as angels of death,' *mal'akē-māwet*]." This notion seems to be operative as well in Job 33:22f. Other verses, while never using this particular locution, refer to angels who kill (note the Arabic verb used here, yatawaffākum: "cause you to die") or attack, and the angel of death also appears in the Talmud and later Jewish traditions.[81] Classical commentaries attempt to identify this figure as 'Azrā'īl, and contain other details derived from hadith developed out of later traditions.[82] All of these appears to be later theological reflection on this verse.

Neuwirth refers to v. 12 as a *Vorausblende* , a "future-glimpse" or "flash- forward."[83] With such material the Qur'anallows its audience to witness the fate of its detractors at the eschaton (i.e., Judgment Day). Once fully aware of their punishment, they will ask to be given a second chance to correct their mistakes, but this will be denied to them. A similar theme— that of the inefficaciousness of repentance after death—can also be glimpsed (albeit with a different point of emphasis) in the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19–31.

Verse 13 responds, in part, to the request of the unbelievers in the previous verse. The ability to provide guidance—or not to do so—is the prerogative of God, and without this guidance the iniquitous were confined to their fate in Hell. The Arabic term for Hell here, jahannam, derives from the Hebrew term for the Valley of the Son of Hinnom (*gayʾ bēn hinnōm*) where the Israelites are said to have sacrificed children to Ba'al (cf. 2 Kgs 23:10; 2 Chr 28:3; Jer 7:32, 19:3–6). In later Jewish and early Christian tradition, Gehenna (Greek Geenna from Aramaic gēhannā) became a term for the final destination of the wicked.[84] Thus by employing this term as a designation for Hell, the Qur'an once again reveals a development of Jewish-Christian tradition.

Bell interprets the "declaration" (*al-qawl*) which God will fulfil as originating in his promise in the story of the fall of the devil (*Iblīs* , from *Greek diabolos*) and the prostration of the angels, such as in Q 7:18 and 38:84-85, wherein God promises to punish the devil and all those who followed him, both humans and jinn.[85] Muqātil agrees, and it seems likely that we here have an instance of intra-textuality.[86] This theme, also found in Q 6:128, resonates with a concept from Revelation 20:10: "And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur."

Most classical v take the jinn to be a separate class of beings, distinct from both angels and humankind, but endowed with freewill like the latter.[87] However, it is possible that the Qur'an simply intends jinn to be identified with the demons and "unclean spirits" of Jewish and Christian tradition, and therefore another term for the qur'anic *shayātīn*

(demons or devils), rather than a distinct species between mankind and the angels. Iblīs is said to be one of the jinn (Q 18:50), they are capable of taking possession of people (hence the term *majnūn* , "jinn-possessed"), they are worshipped apart from God (Q 6:100, cf. 1 Cor 19:19-22), and some are believers (Q 46:29; 72:14), thus matching biblical precedents (cf. James 2:19: "Even the demons believe—and shudder"). Furthermore, in some contexts the Qur'an states that Solomon was served by jinn (Q 34:12– 13; 27:39) but in others they are called *shayātīn* (Q 21:81). They may be different terms for the same thing, and here in v. 13 the unbelievers are threatened to be cast into hell along with demons.

As the climax to the eschatological threat pressed upon believers, v. 14 foreshadows what will be said to the unbelievers at Judgment Day, serving as a fulfilment of the promise alluded to in v. 13. The medieval commentators under our purview were largely interested in identifying the speakers, usually stated to be the keepers (*al-khazana*) of Heaven and Hell (cf. Q 39:71, 73; 40:49; 68:8), and identifying the punishment as a response to kufr (unbelief/ingratitude) and *takdhīb* (denying the validity of the Prophet and/or his revelations).[88] The other theological conundrum facing exegetes was the implication that God could "forget," which seems to undermine his omniscience and sovereignty. Ibn Kathīr correctly specifies that the text here uses the notion of God forgetting in opposition to the fact that others forgot him, and not in a literal sense, adding: *"i.e., He will treat you in the manner of forgetting.* "[89] This has biblical resonances. The book of Deuteronomy frequently charges the Israelites not to forget the covenant made with God (e.g., Deut 4:23 "So be careful not to forget the covenant that the Lord your God made with you…"). The same term is used on an analogy to God's own response in Deuteronomy 4:31: "Because the Lord your God is a merciful God, he will neither abandon you nor destroy you; he will not forget the covenant with your ancestors that he swore to them." Similar expressions of God "forgetting" appear in the Psalms as well: " *How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?* " (Ps 13:1).[90] Thus, theological conundrum aside, the Qur'an is simply employing a standard biblical expression.

To summarize my comments on this passage, the Qur'an again draws upon biblical themes and expressions in presenting claims related to eschatology and the resurrection, albeit for its own exhortative purposes. Biblical themes are woven into the very fabric of the Qur'an.

