

# The Life of Muhammad

by  
Muhammad Husayn Haykal

Translated from the  
8th Edition  
by

Isma'īl Rāgī A. al Fārūqī

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# Contents

*Foreword to the First Edition*

*Preface to the First Edition*

*Preface to the Second Edition*

*Preface to the Third Edition*

|                                                                   |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Arabia before Islām                                            | 3   |
| 2. Makkah, the Ka'bah, and the Quraysh                            | 22  |
| 3. Muḥammad: from Birth to Marriage                               | 46  |
| 4. From Marriage to Prophethood                                   | 63  |
| 5. From the Beginning of<br>Revelation to the Conversion of 'Umar | 76  |
| 6. The Story of the Goddesses                                     | 105 |
| 7. The Malevolent Conduct of Quraysh                              | 115 |
| 8. From the Violation of the Boycott to al Isrā'                  | 131 |
| 9. The Two Covenants of al 'Aqabah                                | 148 |
| 10. Al Hijrah, or the Prophet's Emigration                        | 163 |
| 11. Beginning of the Yathrib Period                               | 173 |
| 12. The First Raids and Skirmishes                                | 200 |
| 13. The Great Battle of Badr                                      | 216 |
| 14. Between Badr and Uhud                                         | 242 |

|                                                                            |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 15. The Campaign of Uhud                                                   | 253 |
| 16. The Effects of Uhud                                                    | 271 |
| 17. The Prophet's Wives                                                    | 285 |
| 18. The Campaigns of al Khandaq and Banū Qurayzah                          | 299 |
| 19. From the Two Campaigns<br>to the Treaty of Hudaibiyah                  | 317 |
| 20. The Treaty of Hudaibiyah                                               | 340 |
| 21. The Campaign of<br>Khaybar and Missions to Kings                       | 360 |
| 22. The 'Umrah or Lesser Pilgrimage                                        | 380 |
| 23. The Campaign of Mu'tah                                                 | 387 |
| 24. The Conquest of Makkah                                                 | 395 |
| 25. Campaigns of Hunayn and al Tā'if                                       | 414 |
| 26. Ibrāhīm and the Wives of the Prophet                                   | 429 |
| 27. Campaign of Tabūk and the Death of Ibrāhīm                             | 443 |
| 28. The Year of Deputations and<br>Abū Bakr's Leadership of the Pilgrimage | 456 |
| 29. The Farewell Pilgrimage                                                | 475 |
| 30. The Prophet's Sickness and Death                                       | 489 |
| 31. The Prophet's Burial                                                   | 504 |
| <i>Conclusion in Two Essays</i>                                            |     |
| I. Islāmic Civilization<br>as Depicted in the Qur'ān                       | 517 |
| II. Islāmic Civilization<br>and the Western Orientalists                   | 555 |
| <i>Notes and References</i>                                                | 595 |
| <i>Supplementary Readings</i>                                              | 615 |
| <i>Index of Proper Names</i>                                               | 619 |

## مقدمه ناشر

کتاب حاضر با عنوان زندگانی محمد(ص) تحقیقی تاریخی در باره تاریخ زندگانی پیامبر اسلام است که دکتر محمد حسین هیکل - وزیر اسبق فرهنگ مصر - آن را با اسلوبی علمی تألیف نموده است.

دکتر هیکل در سال‌هایی که برای تحصیل در اروپا به سر می‌برد، با غرض ورزی و بی‌انصافی برخی مستشرقان در مورد پیامبر اسلام(ص) مواجه شد؛ لذا مصمم شد تا این کتاب را به دور از هرگونه افراط و تفریط درباره سیره پیامبر گرامی اسلام تألیف نماید.

مؤلف، شرح زندگانی پیامبر را در ۳۱ فصل سامان داده، دو فصل تکمیلی با عناوین (تمدن اسلامی از دیدگاه قرآن) و (تمدن اسلامی و مستشرقان) به آن اضافه نموده است.

این کتاب را قبلاً «مرکز بررسی‌های اسلامی» پس از اخذ اجازه از مترجم آن، «شهید اسماعیل فاروقی» و با مقدمه‌ای، در قم منتشر نموده بود.

اکنون مجمع جهانی تقریب مذاهب اسلامی، در سالی که آن را رهبر انقلاب اسلامی ایران حضرت آیت الله خامنه‌ای «حفظه الله» سال پیامبر اعظم(ص) نامیده است، ترجمه انگلیسی این کتاب را منتشر می‌سازد.

بدین وسیله از جناب استاد آقای سید هادی خسروشاهی که اجازه تجدید چاپ این کتاب را به این مجمع دادند، تشکر می‌نمایم.

امید است این کتاب هدیه ارزنده‌ای برای علاقه‌مندان به آشنایی با تاریخ اسلام و زندگی پیامبر اسلام باشد.

معاونت فرهنگی

مجمع جهانی تقریب مذاهب اسلامی

## **Publisher's Note:**

The book before your eyes, "**The Life of Muhammad (PBUH)**", is a historic research work about the different periods of the Prophet of Islam's prolific life.

Its author, the former Culture Minister of Egypt, **Dr. Muhammad Husayn Haykal**, has painstakingly observed the scientific rules of writing a biography.

In the years he lived in Europe to complete his studies, Dr. Haykal had realized how biased and unjust the judgments of some Western Orientalists were about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Those misjudgments urged him to write a realistic book, far from both exaggeration and underestimation.

The author has divided the Prophet's life into 31 chapters, adding two complementary parts titled "Islamic Civilization from Qur'an's Point of the View" and "Islamic Civilization and Orientalists".

The Global Assembly for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought (GAPIST) hereby in the year named after the Holy Prophet (PBUH) by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i presents the English translation of that book to public. It is hoped that this book would be a worthy souvenir for the enthusiasts in getting acquainted with the history of Islam and with the Messenger of Allah's life.

**Global Assembly for Proximity of Islamic Schools of  
Thought -Cultural Affairs Deputy**

## Translator's Preface

Haykal's *Ḥayāt Muḥammad* has a long and strange story. Its translation into English and publication by the University of Chicago Press was discussed by numerous western experts in the forties and early fifties. Obvious as the need for a scholarly sympathetic biography of the Prophet may be, negotiations took years to complete. Agreement, however, was not reached until 1964. When in 1968 the translation was completed, approved by the Supreme Council of Islāmic Affairs, Cairo, Egypt, and the University of Chicago Press, the manuscript copy edited, and its actual production begun, mysterious forces intervened and the University of Chicago Press unilaterally withdrew from its agreement.

Another agreement was negotiated *de novo* between the same parties and Temple University Press, on practically the same terms as Chicago, in 1969. Five years passed with little or no action. Then, mysterious forces again intervened and resulted in the unilateral withdrawal of Temple University Press from its agreement.

This Determined opposition to the publication of the work did not dissuade the translator from preparing this new translation with the encouragement of the Muslim Students' Association of the United States and Canada, an agency interested in the promotion of Islāmic scholarship.

Temple University  
Philadelphia  
Safar 1396 / February 1976

Isma'īl Rājī al Fārūqī

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# The Life of Muhammad

FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

## Foreword to the First Edition

Ever since man appeared on earth he has been anxious to penetrate the universe and discover its laws and secrets. The more he came to know, the more he wondered at its greatness, the weaker he appeared to himself and the less reason he saw for vanity. The Prophet of Islām—may God's peace be upon him—is very much like the universe. From the very beginning, scholars worked hard to uncover various aspects of his great humanity, to grasp the realization of the divine attributes in his mind, character and wisdom. Certainly they achieved a fair measure of knowledge. Much however has escaped them; and there still lies ahead a long and indeed infinite road.

Prophethood is a gift which cannot be acquired. In His wisdom God grants it to whosoever stands prepared for it and is capable of carrying it. He knows best when and where it will be of most benefit. Muhammad—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—was indeed prepared to carry the prophetic message unto all the races of mankind. He was equipped to carry the message of the most perfect religion, to be the final conclusion of prophethood, the unique light of guidance for ever and ever.

The infallibility of the prophets in the conveyance of their message and the performance of their divine trust is a matter on which the scholars have agreed for a long time. Once they are chosen for their task, the prophets' conveyance of their message and their performance of the duties entrusted to them carry no reward. Their work is a necessary consequence of such divine

revelation. Like all men, prophets are truly fallible; their distinction lies in that God does not leave them in their error. He corrects them and often even blames them therefor.

Muhammad—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—was commanded to convey a divine message. But he was not shown how to carry it out nor how to protect the fruits of his work. It was left to him as any rational and sentient being to conduct his affairs as his intelligence and wisdom might dictate. The revelation which he received was absolutely precise and clear in all that concerns the essence, unity, attributes and worship of God. But this was not the case as regards the social institutions of family, village and city, the state in its relations with the said institutions and with other states. There is hence wide scope for research on the Prophet's greatness before his commission as prophet, as there is after his commission had taken place. He became a messenger for his Lord, calling men unto Him, protecting the new faith and guaranteeing the freedom and security of its preachers. He became the ruler of the *Ummah* of Islām,<sup>1</sup> its commander in war and teacher, the judge and organizer of all its internal and foreign affairs. Throughout his career he established justice and reconciled hopelessly disparate and hostile nations and groups. His wisdom, farsightedness, perspicacity, presence of mind and resoluteness are evident in all that he said or did. From him streams of knowledge have sprung and heights of eloquence have arisen to which the great bend their heads in awe and wonder. He departed from this world satisfied with his work, assured of God's pleasure and crowned with the gratitude of men.

All these aspects of the Prophet's life deserve special study and research. It is not possible for any one scholar to give them their due; nor to exhaust the meanings inherent in any one of them.

Like that of any other great man, the biography of Muhammad—may God's blessing be upon him and upon his house—has been expanded by many an imaginary story, whether innocently or with ulterior motive, deliberately or accidentally. Unlike all other biographies, however, a great portion of it has been included in the divine revelation and has thus been preserved forever in the pure Qur'ān. Another fair portion has been safely preserved for us by trustworthy narrators. From these unmistakable sources the biography of the Prophet should be constructed, and on their basis its hidden meanings and complicated problems should be investigated, and its moral established. Its

constitutive materials should be subjected to objective and scholarly analysis taking well into consideration the circumstances of time and environment as well as the prevalent beliefs, institutions and customs.

In his book, *The Life of Muhammad*, Dr. Haykal gave us the biography of the Prophet—may God's peace and blessings be upon him—which I have had the pleasure of reading in part before printing. Dr. Haykal is well known to the Arabic reader; his many books obviate the need for an introduction. He studied law and familiarized himself with logic and philosophy. His personal circumstances and career enabled him to study ancient as well as modern culture and to learn a great deal from both. He lectured on and debated, attacked and defended many questions of belief, of social organization and politics. The maturity of his mind is matched by the perfection of his knowledge, and the wide range of his readings. He debates with powerful, convincing arguments and he treats his subject with sound logic and a style all his own. Such preparation stands behind Dr. Haykal's book. In his Preface, Dr. Haykal wrote: "No one should think that research in the life of Muhammad is completed with this work; and I am far from making any such claim. It is closer to the truth for me to say that my work is really only the beginning of scientific research in this field in Arabic."<sup>2</sup> The reader might be surprised if the strong resemblance of the modern scientific method to the call of Muhammad is pointed out. The former demands that the investigator suspend his own beliefs and refrain from prejudgment, to begin his investigation with observation of the data, and then to proceed to experimentation, comparison, classification and finally to conclusion based upon these objective steps. A conclusion thus arrived at is scientific in that it is itself subject to further testing and critical analysis. It is reliable only as long as further scientific investigations do not disprove any of the premises on which it is based. True, the scientific method is the highest achievement of the human race in its effort to liberate man's thought, but it is precisely the method of Muhammad and the foundation of his call.

Dr. Haykal's new method is truly Qur'anic. For he has made reason the judge, and evidence the foundation, of knowledge. He has repudiated conservatism and castigated the conservatives. Agreeing with the Qur'anic principle "opinion and speculation are no substitute for true knowledge" (Qur'ān, 53:28), Dr. Haykal has chastised those who speculate without evidence; who

regard the old purely for its age, as sacred. He has imposed the teaching of the truth upon all those who have the capacity to grasp it. "Muhammad—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—had only one irresistible miracle—the Qur'ān. But it is not irrational. How eloquent is the verse of al Busayri: 'God did not try us with anything irrational. Thus, we fell under neither doubt nor illusion.'"

As for Dr. Haykal's claim that this method is a modern method, that is rather questionable. In holding such a claim, Dr. Haykal was reconciling the scholars who are his would-be critics. He himself has acknowledged that this method was the method of the Qur'ān. It is also the method of Muslim scholars of the past. Consider the books of *kalām*.<sup>3</sup> Some of them insisted that the first duty of the adult is to know God. Others held that the first incumbent duty is to doubt; for there is no knowledge except by means of proof and argument. Although the process of verification is a kind of deduction, the premises of such reasoning must be either self evident, mediately or immediately given to sense, or dependent upon unmistakable experimentation and generalization, following the rules of logic. The slightest error in any premise or in the form of reasoning vitiates the whole proof.

Al Ghazzālī, the great teacher, followed exactly the same method. In one of his books, he reported that he had decided to strip his mind bare of all former opinions, to think and to consider, to compare and to contrast, then to rethink all the proofs and all the evidence step by step. After all this reconstruction he reached the conclusion that Islām is true, and thus established a number of views and arguments regarding its nature. He did all this in order to avoid conservatism, to achieve faith with certitude, founded upon truth and argument. It is this kind of faith arising from rational conviction which, all Muslims agree, cannot but be true and bring about salvation.

The same method or deliberate repudiation of all creeds, as a preliminary to investigation and scholarly study, is found in most books of *kalām*. Doubt is indeed an old method; and so is experimentation and generalization. The latter is founded upon observation; and it is not new with us at all. Neglected and forgotten in the orient since it took to conservatism and irrationalism, this old method was taken up by the West, purged clean, and used with great benefit to science and industry. We are now taking it back from the West thinking that we are adopting a new method of scientific research.

This method then is both old and new. However, to know a method is easy; to apply it is difficult. Men do not differ much in their knowledge of a certain law; but they stand widely apart in their application of it.

To suspend all prejudices, to observe, to experiment, to compare, to deduct and to extrapolate are all easy words. But for man standing under an inheritance of heavy biological and mental burdens, struggling against an oppressive environment of home, village, school, city and country, suffering under the tremendous weight of conditioning by temperament, health, disease and passion—how could it be easy for him to apply the law? That is the question, whether in the past or in the present. That is the reason for the proliferation of views and doctrines. That is the reason for the movement and change of these views from country to country and people to people. With every generation, philosophy and literature don new robes very much like women do. Hardly any theory or principle stands beyond attack, and none is an impregnable fortress. Change has even attacked the theories of knowledge which were venerated during long ages. The theory of relativity brought a whirlwind to accepted scientific principles. But soon, it too was put under attack. Likewise, the theories of nourishment and disease, of their causes and cures, are undergoing continual change. A closer look, therefore, will convince us that there is no security for the productions of our minds unless they are supported by convincing proofs. But what is the proportion of such secure productions of the mind to the long parade of theories which are produced by fancy, projected by sick minds, imposed by politics, or created by scientists who simply love to differ from their peers? This thought may perhaps sober such men of knowledge and science who are too proud of reason and depend on it alone. Such a thought may yet guide them one day toward the truth, to take shelter under the absolute conviction which it provides, the conviction of true revelation, of the holy Qur'ān and the veritable *Sunnah*.<sup>1</sup>

Let us now turn to Dr. Haykal and his book. A number of *mutakallimūn*<sup>2</sup> have held that the knowledge which astronomy and the dissection of the human body provide clearly points to the fact that divine knowledge includes the most minute details of existence. I concur that the discovery and establishment of the laws and secrets of nature will, besides helping the human mind to penetrate what was incomprehensible before, finally support religion. In this vein, God said, "We shall show them

Our signs in the horizons as well as within themselves, and We shall continue to do so until they realize that Our revelation is the truth. Is it not sufficient that your Lord witnesses everything?" (Qur'ān, 41:53). The discovery of electricity and all the theories and inventions to which it has led has made it possible for us to understand how matter may be transformed into energy and energy into matter. Spiritualism has helped us to understand the transcendent nature of the soul and shed light on the possibility of its separate existence, of its capacity to travel through space and time. It has helped explain many matters on which men differed in ignorance. Dr. Haykal has used this new knowledge in his novel explanation of the story of Muḥammad's *Isrā'*.<sup>5</sup>

To list the good points which Dr. Haykal has made in his book would take many long pages. Suffice it then to point to these contributions in a general way. Undoubtedly, the reader will realize the worth of this work and will learn much from Dr. Haykal's well documented arguments, fine logic, and penetrating insight. The reader will realize that Dr. Haykal's whole devotion has been to the truth alone, and that he has approached his task with a heart replete with the light and guidance of the revelation of Muḥammad, as well as with great awe for the beauty, majesty, greatness, and moral height of the life of Muḥammad—may God's peace and blessing be upon him. Dr. Haykal is fully convinced that this religion of Muḥammad will surely deliver mankind from doubt, from dark materialism, and will open their eyes to the light of conviction, guide them to the divine light with which they will come to know God's infinite mercy. Dr. Haykal is confident that men will thereby come sooner or later to acknowledge the glory of God as heaven and earth already do, and praise the divine might before which all beings become humble. Indeed, he writes: "Indeed, I would even go further. I would assert that such a study may show the road to mankind as a whole to the new civilization to which it is currently groping. If western Christendom is too proud to find the new light in Islām and in its Prophet but willingly accepts it from Indian theosophy and other religions of the Far East then it devolves upon the Orientals themselves, Muslims, Jews or Christians, to undertake this study in all objectivity and fairness in order to reach and establish the truth. Islamic thought rests on a methodology that is scientific and modern as regards all that relates man to nature. In this respect it is perfectly realistic.

