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THE PEOPLE OF SCRIPTURE (*AHL AL-KITĀB*)

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The phrase *Ahl al-Kitāb*, often rendered literally in English as "People of the Book," appears over 30 times in the Qur'an, in more than a dozen suras.[1] As it is typically understood and used in later Muslim discourse, the term refers to the communities who received revelation before the mission of Muhammad and the advent of the Qur'an. On the basis of some passages in the Qur'an itself, this category may be interpreted as including not only the Jews and the Christians but also other communities such as the Zoroastrians (*majūs*, "Magians") and the "Sabians" (*ṣābiʾūn*), a group of scripturalists usually identified as Manichaeans, Mandaeans, or "Jewish-Christians" more broadly (cf. Q 2:62, 5:69, 22:17).

However, it is the Jews and the Christians to whom the term *Ahl al-Kitāb* is most commonly understood to apply in both Qurʾanic parlance and later Muslim usage, as the main communities defined by their fidelity to and reverence for the biblical tradition.[2] In some instances in the Qur'an, it is often unclear whether the term is being applied specifically to Jews or Christians. Sometimes it explicitly refers to both groups at once (as in Q 5:68, where the term *kitāb* – "scripture" or "book" – is applied to the Torah and the Gospels alike); in other cases, it seems to be employed indiscriminately or generically, as in a number of passages in which *Ahl al-Kitāb* are criticized for rejecting the Qur'anic prophet and his teachings, depicted as opponents of his community, and so forth.[3] It is perhaps not an overstatement to suggest that the term *Ahl al-Kitāb* epitomizes a fundamental ambivalence in the Qur'an, and thus in many Islamic cultures afterward, regarding the other, older monotheist traditions.

Strikingly, the phrase *Ahl al-Kitāb* appears more often in the Qur'an than direct references to *Yahūd* ("Jews") or *Naṣārā* ("Christians") and other related expressions.[4] The other term with which *Ahl al-Kitāb* shows some semantic overlap is *Banū Isrāʾīl* ("Israel" or "Israelites"), likewise a much more common term than either "Jew" or "Christian," attested over 40 times in more than 15 different suras of the Qur'an.[5] The discursive prominence of both *Banū Isrāʾīl* and *Ahl al-Kitāb* indicates the importance and relevance of biblical history to the present in which the Qur'an's original audience lived: viewing the contemporary social and religious landscape through a scriptural lens, the Qur'an sees group identity as determined by these communities' origins in revelatory moments in the past, especially their descent from the Israelites as the preeminent recipients of scripture ("scriptuaries") in pre-Islamic history.

Qur'an 4:153–155 is a paradigmatic passage in this regard. Here, the *Ahl al-Kitāb* (clearly Jews in this instance) are chastised for demanding that the Qur'anic prophet bring them a book from Heaven; by doing so, they recapitulate the sins of their ancestors, who contended with Moses,

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committed idolatry with the Golden Calf, transgressed their covenant, and slew their prophets.[6] In such passages, asserting that the prophet's interlocutors are heirs to the *kitāb* revealed to their ancestors establishes their clear continuity not with the Qur'anic prophet's community but rather with their erring forebears.

While the terms *Yahūd* and *Isrā'īl* retain ethnic connotations, the term *Ahl al-Kitāb* generally seems to transcend such distinctions, even if in some contexts it seems to refer specifically to Jews.[7] The Qur'anic noun *ahl*, attested dozens of times along with the cognate *āl*, most often denotes a "family" or "clan" (with a conjectured root meaning of people united by blood ties).[8] However, it can also signify a social grouping of people united by conviction, proximity, or circumstance. Thus the Sodomites are the *ahl* of the city in Q 15:67; the Egyptians are the *Ahl Fir'awn* – those under Pharaoh's dominion – in Q 54:41; and the *Ahl al-Nār* of Q 38:64 are evildoers condemned to the fires of Hell. Notably, we also sometimes find expressions such as "those to whom scripture was given" (*allādhīna ūtū al-kitāb* or *allādhīna ataynāhum al-kitāb*) standing in for *Ahl al-Kitāb*. It is thus likely that the locution is intended to signify a kind of group affiliation and association that supersedes familial and tribal bonds. In this, it is precisely parallel to the Qur'an's various locutions for its in-group, the *umma* or community following its prophet, membership in which is likewise understood to transcend genealogy, the primary principle of social organization in the society of pre-Islamic Arabia, the *Jāhiliyya*.[9]