CONTRAST BETWEEN BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS: VERSES 15–22

15. Only believing in Our signs are those who, when they are reminded of them, fall down in prostration and glorify their Lord with praise, and they do not behave arrogantly.
16. Their sides forsake their beds, calling upon their Lord out of fear and desire. And from what We have provided them, they contribute.
17. No one knows what comfort of the eyes is hidden for them in payment for what they have done.
18. So is the one who believes like the one who is wicked? They are not equal!
19. As for those who believe and do righteous deeds, for them are gardens of the refuge, as a hospitality for what they have done.
20. As for those who act wickedly, their refuge is the Fire. Whenever they want to come out of it, they will be returned to it, and it will be said to them: "Taste the punishment of the Fire which you were calling a lie!"
21. And We shall indeed make them taste the nearer punishment, before the greater punishment, so that they may return.
22. Who is more iniquitous than the one who is reminded of the signs of his Lord, then turns away from them? Surely upon the sinners We are shall take vengeance.

The sura derives its name from v. 15, which states that believers fall prostrating (sujjadan). It begins a contrast made between believers and unbelievers (who were the targets of the earlier warnings). The term for signs (āyāt) could also refer to the verses of the revelation, and could likewise be related to the early Christian notion of evidentiary miracles (Syriac āthā). Neuwirth discusses a "Qur'anic Theology of Signs," by which "signs" in the Qur'an "serve hermeneutically to prove the presence and omnipotence of God."[91] The last portion of the verse, "and they do not act arrogantly" was likely added to match the rhyme scheme.[92]

The verb that begins verse 16, tatajāfā, is a hapax legomenon (appearing only once in the Qur'an).[93] The term for beds, al-madāji', also occurs in Q 4:34 and 3:154, wherein it refers to the place in which one lies down to die. This verse is also one of the few verses of this sura to have its own occasion of revelation (sabab al-nuzūl). Muqātil relates that it was revealed concerning the Anhār ("Helpers") in Medina.[94] Al-Wāhidī reports a tradition in which the Prophet explains this verse to a believer at the Battle of Tabūk.[95] Similar traditions and hadith are preserved by Ibn Kathīr and al-tabarī.[96] Independent of the veracity of these reports, it is clear that this verse is meant to continue to expand upon the favorable qualities of believers vis-à-vis unbelievers, leading to the conclusions in the following verses.

The idiom in v. 17 translated as "comfort" is literally "coolness of the eyes" (*qurrat aʿyun*).[97] Bell rightly points out the similarities between this verse and 1 Corinthians 2:9 ("But, as it is written: 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,/ nor the human heart conceived,/ what God has prepared for those who love him'"),[98] which seems to be drawing upon, but not directly quoting, Isaiah 64:4.[99] Interestingly, al-tabarī seems to have been aware of a tradition which picked up on this association, stating that "it is written in the Torah [al-tawra] concerning what God has (in store) for those whose sides forsake their beds: what no eye has seen, nor any ear heard, nor has occurred to the heart of any human [*bashar*]."[100] However, this seems to be an Arabic translation of Paul, not Isaiah (who does not include the last part about hearts), yet transformed to include elements from v. 16. Otherwise, the *mufassirūn* relate numerous other traditions in an attempt to identify the content of this verse, including a tradition about women in paradise who become progressively more beautiful or levels of heaven that become increasingly more resplendent.[101]

With v. 18, the sura transitions to an explicit comparison of the fates of believers and the iniquitous. The Qur'an here, as elsewhere, draws a strong, polar distinction between those who believe in its message and those who do not accept it. Although this verse appears to be quite general in scope, some traditions provide it a *sabab al-nuzūl* associating with it just two individuals, 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib (the righteous believer) and al-Walīd ibn 'Uqba (the wicked).[102]

Verses 19 and 20 are responses to the rhetorical question posed in v.18. The contrasting fate of believers and the wicked make the degree of inequality between the two groups especially evident. The righteous believers are rewarded with an eschatological paradise, whereas the wicked are punished for eternity. The term "abode," *al-maʾwā* is frequently used in eschatological contexts.[103] The last part of v. 20 particularly hones in on the sin of denying, or "calling a lie," the resurrection or Judgment Day. Repudiating the eschatological, even apocalyptic, message of the Qur'an is equated with acting immorally (cf. also v. 22 below).[104]

Verse 21 continues with the theme of "tasting," in which the first word *wa-la-nudhīqannahum* ("and We shall indeed make them taste") adds additional emphasis.[105] It also places a worldly retribution before the final, eschatological recompense, which is likely meant to inspire them to return to God before the greater punishment in Hellfire. Muqātil says that this verse is in reference to the *kuffār* (unbelievers) of Mecca, and defines the "nearer punishment" as the hunger that struck Mecca for denying Muhammad's prophetic claims, during which Meccans were forced to eat bones, corpses, and dogs as punishment. He then identifies that "greater punishment" as the Battle of Badr.[106] Ibn Kathīr, on the other hand,

offers the possibility that the "nearer punishment" is in reference to Badr, but otherwise also reports traditions interpreting this verse more broadly as the misfortunes of this world (*al-dunyā*) such as sickness, misfortune, or the grave.[107] However, in line with the Qur'an's frequent allusions to thecpunishment-narratives,[108] in which other peoples or tribes (Thamūd, 'Ād, the people of Lot, etc.) are destroyed for rebuffing the messengers sent to them, the "nearer punishment" seems to be a clear allusion to this threat of worldly destruction for denying God's messengers. This particular vision of a *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation history) is one of the most frequent and noteworthy rhetorical tools of the Qur'an in its attempts to impact its audience. The Qur'an anticipates an impending temporal punishment that would strike its opponents, mirroring the earthquakes, sandstorms, and rains of sulfur that annihilated earlier peoples.