But it becomes personalist the moment it leaves nature to consider the relationship of man to the cosmos as a whole and to his creator." Dr. Haykal goes on to say that "the pioneer fighters against this all-embracing paganism of modern times, however, are clearly distinguishable under close observance of the current flow of events. Perhaps, these pioneer forces will grow and become surer of themselves when scholarship has found answers to these spiritual problems through the study of the life of Muhammad, of his teachings, of his age, and of the spiritual world revolution which he incepted."<sup>8</sup>

Dr. Haykal's firm conviction is corroborated by real events. What we have witnessed today of the West's concern for the study of our heritage and the care with which western scholars study the legacy of Islām, its various contents, its ancient and modern history and peoples, of the fair treatment that some of them give to the career of the Prophet—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—and finally, what we know by experience of the necessary final victory of truth—all this leads to the consideration that Islām will spread all over the world. In this process, the strongest protagonists of Islām may well be its strongest enemies whereas its present alien antagonists may be Islām's adherents and defenders. As in the early period the strangers have supported Islām, strangers may yet help it achieve its final victory. It is said that "Islām began as a stranger and will return as a stranger. God bless the strangers!"

Since the Prophet—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—was the last of the prophets, and the world is to have no prophet after him, and since, as the revealed text has said, his religion is the most perfect, it is not possible that the *status quo* of Islām will last. Its light must necessarily eclipse all other lights as the rays of the sun eclipse those of the stars.

Dr. Haykal related the events of the Prophet's life closely to one another. His book therefore presents a closely knit argument. In every case, he has elaborated strong evidence and articulated it clearly and convincingly. His work is not only persuasive; it is pleasant reading and it moves the reader to keep on reading to the very end.

Furthermore, the book contains many studies which do not properly belong to the biography of the Prophet but are necessitated by the author's pursuit of questions related thereto. Finally, let me conclude this prefatory note with the prayer of the master of all men—may God's peace and blessing be upon him,



his house, and his followers: "God, I take shelter under the light of Your face before Whom darkness became light, by Whose command this world and the next were firmly established. Save me from Your wrath and displeasure. To You alone belongs the judgment, harsh as it may be when You are not pleased. There is neither power nor strength except in You."

15 February, 1935

Muhammad Mustafā al Marāghī  
Grand Shaykh of al Azhar

## Preface to the First Edition

Muhammad, God's peace and blessing be upon him! This noble name has been on the lips of countless millions of men. For almost fourteen centuries, millions of hearts have palpitated with deep emotion at the pronouncement of it. Many more millions of people for a period as long as time, will pronounce it, and will be deeply moved thereby. Every day, as soon as the black thread becomes distinguishable from the white, the muezzin will call men to prayer. He will call them to the worship of God and the invocation of blessing upon His Prophet, a task the fulfillment of which is better for them than their sleep. Thousands and millions of men in every corner of the globe will undoubtedly respond to the muezzin's call, springing to honor through their prayers God's mercy and bounty, richly evidenced for them with the break of every new day. At high noon, the muezzin will call again for the noon prayer; then at mid-afternoon, at sunset, and after sunset. On each of these daily occasions Muslims remember Muhammad, the servant of God and His Prophet, with all reverence and piety. Even in between these prayers the Muslims never hear the name of Muhammad but they hasten to praise God and His chosen one. Thus they have been, and thus they will be until God vindicates His true religion and completes His bounty to all.

Muhammad did not have to wait long for his religion to become known, or for his dominion to spread. God has seen fit to complete the religion of Islām even before his death. It was he who laid down the plans for the propagation of this religion. He

had sent to Chosroes, to Heraclius and other princes and kings of the world inviting them to join the new faith. No more than a hundred and fifty years passed from then until the flags of Islām were flying high between Spain in the west and India, Turkestan and indeed China in the east. Thus by joining Islām, the territories of al Shām<sup>1</sup> Irāq, Persia, and Afghanistan have linked the Arabian Peninsula with the kingdom of "the Son of Heaven."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the Islāmization of Egypt, Burqah, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco have linked the native land of Muhammad—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—with Europe and Africa. From that time until our day Islām remains supreme throughout all these territories. It withdrew from Spain only under the attack of Christendom which inflicted upon the people of Spain all kinds of suffering and persecution. As the people could not bear these tragedies, some of them returned to Africa. Others under the threats of fear and panic apostasized, withdrew from the religion of their ancestors, and entered into that of the tyrants and conquerors.

What Islām had lost in Spain and in western Europe was regained when the Ottomans conquered Constantinople and established the religion of MuḤammad therein. From there, Islām spread throughout the Balkans into Russia and Poland and spread over territories many times wider than Spain. From the day of its initial conquest until now, no religion has ever conquered Islām despite the fact that its people have fallen under all kinds of tyrannies and unjust governments. Indeed, reduction of their worldly power has made the Muslims more strongly attached to their faith, to their Islāmic way of life, and to their Islāmic hope.

### *Islām and Christianity*

The power with which Islām quickly spread brought it face to face with Christianity and involved the two religions in a *guerre à outrance*. Muhammad vanquished paganism and eliminated it from Arabia just as his early successors pursued it across Persia, Afghanistan and a good portion of India and eliminated it from these territories. Later on the successors of MuḤammad conquered Christianity in Hīrah, Yaman, Syria, Egypt, and even in the capital of the Christian empire, Constantinople. Was Christianity then to receive the same fate of extinction which befell paganism despite the fact that MuḤammad had praised it

and confirmed the prophethood of its founder? Were the Arabs, coming out of their arid desert peninsula, destined to conquer the gardens of Spain, of Byzantium, and all Christendom? "No! Death rather than such a fate!" Thus the fight continued for many centuries between the followers of Jesus and the followers of Muḥammad. The war was not limited to swords and guns. It spread out to the fields of debate and controversy where the contenders contended in the names of Muḥammad and Jesus. No means were spared to sway the community, to arouse the populace and to stir the passions of the people.

### *The Muslims and Jesus*

Islām, however, prevented the Muslims from attacking the person of Jesus. It held that Jesus was a servant of God endowed with scripture and appointed as prophet. It also held that Jesus was always blessed; that he was enjoined as long as he lived to hold prayer and to give *zakāt*,<sup>3</sup> that his mother was innocent and that he was neither unjust nor unfortunate. It asserted that Jesus was blessed on the day of his birth, on the day of his future death as well as on the day of his resurrection. Many Christians, on the other hand, have attacked the person of Muḥammad and attributed to him the most unbecoming epithets—thereby giving vent to their resentment and sowing the seeds of hatred and hostility. Despite the commonly held view that the Crusades have long been finished and forgotten, fanatic Christian antagonism still continues to rage against Muḥammad. The present situation has not changed except perhaps for the worse. Moved by the same fanaticism, the missionaries resort to immoral and depraved means in their struggle against Islām. This fanaticism was never exclusive to the Church. It stirred and inspired many writers and philosophers in Europe and America who are not related to the Church.

## **CHRISTIAN FANATICS AND MUḤAMMAD**

One may wonder why Christian fanaticism against Islām continues to rage with such power in an age which is claimed to be the age of light and science, of tolerance and *largueur de cœur*. This fanaticism is all the more surprising when one remembers that the early Muslims were overjoyed at the news of the victory

of Christianity over Zoroastrianism, when the armies of Heraclius carried the day against those of Chosroes. Persia had a dominant influence in South Arabia ever since the Persians expelled the Abyssinians from Yaman. Chosroes had sent his army in 614 C.E. under the command of his general named Shahrbarāz<sup>4</sup> to conquer Byzantium. When their armies met in Adhri'at and Busrā, territories of al Shām close to Arabia, the Persians inflicted upon the Byzantines heavy losses in lives and destroyed their cities and orchards. The Arabs, especially the people of Makkah, used to follow the news of this war with great anxiety. At the time, the two hostile powers were the greatest on earth. The Arabs adjoined both powers and had territories which fell under the suzerainty of both. The Makkan idolaters rejoiced at the defeat of the Christians and celebrated the event. They regarded them as people with a scripture, very much like the Muslims, and they even attempted to attribute their defeat to their religion. For the Muslims, it was hard to believe the defeat of the Byzantines for the same reason, namely that like them they were a people with scripture. Muḥammad and his companions especially hated to see the Zoroastrians victorious. This difference in the views of the Muslims and the idolaters of Makkah led to open contention between the two groups. The Muslims were ridiculed for holding such opinions. One of them was so bold in his show of joy in front of Abū Bakr that the latter, known for his great calm and friendliness, was prompted to say: "Don't take to joy too soon. The Byzantines will avenge themselves." When the idolater rejoined, "This is a lie," Abū Bakr became angry and said: "You are the liar, O Enemy of God: I wager ten camels that the Byzantines will win against the Zoroastrians within the scope of a year." When this came to the notice of Muḥammad, he advised Abū Bakr to increase the amount of the wager and to extend its term. Abū Bakr then raised the wager to one hundred camels and extended the time to nine years. In 625 C.E. Heraclius was victorious. He defeated Persia and wrenched from it the territory of Syria as well as the cross of Christ. Abū Bakr won his wager and the prophesying of Muḥammad was confirmed in the following Qur'ānic revelation: "The Byzantines have been defeated in the land nearby. However, they shall win in a few years. To God belongs the command before and after. Then will the believers rejoice at the victory which God has sent. God, the Mighty and Merciful, gives His

victory to whomsoever He wishes. He never fails in His promise. Most men however do not know."<sup>5</sup>

### *The First Principles of the Two Religions*

Muslim rejoicing at the victory of Heraclius and his Christian armies was great. Despite the many controversies that had taken place between the followers of Muḥammad and those who believed in Jesus, their friendly and fraternal relationships continued to be strong throughout the life of the Prophet. It was otherwise with the relationships of Muslims and Jews. There had been an armistice followed by alienation and war with consequences so disastrous and bloody that the Jews had to be moved out of the Arabian Peninsula altogether. The Qur'ān confirms the bond of friendship between Muslims and Christians and denounces the enmity of the Jews. It advises the Muslims, "You will find greater enmity to the believers among those who are Jews and idolaters; but you will find greater friendliness among those who say, 'We are Christians.' For they, especially the monks and priests among them, do not take to false pride."<sup>6</sup>

Indeed Christianity and Islām entertain the same view of life and ethics. Their view of mankind and of creation is one and the same. Both religions believe that God created Adam and Eve, placed them in paradise and commanded them not to listen to Satan, and that eating of the tree thereby caused them to be discharged. Both religions believe that Satan is the enemy of mankind who, according to the Qur'ān, refused to prostrate himself to Adam when commanded to do so by God and, according to Christian scripture, refused to honor the word of God. Satan whispered to Eve and deceived her, and she in turn deceived Adam. They ate from the tree of eternal life, discovered their nakedness, and then pleaded to God to forgive them. God sent them to earth, their descendants enemies of one another, forever open to the deception of Satan, some of them liable to fall under this deception and others capable of resisting it to the end. In order to transcend man's war against this deception, God sent Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and the other prophets, commissioning every one of them to convey in the tongue of his people a book which confirms, elaborates, and makes evident the revelations received from his predecessor-prophet. As Satan is assisted by his helpers among the evil spirits, the angels praise the

Lord and adore Him. Both the good and the evil powers therefore compete to win mankind until the Day of Judgment when every soul will receive that which it has earned and when everyone will be responsible for himself alone.

### *The Difference between Them*

Not only has the Qur'ān mentioned Jesus and Mary, but it has honored them and presented them in such light that the readers cannot but feel this fraternal feeling towards Christianity when they read its verses. It is all the more perplexing, therefore, that the Muslims and Christians have continued to fight each other century after century. The confusion disappears however, when we learn that Islām has differed from Christianity in many fundamental matters which were subjects of strong controversy, without ever leading to hatred and hostility. Christianity does not acknowledge the prophethood of Muḥammad as Islām acknowledges the prophethood of Jesus. Moreover, Christianity upholds trinitarianism whereas Islām strongly rejects anything but the strictest monotheism. The Christians apotheosize Jesus and, in their argument with Muslims, seek confirmation of his divinity in the Qur'ānic assertion that he spoke out in the cradle (19:29-34) and in the many miracles which he alone had been favored by God to perform. During the early days of Islām, the Christians used to dispute with the Muslims in the following vein: Doesn't the Qur'ān itself, which was revealed to Muḥammad, confirm our view when it says:

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ إِنَّهُ إِسْمُ الْقُدُّوسِ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ ۖ وَقِيلَ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ۖ قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ ۚ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ ۚ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ۚ وَيَعْلَمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِسَابَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ ۚ وَرَسُولًا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ۚ أَنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ أَنِّي أَخْلَقُ لَكُمْ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنفُثُ فِيهِ رُوحِي فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَابْرَأُ الْأَكْمَةَ وَالْإِبْرَصَ وَأُخِي الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَانْتَظِرْكُمْ بِمَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَمَا تَدْعُونَ فِي يَوْمِكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

“The angels said, ‘O Mary God announces to you His command that a son will be born to you whose name shall be the Messiah, Jesus, Son of Mary, and who will be honored in this world and

in the next and be close to God. He will speak as a baby in the cradle and he will be righteous throughout his long age.' Mary asked: 'How can I have a son when no human has touched me?' The angel answered: 'Thus God creates whatever He wills. He commands a thing to be and it is.' God will teach Jesus the scripture, wisdom, the Torah and the Evangel. He will send him a prophet of Israel, and charge him with the conveyance of a new revelation from God. He will confirm him by giving him the power to blow life into birds which he could fashion out of clay, to give vision to the blind, to heal the leper, to resurrect the dead, and to prophesy about what the Jews eat and what they hide in their houses—all with God's permission—that the Jews may believe in him and thereby prove their faith."<sup>7</sup>

The Qur'ān then did declare that Jesus would resurrect the dead and give vision to the blind and heal the leper, create birds out of clay and prophesy—all of which are divine prerogatives. Such was the view of the Christians who, at the time of the Prophet, were disputing and arguing with him that Jesus was a god besides God. Another group of them apotheosized Mary on the grounds that she had been the recipient of God's command. The Christian adherents to this view regarded Mary as a member of a trinity which included the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.<sup>8</sup> However, those who held that Jesus and his mother were divine were but one of the many sects into which Christianity was divided in those days.

### *Debate of the Christians with the Prophet*

The Christians of the Arabian Peninsula debated with Muḥammad on the basis of their diverse views. They argued that Jesus was God, that Jesus was the Son of God, that Jesus was the third person of the trinity. The apotheosizers of Jesus had recourse to the foregoing argument. Those who held the view that Jesus was the Son of God argued that he had no known father, that he had spoken out in the cradle as no other human had ever done. Those who held that he was the third person of the trinity argued that God referred to Himself as "We" in His acts of creation, of commanding and providing, and that this was evidence for His plurality—for otherwise He would have referred to Himself as "I." Muḥammad used to listen to all these arguments and debate with them in kindness. He never showed



in his debates the hardness and severities which characterized his debates with the associationists" and the worshipers of idols. Rather, he argued with them on the basis of revealed scripture and based himself on what could be deduced therefrom. God said: "Blasphemous are those who claim that God is Jesus, the son of Mary. Say, 'Who is capable of anything should God desire to destroy Jesus, the son of Mary, as well as his mother and all that is on the face of the earth? To Him alone belongs the dominion of heaven and earth and all that is in between. He, the Omnipotent, creates what He wills.' Both Jews and Christians claim that they are the sons of God and His favorite people. Say, 'Why does He then punish you for your sins? Rather, you are all humans, on a par with all other men He has created. God forgives whomsoever He wills and punishes whomsoever He wills.'"<sup>10</sup> God said: "Blasphemous are those who claim that God is Jesus, the son of Mary. Jesus said: 'O Children of Israel, worship God alone, your Lord and my Lord. Whoever associates aught with God, God will exclude from paradise and punish in hell. Such unjust people will have no helper.' Blasphemous are those who claim that God is the third person of a trinity. There is no God other than God, the One. Unless they stop this blasphemy, God will inflict upon them a painful punishment."<sup>11</sup> He, to Whom is the glory, also said: "God asked Jesus, son of Mary: 'Did you ask the people to take you and your mother as two gods beside God?' Jesus answered: 'Praise be to You alone, I had not said but that which I was commanded to say. You surely know whether I am guilty of such blasphemy, for You know all that is in my thoughts, and I know none of what is in Yours. You alone are omniscient. I did convey to them that which You commanded me to convey, namely, that they ought to worship God alone, my Lord and their Lord. In their midst, I have been a witness unto You throughout my life. And when You caused me to die, knowledge of what they did was Yours for You are the witness of everything. If You punish them, they are Your creatures and servants: if You choose to forgive them, You are the Mighty and Wise.'"<sup>12</sup>

Christianity upholds the trinitarian view and claims that Jesus is the Son of God. Islām, on the other hand, categorically denies that God could possibly have a son. "Say," God commands Muhammad, "God is one. God is eternal. He has neither progeny nor ancestry. He is absolutely without parallel."<sup>13</sup> "It is not possible for God—may He be praised—to take unto Himself a

son."<sup>14</sup> "Jesus is to God as Adam was to Him, a creature made out of dust that had come to be at God's command."<sup>15</sup> Islām is monotheistic *par excellence*; the unity of God it teaches is the most categorical, the clearest, the simplest, and therefore the strongest. Whatever casts the slightest doubt upon the unity of God is strongly rejected by Islām and declared blasphemous. "God does not forgive that He be associated with anyone, but He will forgive anything lesser than that to whomsoever He wills."<sup>16</sup> Whatever connection Christianity may have had with ancient religions as far as its trinitarian doctrine is concerned furnished no justification at all in the eye of Muḥammad. The truth is that God is one and unique, that He has no associates, that He has neither progeny nor ancestry and that He is absolutely without parallel. It is no wonder therefore that controversy arose between Muḥammad and the Christians of his time, that he debated with them in kindness, and that revelation confirmed Muḥammad with the foregoing Qur'ānic corroborations.