The next verse, v. 22, concludes the eschatological contrast between believers and unbelievers, and seems to target those who had become lax in following the Prophet. Muqātil associates the iniquitous with the unbelievers in Mecca, especially those of the Quraysh who were disposed to mockery, and takes the vengeance as referring to the events of Badr.[109] Other commentators understand the verse more broadly, although al- tabarī also understands it in tandem with Q 54:49.[110] Suffice to say that this verse is concerned with preserving religious praxis within its community, and requires no specific individuals in its scope. It also resonates with 2 Peter 2:21: "For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment that was passed on to them." Even here, in the sura's contrast between believers and unbelievers, we can note echoes of biblical material (e.g., 2 Pet 2:21 and 1 Cor 2:9).

THE EXAMPLE OF MOSES AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL: VERSES 23–25

23. And indeed We gave Moses the Scripture —*so do not* be in doubt of the meeting with Him—and We made it a guidance for the Children of
24. And We appointed from them leaders, guiding by Our command, when they were patient and were, of Our signs, certain.
25. Surely your Lord—He will distinguish between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning what they differed.

The chapter here switches to proclamations concerning Moses, though eschatological elements remain. Following Neuwirth, the inclusion of Moses and the Israelites seems to serve a liturgical function, "marking the divine confirmation of God's work in history."[111] One difficulty with this verse is identifying the antecedents of some of its pronoun suffixes in the Arabic. The possessive suffix of *liqā'ihi* could mean "the meeting with Him [i.e., God]", or "the meeting with it [the Book], or "the meeting with him [i.e., someone else]." I have opted for the first of these options because the term for "meeting," *liqā'* , often alludes to the meeting with God at the Day of Judgment,[112] which is also how it is understood in its two other occurrences in this sura (in vv. 10 and 14). Note that this association between Moses/the Torah and resurrection is noteworthy because resurrection as a concept is noticeably absent from the Pentateuch.

The "meeting" might also allude to episodes in scripture in which Moses encounters a theophany of YHWH, such as at the Burning Bush (Exod 3) or on Mount Sinai (Exod 19f). Muqātil, on the other hand, takes this term to be directed at Muhammad as a confirmation to him that the Torah was granted to Moses, which strikes one as an odd reading.[113] The authors of *Tafsīr al- Jalālay* n, for their part, state that the Qur'an here alludes to the meeting of Muhammad with Moses on the Night Journey, a tradition which seems to be supported by both al-tabarī and Ibn Kathīr, relying heavily upon

the hadith corpus, but to me this seems unlikely.[114] Additionally, the object-suffix of the verb *ja'alnāhu* could mean "made it [the Book] a guidance" or "made him [Moses] a guidance." The exegetical tradition raises both possibilities, but seems to opt for the former, as have I in this instance, although neither seems to undermine the general message of the passage.[115]

Verse 24 continues the example of the Israelites as the model or prototypical community, who were guided by leaders who led them based on the signs of God, which seems to imply guidance by means of the Torah. Muqātil, however, understands the "signs" to be the signs in Egypt— possibly the plagues, although he mentions nine instead of ten— and associates the time in which "they were patient" with their hardship in Egypt. Q 21:72–73 suggest that the text may have Isaac and Jacob in mind here, as in 21:73 we find the almost identical language of *wa- ja'alnāhum a'imatan yahdūna bi-amrinā* , though these figures predated Moses. This might instead be an allusion to Moses' appointment of tribal leaders in Deuteronomy 1:15, e.g. "So I took the leaders of your tribes, wise and reputable individuals, and installed them as leaders over you."

The following verse, v. 25, is interesting in that the text moves from an appraisal of Moses and the Israelites as a paradigmatic religious community to a more nuanced or even hesitant position concerning their fate on Judgment Day. However, the text does not make explicit here the contents of this controversy, and assumes some background on the part of its audience as to its intentions.[116] Nonetheless, this material is a clear case of the Qur'an using biblical characters and episodes to make its own homiletic points.

SIGNS FOR THE UNBELIEVERS: VERSES 26–27

26. Does it not guide them, how many generations We have destroyed before them, among whose dwellings they walk? Surely in that are signs indeed– will they not hear?
27. Do they not see that We drive water to the barren earth, and bring forth crops by means of it, from which their livestock and they themselves eat? Will they not see?

Verse 26 either continues to discuss the Children of Israel, or—as interpreted by the majority of *mufassirūn* —transitions to address contemporary opponents (understood by most to be the *mushrikūn* ("associators" or polytheists) of Mecca).[117] The bygone peoples are frequently taken by tradition to refer to the people of Thamūd and 'Ād.[118] This seems to be what the text intends, in light of verses such as Q 29:36– 38, wherein it is also mentioned that "it is clear to you from their dwellings [*masākinihum*]." The text assumes that members of its addressees are quite familiar with such ruins, which constitute ominous signs of the destructive power of God.[119] The text follows in v. 27 with a rather customary nature- sign verse, by which God's ability to produce vegetation from barren earth is meant to imply his ability to resurrect the dead, as well as demonstrate his goodwill to humanity.[120] Thus these two verses include references to both "historical signs" and "cosmic signs."[121]

FINAL APOCALYPTIC POLEMIC AGAINST UNBELIEVERS: VERSES 28–30

28. And they say, "When is this victory, if you are truthful?"
29. Say: "On the Day of Victory, their belief will not benefit those who disbelieve, nor will they be spared."
30. So turn away from them, and wait; Surely they (too) are

Sūrat al-Sajda closes with an apocalyptic polemic against the unbelievers. The question in v. 28 (which may be a rhetorical device rather than a direct quotation)[122] is not directly answered in v. 29, but nonetheless suggests that the answer is imminent. In other words, v. 29 does not respond by saying "soon," but by stating that belief on the Day of Judgment will not avail anyone, with the implication that the Day was imminent. It insinuates that the reality

of the impending judgment is so dire that the addressees need to respond now or risk responding too late.

Many exegetes, such as Ibn Qutayba, understand *al-fath* as an allusion to the conquest of Mecca (for which Islamic tradition usually employs the term *al-fath*).[123] Al-tabarī also relates two traditions with this interpretation, but also mentions others in which al-fath is said to be a reference to the Day of Judgment (*yawm al-qiyāma*).[124] Muqātil understands *al-fatḥ* as an allusion to the resurrection,[125] and Ibn Kathīr is more explicit in his rejection of the tradition in which this verse is said to refer to the conquest of Mecca.[126] Bell, for his part, states that it is "most improbable" that these verses refer to Mecca, and are instead an allusion to a general success without any particular reference.[127] I agree that any association with Mecca seems unlikely, and *al-fatḥ* seems to allude to the Day of Judgment—a day that the text asserts is imminent. Parallels to the final verse (v. 30) of the sura appear elsewhere in eschatological contexts (e.g., Q 6:158, which likewise alludes to the inefficaciousness of belief on the Last Day). Nicolai Sinai has convincingly argued that the Qur'an manner of highlighting the imminence of eschatological punishment parallels Syriac Christian eschatological homilies, wherein the proximity of Judgment is similarly heightened to illicit a response from others.[128] This is in line with the Qur'an remarkable relationship with Syriac literature in general.[129]

In sum, while this passage exhibits little that is explicitly biblical in character, the Qur'an is nonetheless utilizing timed-honored homiletic strategies of other scriptural communities.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It has been my contention in this commentary that reading Q 32 alongside medieval exegetes is not as insightful as reading it alongside the Bible. In this sura, as elsewhere, the Qur'an creatively employs biblical language, themes, and motifs for its own purposes. In this sura, this material is often paraenetic and eschatological in character, and is woven into the very fabric of the Qur'an itself. Examples in this sura include:

- 32:4 – Gen 1:1; Exod 20:11
- 32:5 – Ps 90:4; 2 Pet 3:8
- 32:7 – Gen 1:3; Job 33:6; Isa 29:16; 45:9; 64:8; Jer 18:4, 6; Rom 9:21
- 32:8 – 2 Pet 3:5
- 32:9 – Gen 2:7; Ps 33:6
- 32:10 – Rev 21:5–6
- 32:11 – Prov 16:14; Job 33:22f
- 32:12 – Luke 16:19–31
- 32:13 – 2 Kgs 23:10; 2 Chr 28:3; Jer 7:32, 19:3–6
- 32:14 – Deut 4:31; Ps 13:1
- 32:17 – 1 Cor 2:9; Isa 64:4
- 32:22 – 2 Pet 2:21
- 32:23 – Exod 3; 19ff
- 32:24 – Deut 1:15;
- 32:28–30 – Eschatological rhetoric, similar to Syriac Christian homiletic use.

Some of these connections are certainly stronger than others, but together they strengthen the thesis of the Qur'an's direct engagement with biblical themes. The Qur'an expects its audience to be familiar with biblical characters, stories, and motifs, which to the historian is indicative of a particular Jewish and/or Christian milieu at the context of the Qur'an's origins, even in the erstwhile pagan environment of Mecca. This is not to imply the immediate knowledge of biblical texts, but it does suggest that Jewish and Christian culture or religious language, narratives, and lore were widespread.[130] Indeed, historians are beginning to assert that Arabia may not have been as secluded and remote as had previously been presumed—rather, it was thoroughly interwoven with the rest of the Late Antique Near East.[131] Thus, sometimes it can be a worthwhile endeavor to read the Qur'an alongside what came before it (Jewish and Christian tradition), rather than what came after it (medieval tafsīr).

NOTES

1. I use the phrase "literary interpretation" deliberately, as my interests here are historical and literary interpretations (that, treating the Qur'an as a historical piece of literature), rather than theological.

2. I do not intend, of course, to imply that tafsīr as a genre is without use—it is an invaluable resource for qur'anic studies. However, exegetical literature must be employed critically. See Andrew Rippin, "The Function of 'Asbāb Al-Nuzūl' in Qur'ānic Exegesis," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London 51, no. 1 (1988): 1–20.

3. Sidney Griffith, The Bible in Arabic (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 2.

4. Compare Q 21:105 with Ps 37:29, and Q 7:40 with Matt 19:24, Mark 10:25, and Luke 18:25.

5. One of the first attempts to catalogue these biblical allusions was Heinrich Speyer, Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran (Gräfenhainichen 1931; 3rd ed.: Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1988). For a succinct overview, see Gabriel Said Reynolds, "Biblical Background," in The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an, ed. Andrew Rippin and Jawid Mojaddedi, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 303–19.