### *The Question of Jesus' Crucifixion*

Another problem in which Islām differed from Christianity and which aroused controversy at the time of the Prophet is that of the crucifixion of Jesus as atonement for the sins of mankind. The Qur'ān clearly denies that the Jews had killed or crucified the Messiah. It says: "As for the Jews' claim that they killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Prophet of God, the truth is that they have not killed him, nor have they crucified him, but that that appeared to them to be the case; whereas those who contend concerning this matter have no certain knowledge at all but merely conjecture. None of them is absolutely certain that they killed Jesus. Rather, God the Mighty and Wise raised Jesus unto Himself."<sup>17</sup>

Despite the fact that the idea of the Messiah's sacrifice and his atonement for the sins of mankind with his own blood is undoubtedly beautiful and the writings it had inspired are worthy of poetical, moral, and psychological analysis, Islām founded itself upon the principle that moral guilt is non-transferable and that on the Day of Judgment justice shall be meted out to each according to his due. This fact rules out any logical rapprochement between the two doctrines. The *logique* of Islām is so precise on this matter and so clear and distinct that the difference between it and Christianity cannot be composed. The doctrine

of sacrificial atonement runs diametrically counter to that of personal justice. "No father may bear the guilt of his son, and no son may earn anything for his father."<sup>18</sup>

### *Byzantines and Muslims*

Did any Christians at the time consider this new religion and ponder the possibility of harmonizing its "unization"<sup>19</sup> of God and their revelation of Jesus? Indeed! And many of them joined it as a result. The Byzantines, however, whose victory the Muslims had celebrated and regarded as the victory of the scriptural religions, did not take the trouble to investigate this new religion. Rather, they looked at it from a political angle, and worried about their dominion should the new religion carry the day. They therefore began to attack it and its people and sent an army of a hundred thousand soldiers (or of two hundred thousand according to another report) against it. This led to the conquest of Tabūk by the Muslims and the retreat of the Byzantines in front of the army which rallied around Muḥammad to repulse the aggression with such power and determination as it deserved.

Ever since then, Muslims and Christians have followed a policy of hostility towards each other; for many centuries victory was on the side of the Muslims, enabling them to extend their empire from Spain in the west to India and China in the east. Most of the inhabitants of this empire joined the new faith and adopted its Arabic language. When history came full cycle, the Christians forced the Muslims from Spain, launched the Crusades against them, and began to attack their religion and Prophet with falsehoods, lies, and forgeries. In their prejudice, they forgot the great respect and honor accorded to Jesus—may God's blessing be upon him—by Muḥammad—may God's blessing be upon him—as the tradition has reported and the Qur'ān, the revelation to Muḥammad, has stated.

### *Christian Scholars and Muḥammad*

In presenting the views Christian scholars had of Muḥammad during the first half of the nineteenth century, the French *Encyclopédie Larousse* stated: "Muḥammad remained in his moral corruption and debauchery a camel thief, a cardinal who failed

to reach the throne of the papacy and win it for himself. He therefore invented a new religion with which to avenge himself against his colleagues. Many fanciful and immoral tales dominated his mind and conduct. The *Life of Muhammad* by Bahomet is an example of this kind of literature. Other books on Muhammad, such as those published by Renault and François Michel in 1831, illustrate the idea of Muhammad prevalent in the Middle Ages. In the seventeenth century, Peel looked at the Qur'ān from a historian's point of view. But he refused to divulge his conclusions to his readers though he acknowledged that the ethical and social system of Muhammad does not differ from the Christian system except in the theory of punishment and polygamy."

Emil Dermenghem, the French writer, was one of the few orientalist writers who investigated the life of Muhammad with some objectivity. Quoting some of the writings of his colleagues, he wrote: "After the war between Islām and Christianity had been going on for centuries, the misunderstanding naturally increased and we are forced to admit the most serious ones were on the side of the Occidentals. Numerous were the Byzantine polemicists who covered Islām with their contempt without taking the trouble to study it (with perhaps the exception of St. John of Damascus), as well as the writers and minstrels who fought the Saracens with only ridiculous calumnies. They portrayed Mahomet as a camel-thief, a rake, sorcerer, a brigand chief, and even as a Roman cardinal furious at not having been elected pope . . . they showed him as a false god to whom the faithful made human sacrifices."

"The worthy Guibert de Nogent himself tells us that he (Muhammad) died through excessive drunkenness and that his corpse was eaten by pigs on a dunghill, explaining why the flesh of this animal and wine are prohibited . . .

"The opposition of the two religions had not, in the main, any more serious foundations than the affirmations of heroic songs portraying Mahomet, the iconoclast, as a golden-idol, and Mussulman mosques as pantheons filled with images! The *Song of Antioch* describes, as if the author had seen it, a massive idol, Mahom, in gold and silver enthroned on the mosaic seat of an elephant. The *Song of Roland*, which shows Charlemagne's horsemen throwing down Mussulman idols,

tells us that the Saracens worshiped a Trinity composed of Termagant, Mahom and Apollo. The *Roman de Mahomet* asserts the Islām permitted polyandry . . . .

"Hate and prejudice were tenacious of life. From the time of Rudolph de Ludheim (620) until the present, Nicholas de Cuse, Vives, Maracci, Hottinger, Bibliander, Prideaux, etc. present Mohamet as an impostor, Islām as the cluster of all the heresies and the work of the devil, the Mussulmans as brutes, and the Koran as a tissue of absurdities. They declined to treat such a ridiculous subject seriously. However, Pierre le Vénérable, author of the first Occidental treatise against Islām, made a Latin translation of the Koran in the twelfth century. Innocent III once called Mahomet Antichrist, while in the Middle Ages he was nearly always merely looked upon as a heretic. Raymond Lull in the fourteenth century, Guillaume Postel in the sixteenth, Roland and Gagnier in the eighteenth, the Abbé de Broglie and Renan in the nineteenth give rather varied opinions. Voltaire, afterwards, amended in several places the hasty judgment expressed in his famous tragedy. Montesquieu, like Pascal and Malebranche, committed serious blunders on the religion, but his views of the manners and customs of the Mussulmans are well-considered and often reasonable. Le Comte de Boulainvilliers, Scholl, Caussin de Perceval, Dozy, Sprenger, Barthélemy, Saint-Hilaire de Castries, Carlyle, etc., are generally favorable to Islām and its Prophet and sometimes vindicate him. In 1876 Doughty nonetheless called Mahomet 'a dirty and perfidious nomad,' while in 1822 Foster declared that 'Mahomet was Daniel's little goat's horn while the Pope was the large one.' Islām still has many ardent detractors."<sup>20</sup>

What a nether world of degradation have the writers of the West sunk to! What chronic, centuries-old obstinacy to go astray and to stir hatred and hostility between men! Many of the aforementioned men belonged to the Age of Enlightenment, the century of science, of free thought and research, and of the establishment of brotherhood between man and man. Perhaps the gravity of this unfortunate chronicle is somewhat attenuated by the fact that a number of objective scholars, mentioned by Dermenghem, have accepted the truthfulness of Muhammad's

faith in the message which God had revealed to him, have commended the spiritual and moral greatness of Muḥammad, his nobility and virtue, or have written about all these matters in literary and eloquent style. On the whole, however, the West continued to attack Islām and its prophet in the harshest possible terms. Indeed, western impertinence has gone so far as to spread Christian missionaries throughout the Muslim World, to urge them to dig their claws into its body, to dissuade the Muslims from their religion and to convert them to Christianity.

### *The Cause of Hostility between Islām and Christianity*

We must search for the cause of this stormy hostility and fierce war which Christianity has been waging against Islām. We believe that western ignorance of the truth of Islām and of the life of its Prophet constitutes the first cause of this hostility. Without a doubt, ignorance is one of the most chronic causes of lethargy, conservatism and prejudice; and it is the most difficult to correct.

### *Ignorance and Fanaticism*

This ignorance is centuries old. Over the years it has set up in the souls of generations idols of its own whose destruction will require a spiritual strength as great as that which characterized Islām when it first made its appearance. However, it is our opinion that there is yet another cause behind this fanaticism of the West and the terrible war it has waged and still wages against the Muslims, century after century. We are not here referring to political ambitions, or to the will of states to subjugate people for the purpose of exploiting them. In our opinion this is the result and not the cause of the fanaticism which goes beyond science and all its researches.

### *Christianity Does Not Accord with the Nature of Western Man*

This deeper lying cause, we think, is the fact that Christianity—with its call for asceticism, other-worldliness, forgiveness, and the high personalist values—does not accord with the nature of western man whose religious life had for thousands of years

been determined by polytheism and whose geographic position had imposed upon him the struggle against extreme cold and inclement nature. When historical circumstances brought about his Christianization, it was necessary for him to interpret it as a religion of struggle and to alter its tolerant and gentle nature. Thereby western man spoiled the spiritual sequence, completed by Islām, in which Christianity stood as a link in the chain. This spiritual continuum reconciles the claims of the body with those of the spirit; it synthesizes in harmony emotion and reason. It is a system which integrates the individual, indeed mankind, as a natural part of the cosmos and co-existent with it in its infinity of space and time. In our view, this spoiling is the cause of the fanaticism of the West *vis-d-vis* Islām and the cause of an attitude which Christian Abyssinia found beneath its dignity to adopt when the Muslims sought its protection at the beginning of the Prophet's career.

It is with reference to this cause that we can explain the exaggerated religiosity of western man as well as his extremist irreligiosity. For here too western fanaticism and hostility know neither tolerance nor temperance. Admittedly, history has known many saints among western men who in their lives have followed the example of Jesus and his disciples. But it cannot be denied that this same history affirms the life of the western people to be one of struggle, power, antagonism, and bloody war in the name of politics or religion. Nor can it be denied that the popes of the Church as well as the secular rulers have always engaged one another in strife: that one or the other was one day conqueror and the other vanquished. As secular power emerged victorious in the nineteenth century, it sought to stamp out the life of the spirit in the name of science, claiming that the latter should replace religious faith in human spirituality. Nowadays, after a long struggle, the West has come to realize its error and the impossibility of what it sought to achieve. Voices are now being heard from all sides demanding to regain the lost spirituality by looking for it in the new theosophic and other schools.<sup>21</sup> Had Christianity accorded with the instinct of strife which among westerners is the law of life, they would have realized the bankruptcy of materialism to furnish them with the needed spiritual power. They then would have returned to the noble Christian religion of Jesus, son of Mary, unless God were to guide them toward Islām. They would not have needed to emigrate to India and other places to obtain a necessary spiritual life. Such spir-

ity is of the essence of the religion of Jesus, indeed its very nature and being.

### *Colonialism and Christian Mission against Islām*

Western colonialism helped the West to continue its war against Islām and Muḥammad. It encouraged the West to proclaim that Islām is the cause of the decadence of its adherents and their subjugation by others. Many western scholars still subscribe to this claim unaware that by doing so they cede the point to the Makkans who proclaimed thirteen centuries ago that Christianity is responsible for the shameful defeat of Heraclius and Byzantium by Persia, as well as to anyone who wishes to make use of the argument to explain Christendom's retreat under the blows of the Muslims. One fact alone is sufficient to refute such an obvious piece of falsehood. That is the fact that the civilization of Islām was dominant in, and its people sovereign over, the whole known world for many centuries; that in the Muslim world arose greater men of science and knowledge who lived and worked in an atmosphere of freedom which the West was not to know until very recently. If it were at all possible to attribute to a religion the decay of its adherents, no such imputation is possible in the case of Islām which aroused the Bedouins of the Arabian Peninsula and enabled them to dominate the world.

### *Islām and the Present State of the Islāmic Peoples*

Those who impute to Islām responsibility for the decay of the Islāmic peoples are partially right in the fact that there was added to the religion of God much which neither God nor His Prophet would have approved of. Such additions soon became integral to the religion, and whoever denied them was declared a heretic. Apart from the doctrine itself, let us take a close look at the biography of the Prophet of Islām—may God's blessing be upon him. Most of his biographies have narrated stories which no reason would accept and which no confirmation of Muḥammad's prophethood needed. It was from such additions that the western orientalists and critics of Islām, of its Prophet and of the Muslim peoples, drew their conclusions and formed their unjust and revolting attacks. After basing themselves on these incoherent assumptions, they launched further attacks and



claimed for what they wrote the status of modern scientific research. The scientific method demands that events, people, and heroes be presented objectively, that the author's judgment be given only in light of the given evidence. The writings of these authors, however, were dictated by their passion for controversy and vituperation. They were aptly cast in expressions which deluded their co-religionists into believing that they were scientific, and that they were made in seeking after truth alone. Nonetheless, God did grant His peace to a number of contented souls, for among them there were men of letters, men of science, and other free thinkers who came closer to justice and fairness.

### *Conservatism and Ijtihād among the Muslims*

A number of 'ulamā'<sup>23</sup> in different circumstances responded to the claims of these western fanatics. The name of Muḥammad 'Abduh shines most in this regard. But they have not observed the scientific method which the European writers and historians claim to have observed. Their argument would not have the same power as that of their opponents. Moreover, the same Muslim scholars—Muḥammad 'Abduh above all others—were accused of heresy and blasphemy—a fact which weakened their argument before the opponents of Islām. Such accusations as were directed at them left deep impressions in the hearts of educated Muslim youths. These young men felt that for a group of Muslim 'ulamā' adjudication by reason and logic amounts to heresy, that heresy is the twin of *ijtihād*, and that *imān*<sup>24</sup> is the twin of conservatism. Hence their minds panicked, and they rushed to the books of the West seeking to learn the truth which they believed was not to be found in the books of Muslim authors. They did not at all consider the books of Christianity and of Christian history. Instead, they turned to the books of philosophy to quench their burning thirst for the truth. In western logic and scientific method they sought the light with which to illuminate their human souls, and the means by which to communicate with the universe. In the western products of pure philosophy, literature, and allied fields, these men found many great ideas by which they were deeply impressed. The methods of their presentation, the precision of their logic and their authors' candidness in the search for the truth added all the more to their attractiveness. That is why our youths' thinking was drawn away from all the religions in general and from the methods of Islām and its carriers in particular.

They were anxious not to stir a war with conservatism which they were not confident they could win, and they did not realize that spiritual intercourse with the universe is the necessary requisite of any human realization of perfection, of that moral power which is strong enough to withstand the storms.

### *Western Science and Literature*

Our young men were thus drawn away from serious confrontation with the Islāmic message and its carriers. In this they were encouraged by what they observed of positive science and positivist philosophy, ruling for them that religious questions are not subject to logic, that they do not fall within the realm of scientific thinking, and that the metaphysical assumptions implied in those questions fall outside the realm of the scientific method. Our men have also observed the clear separation of state and church in the western countries. They learned that despite the fact that the constitutions of these countries prescribe that their kings are the protectors of Protestantism or Catholicism, or that the official religion of the state is Christianity, the Western states do not mean any more than to subscribe to the public observance of the feasts and other occasions of the Christian calendar. Hence they were encouraged to enter into this line of scientific thinking and to derive therefrom, as well as from the related philosophy, literature and art, all the inspiration possible. When the time came to transfer their attention from study to practical life, their occupations pulled them away further from those problems which they could not solve even at the time of their study. Their minds, therefore, continued to run in their original courses. They looked at conservatism with contempt and pity and drew their nourishment from the lifeline of western thought and philosophy. Remembering this lifeline as the source from which they obtained their nourishment in their youth, they continued to find therein their intellectual pleasure; their admiration for it was always growing.

Nevertheless, the Orient stands today in great need of learning from western thought, literature and art. The present of the Orient is separated from its past by centuries of lethargy and conservatism which have locked its old healthy mind in ignorance and suspicion of anything new. Anyone who seeks to dissolve this thick curtain must needs be assisted by the most modern thinking in the world if he is to forge anew the link between the live present and the great legacy of the past.

### *Efforts of Islāmic Reform*

It is undeniable that we must acknowledge the worthy western achievements in Islāmic and Oriental studies. These have prepared the road for Muslims as well as Orientals to enter these fields of research with greater promise than was open to their western colleagues. The Muslims and Orientals are naturally closer to the spirit of Islām and the Orient which they are seeking to penetrate. As long as the new leadership in this field has come from the West, it is the Muslim's and Oriental's duty to look into the products of the West, to correct their mistakes, and to give to the discipline the proper orientation which will re-establish the unity of the old and the new. This should not be done merely on paper, for it is a living legacy, spiritual and mental, which the heirs ought to represent to themselves, to add thereto, and to illumine with their own vision and understanding of the central realities.

Many of our young men have succeeded in their undertaking of scientific researches on these lines. The orientalists have often appreciated their work and complimented them on their contributions to scholarship.

### *Western Missionaries and Muslim Conservatives*

Scientific cooperation in Islāmics between Muslim and Oriental scholars on one hand, and western scholars on the others, is worthy of great promise. Although it has just begun to make progress, we yet notice that the Christian missionaries continue their attacks against Islām and Muḥammad with the same ferocity as their predecessors to whom we have alluded earlier. In this they are encouraged and supported by the western colonialist powers in the name of freedom of opinion. These very missionaries were themselves thrown out of their countries by their own governments because they were not trusted by them to implant true faith in the hearts of their own co-religionists at home.<sup>25</sup> Moreover this colonialism assists the leaders of conservatism among the Muslims. Colonialism in fact has brought about a coalescence of the two tendencies: on the one hand it confirms the infusion of Islām with that which is not Islāmic, such as the irrational and unrefined superstitions added to the life of the Prophet; on the other hand, it confirms the antagonists of Islām in their attacks against these forgeries.

### ***The Idea and Plan of This Book***

The circumstances of my life have enabled me to observe all these maneuvers in the various countries of the Islāmic East, indeed throughout the Muslim World, and to discover their final purpose. The objective of colonialism is to destroy in these countries the freedom of opinion, the freedom to seek the truth. I have come to feel that I stand under the duty to foil these maneuvers and spoil their purpose, for they are certainly harmful to the whole of mankind, not only to Islām and the Orient. What greater damage could befall humanity than to have its greater half, the half which has throughout history been the carrier of civilization, to wallow in sterility and conservatism? It was this consideration which led me at the end of the road of life to the study of the life of Muḥammad, the carrier of the message of Islām and the target of Christian attacks on one side and of Muslim conservatives on the other. But I have resolved that this will be a scientific study, developed on the western modern method, and written for the sake of truth alone.

I began to study the history of Muḥammad and to look more closely into the *Sirah* of Ibn Hishām, the *Tabaqāt* of Ibn Sa'd, the *Maghāzi* of Wāqidi, and the *Spirit of Islam* of Sayyid Ameer Ali. Then I took care to study what some orientalisists have written on the subject such as the work of Dermenghem, and also that of Washington Irving. The winter of 1932 at Luxor provided me with the occasion to begin my writing. At that time I was quite hesitant to publish my thoughts because I feared the storm which the conservatives and their followers who believe in superstitions might raise. But I was encouraged by a number of professors in the Islāmic institutions of learning, many of whom took such care in studying my writing and making pertinent observations on it that I resolved to follow my scientific treatment of the life of Muḥammad to a conclusion. It was the encouragement of these men that stirred me to search for the best means by which to analyze the biography of the Prophet.

### ***The Qur'ān as the Most Reliable Source***

I discovered that the most reliable source of information for the biography of Muḥammad is the Holy Qur'ān. It contains a reference to every event in the life of the Arab Prophet which can serve the investigator as a standard norm and as a guiding

light in his analysis of the reports of the various biographies and of the *Sunnah*. As I sought to understand all the Qur'ānic references to the life of the Prophet, Professor Aḥmad Luṭfī al Sayyid, of Dār al Kutub al Miṣriyyah, offered me great assistance by letting me use a topically arranged collection of all the verses of the Qur'ān. While analyzing these verses, I began to realize that it was necessary to discover the causes and occasions of their revelation. I acknowledge that despite all the effort I put in that direction I was not always successful. The books of exegesis sometimes refer to these relations but often overlook them. Al Wāḥidī's *Asbāb al Nuzūl*, and Ibn Salāmah's *al Nāsikh Wa al Mansūkh* treat this matter very precisely but, unfortunately, very briefly. In these as well as other books of exegesis, I discovered many facts which helped me in my analysis of the claims various biographies have made as well as the many other facts worthy of being considered and investigated by all scholars of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*.

### *Candid Advice*

As my research progressed I found candid advice coming to me from all directions, especially from the professors of Islām and the learned men of religion. Dār al Kutub al Miṣriyyah and its officers were responsible for the greatest assistance. No expression of appreciation of their work is adequate. Suffice it here to mention that, encouraged by his director and other senior officers, Professor 'Abd al Raḥīm Maḥmūd, Editor in the Division of Literature, used often to save me from great trouble by borrowing for me all the needed books. Whenever I did manage to go to Dār al Kutub, all the employees were delightfully ready to assist me in my search. Some of these men were personally known to me and others were not. I referred many a question which was opaque or presented difficulties to those of my friends whom I knew would shed some light thereon; and more often than not the confusion or opaqueness was cleared. This was many times the case with the Grand Shaykh Muḥammad Mustafā al Marāghī, along with my expert friend, Ja'far Pasha Waliy, who lent me several of his books, such as the *Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim* and the histories of Makkah, and who guided me in many problems. Makram 'Ubayd Pasha, another friend of mine, lent me Sir William Muir's *The life of Muḥammad* and Father Lammens's *Islam*. This valuable assistance is all in addition to that which I

found in the writings of the contemporary authors such as *Fajr al Islām* by Aḥmad Amin, *Qisas al Anbiyā'* by 'Abd al Wahhāb al Najjār, *Fī al Adab al Jāhili* by Ṭaha Ḥusayn, *The Jews in Arabia* by Israel Wolfenson, and many other contemporary works mentioned in my list of old and new references used in the preparation of this book.

As I progressed in my research more and more complicated problems emerged which overtaxed my powers. Throughout, the biographies of Muḥammad and the books of exegeses as well as the works of the orientalist have assisted me in achieving a measure of certainty of purpose. I found myself compelled to limit my investigation to the events in the life of Muḥammad and to refrain from tackling a number of side issues connected therewith. Had I allowed myself to indulge in the discussion of all these problems, I would have needed to write many volumes of this size or larger. Let me mention in passing that Caussin de Perceval wrote three volumes under the title *Study in Arab History*, of which he devoted the first two to the history and life of the Arab tribes and the third to the history of Muḥammad and his first two successors, Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Likewise, the *Ṭabaqāt of Ibn Sa'd* devoted one of its many volumes to the life of Muḥammad and all the others to the lives of his companions. My purpose in this work has never gone beyond the investigation of the life of Muḥammad itself; therefore, I did not allow myself the liberty to investigate the other problems involved.

### *Restriction to the Life of Muḥammad*

Another consideration restricted me to the frontiers of the life of Muḥammad—the greatness, majesty, and brilliance which make his life unique among all others. How great was Abū Bakr! And how great was 'Umar! Each was a great sun eclipsing all others around him. How great, too, were the first Muslims, the companions of Muḥammad, who are remembered from generation to generation with the greatest pride. All these men, however, stood beneath Muḥammad, reflecting his light and his glory. It is not easy therefore for the investigator to restrict himself to the life of Muḥammad alone. This is all the more so if the investigation is to follow the modern scientific method, and thereby present the greatness of that life with all its strength and moving appeal in a manner which both Muslims and non-Muslims may accept and admire.

If we were to disregard those foolish fanatics, such as the missionaries and their like, whose purpose never goes beyond vituperation of Muhammad, we could still find a clear and distinct respect for greatness in the life of Muhammad in the works of the western orientalists. In his *On Heroes and Hero Worship*, Thomas Carlyle devoted a chapter to Muhammad in which he described the revelation of Muhammad as issuing from a spark that is divine and holy. He understood Muhammad's greatness and portrayed it in its whole strength. Likewise, Muir, Irving, Sprenger, and Weil, among other orientalists, eloquently described the greatness of Muhammad. A lack of vision, penetration, and critical skill prevented some of them from regarding one point or another of Muhammad's life as other than blame-worthy. It is probable that they had relied in their investigation on unreliable biographies and books of exegesis of the Prophet, forgetting that the earliest biography was not written down until two centuries after Muhammad's death, and that during this time a great number of Israelitisms and other forgeries were forced into his biography and into his teachings. Generally, western orientalists acknowledge this fact even though they attribute to the Prophet materials which the least investigation would reject as superfluous. The cases of the goddesses of Makkah, of Zayd and Zaynab, of the wives of the Prophet, constitute examples of such superfluous materials as I have had the occasion to investigate in this book.

### *This Book as Mere Beginning of Research*

No one should think that research in the life of Muhammad is completed with this work. It is closer to the truth for me to say that my work is really only the beginning of scientific research in this field in Arabic and that all my efforts in this regard do not make my work any more than a mere beginning in the scientific as well as Islāmic undertaking of this grave subject. As many scholars have devoted all their energies to the study of one period of history, even as Aulard has specialized in the study of the French Revolution, some scholars and historians ought to devote themselves to the study of the Age of Muhammad. The life of Muhammad is certainly worthy of being studied in a scientific and academic manner by more than one specialist or by more than one competent scholar. I have no doubt that any efforts spent on such scientific study of this brief period in the history of Arabia and on investigating the relations of Arabia to other countries during

that age will prove beneficial to mankind as a whole, not merely to Islām or the Muslims. Such a study will clear many psychological and spiritual problems and prepare them for scholarly research. It will shed great light on the social moral and legislative life of Arabia and thus illuminate areas which so far science has been unable to penetrate on account of the religious conflict between Islām and Christianity. Such a study would dissipate the futile attempt at westernizing the Orientals or Christianizing the Muslims in a way that history has proven to be impossible and harmful to the relations of the various parts of mankind with one another.

### *Universal Benefits of the Study*

Indeed, I would even go further. I would assert that such a study may show the road to mankind as a whole to the new civilization to which it is currently groping. If western Christendom is too proud to find the new light in Islām and in its Prophet but willingly accepts it from Indian theosophy and other religions of the Far East, then it devolves upon the Orientals themselves, Muslims, Jews or Christians, to undertake this study in all objectivity and fairness in order to reach and establish the truth. Islāmic thought rests on a methodology that is scientific and modern as regards all that relates man to nature. In this respect it is perfectly realistic. But it becomes personalist the moment it leaves nature to consider the relationship of man to the cosmos as a whole and to his creator. Moreover, in the psychological and spiritual fields Islāmic thought made contributions which science has not yet been able either to confirm or to deny. Although science may not regard these discoveries as facts in the scientific sense of the terms, they still remain the constituents of man's happiness and the determinants of his conduct in the world. What then is life? And what is man's relation to this world? How shall we explain his concern for life? What is the common faith which inspires human groups and by which their morale is raised to high pitch or dissolved? What is being? And what is the unity of being? What is the place of man in this being and in its unity? These are problems of metaphysics and a whole literature has arisen around them. Answers far nearer human understanding and implementation than are usually found in the literature of metaphysics are found in the life of Muḥammad and his teachings. Ever since the 'Abbāsī period, Muslim thinkers have spent centuries looking for metaphysical answers.



Likewise western thinkers have spent three centuries, from the sixteenth through the nineteenth, to lead the West to modern science in the same manner as the Muslims have done in the past. Once more, science stands today as it stood in the past as failing to realize human happiness on earth. Such happiness is impossible to realize unless we resume research for a correct understanding of the personal relationship of man to the cosmos and to the creator of the cosmos, and unless such understanding is sought on the basis of a divine unity, which is eternal and immutable, and with regard to space and time in relation to our short life. The life of Muhammad provides us with the best example of personalist communion with being as well as the best materials for a scientific study of this relationship. The same materials may equally be the object of practical study for those who are endowed therefore but naturally removed from achieving such communion with God as the Prophet had achieved. It is most likely that the scientific study, and the practical study, if felicitously undertaken, may yet shake our world loose from the paganism into which it has fallen in spite of its religious creeds and scientific doctrines. It may yet save the world from its present monolatry of wealth that has made all science, art, and ethics its servants and conscripted all man's powers to do its bidding and sing its praises. Such hopes may still be far from realization. However, the beginning of the end of this all-embracing paganism of modern times is clearly distinguishable under close observance of the current flow of events. Perhaps, these humble beginnings will grow and become surer of themselves when scholarship has found answers to these spiritual problems through the study of the life of Muhammad, of his teachings, of his age, and of the spiritual world revolution which he incepted. Should such scientific and scholarly research uncover for man his stronger bonds with the higher reality of the world, it would have then provided the new civilization with its first foundation.

As I said already, this book is only a mere beginning on this road. It will prove sufficient reward for me if it should succeed in convincing the reader of the validity of its assertions, and the scholars and researchers of the need for dedication and specialization if the final end of the study is to be reached. God will surely reward the good doers.

Muhammad Husayn Haykal

# Preface to the Second Edition

The speed with which the first edition of this work was exhausted has exceeded all expectations. Ten thousand copies were printed of which one-third were sold before the book came off the press. The remaining copies were sold during the first three months following its publication. If this is any indication, the reader must have been quite interested in its contents. A second printing, therefore, is as imperative as the reconsideration of those contents.

## *An Observation*

Without a doubt, the title of the book attracted the reader most. The attraction may also have been due to the method with which the subject was treated. Whatever the reason, the thought of a second edition has occasioned the question of whether or not I should allow the book to be reprinted without change or have it corrected, considering that a need for correction, clarification, or addition has in the meantime seemed to me evident. Some, whose counsel I certainly value, have advised me to make the second edition an exact copy of the first in order to achieve equality between the earlier and later buyers and to allow myself longer time for revision thereafter. This view almost convinced me. Had I followed it, this second edition would have been put in the hands of the readers many months ago. But I hesitated to accept this advice and finally decided in favor of revisions

which many considerations had made necessary. The first of such considerations concerned a number of observations which Muhammad Mustafā al Marāghī, Grand Shaykh of al Azhar, had kindly made when he read the first parts of the book as they came from the press, and kindly decided to write the foreword. When the book made its appearance, a number of 'ulamā' and other scholars spoke and wrote about it. Their observations were all preceded by numerous compliments for the achievement of this work, indeed more than the book actually deserved. These observations were based upon the understanding that a book about the Arab Prophet, which is so well written that it has won their approval and appreciation, ought to be absolutely free of all shortcomings. It is therefore necessary for me to take them into account and give them the consideration due.

It was perhaps this very approval and appreciation of the readers which moved them to make observations on incidental matters related neither to the essence of the book nor to its main themes. Some of them, for instance, pleaded for further clarification of certain points. Others called for closer scrutiny of my use of prepositions. Still others suggested different words better to express the meanings I intended. A number of them did focus on the themes of the book and therefore caused me to review what I have written. I certainly wish that this second edition will come closer to satisfying all these writers and scholars. All this notwithstanding, I still believe that this book provides no more than a mere beginning in the Arabic language of such studies using the modern scientific method.

A further consideration caused me to review the first edition. Having read the many observations made, most of which were not new, I became convinced as I read my work again that I ought to add, where relevant, a discussion of the points to which the observations referred in order at least to convince their authors of my point of view and of the veracity of my arguments. My reconsideration of some of these points opened new vistas which any student of the biography of the Arab Prophet will have to study. Although I am proud that the first edition did in fact deal with the points raised in the reviews, I am more proud yet today to present to the reader this second edition in which the same points have been treated more fully. No study, however, can be full or perfect which undertakes the investigation of the life of the greatest man history has known—the Seal of the Prophets and of the Messengers from on high—may God's peace and blessing be upon him.

In this edition, I have tried to address myself to a number of observations made regarding my method of investigation. I have added to the book two new chapters in which I have dealt with matters which have been only slightly referred to toward the end of the preface of the first edition. I have also re-edited the work wherever it needed editing, and added to its various sections and paragraphs such points as my rethinking has made necessary.

### *Answering the Followers of Western Orientalists*

I want first to address myself to a letter I received from an Egyptian writer. He claimed that his letter is an Arabic translation of an article he wrote for a German Orientalist magazine in criticism of this book. I have not published this letter in the Arabic press because it contains many unfounded attacks; and I thought that its author had better bear the responsibility of publishing it if he wished to. Nor will I mention his name here because I believe he will repudiate his old views when he reads the critical analysis that follows. The substance of the letter is that my *The Life of Muhammad* is not a scientific one in the modern sense. He argues that I have depended upon Arabic sources alone and have not consulted the studies of German orientalists such as Weil, Goldziher, Nöldeke, and others, and have not adopted their conclusions. The letter also blames me for regarding the Qur'ān as a certain historical document, whereas the investigations of the foregoing orientalists have proven that it has been tampered with and been changed after the death of Muhammad in the first century A.H. It reported that these investigations have discovered that the name of the Prophet is a case in point; that having once been "Qutham" or "Quthāmah," it was later changed to "Muhammad" in order to accord with the verse, "Jesus said: O Children of Israel, I am the Prophet of God sent to you to confirm the scripture that is already in my hand and to announce to you the advent of a prophet after me whose name shall be Ahmad." This fabrication was deemed desirable in order to forge a link between the Prophet and the Evangel's announcement of a prophet coming after Jesus. Moreover, the letter added, the researches of the orientalists have revealed that the Prophet suffered from epilepsy, that his so-called revelations were really effects of his epileptic attacks; that the symptoms of epilepsy—loss of consciousness, perspiration, convulsion, foam around the mouth—were all apparent in his

case. It was after he recovered from these fits that he claimed that the revelation had come to him, recited it to the believers, and claimed that it had come from God.