6. The archetypal work indicative of this approach is Abraham Geiger, Was hat Muhammad aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen? (Bonn, Germany: Baaden, 1833).

7. Reynolds notes that the Qur'an "is a creative work, a work which purposefully exaggerates and satirizes the views of its opponents in order to refute them more effectively." Gabriel Said Reynolds, "On the Presentation of Christianity in the Qur'an and the Many Aspects of Qur'anic Rhetoric," Al-Bayān 12 (2014): 47. Mun'im Sirry likewise accentuates the polemical shaping of much of the Qur'an's assertions. Mun'im Sirry, Scriptural Polemics: The Qur'ān and Other Religions (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 34–57.

8. Gabriel Said Reynolds, The Qur'an and its Biblical Subtext (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 36.

9. Ibid.

10. Reynolds, The Qur'an and its Biblical Subtext.

11. Emran Iqbal El-Badawi, The Qur'ān and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

12. Angelika Neuwirth, Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: Ein europäischer Zugang (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2010). See also the recent English translation: Neuwirth, The Qur'ān and Late Antiquity: A Shared Heritage, translated by Samuel Wilder, Oxford Studies in Late Antiquity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

13. Aziz al-Azmeh, The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allāh and His People (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 494, 496.

14. Gabriel Said Reynolds, "Reading the Qur'an as Homily: The Case of Sarah's Laughter," in The Qur'an in Context, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 586. I prioritize the Qur'an's engagement with Syriac Christian tradition, as has been convincingly argued in: Joseph Witztum, "The Syriac Milieu of the Quran: The Recasting of Biblical Narratives" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2010).

15. Paul Casanova, Mohammed et la fin du monde (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1911).

16. Tor Andrae, Der Ursprung des Islams und das Christentum (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1926). Cf. idem, Mohammed, sein Leben und sein Glaube (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1932), 43.

17. Stephen J. Shoemaker, The Death of a Prophet: The End of Muhammad's Life and the Beginnings of Islam (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 169. See also Stephen J. Shoemaker, "Muhammad and the Qur'an," in The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity, ed. Scott F. Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1078–1108.

18. Stephen J. Shoemaker, "'The Reign of God Has Come': Eschatology and Empire in Late Antiquity and Early Islam," Arabica 61 (2014), 514–558; idem, The Apocalypse of Empire: Imperial Eschatology in Late Antiquity and Early Islam (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

19. Shoemaker, The Death of a Prophet, 119.

20. Nicolai Sinai, "The Eschatological Kerygma of the Early Qur'an," in Apocalypticism and Eschatology in Late Antiquity: Encounters in the Abrahamic Religions, 6th-8th Centuries, ed. Hagit Amirav, Emmanouela Grypeou, and Guy Stroumsa (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 219–266. See also Nicolai Sinai, The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 162–169. I make a similar argument in Andrew J. O'Connor, "'Warn them of the Day of the Impending': Imminent Eschatology and Rhetoric in the Qur'an," forthcoming.

21. Sinai, "The Eschatological Kerygma", 236–237.

22. Additional quotations from the Qur'an outside of Q 32 utilize the translation of: Alan Jones, trans., The Qur'ān: Translated into English (Cambridge: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007). All Arabic is taken from the 1924 Cairo edition (the reading of Hafs 'an 'Āsim).

23. Or: "A.L.M."

24. Note that an italicized second-person pronoun indicates that the Arabic term is singular rather than plural (i.e., addressing the Prophet), as are any imperative verbs addressed to a single addressee.

25. That is, the progeny of the primordial human.

26. Or: "and feelings" (Arabic al-af'ida).

27. Or: "every person" or "every individual" (Arabic nafs).

28. Or: "No soul (nafs) knows…for it."

29. Or: "and we made him [Moses] a guidance," although here I think the Scripture (kitāb) is intended.

30. Both commands are directed to a singular person, such as the Prophet.

31. However, Richard Bell speculates that vv. 15–20 originally ended in a rhyme of –ā(n), but later revelations were added to the end of each of these verses to match the scheme of –ūn. Richard Bell, A Commentary on the Qur'ān, ed. C. Edmund Bosworth and MEJ Richardson, Vol. 2 (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1991). 2:89.

32. Angelika Neuwirth, Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren: die literarische Form des Koran –ein Zeugnis seiner Historizität? (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 58, 305.

33. Carl W. Ernst, How the Read the Qur'an (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 106.

34. Michel Cuypers, The Banquet: A Reading of the Fifth Sura of the Qur'an, trans. Patricia Kelly (Miami: Convivium Press, 2009), especially pp. 25–39. However, see also the review of Cuypers in Nicolai Sinai, "Review Essay: Going Round in Circles," Journal of Qur'anic Studies 19 (2017): 106–122.

35. She divides Q 32 into the following three sections: (1a) Introduction with the affirmation of the kitāb (vv. 1–3) and (1b) sublimity of God (vv. 4–9); (2) Eschatology (vv. 10–22); and (3) the confirmation of the revelation with polemic (vv. 23–30). Neuwirth, Studien Zur Komposition, 305. However, she has also conceded that in the later suras "the distinct tripartite composition often becomes blurred." Angelika Neuwirth, "Structural, Linguistic, and Literary Features," The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 111.