By itself, this letter is not worthy of attention or investigation. Its author, however, is a Muslim and an Egyptian. Had he been an orientalist or a missionary, I would have let him alone to rave as he pleased. What I have said in the preface to the first edition in this regard is sufficient refutation for such people and views. The author of this letter, however, is an example of a class of young Muslims who are too ready to accept what the orientalists say and regard it as true knowledge. It is precisely to this class of people that I want now to address myself and warn them of the errors in which the orientalists fall. Some of these orientalists are candid and scholarly despite their errors. Error nonetheless finds its way into their conclusions either because of their lack of mastery of the nuances of the Arabic language, or of their prejudice against religion as such, or Islām in particular, which, in turn, conditions them to seek to destroy the fundamental basis of religion. Both shortcomings are unworthy of scholars and it behooves them to seek a remedy therefor. We have seen Christian thinkers who, moved by this same antagonism, denied that Jesus ever existed in history; and we have seen others who have gone further and have even written about the madness of Jesus. The western thinker's innate antagonism to religion was generated by the struggle between the Church and the state and this led both the men of science and the men of religion to pull in different directions in order to wrench power from the other side and seize it for themselves. Islām, on the other hand, is free of such strife; Muslim scholars, therefore, should not be affected by it as their western colleagues have been. In most cases, to fall under such a complexus would vitiate the research. Muslim readers therefore, should watch out more carefully when they read a religious study by a westerner. They should scrutinize every claim these studies make for the truth. A large measure of their researches are deeply affected by this past strife which the men of religion and the men of science had waged against one another during long centuries.

### *Dependence upon the Muslim Biographers*

The case of the letter from the Egyptian Muslim colleague clearly points to the need for such care. His first criticism con-

cerned my dependence upon Arabic and Islāmic sources. Of course this is not denied. But I have also consulted the books of the orientalist mentioned in my list of references. The Arabic sources, however, constituted my primary sources as they constituted the primary sources for orientalists before me. That is natural. For these sources, and the Qur'ān above all, were the first ones ever to discuss the life of the Arab Prophet. There is nothing objectionable if such early historical documents are taken as primary sources for any modern and scientific biographical study of the Prophet. Nöldeke, Goldziher, Weil, Sprenger, Muir, and other orientalists have all taken the same works as primary sources for their studies, just as I have done. I have also allowed myself as much liberty in scrutinizing the reports of these works as they did. And I have also not omitted to consult some of the early Christian books which the orientalists had consulted despite the fact that they were products of Christian fanaticism rather than of scholarly research and criticism. If anybody were to criticize my work on the grounds that I have allowed myself to differ from some orientalists and have arrived at conclusions other than their own, he would in fact be calling for intellectual stagnation—a conservatism not less reactionary or retrogressive than any other conservatism we have known. It is unlikely that any of the orientalists themselves agree with such call; for to do so implies approval of religious stagnation. Neither for me nor for any scholarly student of history is such a stand viable. Rather, I should ask myself, as well as any other scholar, to scrutinize the work of his colleagues. Unless he is convinced by clear evidence and incontestable proofs, he should seek other ways to the truth. To this task I call those of us, particularly the youth, who admire the researches of the Orientalists. This has also been my task. Mine is the reward where I have in fact arrived at the truth; and mine is the apology where I have erred despite my good intentions.

### *The Orientalists and the Bases of Religion*

The aforesaid Muslim Egyptian's letter gives evidence of the western orientalists' extreme care to destroy the basis of religion. They claim that their researches have established that the Qur'ān is not a historical document devoid of doubt but that it has been tampered with and edited, and many verses added to it for religious or political ulterior purposes in the first century after

the death of the Prophet of Islām. I am not questioning the author of the letter from an Islāmic point of view but arguing with him, as it were, as a fellow Muslim, the veracity or otherwise of the Islāmic conviction that the Qur'ān is the work of God and that it is impossible for it to be forged. The stand from which he wrote his letter is clearly that of the orientalist who hold that the Qur'ān is a book written by Muḥammad. According to a number of orientalist, Muḥammad wrote the Qur'ān in the belief that it was God's revelation to him; according to others, Muḥammad claimed that the Qur'ān was the revelation of God merely in order to prove the genuineness of his message. Let me then address the author of this letter in his own language assuming that he is one of those free thinkers who refuse to be convinced except by scientific, apodeictic proof.

### *The False Charge of Forgery*

Our young author depends upon the western orientalist and their views. A number of these do think of the Qur'ān in the manner this young author exemplified. Their claim is based upon flagrant motives which stand at the farthest possible remove from science and the scientific method. Suffice it to expose the incoherence of their arguments that the phrase, "and announcing the advent of a prophet after me whose name shall be Ahmad"<sup>2</sup> was added to the Qur'ān after the death of the Prophet in order to establish proof of Muḥammad's prophethood based upon the scriptures preceding the Qur'ān. Had these orientalist who make this claim truly sought to serve the purpose of science, they would not have resorted to this cheap propaganda that the Torah and the Evangel are truly revealed books. Had they honored science for its own sake, they would have treated the Qur'ān on a par with the scriptures antecedent to it. Either they would have regarded the Qur'ān as sacred as these scriptures—in which case it would have been natural for it to refer to its antecedents—or, they would have regarded all these books as they did the Qur'ān and imputed to them the same kind of doubtful nature as they did to it, holding as well their authors to have forged or written them in satisfaction of ulterior religious or political purposes. Had the orientalist held such a view, logic would rule out their claim that the Qur'ān had been tampered with and forged for political and religious purposes. It is inadmissible that the Muslims would have sought such confirmation of Muḥammad's claim to prophethood from

these scriptures after Muslim dominion had been established, the Christian empire vanquished, so many other peoples of the earth subjugated and, indeed, after the Christians themselves had entered into Islām *en masse*. The inadmissibility of these orientalists' claims is demanded by genuine scientific thought. Furthermore, the claim that the Torah and the Evangel are sacred whereas the Qur'ān is not is devoid of scientific support. Therefore, the claim that the Qur'ān had been tampered with and forged in order to seek confirmation of Muḥammad's prophethood on the basis of the Torah and the Evangel is a piece of sheer nonsense unacceptable to either logic or history.

Those western orientalists who have made this false claim are very few and belong to the more fanatic group. The majority of them do believe that the Qur'ān which is in our hands today is precisely the Qur'ān which Muḥammad had recited to the Muslims during his lifetime; that it has neither been tampered with nor forged. They admit this explicitly in their writings while criticizing the method by which the verses of the Qur'ān were collected and its chapters arranged—a matter of discussion which does not belong here. The Muslim students of the Qur'ān did in fact study these criticisms and exposed their errors. As for our purpose here, suffice it to look at some orientalists' writing on this subject. Perhaps our young Muslim Egyptian author would thereby be convinced and, perhaps, he would convince those of his fellows who think like him.

### *Muir Rejects the Forgery of the Qur'ān*

The orientalists have written a great deal on this subject. We can select a passage by Sir William Muir from his book, *The Life of Mahomet*, in the hope that those who claim that the Qur'ān has been forged will realize wherein they have erred, to the detriment of both the truth and their own scholarship. It should be remembered that our author, Muir, is a Christian, an *engagé* and proud Christian, as well as a missionary who never misses occasion to criticize the Prophet of Islām or its scripture.

When he came to speak of the Qur'ān and the veracity and precision of its text, he wrote:

"The divine revelation was the corner-stone of Islam. The recital of a passage from it formed an essential part of daily prayer public and private; and its perusal and repeti-



tion were enforced as a duty and a privilege fraught with religious merit. This is the universal voice of early tradition, and may be gathered also from the revelation itself. The Coran was accordingly committed to memory more or less by every adherent of Islam, and the extent to which it could be recited was one of the chief distinctions of nobility in the early Moslem empire. The custom of Arabia favoured the task. Passionately fond of poetry, yet possessed of but limited means and skill in committing to writing the effusions of their bards, the Arabs had long been habituated to imprint these, as well as the tradition of genealogical and other tribal events, on the living tablets of their hearts. The recollective faculty was thus cultivated to the highest pitch; and it was applied, with all the ardour of an awakened spirit, to the Coran. Such was the tenacity of their memory, and so great their power of application, that several of Mahomet's followers, according to early tradition, could, during his life-time, repeat with scrupulous accuracy the entire revelation.

“However retentive the Arab memory, we should still have regarded with distrust a transcript made entirely from that source. But there is good reason for believing that many fragmentary copies, embracing amongst them the whole Coran, or nearly the whole, were made by Mahomet's followers during his life. Writing was without doubt generally known at Mecca long before Mahomet assumed the prophetic office. Many of his followers are expressly mentioned as employed by the Prophet at Medina in writing his letters or despatches . . . Some of the poorer Meccan captives taken at Bedr were offered their release on condition that they would teach a certain number of the ignorant citizens of Medina to write. And although the people of Medina were not so generally educated as those of Mecca, yet many are distinctly noticed as having been able to write before Islam. The ability thus existing, it may be safely inferred that the verses which were so indefatigably committed to memory, would be likewise committed carefully to writing.

“We also know that when a tribe first joined Islam, Mahomet was in the habit of deputing one or more of his followers to teach them the Coran and the requirements of

the faith. We are frequently informed that they carried written instructions with them on the latter point, and they would naturally provide themselves also with transcripts of the more important parts of the Revelation, especially those upon which the ceremonies of Islam were founded, and such as were usually recited at the public prayers. Besides the reference in the Coran to its own existence in a written form, we have express mention made in the authentic traditions of Omar's conversion, of a copy of the 20th Sura being used by his sister's family for social and private devotional reading. This refers to a period preceding, by three or four years, the emigration to Medina. If transcripts of the revelations were made, and in common use, at that early time when the followers of Islam were few and oppressed, it is certain that they must have multiplied exceedingly when the Prophet came to power, and his Book formed the law of the greater part of Arabia.

"Such was the condition of the text of the Coran during Mahomet's life-time, and such it remained for about a year after his death, imprinted upon the hearts of his people, and fragmentary transcripts increasing daily. The two sources would correspond closely with each other; for the Coran, even while the Prophet was yet alive, was regarded with a superstitious awe as containing the very words of God; so that any variations would be reconciled by a direct reference to Mahomet himself, and after his death to the originals where they existed, or copies from the same, and to the memory of the Prophet's confidential friends and amanuenses.

"It was not till the overthrow of Moseilama, when a great carnage took place amongst the Moslems at Yemama, and large numbers of the best reciters of the Coran were slain, that a misgiving arose in Omar's mind as to the uncertainty which would be experienced regarding the text, when all those who had received it from the original source, and thence stored it in their memories, should have passed away. 'I fear,' said he, addressing the Caliph Abu Bakr, 'that slaughter may again wax hot amongst the reciters of the Coran, in other fields of battle; and that much may be lost therefrom. Now, therefore, my advice is, that thou shouldst

give speedy orders for the collection of the Coran.' Abu Bakr agreed, and thus made known his wishes to Zeid ibn Thabit, a citizen of Medina, and the Prophet's chief amanuensis: 'Thou art a young man, and wise; against whom no one amongst us can cast an imputation; and thou wert wont to write down the inspired revelations of the Prophet of the Lord. Wherefore now search out the Coran, and bring it together.' So new and unexpected was the enterprise that Zeid at first shrank from it, and doubted the propriety, or even lawfulness, of attempting that which Mahomet had neither himself done nor commanded to be done. At last he yielded to the joint entreaties of Abu Bakr and Omar, and seeking out the fragments of the Coran from every quarter, 'gathered it together, from dateleaves, and tablets of white stone, and from the breasts of men.' By the labours of Zeid, these scattered and confused materials were reduced to the order and sequence in which we now find them, and in which it is said that Zeid used to repeat the Coran in the presence of Mahomet. The original copy prepared by Zeid was probably kept by Abu Bakr during the short remainder of his reign. It then came into the possession of Omar who . . . committed it to the custody of his daughter Haphsa, the Prophet's widow. The compilation of Zeid, as embodied in this exemplar, continued during Omar's ten years' Caliphate to be the standard and authoritative text.

"But variety of expression either prevailed in the previous transcripts and modes of recitation, or soon crept into the copies which were made from Zeid's edition. Mussulmans were scandalised. The Coran sent down from heaven was ONE, but where was now its unity? Hodzeifa, who had warred both in Armenia and Adzerbaijan and had observed the different readings of the Syrians and of the men of Irac, alarmed at the number and extent of the variations, warned Othman to interpose, and 'stop the people, before they should differ regarding their Scripture, as did the Jews and Christians.' The Caliph was persuaded, and to remedy the evil had recourse again to Zeid, with whom he associated a syndicate of three Coreish. The original copy of the first edition was obtained from Haphsa's depository, the various readings were sought out from the different provinces, and a careful recension of the whole set on foot. In case of dif-

ference between Zeid and his coadjutors, the voice of the latter, as conclusive of the Coreishite idiom, was to preponderate; and the new collation was thus assimilated exclusively to the Meccan dialect, in which the Prophet had given utterance to his inspiration. Transcripts were multiplied and forwarded to the chief cities in the empire, and the previously existing copies were all, by the Caliph's command, committed to the flames. The old original was returned to Haphsa's custody.

"The recension of Othman had been handed down to us unaltered. So carefully, indeed, has it been preserved, that there are no variations of importance—we might almost say no variations at all—among the innumerable copies of the Coran scattered throughout the vast bounds of the empire of Islam. Contending and embittered factions, taking their rise in the murder of Othman himself within a quarter of a century from the death of Mahomet, have ever since rent the Mahometan world. Yet but ONE CORAN has been current amongst them; and the consentaneous use by them all in every age up to the present day of the same Scripture, is an irrefragable proof that we have now before us the very text prepared by command of the unfortunate Caliph. There is probably in the world no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text. The various readings are wonderfully few in number, and are chiefly confined to differences in the vowel points and diacritical signs. But these marks were invented at a later date. They did not exist at all in the early copies, and can hardly be said to affect the text of Othman.

"Since, then, we possess the undoubted text of Othman's recension, it remains to be enquired whether that text was an honest reproduction of Abu Bakr's edition, with the simple reconciliation of unimportant variations. There is the fullest ground for believing that it was so. No early or trustworthy traditions throw suspicion upon Othman of tampering with the Coran in order to support his own claims. The Sheeahs of later times, indeed, pretend that Othman left out certain Suras or passages which favoured Ali. But this is incredible. . . .

"When Othman's edition was prepared, no open breach had taken place between the Omeiyads and the Alyites. The unity of Islam was still complete and unthreatened. Ali's

pretensions were as yet undeveloped. No sufficient object can, therefore, be assigned for the perpetration by Othman of an offence which Moslems regard as one of the blackest dye . . . At the time of the recension, there were still multitudes alive who had the Coran, as originally delivered, by heart; and of the supposed passages favouring Ali—had any ever existed—there would have been numerous transcripts in the hands of his family and followers. Both of these sources must have proved an effectual check upon any attempt at suppression. Fourth: The party of Ali shortly after assumed an independent attitude, and he himself succeeded to the Caliphate. Is it conceivable that either Ali, or his party, when thus arrived at power, would have tolerated a mutilated Coran—mutilated expressly to destroy his claims? Yet we find that they used the same Coran as their opponents, and raised no shadow of an objection against it. The insurgents are indeed said to have made it one of their complaints against Othman that he had caused a new edition to be made, and had committed the old copies of the sacred volume to the flames; but these proceedings were objected to simply as unauthorised and sacrilegious. No hint was dropped of alteration or omission. Such a supposition, palpably absurd at the time, is altogether an after-thought of the modern Sheeas.

"We may then safely conclude that Othman's recension was, what it professed to be, namely, the reproduction of Abu Bakr's edition, with a more perfect conformity to the dialect of Mecca, and possibly a more uniform arrangement of the component parts—but still a faithful reproduction. The most important question yet remains, viz., Whether Abu Bakr's edition was itself an authentic and complete collection of Mahomet's Revelations. The following considerations warrant the belief that it was authentic and in the main as complete as at the time was possible.

"First.—We have no reason to doubt that Abu Bakr was a sincere follower of Mahomet, and an earnest believer in the divine origin of the Coran. His faithful attachment to the Prophet's person, conspicuous for the last twenty years of his life, and his simple, consistent, and unambitious deportment as Caliph, admit no other supposition. Firmly believing the revelations of his friend to be the revelations of God himself, his first object would be to secure a pure

and complete transcript of them. A similar argument applies with almost equal force to Omar and the other agents in the revision. The great mass of Mussulmans were undoubtedly sincere in their belief. From the scribes themselves, employed in the compilation, down to the humblest Believer who brought his little store of writing on stones or palm-leaves, all would be influenced by the same earnest desire to reproduce the very words which their Prophet had declared as his message from the Lord. And a similar guarantee existed in the feelings of the people at large, in whose soul no principle was more deeply rooted than an awful reverence for the supposed word of God. The Coran itself contains frequent denunciations against those who should presume to 'fabricate anything in the name of the Lord,' or conceal any part of that which He had revealed. Such an action, represented as the very worst description of crime, we cannot believe that the first Moslems, in the early ardour of their faith and love, would have dared to contemplate.

"Second.—The compilation was made within two years of Mahomet's death. We have seen that several of his followers had the entire revelation . . . by heart; that every Moslem treasured up more or less some portions in his memory; and that there were official Reciters of it, for public worship and tuition, in all countries to which Islam extended. These formed a living link between the Revelation fresh from Mahomet's lips, and the edition of it by Zeid. Thus the people were not only sincere and fervent in wishing for a faithful copy of the Coran: they were also in possession of ample means for realising their desire, and for testing the accuracy and completeness of the volume placed in their hands by Abu Bakr.

"Third.—A still greater security would be obtained from the fragmentary transcripts which existed in Mahomet's life-time, and which must have greatly multiplied before the Coran was compiled. These were in the possession, probably, of all who could read. And as we know that the compilation of Abu Bakr came into immediate and unquestioned use, it is reasonable to conclude that it embraced and corresponded with every extant fragment; and therefore, by common consent, superseded them. We hear of no fragments, sentences, or word intentionally omitted by

the compilers, nor of any that differed from the received edition. Had any such been discoverable, they would undoubtedly have been preserved and noticed in those traditional repositories which treasured up the minutest and most trivial acts and sayings of the Prophet.

"Fourth.—The contents and the arrangement of the Corān speak forcibly for its authenticity. All the fragments that could be obtained have, with artless simplicity, been joined together. The patchwork bears no marks of a designing genius or moulding hand. It testifies to the faith and reverence of the compilers, and proves that they dared no more than simply collect the sacred fragments and place them in juxtaposition.

"The conclusion, which we may now with confidence draw, is that the editions of Abu Bakr and of Othman were not only faithful, but, so far as the materials went, complete; and that whatever omissions there may have been, were not on the part of the compilers intentional . . . we may upon the strongest presumption affirm that every verse in the Corān is the genuine and unaltered composition<sup>3</sup> of Mahomet himself."<sup>4</sup>

### *The Slanderers of Islām*

We have quoted Sir William Muir at length. Hence, we do not need to bring further quotations from the work of Father Lammens, Von Hammer, and other orientalistes who hold this view. All these are absolutely certain that the Qur'ān which we recite today contains all that Muḥammad reported in all candidness as having been revealed to him from his Lord. If a certain group of orientalistes do not agree and insist that the Qur'ān is forged without regard to these rational proofs which Muir had listed and which most orientalistes had in fact taken from Muslim historians and scholars, it is in order to slander Islām and its Prophet. Such is the dictate of hate and resentment. However clever and adept such orientalistes may be in formulating their slander, they will never be able to pass it as genuine scientific research; nor will they ever be able to fool any Muslims, except perhaps those young men deluded enough to think that free research demands of them the denial of their tradition and the naive acceptance of any nicely presented falsehood and attacks against their legacy, regardless of the validity or falsity of its premises and assumptions.

We could have quoted these same arguments of Sir William Muir and other orientalist directly from their primary Muslim sources as written by the scholars of Islām. But we have preferred to quote them in the words of an orientalist in order to show those of our youths who are spellbound by western works that precision in scientific research and a candid desire to seek the truth are sufficient to lead anyone to the ultimate facts of history. It was also our intention to show that the investigator ought to be very exact and precise in his investigation if he is to arrive at an understanding of his objective unaffected by ulterior motives or prejudice. Some orientalists undoubtedly arrive at the truth in some cases; others have not been as fortunate. The research which we have conducted in the writing of this book has convinced us that as regards the problem which the life of the Prophet poses to the scholar most of the orientalists have indeed erred.

### *Proper Methodology*

It behooves us here to remember that the researcher should never assert or deny a thesis until his research and analysis have led him to perfect conviction that he has actually grasped all there is to know concerning the given problem. Here, the historian stands in the same predicament as his colleague researcher in the natural sciences. Such is his duty regardless of whether the material he analyzes is the work of an orientalist or that of a Muslim scholar. If we sincerely seek the truth, our duty is to scrutinize critically all that the Arab and the Muslim scholars have written in the fields of medicine, astronomy, chemistry and other sciences, and to reject all that does not hold its ground before the tribunal of science and to confirm that which does. The search for truth imposes upon us such exactitude in historical matters even though they may be related to the life of the Prophet—may God's peace and blessing be upon him. The historian is not a mere reporter. He is also a critic of what he reports, analyzing it and ascertaining the truth that it contains. There is no criticism without analytic scrutiny; and science and knowledge constitute the foundation of such criticism and analysis.

The exacting analysis which we have quoted in the foregoing pages regarding the Qur'ān is not enough. It does not obviate the need to respond to the letter of that Egyptian Muslim who naively believes all the writings of the orientalists, more par-



ticularly their claim that verses have been added to the Qur'ān regarding the name of the Prophet, that it was once "Qutham" or "Quthāmah." This claim is false, and it is motivated by the same ulterior motive that stands behind the charge of the forgery of the Qur'ān.

Let us then return to the last point in the letter of our young Muslim Egyptian author. He says that the investigations of the orientalists have established that the Prophet suffered from epilepsy, that the symptoms of the disease were all present in him and that he used to lose consciousness, perspire, fall into convulsions and sputter. After recovering from such seizures, the claim continues, Muhammad would recite to the believers what he then claimed to be a revelation from God, whereas that was only an aftereffect of the epileptic fits which he suffered.

### *The Slander of Epilepsy*

To represent the phenomenon of Muhammad's revelations in these terms is, from the standpoint of scientific research, the gravest nonsense. The fit of epilepsy leaves the patient utterly without memory of what has taken place. In fact, the patient completely forgets that period of his life and can recollect nothing that has happened to him in the meantime because the processes of sensing and thinking come to a complete stop during the fit. Such are the symptoms of epilepsy as science has established them. This was not the case at all with the Prophet at the moment of revelation, for his cognitive faculties used to be strengthened—rather than weakened—and do so to a superlative degree hitherto unknown by the people who knew him most. Muhammad used to remember with utmost precision what he received by way of revelation and recited it to his companions without a flaw. Moreover, revelation was not always accompanied by paroxysms of the body. Much of it took place while the Prophet was perfectly conscious, during his usual wakefulness. We have advanced sufficient evidence for this in our discussion of the revelation of the *surah* "al Fath" upon return of the Muslims from Makkah to Yathrib after signing the Pact of Hudaibiyah.<sup>5</sup>

Scientific investigation therefore reveals that the case of Muhammad was not one of epilepsy. For this reason very few orientalists have upheld this claim and these turn out to be the same authors who upheld the charge of forgery against the Qur'ān. Obviously, in charging Muhammad with epilepsy, their

motivation was not the establishment of historical fact but the derogation of the Prophet in the eyes of his Muslim followers. Perhaps, they thought, propagation of such views would cast some suspicion upon his revelation, for it was precisely the revelation that came as a result of the so-called epileptic fits. This, of course, makes them all the more blameworthy and, from the standpoint of science, positively in error.

### *Return to Science*

Had these western orientalists been candid, they would not have presented their non-scientific claims in the name of science. They did so in order to delude the ignorant who, ignorant though they be of the symptoms of the epileptic disease, are prevented by their own naïveté from checking the orientalists' claims against the writings and opinions of the men of the medical sciences. A consultation of medical literature would have quickly exposed the errors of the orientalists, deliberate or accidental, and convinced them that in an epileptic fit all the intellectual and spiritual processes come to an absolute stop. When in a fit, the epileptic patient is either in a ridiculously mechanical state of motion or on a rampage injurious to his fellow men. He is utterly unconscious, unknowing of what he himself does, or of what happens to him, very much like the somnambulant who has no control over his movements during his sleep and who cannot remember them when he wakes up. A very great difference separates an epileptic fit from a revelation in which an intense and penetrating consciousness establishes, in full knowledge and conviction, a contact with the supernal plenum that enables the prophet to report and convey his revelation. Epilepsy, on the other hand, stops cognition. It reduces its patient to a mechanical state devoid of either feeling or sensation. Revelation is a spiritual heightening with which God prepares His prophet to receive from Him the highest and apodeictic cosmic truths that he may convey them to mankind. Science may eventually reach some of these truths and discover the secrets and laws of the universe. The rest may never become object of human knowledge until existence on this earth has come to an end. Nonetheless, these truths are apodeictically certain, furnishing true guidance to the earnest believer though they remain opaque to the ignorant whose hearts are locked and whose vision is dim.

*Incapacity of Science in Some Fields*

We would have understood and appreciated the western orientalists having said: "Revelation is a strange psychic phenomenon inexplicable in terms of contemporary science." Such a statement would mean that despite its wide scope and penetration, our science is still unable to explain many spiritual and psychic phenomena of which revelation is one. This statement is neither objectionable nor strange. Science is still unable to explain many natural, cosmic phenomena. The nature of the sun, moon, stars, and planets is still largely a matter for hypothesis. These heavenly bodies are only some of what the human eye, whether naked or through the telescope, reveals to us of the cosmos. Many of the inventions of the twentieth century that we presently take for granted were regarded by our predecessors in the nineteenth century as pure fiction. Psychic and spiritual phenomena are now subject to careful scientific study. But they have not yet been subject to the dominion of science so that it could be made to reveal their permanent role. We have often read about phenomena witnessed by the men of science and ascertained by them without explanation in terms coherent with scientific knowledge. Psychology, for instance, is a science which is not yet certain of the structures of many areas of psychic life. If this uncertainty is true of everyday phenomena, the demand to explain all the phenomena of life scientifically must be a shameful and futile exaggeration.

The revelations of Muhammad were phenomena witnessed by his Muslim contemporaries. The more they heard the Qur'ān, the more convinced they became of the truth of these revelations. Among these contemporaries were many of extreme intelligence. Others were Jews and Christians who had argued with the Prophet for a long time before, and they believed in his mission and trusted his revelation in every detail. Some men of Quraysh had accused Muhammad of magic and madness. Later, convinced that he was neither a magician nor a madman, they believed in and followed him. Since all these facts are certain, it is as unscientific to deny the phenomenon of revelation as it is unworthy of the men of science to speak of it in derogative terms. The man of science candid in his search for the truth will not go beyond asserting that his discipline is unable to explain the phenomenon of revelation according to the materialistic theory. But he will never deny the factuality of revelation as reported

by the companions of the Prophet and the historians of the first century of Islām. To do otherwise would be to fall under prejudice and betray the spirit of science.

*Slander against Muhammad Is Argumentum ad Hominem*

Such obstinate prejudice only proves the determined concern of its author to arouse suspicion in Islām itself. Such people have been incapable of arguing against Islām because they had found it sublimely noble, simple, and easy to understand, and realized that these qualities are the sources of its strength. They hence resort to the trick of the impotent who shifts attention from the great idea beyond his reach to the person advocating it. That is the *argumentum ad hominem* fallacy which every scholar should seek to avoid. It is natural for men to concern themselves with ideas and not with the personal circumstances of their authors and advocates. Men do not give themselves the trouble to investigate the roots of a tree whose fruits they had found delectable, nor the fertilizer which had helped it to grow, as long as their purpose is not to plant a similar or better tree. When they analyze the philosophy of Plato, the plays of Shakespeare, or the paintings of Raphael, and find nothing objectionable in them, they do not look for blameworthy aspects in the lives of these great men who constitute humanity's glory and pride. And if they try to fabricate charges against these persons, they will never succeed in convincing anyone. They only succeed in betraying themselves and exposing their ulterior motives. Casting resentment in the form of scientific research does not alter it from being what it is: namely resentment. Resentment refuses to recognize the truth; and the truth will always be too proud to allow resentment to be its source or associate. Such is the case of the orientalists' charges against the person of the Arab Prophet Muhammad, Seal of the Prophets; and that is why their charges fall to the ground.

That is all I have to say by way of response to those orientalists to whom the letter of the Egyptian Muslim had referred. Having thus refuted their views, let me now direct my attention to a number of observations made on the first edition of this book by the Islāmicists at home.

It is my earnest hope that such base charges unworthy of science and unacceptable to scholars will never be repeated again. Perhaps, hitherto, the orientalists felt themselves excused

on the grounds that they were writing for the consumption of their fellow Christians and Europeans and that they were actually discharging a national or religious duty imposed upon them by a patriotism or faith which requires scholarly form to make its propaganda palatable. Our day, however, is different. Communication between the various corners of the globe by means of radio broadcasting and the press has made it possible for anything said or published in Europe or America today to become known throughout the Orient in that same day or even the same hour. It is therefore the duty of those who assume the scholarly profession and the pursuit of truth to tear away from their hearts and eyes every curtain of national, racial, or religious isolation. They should realize that whatever they say or write will soon reach the ears of all men throughout the world and will be subject to universal criticism and scrutiny. The absolute and unconditional truth should be the objective of every one of us; and let us all take due care to connect the present reality of mankind with its past, to regard humanity as one great unit undivided by nationality, race or religion. Let such connection be the bond of free fraternity in the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty, and the noblest ideal that humanity has ever known. Such a bond is alone capable of guiding humanity in its quick march toward happiness and perfection.

### *Observations of Muslim Islāmicists*

Whereas the naive believers in the exaggerations of the orientalists blame us for having recourse to the Arabic sources and depending upon them, a number of Muslim Islāmicists blame us for turning to the writings of the orientalists rather than limiting ourselves to the Islāmic biographies and books of Ḥadīth. The latter have also criticized us for not following the same method as these ancient books.

It was on this basis that some of them made friendly observations in hope of reaching the fact of the matter in question. Others made observations which betray such ignorance or prejudice as no scholar would wish to associate himself with. The former took note of the fact that we have not reported the miracles of Muḥammad as the biographies and Ḥadīth have done. In this regard we wrote in the conclusion of our first edition: "The Life of Muḥammad, therefore, has realized the highest ideals possible to man. Muḥammad—may God's peace

and blessing be upon him—was very careful that the Muslims should think of him as a human to whom revelation came. He never accepted that any miracle be attributed to him other than his association with the advent of the Qur'ān, and actually told this much to his companions." As regards the story of the splitting of Muhammad's chest we wrote: "Orientalists as well as Muslim scholars take their attitude towards this event in the life of Muhammad on the grounds that Muhammad's whole life was all too human and noble and that he never resorted to miracles as previous prophets had done, in order to prove the veracity of his revelation. In taking this attitude, the above-mentioned thinkers rely upon the Arab and Muslim historians who share their view and who deny any place in the biography of the Arab Prophet to all that is irrational. They regard their stand as being in perfect accord with the Qur'ān's call to man to study the creation of God and discover therein His immutable laws. They find the claim for miracles incoherent with the Qur'ān's condemnation of the associationists as men who do not reason, as men who have no faculties with which to reason." Other more considerate critics criticized us for having mentioned at all the orientalists' attacks upon the Prophet, though we did so but to refute them. In their opinion, this procedure does not accord with the veneration due to the person of the Prophet—may God's blessing be upon him. Lastly, there is the class of prejudiced critics who were known even before the first edition of this book had appeared and, indeed, even before my researches had been collected in book form. Their strongest criticism was that I have given my work the title, "The Life of Muhammad," without joining it to an invocation of peace and blessing upon him. Such invocations occur frequently in the course of the book. I had thought, nonetheless, that they would discover their prejudice once the title page of the first edition came out decorated, as it was, with the verse: "God and his angels bless the Prophet. O you who believe, invoke God's peace and blessing upon him and salute him with the salutation of peace." I had also thought that the method used in this book would itself dissolve their prejudice. By insisting as they did, however, they betrayed their ignorance of Islāmic truths and their satisfaction with the imitation of their ancestors.

Let us begin by answering their false criticism in the hope that neither they nor any others will repeat it regarding this or any other book. We shall refuse their criticism by turning to

the books of the classical leaders of Islāmic knowledge. Everyone will then realize the free stand Islām has taken *vis-à-vis* all verbal restrictions and will then appreciate the *ḥadīth*, "This religion is indeed sound. Analyze it as you wish, but gently. You will never find a flaw therein." Abū al Baqā' wrote in his book, *Al Kullīyyāt*: "Writing the invocation of peace and blessing on Muhammad at the beginning of a book occurred during the 'Abbāsī period. That is why the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī and others are devoid of it." The majority of the great men of Islāmic knowledge agree that the invocation of peace and blessing upon the Prophet need not be made by the Muslim more than once in his lifetime. In his book *Al Baḥr al Rā'iq*, ibn Nujaym wrote: "The religious imperative implied in the divine command, 'Invoke upon him God's peace and blessing,' is that it should be made at least once in a lifetime whether during or outside the prayer. For no command by itself implies repetition. On this there is no disagreement." Likewise, al Shāfi'ī contended with his colleagues on "whether or not the invocation of God's peace and blessing on the Prophet is imperative during the prayer or outside of it. Prayer is itself invocation. As it stands in the above mentioned verse, to invoke God's peace and blessing upon the Prophet simply means that one should ask God to bless the Prophet and to salute him the salutation of peace." That is the lesson which the Muslim men of knowledge and their leaders have taught in this regard. It proves that those who claim that this invocation is imperative whenever the name of the Prophet is mentioned or written are simply exaggerating. Had they known the foregoing facts, and that the greatest traditionists had not written such an invocation regarding the Prophet on the title pages or beginnings of their collections of *ḥadīths*, they would perhaps have avoided falling into their present error.

### *Refutation of the Orientalists and Its Method*

As to those who claim that it does not become a Muslim scholar to repeat the attacks of the Orientalists and the missionaries against the Prophet even in order to refute them, they have really nothing to stand upon except an Islāmic emotion which we salute. From the religious as well as scholarly points of view, they simply have no argument at all. The Holy Qur'ān itself reported much of what the associationists of Makkah used to

say about the Prophet and refuted them with clear and eloquent argument. The Arabic style of the Qur'ān is the highest and its morals the noblest." It mentioned the accusation of the Quraysh that Muhammad was either possessed or a magician. It said: "We do know that they say that it is only a man who teaches Muhammad the Qur'ān. But the tongue of him to whom they refer by this insinuation is foreign whereas this Qur'ān is in the Arabic tongue, plain and clear."<sup>6</sup> There are many such statements in the Qur'ān. Moreover, an argument is not scientifically refuted unless it is honestly and precisely stated. In writing this book, my purpose has been to reach objective truth by means of scholarly research. And I have written my book so that both Muslims and non-Muslims may read it and be convinced of this objective truth. Such a purpose cannot be achieved unless the scholar be honest in his pursuit. He should never hesitate to acknowledge the truth whencesoever it may come.