36. I should add that I tend toward agnosticism regarding the question of chronological schemes for the Qur'an. I include these details here merely for the sake of being thorough.

37. Theodor Nöldeke, Friedrich Schwally, Gotthelf Bergsträßer, and Otto Pretzl, The History of the Qur'an, ed. and trans. Wolfgang H. Behn (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 117. Original German edition: Theodor Nöldeke, Geschichte des Qorâns (Göttingen: Verlag der Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1860).

38. For an overview of different chronological traditions, cf. Nöldeke, History of the Qur'an, 47–53. Cf. also the chart in: Ernst, How to Read the Qur'an, 39–41.

39. Q 32 has a MVL of 77.33 transcription letters. Sinai, The Qur'an, 113–124, 161.

40. Hartwig Hirschfeld, New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qoran (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1902), 72f.

41. On Muqātil, see: Nicolai Sinai. "The Qur'ānic Commentary of Muqātil B. Sulaymān and the Evolution of Early Tafsīr Literature," in Tafsīr and Islamic Intellectual History: Exploring the Boundaries of a Genre, ed. Andreas Görke and Johanna Pink (London: Oxford University Press, 2014), 113–43.

42. Muqātil ibn Sulaymān al-Balkhī, Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, ed. Ahmad Farīd, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2003), 3:26.

43. 'Abd Allāh ibn Muslim ibn Qutayba, Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'an, ed. Ahmad Saqr (Beirut: al-Maktabh al-'Ilmiyya, 2007), 346.

44. Nöldeke, History of the Qur'an, 118.

45. Cf. Reynolds, "Le problème de la chronologie du Coran," Arabica 58 (2011): 477–502.

46. For a treatment of diverse Sunnī interpretations, see: Martin Nguyen, "Exegesis of the hurūf al-muqatta'a: Polyvalency in Sunnī Traditions of Qur'anic Interpretation," Journal of Qur'anic Studies, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2012), 1–28. Tafsīr al-Jalālayn (that is, "the Commentary of the two Jalāls", composed by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Mahallī [d. 864 AH/1459 CE] and his more prominent student Jalāl al-Dīn Al-Suyūtī [d. 911 AH/1505 CE]) simply remarks that "God knows best what he intended by this." Jalāl al-Dīn al-Mahallī and Jalāl al-Dīn Al-Suyūtī, Tafsīr al-Jalālayn, ed. Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal and trans. Feras Hamza (Amman, Jordan: Royal Aal al- Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007), 473. (Hereafter, "Tafsīr al-Jalālayn"). Cf. also Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'an al-'azīm (Beirut: Al-Kitāb al-'ālamī li-l-nashr, 2012), 1:61–65.

47. Arthur Jeffery, "The Mystic Letters of the Koran," The Muslim World 13 (1924): 247–260; James A. Bellamy, "The Mysterious Letters of the Koran: Old Abbreviations of the Basmalah," Journal of the American Oriental Society 93, No. 3 (1973): 267–285; Keith Massey, "A New Investigation into the 'Mystery Letters' of the Quran," Arabica 43, no. 3 (1996): 497–501.

48. Hirschfeld, New Researches, 142–43.

49. Richard Bell, Introduction to the Qur'ān (Edinburgh: University Press, 1953), 55.

50. Neuwirth, The Qur'an and Late Antiquity, 82, 193.

51. For discussion of the terms tanzīl and wahy, see Neuwirth, The Qur'an and Late Antiquity, 65–80.

52. Neuwirth, The Qur'an and Late Antiquity, 193.

53. A.J. Droge, ed. and trans., The Qur'an: A New Annotated Translation (Bristol, CT.: Equinox Publishing, Ltd., 2013), 1.

54. Muqātil, Tafsīr Muqātil, 3:26.

55. Bell, Commentary. 2:87.

56. E.g., Tafsīr al-Jalālayn, 474.

57. Walid Saleh refers to warning as the "core of a messenger's mission."

58. For a more complete treatment of this theme, cf. Speyer, Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran, 24–27.

59. All English quotations from the Bible are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), unless noted otherwise.

60. Bell, Commentary. 2:87.

61. Tafsīr al-Jalālayn, 474.

62. Abū Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-tabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'an, ed. Khalīl Mays, vol. 11 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2009), 11:96.

63. Ibn Kathīr, a student of Ibn Taymiyya, endeavored to adhere to the "radical hermeneutics" of his teacher. Walid A. Saleh, "Ibn Taymiyya and the Rise of Radical Hermeneutics: An Analysis of An Introduction to the Foundations of Qur'ānic Exegesis," in Ibn Taymiyya and His Times, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 123–162.

64. Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:254–55. He adds that Adam was created from the redness and blackness of the earth, and the good and malignant parts of earth, hence among children of Adam there are good and bad (al-tayb wa-l-khabīth).

65. On this, cf. Gerald Hawting, The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

66. See Speyer, Die biblischen Erzählungen, 24–27.

67. E.g., al-tabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān, 11:96–99. They also add supplementary information, such as Ibn Kathīr reporting that it takes 500 years for the affair to come down from the highest heaven to the earth, and then 500 years to go back up. He also interprets this as the deeds of all of God's creatures rising up to him. Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:255. Ibn Qutayba likewise interpreted this verse as referring to judgment, about which it took a thousand years for angels to descend and then ascend to report to God. Ibn Qutayba, Tafsīr gharīb, 346.

68. Cf. also 6:73; 9:94, 105/13:9/23:92/32:6/39:46/59:22/62:8/64:18. For these and all other cross-references I am indebted to Rudi Paret, Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz, 8th ed. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2012).

69. Al-tabarī states that al-'azīz refers to God's severe vengeance upon those who disbelieve in him or associate other beings with him, and defines al-rahīm as referring to God's mercy to those who return to him from their error Al-tabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān, 11:99. Ibn Kathīr, for his part, adds that God is mighty in his compassion and compassionate in his might. Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:255.

70. Ali Quli Qara'i, trans., The Qur'an with Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation (New York, Tahrike Taarsile Qur'an, 2007).

71. M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans., The Qur'an (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

72. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph E.B. Lumbard, and Mohammed Rustom, eds. and trans., The Study Qur'an: A New Translation and Commentary (New York: HarperOne, 2015).

73. E.g., Arne A. Ambros and Stephan Procházka, A Concise Dictionary of Koranic Arabic (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004), 71. Elsaid M. Badawi andMuhammad Abdel Haleem, Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2008),

74. Muqātil, Tafsīr Muqātil, 3:27. Tafsīr l-Jalālayn, 474. Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:255. Note as well that there are two ways to read the fifth word in the Arabic, as either khalaqahu, "[that which] he created it" or khalqahu (with a sukūn on the lām), "[of] his creation/creating." Neither reading has much impact on interpretation.

75. Usually understood as a reference to sperm; exegetes often gloss this expression with nutfa, and mahīn with da'īf or "weak". Al-tabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān, 11:101. Muqātil, Tafsīr Muqātil, 3:27. Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:225. The choice of the term mahīn seems a little odd, but the criteria in selecting it was likely not any particular negative view of sperm, but to match the end-rhyme (-īn to match -ūn).

76. Note the quotation of Ephrem in Gabriel Said Reynolds, The Qur'an and the Bible: Text and Commentary (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018), 553.

77. Al-tabarī, like others, relates reports in which dalalnā is glossed as halaknā. Al-tabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān, 11:102–03. Ibn Kathīr notes that this idiom refers to being torn apart in different pieces, which are spread out over earth, and that unbelievers could not believe that they would then become one again. However he remarks that this is no different from creation from nonexistence (al-'adam). Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:255. Muqātil attributes this phrase to particular named individuals among the Meccans. Tafsīr Muqātil, 3:28.

78. Reynolds, Biblical Subtext, 251–52. Cf. as well, Reynolds, The Qur'an and the Bible, 388, 773.

79. Cf. Penrice, A Dictionary and Glossary, 19. Al-Isfahānī calls it a "kalima li-l-tadāruk," "to have whatever is after it negate whatever is before it, or maybe to confirm as correct the wisdom following it and to prove false what is before it." Al-Rāghib a-Isfahānī, Mufradāt alfāz al-Qur'an (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 2011), 141.

80. Bell, Commentary. 2:89. The Qur'an also elsewhere reiterates this notion of the angels taking the souls at death (cf. Q 6:61).

81. Cf. 2 Kgs 19:35; 1 Chr 21:15; Isa 37:36; 2 Sam 24:16. Cf. also Baba Qamma 6b in the Babylonian Talmud.

82. Cf. Muqātil, Tafsīr Muqātil, 3:28. He adds that this angel has four wings: one in the east, one in the west, and in each in the far places of the earth from which the two winds blow, and one of his legs is in the east, the other in the west. Ibn Kathīr adds: "It is apparent from this verse that the angel of death is a certain individual from among the angels, which is strongly suggested by a hadīth…" He also relates a report from Ja'far al-sādiq in which Muhammad is said to have seen the angel of death near the head of a man from the Ansār of Medina. Muhammad asks the angel to be kind to his companion because he was a believer, and the angel responds that he was a friend to all believers. Ibn Kathīr also reports different traditions as to how many times the angel roams around the earth each day: five times, two times, or seven times. Ibn Katir, Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:255–56.

83. Neuwrith, Studien zur Komposition, 305.

84. Cf. Matt 5:22, 29, 30; 18:9; 23:33; Jas 3:6.

85. Bell, Commentary. 2:89.

86. Muqātil, Tafsīr Muqātil, 3:28.

87. Cf. Ibn Kathīr's remarks on this verse in that it refers to felling hell "from among the two species [min al-sanfayn]." Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:256.

88. E.g., Muqātil 3:28. Tafsīr al-Jalālayn, 475.

89. Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:475–77.

90. Cf., also Ps 9:12; 10:12; 44:24.

91. Neuwirth, The Qur'an and Late Antiquity, 264–266. Cf. also Jeffery's remarks concerning this term. Arthur Jeffery, The Qur'an as Scripture (New York: Russell F. Moore Company, 1952), 44.