### ***Biographies and Hadith Books***

Let us return to the first criticism the Muslim students of Islām have kindly directed to our work, namely, that we have not taken into consideration the Islāmic biographies and Hadith books and that we have not followed the same methodology as these ancient works. It should suffice to say in reply to this criticism that I have resolved to follow the modern scientific method and to write in the style of the century and that I have taken this resolution because it is the only proper one in the eyes of the contemporary world, whether for historiography or any other discipline. This being the case, ancient methods are ruled out *a priori*. Between these and the methods of our age there is great difference, the most obvious of which is the freedom to criticise. Most of the ancient works were written for a religious purpose and as devotional exercises, whereas contemporary writers are interested only in scientific analysis and criticism. To say this much concerning my method and work should be sufficient answer to their criticism. But I see the need for a more detailed treatment in order to show the reasons why our classical scholars of the past did not, and those of the present should not, assume in wholesale fashion the veracity of all that the books of biography and Hadith have brought. It is also my intention to clarify the reasons why we ought to observe



the rules of scientific criticism as closely as possible in order to guard against all possible errors.

### *The Difference between These Books*

The first of these reasons is the difference of these books in their reporting of events supposed to have taken place in the life of the Arab Prophet. Those who studied these books have observed that the miracles and extraordinary events reported increased or decreased for no reason other than the change in the time when they were written. The earlier report fewer miracles than the later; and the miracles they do report are less unreasonable than those reported in later books. The oldest known biography, namely, that of ibn Hishām for example, has far less material than the *Tārīkh* of Abū al Fidā', than *Al Shifā'* of Qādi 'Ayyad and of most later writings. The same is true of the books of the Ḥadīth. Some of them tell a story and others omit it, or they report it and point out that it is not trustworthy. The objective researcher investigating these books must therefore have a standard by which he can evaluate the various claims. That which agrees with the standard he would find acceptable and that which does not, he would subject to closer scrutiny wherever possible.

Our ancestors have followed this method in their investigations at times, and they have omitted doing so at others. An example of their omission is the story of "the daughters of God." It is told that when the Prophet, under ever-increasing oppression of Quraysh, recited the Qur'ānic *surah* "al Najm" and arrived at the verse: "Consider al Lāt and al 'Uzzā; and Manāt, the third goddess,"<sup>10</sup> he added: "Those are the goddesses on high; their intercession with God is worthy of our prayers." He then went on reciting the *surah* to its end and when he finished, he prostrated himself in worship, and Muslims and associationists joined him and did likewise. This story was reported by ibn Sa'd in his *Al Tabaqāt al Kubrā* without criticism. It also occurs with little variation in some books of Ḥadīth. Ibn Ishāq, however, reported the story and judged it as being the fabrication of *zindīqs*.<sup>11</sup> In his *Al Bidāyah wa al Nihāyah fī al Tarīkh*, ibn Kathīr wrote: "They mentioned the story of the goddesses of Makkah, whereas we have decided to omit it for fear that the uninstructed may naively accept it as truth. The story was first reported in the books of Ḥadīth." He then reported a tradition from

Bukhārī in this regard and qualified it as being "unique to Bukhārī, rejected by Muslim." As for me, I did not hesitate to reject the story altogether and to agree with ibn Ishāq that it was the fabrication of *zindīqs*. In analyzing it I brought together several pieces of evidence. In addition to its denial of the infallibility of the Prophets in their conveyance of their divine messages, this story must also be subject to modern scientific criticism.

### *The Age of These Books*

The books of the ancestors should be closely scrutinized and criticised in a scientific manner because the most ancient of them was written a hundred or more years after the death of the Prophet. At that time, many political and religious movements were spreading throughout the Islamic Empire, each of which fabricated all kinds of stories and *hadiths* to justify its own cause. The later books, written during even more turbulent and unsettled times, are more vulnerable. Political struggles caused a great deal of trouble to the collectors of *Hadith* because they took utmost care in scrutinizing these various reports, rejecting the suspicious, and confirming only those which passed the severest tests. It is sufficient to remember here the travails of al Bukhārī in his travels throughout the Muslim World undertaken for this purpose. He told us that he had found some six hundred thousand *hadiths* current, of which only 4,000 he could confirm as true. The ratio is that of one to 150 *hadiths*. As for Abū Dāwūd, he could confirm 4,800 *hadiths* out of half a million. Such was the task of all collectors of *hadiths*. Nonetheless, many of the *hadiths* which they had found true after criticism were found untrue by a number of other scholars under further criticism. Such was the case of the goddesses. If such is the case of *Hadith*, despite all the efforts spent by the early collectors, how trustworthy can the later biographies of the Prophet be? How can their reports be taken without scientific scrutiny?

### *Effects of Islāmic Political Strife*

In fact, the political struggles of the first century of Islām caused the various parties to invent, and press into their service, a great number of stories and *hadiths*. No *Hadith* has been

committed to writing until the last years of the Umawī period. It was 'Umar ibn 'Abd al 'Azīz who ordered its collection for the first time. The job, however, was not completed until the reign of al Ma'mūn, the time when "the true *ḥadīth* was as discernible from the false as a white hair is in the fur of a black bull," to borrow the phrase of Dāraqutnī. The *Ḥadīth* was not collected in the first century of Islām perhaps because of the reported command of the Prophet: "Do not write down anything I say except the Qur'ān. Whoever has written something other than the Qur'ān, let him destroy it." Nonetheless, the *ḥadīths* of the Prophet were current in those days and must have been varied. During his caliphate, 'Umar ibn al Kḥaṭṭāb once tried to deal with the problem by committing the *Ḥadīth* to writing. The companions of the Prophet whom he consulted encouraged him, but he was not quite sure whether he should proceed. One day, moved by God's inspiration, he made up his mind and announced: "I wanted to have the traditions of the Prophet written down, but I fear that the Book of God might be encroached upon. Hence I shall not permit this to happen." He therefore changed his mind and instructed the Muslims throughout the provinces: "Whoever has a document bearing a prophetic tradition shall destroy it." The *Ḥadīth* therefore continued to be transmitted orally and was not collected and written down until the period of al Ma'mūn.

### *The Standard of Ḥadīth Criticism*

Despite the great care and precision of the *Ḥadīth* scholars, much of what they regarded as true was later proved to be spurious. In his commentary on the collection of Muslim, al Nawawī wrote: "A number of scholars discovered many *ḥadīths* in the collections of Muslim and Bukhārī which do not fulfill the conditions of verification assumed by these men." The collectors attached the greater weight to the trustworthiness of the narrators. Their criterion was certainly valuable, but it was not sufficient. In our opinion, the criterion for the *Ḥadīth* criticism, as well as standard for materials concerning the Prophet's life, is the one which the Prophet himself gave. He said: "After I am gone differences will arise among you. Compare whatever is reported to be mine with the Book of God; that which agrees therewith you may accept as having come from me; that which disagrees you will reject as a fabrication." This

valid standard is observed by the great men of Islām right from the very beginning. It continues to be the standard of thinkers today. Ibn Khaldūn wrote: "I do not believe any *ḥadīth* or report of a companion of the Prophet to be true which differs from the common sense meaning of the Qur'ān, no matter how trustworthy the narrators may have been. It is not impossible that a narrator appears to be trustworthy though he may be moved by ulterior motive. If the *ḥadīths* were criticised for their textual contents as they were for the narrators who transmitted them a great number would have had to be rejected. It is a recognized principle that a *ḥadīth* could be declared spurious if it departs from the common sense meaning of the Qur'ān from the recognized principles of the Shari'ah,<sup>12</sup> the rules of logic, the evidence of sense, or any other self-evident truth." This criterion, as given by the Prophet as well as Ibn Khaldūn, perfectly accords with modern scientific criticism.

True, after Muhammad's death the Muslims differed, and they fabricated thousands of *ḥadīths* and reports to support their various causes. From the day Abū Lu'lu'ah, the servant of al Mughirah, killed 'Umar ibn al Khattāb and 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān assumed the caliphate, the old pre-Islāmic enmity of Banū Hāshim and Banū Umayyah reappeared. When, upon the murder of 'Uthmān, civil war broke out between the Muslims, 'A'ishah fought against 'Alī and 'Alī's supporters consolidated themselves into a party, the fabrication of *ḥadīths* spread to the point where 'Alī ibn Abū Tālib himself had to reject the practice and warn against it. He reportedly said: "We have no book and no writing to read to you except the Qur'ān and this sheet which I have received from the Prophet of God in which he specified the duties prescribed by charity." Apparently, this exhortation did not stop the *Ḥadīth* narrators from fabricating their stories either in support of a cause they advocated, or of a virtue or practice to which they exhorted the Muslims and which they thought would have more appeal if vested with prophetic authority. When the Banū Umayyah firmly established themselves in power, their protagonists among the *Ḥadīth* narrators deprecated the prophetic traditions reported by the party of 'Alī ibn Abū Tālib, and the latter defended those traditions and propagated them with all the means at their disposal. Undoubtedly they also deprecated the traditions reported by 'A'ishah, "Mother of the Faithful." A humorous piece of reportage was given us by Ibn 'Asākir who wrote: "Abu Sa'd Isma'īl ibn al Muthannā

al Istrabādhi was giving a sermon one day in Damascus when a man stood up and asked him what he thought of the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet: 'I am the city of knowledge and 'Alī is its gate.' Abu Sa'd pondered the question for a while and then replied: 'Indeed! No one knows this *ḥadīth* of the Prophet except those who lived in the first century of Islām. What the Prophet had said, he continued, was, rather, "I am the city of knowledge; Abū Bakr is its foundation; 'Umar, its walls; 'Uthmān its ceiling; and 'Alī its gate.' The audience was quite pleased with his reply and asked him to furnish them with its chain of narrators. Abu Sa'd could not furnish any chain and was terribly embarrassed." Thus *ḥadīths* were fabricated for political and other purposes. This wanton multiplication alarmed the Muslims because many ran counter to the Book of God. The attempts to stop this wave of fabrication under the Umayyids did not succeed. When the 'Abbāsids took over, and al Ma'mūn assumed the caliphate almost two centuries after the death of the Prophet, the fabricated *ḥadīths* numbered in the thousands and hundreds of thousands and contained an unimaginable amount of contradiction and variety. It was then that the collectors applied themselves to the task of putting the *Ḥadīth* together and the biographers of the Prophet wrote their biographies. Al Wāqidi, ibn Hishām and al Madā'inī lived and wrote their books in the days of al Ma'mūn. They could not afford to contradict the caliphate and hence could not apply with the precision due the Prophet's criterion that his traditions ought to be checked against the Qur'ān and accepted only if they accorded therewith.

Had this criterion, which does not differ from the modern method of scientific criticism, been applied with precision, the ancient masters would have altered much of their writing. Circumstances of history imposed upon them the application of it to some of their writings but not to others. The later generations inherited their method of treating the biography of the Prophet without questioning it. Had they been true to history, they would have applied this criterion in general as well as in detail. No reported events disagreeing with the Qur'ān would have been spared, and none would have been confirmed but those which agreed with the Book of God as well as the laws of nature. Even so, these *ḥadīths* would have been subject to strict analysis and established only with valid proof and incontestable evidence. This stand was taken by the greatest Muslim scholars of the past as well as of the present. The grand Shaykh

of al Azhar, Muḥammad Mustafā al Marāghī, wrote in his foreword to this book: "Muḥammad—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—had only one irresistible miracle—the Qur'ān. But it is not irrational. How eloquent is the verse of al Busayrī: 'God did not try us with anything irrational. Thus, we fell under neither doubt nor illusion.'"<sup>13</sup>

The late Muḥammad Rashīd Ridā, editor of *al Manār*, wrote in answer to our critics: "The most important objection which the Azharis and the Ṣūfīs raise against Haykal concerns the problem of the miracles. In my book, *Al Waḥy al Muḥammadī*, I have analyzed the problem from all aspects in the second chapter and the second section of the fifth chapter. I have established there that the Qur'ān alone is the conclusive proof of the prophethood of Muḥammad—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—as well as of the other prophets of their messages and prophecies regarding him. In our age it is impossible to prove any work of the Prophet except by the Qur'ān. From its standpoint, supernatural events are *ipso facto* doubtful. Besides the ubiquitous reports of their occurrence in all ages and places, they are believed in by the superstitious of all faiths. I have also analyzed the causes of this predilection for belief in miracles and distinguished the miraculous from the spiritual and shown the relationship of both to cosmic laws."<sup>14</sup>

In his book, *Al Islām wa al Nasrāniyyah*, Muḥammad 'Abduh, the great scholar and leader wrote: "Islām, therefore, and its demand for faith in God and in His unity, depend only on rational proof and common sense human thinking. Islām does not overwhelm the mind with the supernatural, confuse the understanding with the extraordinary, impose acquiescent silence by resorting to heavenly intervention, nor does it impede the movement of thought by any sudden cry of divinity. All the Muslims are agreed, except those whose opinion is insignificant, that faith in God is prior to faith in prophethood and that it is not possible to believe in a prophet except after one has come to believe in God. It is unreasonable to demand faith in God on the ground that the prophets or the revealed books had said so, for it is unreasonable to believe that any book had been revealed by God unless one already believed that God exists and that it is possible for Him to reveal a book or send a messenger."

I am inclined to think that those who wrote biographies of the Prophet agreed with this view. The earlier generation of them could not apply it because of the historical circumstances

in which they lived. The later generation of them suspended the principle deliberately on account of their belief that the more miraculous their portrayal of the Prophet, the more faith this would engender among their audience. They assumed, quite naively, that the inclusion of these extraneous matters into his biography achieved a good purpose. Had they lived to our day and seen how the enemies of Islām had taken their writings as an argument against Islām and its people, they would have followed the Qur'ān more closely and agreed with al Ghazzālī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, al Marāghī, and all other objective scholars. And had they lived in our day and age, and witnessed how their stories have alienated many Muslim minds and hearts instead of confirming their faith, they would have been satisfied with the indubitable proofs and arguments of the Book of God.

## Reports Condemned by Reason and Science

Now that the defect of reports condemned by reason and science has become obvious, scientific and critical analysis of the materials involved is demanded. This is equally the demand of Islām and a service to it as well as to the history of the Arab Prophet. It is a necessary requisite if that history is to illuminate the road of mankind towards high culture and civilization.

## The Qur'ān and Miracles

We will quickly agree with the views of the objective Muslim scholars as soon as we compare a number of narratives from the biography and Hadith books with the Qur'an. The latter told us that the Makkans had asked the Prophet to perform some miracles if they were to believe in him; it mentioned specifically their demands, and refuted them. God said:

وَكَلَّا لَآنْ تُؤْمِنُ كَلْفَ حَتَّىٰ تُفْعَلَ لِنَا مِنَ الْكُفْرِ يَبْهُتُونَ ۚ أَوْ تَكُونَ لَكُمُ الْجَنَّةُ مِمَّنْ يُفْسِدُونَ فِيهَا  
فَتُخْرَجُونَ الْأَنفُسُ مِنْهَا لِيُتَبَخَّرُوا ۚ وَكَانَتْ هَذِهِ الْأَنفُسُ أَعْتَقَتْ ۖ أَذَاتَا فِي الْإِنشَاءِ وَالْمُنَافِقَةِ ۚ قَبِيلًا ۚ  
أَوْ تَكُونَ لَكُمُ الْيَتَامَىٰ مِنْ زُخْرَفٍ ۚ أَوْ تُنْفَىٰ فِي السَّمَاءِ ۚ وَكُنْ تَؤْمِنُ رَبُّكَ ۚ حَتَّىٰ تُكَلَّمَ عَلَيْكَ الْكُتُبُ ۚ وَتُرْوَىٰ  
فَلْيُصْبِحَنَّ سِرًّا ۚ هَلْ كُنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرًا رَّسُولًا

"They said that they will never believe in you unless you cause a fountain to spring forth from the earth; or create for yourself a garden of big trees and vines and cause abundant streams of

water to run from one side of it to the other, or cause heaven to fall upon them in pieces as you had claimed, or bring God and His angels before them face to face, or create for yourself a beauteous palace, or ascend to heaven in front of them. 'Nay,' they said to Muhammad, 'we will not believe in your ascension unless you send down upon us a book confirming that you have done all these things clearly and unequivocally.' Answer: 'Praised be my Lord: Have I ever claimed to be anything but a human and a messenger?' "16

God also said: "They swore their strongest oaths that if they could witness a miracle they would believe. Answer: 'Miracles are God's prerogative, not mine.' But what would convince you [Muhammad] that they will not believe even if such miracles were to take place? Let their mind and understanding remain as confused as ever. Let them wander aimlessly in their misguidance. Indeed, unless of course God wills for them to believe, they will not believe even if We sent them the angels, caused the dead to speak to them, and placed everything squarely before them. But most of them are ignorant."16 There is no mention in the whole Qur'ān of any miracle intended to support the prophethood of Muhammad except the Qur'ān, notwithstanding its acknowledgment of many of the miracles performed with God's permission by the prophets preceding Muhammad and description of the many other favors which God has bestowed upon him. What the Qur'ān did report about the Arab Prophet does not violate any of the laws of nature in the least degree.

### ***The Greatest Miracle***

Since this is the logic of the Book of God and is demanded by the advent of His Prophet, what reason could have caused some of the Muslims of the past, and still cause some of them in the present, to attribute miracles to Muhammad? It must be their reading in the Qur'ān of miracles performed by prophets preceding Muhammad and their jumping to the conclusion that such supernatural occurrences are necessary for prophethood. They thus believed the stories circulating about Muhammad's miracles despite the fact that they could not find any confirmation of them in the Qur'ān. They mistakenly believed that the more of them they could muster the more convinced they and their audiences would be of their faith. To compare the Arab Prophet with his predecessor prophets is to compare the incom-



parable. For he was the last of the prophets and the first one sent by God unto all mankind rather than unto any specific people alone. That is why God desired that the "miracle" of Muhammad be human and rational, though unmatched by any humans or genii. This miracle is the Qur'ān itself, the greatest that God permitted. He—may His glory be praised—willed that His Prophet's mission be established by rational argument and clear proof. He willed that His religion achieve victory in the life of His prophet and that men might see in his victory the might and dominion of God. Had God willed that a material miracle force the conversion of Makkah, the miracle would have occurred and would have been mentioned in the Qur'ān. But some men do not believe except in that which their reason understands and corroborates. The proper way to convince them would be to appeal to their understanding and reason. God made the Qur'ān Muhammad's convincing argument, a miracle of the "illiterate Prophet." He willed that men's entry into Islām and the sense of their faith in Him be dependent upon true conviction and apodeictic evidence. A religion thus founded would be worthy of the faith of all men in all times whatever their race or language.

Should a people convert to Islām today who did not need any miracle beside the Qur'ān, this fact would neither detract from their faith nor from the worth of their conversion. As long as a people is not itself recipient of a revelation, it is perfectly legitimate to subject all the reports of such revelation to the closest scrutiny. That which unquestionable proof confirms is acceptable; the rest may validly be put to question. To believe in God alone without associate does not need recourse to a miracle. Nor does it need more than consideration of the nature of this universe which God created. On the other hand, to believe in the Prophethood of Muhammad who, by command of God, called men precisely unto such faith, does not need any miracles other than the Qur'ān. Nor does it need any more than the presentation of the revealed text to consciousness.

Were a people to believe today in this religion without the benefit of any miracle other than the Qur'ān, its faithful would belong to one of the following kinds: the man whose mind and heart does not oscillate but is guided by God directly to the object of his faith, as was the case with Abū Bakr who believed without hesitation; and, the man who does not seek his faith in the miraculous but in the natural (i.e., the created world, un-

limited in space or time and running perfectly in accordance with eternal and immutable laws), and whose reason guides him from these laws of nature to the creator and fashioner thereof. Even if miracles did exist, they would constitute no problem for either kind of believer who regards them as mere signs of divine mercy. Many leaders of Islāmic knowledge regard this kind of faith as indeed the highest. Some of them even prescribe that faith should not stand on a foundation of fear of God's punishment or ambition to win His reward. They insist that it should be held purely for the sake of God and involve an actual annihilation of self in God. To Him all things belong; and so do we. To Him, we and all things shall return.

### *The Believers during the Life of the Prophet*

Those who believe today in God and in His Prophet and whose faith does not rest on miracles are in the same position as those who believed during the life of the Prophet. History has not reported to us that any one of those early companions had entered the faith because of a miracle he witnessed. Rather, it was the conclusive divine argument conveyed through revelation and the superlatively noble life of the Prophet himself which conducted those men to their faith. In fact, all biographies mention that a number of those who believed in Muḥammad before the *Isrā'* abandoned their faith when the Prophet reported to them that he had been transported during the night from the Mosque of Makkah to the Blessed One of Jerusalem. Even Surāqah ibn Ju'shum, who pursued Muḥammad on the latter's flight to Madīnah in order to capture him dead or alive and win the prize the Makkans had placed on his head, did not believe despite the miracle which the biographers have reported to have taken place on his way there. History has not reported a single case of an associationist who believed in Muḥammad because of a miracle performed. Islām has no parallel to the case of the magicians of Pharaoh whose rods were swallowed up by that of Moses.<sup>17</sup>

### *The Goddesses and Tabūk*

The classical biographies are not unanimous in their reportage of the so-called miracles. Many a time their narratives were subject to strong criticism despite their corroboration by the

books of Hadith. We have already referred to the question of the goddesses in this preface, and we have also treated the problem in detail in the course of this work. The story of the opening of Muhammad's chest as reported by Halimah, Muhammad's wet nurse, is equally inconclusive.<sup>18</sup> There is a difference of opinion concerning Halimah's reports as well as the age of Muhammad at which the story has supposedly taken place. Likewise, the reports of the biographies and of the Hadith concerning Zayd and Zaynab are devoid of foundation, as we shall have occasion to see later.<sup>19</sup> Similar disagreement exists as regards the story of the military expedition to Tabūk (Jaysh al 'Usrah). In his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Muslim reported from Mu'ādh ibn Jabal that "the Prophet told ibn Jabal and his companions who were marching to Tabūk: 'Tomorrow, but not before mid-day, you will, with God's leave, reach the spring of Tabūk. You will not, however, touch its waters until I come.' When we arrived, we found that two of our men had reached it before us and the spring had very little water. The Prophet asked the two men whether they had touched the water of the spring, and they confessed. He—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—criticized and scolded them as he should. They then filled a container with water from the spring. Mu'ādh said: 'The Prophet of God—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—washed his face and his hands and poured the water back into the spring whereupon the spring gushed forth abundantly (he might have said 'profusely') until all men drank and were satisfied. The Prophet then said: 'If you were to live long enough, O Mu'ādh, you would see this place full of gardens.'"<sup>20</sup>

In the biographies, on the other hand, the story of Tabūk is told in a different way without mention of any miracles. Thus we read in Ibn Hishām's *The Life of Muhammad*: "When, in the morning, the men discovered they had no water, they complained to the Prophet—may God's peace and blessing be upon him. He prayed to God, who then sent a rain cloud. So much rain fell that everybody drank his fill and filled his skin. Ibn Ishāq said: 'Asim ibn 'Umar ibn Qatādah, reporting from Maḥmūd ibn Labīd, who in turn was reporting what he heard from some men of the Banū 'Abd al Ashhal tribe, said: 'I said to Maḥmūd, 'Did these Muslims know that some hypocrites were among them'? He answered, 'Yes. Sometimes a man would tell a hypocrite even if he were his brother, father, uncle or fellow tribesman; at other times he would not be able to differentiate between them.' Maḥmūd continued: 'A fellow tribesman told

me of a well-known hypocrite who used to accompany the Prophet of God—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—wherever he went, and who was present at this expedition. After the miracle had taken place, we went to him and asked: 'Are you still in doubt after what you saw with your own eyes?' He answered, 'It was but a passing cloud.' "

Such a wide range of difference as separates the classical accounts of this story makes it impossible for us to affirm it conclusively. Those who apply themselves to the study of it should not stop at probable solutions which neither confirm nor deny the classical reports. Whenever they are confronted by a story not supported by positive evidence, the least they can do is to discard it. Should other investigators later on discover the required evidence, the duty of presenting the story with its proof-claims would devolve upon them.

### *My Methodology*

This is the method which I have followed in my study of the life of Muhammad, the Prophet of the Islāmic mission to mankind. It characterizes my work throughout; for ever since I decided to undertake this study I resolved that it would be conducted in accordance with the modern scientific method in all sincerity and for the sake of truth alone. That is what I announced in the preface of this book and prayed, in the conclusion of its first edition, that I may have accomplished, thereby paving the way for deeper and wiser investigations. I had hoped that this and similar studies would clear for science a number of psychic and spiritual problems and establish facts which would guide mankind to the new civilization for which it is groping. There is no doubt that deepening of analysis and extending the scope of the investigation would unlock many secrets which many people have thought for a long time to lie beyond scientific explanation. The clearer the understanding mankind achieves of the psychological and spiritual secrets of the world, the stronger man's relation to the world will become and, hence, the greater his happiness. Man will then be better able to rehabilitate himself in the world when he knows its secrets, just as he became better able to enjoy it when he understood the latent forces of electricity and radio.

It therefore behooves any scholar applying himself to such a study to address his work not only to the Muslims but to mankind as a whole. The final purpose of such work is not, as

some of them think, purely religious. Rather, it is, following the example of Muhammad, that all mankind may better learn the way to perfection. Fulfillment of this purpose is not possible without the guidance of reason and heart, and the conviction and certainty they bring when founded on true perception and knowledge. Speculative thinking based upon imprecise knowledge which is not conditioned by the scientific method is likely to go astray and point to conclusions far removed from the truth. By nature, our thinking is deeply influenced by temperament. Men with equal training and knowledge, common purpose and resolution, often differ from one another for no reason other than their difference in temperament. Some are passionate, deeply perceptive, over-hasty in their conclusions, mystical, stoic, ascetic, inclined towards matter, or utterly conditioned by it. Others are different, and their views of the world naturally separate them from one another. As far as artistic expression and practical living are concerned, this variety of the human kind is a great blessing. It is, however, a curse in the field of scientific endeavor which seeks to serve the higher benefit of mankind as a whole. The study of history should search for high ideals within the facts of human life. Anyone who applies himself to this search should therefore be free from passion and prejudice. No method succeeds as well in avoiding these pitfalls as the scientific method, and no method will more surely lead to error than that which uses the materials of history to propagate a certain view or bends them to corroborate a certain prejudice.

### *The Works of Orientalists*

Many western Orientalists have been affected in their so-called scientific research by their preconceptions and passions. The same is true of many Muslim authors as well. More surprising in both is the fact that each had taken the passionate and prejudiced propaganda of the other as basic sourcework, and each had claimed for his writing the objectivity which belongs to a research done for the sake of truth alone. Neither realized how deeply affected he was by his own vehement reaction to the propaganda of the other. Had either party taken the trouble to analyze objectively the work of the other, the respective claims would have dissolved and crumbled. Had any author kept his own predilections at bay, immunizing himself against them by applying scientific principles, his writings would have had a more lasting

effect on his readers. In this preface I have attempted to expose as briefly as possible some of the errors of both parties; I hope I have done so with fairness and objectivity.

It is not possible to expect the western Orientalists to carry out their researches in Islāmic matters with such precision and fairness, however sincere and scientific they may be. It is especially difficult for them to master the secrets of the Arabic language and to know its usage, its nuances and rules. Moreover, they are inevitably affected by the history of western Christianity which makes them regard all other religions with suspicion. The history of the struggle between Christianity and science affects equally the very few Orientalists who are still Christians. It causes them in their Islāmic studies to fall under the same préjudice which generally characterizes all their Christian or religious research: namely, that one or the other party's line must be vindicated against its opposite. The candid Orientalists, however, cannot be blamed for this. For no man can completely escape the conditioning of his time and place. Nonetheless, this conditioning vitiates their Islāmic researches and clouds their vision of the truth. All this imposes upon the Muslim scholars, whether in the religious or other fields of Islāmic research, the very grave burden of studying their legacy with precision and exactitude, according to the scientific method. Assisted as they are by their mastery of the Arabic language and understanding of Arab life in general, their researches should convince all or some Orientalists of their errors; these researchers should also persuade them to accept the new results readily and with intellectual satisfaction.

### *The Muslims and Research*

Such results will not be easy to achieve, nor are they impossible or altogether difficult. Patience, perseverance in study and research, sound judgment, and free thinking are all required. Moreover, this is an extremely grave matter, grave in its promise for or threat to the future of Islām, as well as mankind. It seems to me that to undertake it well, one must distinguish between two periods of Muslim history: the first begins with Muḥammad and ends with the murder of 'Uthmān; the second begins with the murder of 'Uthmān and ends with the closing of the gates of *ijtihād*. In the first period, Muslim agreement was complete. It stood unaffected by the conquest of foreign lands, the War of

Apostasy, the so-called "differences over the caliphate." After the murder of 'Uthmān, disagreement spread among the Muslims; civil war was declared between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah; insurrection and rebellion continued; and politics played a serious role even in the religious life itself. In order to help the reader appreciate this difference, let us compare the principles implied in the accession speeches of Abū Bakr and al Manṣūr al 'Abbāsī. The former said: "O men! Here I have been assigned the job of ruling over you while I am not the best among you. If I do well in my job, help me. If I do wrong, redress me. Truthfulness is fidelity, and lying is treason. The weak shall be strong in my eye until I restore to them their right, and the strong shall be weak in my eye until I have dispossessed them of that right. No people give up fighting for the cause of God but He inflicts upon them abject subjection; and no people give themselves to lewdness but He envelops them with misery. Obey me as long as I obey God and His Prophet. But if I disobey God's command or His Prophet, then no obedience is incumbent upon you. Rise to your prayer so he may have mercy on you." The other said: "O men! I am the power of God on His earth. I rule you with His guidance and confirmation. I am the guardian over His wealth and I manage it by His will and in accordance with His pattern. I disburse from it with His permission, for He has made me the lock. If He chooses to open me so that you may receive therefrom and be provided for, He will. And if He chooses to keep me locked, He will. . . ." A comparison of these two speeches is sufficient to realize the great change which had taken place in the basic rules of Muslim life in less than two centuries. It was a change from the rule of *shūrā*<sup>1</sup> to that of absolute power derived from divine right.

Revolts and successive changes of government and political principles were the cause of the retrogression and decay of the Islāmic state. Despite the fact that Islām and the civilization to which it gave birth continued to blossom two centuries after the murder of 'Uthmān, and despite the fact that after the first decay the Islāmic state was energized again to conquer many provinces and kingdoms first by the Saljūqs and then by the Moghuls, it was during the first period which came to an end with the murder of 'Uthmān that the true principles of Islāmic public life were established and crystallized. Therefore, one must look to that period alone if he seeks certitude regarding these principles. Later on, despite the blossoming of knowledge and science during

the Umawī and especially the 'Abbāsī periods, these normative principles were tampered with and often replaced by others which did not accord with the spirit of Islām. For the most part, this was done in pursuit of political *shu'ūbi* reasons.<sup>22</sup> It was the insincere converts from Judaism and Christianity as well as the Persians who propagated these new principles. They had no inhibition against the fabrication of *ḥadīths* and their attribution to the Prophet—may God's peace be upon him—nor against the fabrication of tales about the early caliphs contrary to what is known of their biographies and temperament.

None of the materials which have come to us from this late period can be depended upon without the strictest scrutiny and criticism; none may be scientifically accredited without subjection to impersonal analysis, absolutely free of prejudice. The first requirement consists of referring all controversial material concerning the Arab Prophet to the Qur'ān and of discarding all that disagrees therewith. As for the rest of the period ending with the murder of 'Uthmān, scientific and critical analysis should accredit the materials that have come to us and thus enable us to use them as reference in our analysis of later materials. If we do this with scientific precision, we may gain a true picture of the genuine principles of Islām and of early Islāmic life. We will grasp the mind and spirit of Islām which achieved such heights of power and vision that the Arab Bedouins who were caught by it sallied forth into the world to spread in a few decades the noblest humanism that history has ever known. Success in this task would lay bare for the benefit of humanity new horizons capable of leading it to communion with the realm of soul and spirit and the achievement of happiness and felicity, just as man's knowledge of electricity and radio and his resultant communion with the forces of nature have led to his greater enjoyment of his life on earth. Furthermore, our success in this undertaking would bring to Islām the same honor which belonged to it in its early history when the Arabs carried forth its high principles from the Peninsula to the farthest reaches of the earth.

If we are to serve truth, science and humanity, one of our foremost requirements is to deepen our study of the biography of the Arab Prophet in order to uncover therein the guidance mankind seeks. The Qur'ān is unquestionably the truest and most reliable source for such a study. It is the book which is absolutely free of error and which no doubt can penetrate. It is the only book whose text has remained for thirteen centuries, and will remain for the



rest of time, absolutely pure and unadulterated. The purity of the Qur'ānic text is and will forever remain the greatest miracle of all history. God said of it: "It is We who have revealed it and it is We who will guard it."<sup>23</sup> The Qur'ān will always remain as it once was, the only miracle of Muhammad. Of all that concerns his life, that is true which accords with the Qur'ān, and that is false which does not. I have attempted to heed this principle in this elementary study as precisely as I could. In going over the first edition of this work I praise God and thank Him for His guidance and pray that He will guide and provide for the continuation of the scientific study of the life of the Prophet.

"Oh God! It is upon You that we depend, to You that we have recourse, and to You that we shall return."<sup>24</sup>

## Preface to the Third Edition

This edition does not differ from the second except in a few words and phrases as demanded by clarity or syntactical precision. The changes are unnoticeable except in *verbatim* comparison. Hence, there is no need to mention them.

My reticence to undertake more serious emendation of the text is not due to any judgment on my part that in its second edition the book is perfect. I do not tire of repeating here what I said in the preface to the first edition, namely, that this book is merely the beginning of scientific Islāmic research in an important field. I have discussed many problems attendant upon such research in my book *Fi Manzil al Wahy* ["At the Locus of Revelation"] written after my pilgrimage and following the traces of the Prophet through Hijāz and Tihāmah. I therefore refer the reader to it. Preoccupied with other things during the last eight years I have not been able to pursue my study of the life of the Prophet, of his teaching, and the careers of his companions, nor to analyze in detail the general assertions of the concluding chapters of the second edition. But I hope God will grant me the power to do so in a separate book devoted entirely to the subject. Perhaps, after reading the conclusion of the present edition, the reader might even share this hope with me.

Finally, I thank God for the appreciation with which this book has been met by Muslim as well as non-Muslim readers, and for the reviews and announcements of it in the publications of East and West. I pray Him to guide those who undertake the continuation of this research that they may be capable of bringing it to its ultimate purpose of service to the truth.