92. Concerning the rhyme, Bell also posits that vv. 15-20 may have originally rhymed in –ā(n) (that is, with tanwīn in the accusative or a long ā sound), but was later revised to end in -ūn, the nominative masculine plural. If he is right, then the original verses would have ended as follows: v. 15 with sujjadan, v. 16 with tama'an, v. 17 with jazā'an, v. 18 with fāsiqan v. 19 with nuzulan, and in v. 20 with fīhā. This possibility is strengthened by the fact that the material at the ends of these verses supplying the –ūn rhymes add little to their content. However this revision to the text remains conjectural. Bell, Commentary, 2:89.

93. However, if its root consists of the radicals J-F-' it might be related to jufā' ("scum") in Q 13:17. Ambros and Procházka, A Concise Dictionary, 60, Penrice, A Dictionary and Glossary, 28, and Badawi/Abdel Haleem, Arabic-English Dictionary, 166–267, all treat them as separate roots: J-F-' for jufā' and J-F-W for tatajāfā. For jufā', al-Isfahānī notes that some say the third radical of the root is waw, while others say hamza'. Al-Isfahānī, Mufradāt, 197–98.

94. Muqātil, Tafsīr Muqātil, 3:29.

95. 'Alī ibn Ahmad al-Wāhidī, Asbāb al-Nuzūl, ed. Mokraine Guezzou and Yousef Meri (Amman: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2008), 127. For an introduction and an intellectual biography of the author, cf.: Walid A. Saleh, "The Last of the Nishapuri School of Tafsīr: Al-Wāhidī (d. 468/1076) and His Significance in the History of Qur'anic Exegesis," Journal of the Amer- ican Oriental Society 126, no. 2 (2006): 223–243.

96. Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:256. Al-Tabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān, 11:105– 109.

97. Al-Isfahānī glosses qurra with al-bard. Al-Isfahānī, Mufradāt, 663.

98. Bell, Commentary, 2:90.

99. Isa 64:4: "From ages past no one has heard,/ no ear has perceived,/ no eye has seen any God besides you,/ who works for those who wait for him."

100. Al-Tabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān, 11:110.

101. Cf. al-Tabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān, 11:109–14. Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:259.

102. Muqātil, Tafsīr Muqātil, 3:29. Cf. also Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:261; al-Wāhidī, Asbāb al-Nuzūl, 127. Such traditions seems to derive from an early impetus to associate verses— even those that provide seemingly universal principles such as this— with the biography of Muhammad or those around him.

103. Cf. Q 30:15f; 79:41; 53:15; 18:107f; 3:198; 41:32.

104. On these observations, cf. Sinai, The Qur'an, 162–169.

105. Cf. the following cross-references: Q 39:26; 68:33; 88:24; (52:47).

106. Muqātil, Tafsīr Muqātil, 3:30.

107. Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:261–62. Al-Tabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān, 11:116f.

108. Josef Horovitz, Koranische Untersuchungen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1926), 10– 32, famously refers to these as the Straflegenden. On the punishment-narratives, see also David Marshall, God, Muhammad, and the Unbelievers: a Qur'anic Study (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999).

109. Muqātil, Tafsīr Muqātil, 3:30.

110. Al-Tabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān, 11:118f. Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:262.

111. Neuwirth, The Qur'an and Late Antiquity, 193.

112. E.g., Q 2:4; 6:31; 7:47; 8:46; 23:33; 30:16.

113. Muqātil, Tafsīr Muqātil, 3:30.

114. Tafsīr al-Jalālayn, 476. Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:262. Al-Tabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān, 11:119.

115. E.g., Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:262.

116. Ibn Kathīr, for his part, seems to relate this to the claim that Jews have altered their scrip- tures. Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:263. On this notion of tahrīf, cf. Gabriel Said Reynolds, "On the Qur'anic Accusation of Scriptural Falsification (tahrīf) and Christian Anti-Jewish Polemic," Journal of the American Oriental Society 130, no. 2 (2010): 189–202.

117. E.g., Muqātil, Tafsīr Muqātil, 3:31. Al-Tabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān, 11:121.

118. Ibid.

119. Note also the remark about the Qur'an's interlocutors passing by the remains of Lot's city in Q 37:137–138.

120. The exegetical tradition largely concerns itself with defining and explaining the word juruz, "barren," and attempting to identify it as a particular geographical region, such as Yemen or Egypt. Al-Tabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān, 11:121–23. Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:263–64.

121. Here employing the language of Nicolai Sinai in The Qur'an, 169–174.

122. See Mehdi Azaiez, Le contre-discours coranique (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

123. Ibn Qutayba, Tafsīr gharīb, 347. He adds that v. 29 is referring to those whom Khālid ibn al-Walīd killed during the conquest of the city.

124. Al-Tabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān, 11:123–24.

125. Muqātil, Tafsīr Muqātil, 3:31.

126. He argues that at the conquest of Mecca, al-tulaqā' (the Meccans who remained heathen until the surrender of the city) became Muslims, so their belief did benefit them at the end, and therefore v.29 does not match this conquest. Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'an, 6:264.

127. Bell, Commentary. 2:92–93.

128. Again, see Sinai, "The Eschatological Kerygma of the Early Qur'an"; idem, The Qur'an, 166–169.

129. Witztum, "The Syriac Milieu of the Qur'an."

130. Griffith, The Bible in Arabic, 15.

131. Cf. especially: Robert G. Hoyland, Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam (New York: Routledge, 2001). Also, idem, "Early Islam as a Late Antique Religion," in The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1053–77.