The word *kitāb* appears in the Qur'an as a signifier for scripture – most often in connection with the Qur'an itself – over 200 times.[10] It has often been understood as denoting an actual physical book, even if this book exists beyond earthly time and space – as, for example, in the case of the well-known phrase *Umm al-Kitāb* ("Mother of the Book," Q 3:7, 13:39, 43:4), often represented in traditional commentary as a heavenly codex that is the supernal analogue to and matrix of earthly manifestations of divine revelation like the Qur'an (as well as the Torah, Gospels, and other scriptures before it).[11] However, nearly 20 years ago, the groundbreaking study of Daniel A. Madigan demonstrated that in Qur'anic parlance *kitāb* often refers to both the dynamic process of God's revelation to humanity and the multiple aurally and physically manifest artifacts of that process, whether they are literally or only figuratively "books."[12] This insight solves a number of cruxes presented by the Qur'an, not least of all the striking fact that Qur'anic discourse seems to refer to the Qur'an itself as *kitāb*, although at the time its verses were revealed, those verses were yet to be incorporated into an actual book, whether a physical object or a complete orally transmitted text.[13]

This is relevant to the proper understanding of the locution *Ahl al-Kitāb* because it exposes the degree to which Jews, Christians, and other communities identified through their association with one or another *kitāb* are not only marked by their possession of a literal book of scripture but are imagined as having originally come into being *as* communities through particular moments in a long process of divine self-disclosure through prophetic communication, a process conceptualized and represented through the figure of writing.[14] As this process gave rise to the Jews, Christians, and other communities in the past, so too is it taking place anew among the Arabs in the prophetic present of the Qur'an, which is wholly self-conscious of its status as a new instantiation of *kitāb* that is bringing a new community into being – as, for example, when the faithful are enjoined to say to the People of Scripture, "We believe in what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to you; your God and our God are one; it is to Him that we prostrate/submit (*muslimūn*)" (Q 29:46).[15] Notably, the next verse continues, in the voice of the Deity: "Thus have We revealed the Book to you; those to whom the Book has been revealed previously believe in it, and some others; none but unbelievers reject Our signs" (Q 29:47). Here the word *kitāb* is invoked twice, referring first to the Qur'an and then to a previous revelation, and they are, it is suggested, equal and equivalent manifestations of *kitāb*.

Taking all this into account, *Ahl al-Kitāb* would arguably best be rendered "the Scriptured" rather than "People of Scripture," "Scripturalists," or "Scriptuaries" – emphasizing these peoples' identities

as being grounded in the experience of a divinely initiated process of "scripturing" in which God has actively engaged humanity over millennia. It is worth reiterating that the Qur'an sees itself, its prophet, and his community as part of that process, not qualitatively different from those that came before.

In about a dozen of the occurrences of the phrase in Qur'anic discourse, *Ahl al-Kitāb* appears in the vocative form: "O People of Scripture. . . ." These people are not only a present reality in the social and religious world of the Qur'anic prophet; they are a living link to the prophetic and revelatory heritage of the past, particularly that of the Israelites, to which the Qur'an itself hearkens back and which it to a large degree assimilates and appropriates. It is certainly noteworthy as well that the majority of these addresses (most of which are found in a single sura, Q 3) to the *Ahl al-Kitāb* are admonitory, chastising them for their excesses and errors: "O People of Scripture, why do you disbelieve in the signs of God, which you yourselves have witnessed" (Q 3:70); "O People of Scripture, do not commit excesses in your religion" (Q 4:171); "Say, 'O People of Scripture, do you resent us only because we believe in God. . . ?'" (Q 5:59). One readily concludes that in the Qur'an's view, the *Ahl al-Kitāb* have failed to live up to the legacy of their ancestors who faithfully followed the prophets who received revelation and transmitted it to their communities. They are presently in the process of being supplanted by a new community laying claim to the *kitāb*, now being revealed again in a new iteration through the Qur'anic prophet.[16]

The Late Antique and Formative Islamic Context

Scripturalism is one of the distinctive marks of Late Antique culture. Not only were the centuries between the advent of a Christian Roman Empire and the Arab conquests instrumental for the canonization and dissemination of authoritative versions of the Bible and other scriptural formations, but engagement with scripture as a broad phenomenon, taking myriad forms, became a characteristic aspect of Late Antique religiosity generally, across communal boundaries. What has been termed "Torahcentrism" became increasingly central to Jewish identity, especially with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the increasing prominence of members of the rabbinic movement as communal leaders. At around the same time, a rich Christian culture of the book emerged as a manifestation of and eventual successor to the sophisticated Greco-Roman literary habitus that was virtually definitive of civilization in the Augustan Era and afterward. Although the available evidence is patchier, processes of canonization and discursive engagement with scripture became increasingly important for other groups as well, for example, Zoroastrians and Manichaeans. This is the phenomenon reflected in the Qur'an's incorporation of numerous groups (and not just Jews and Christians) under the rubric of *Ahl al-Kitāb*.

From the western Mediterranean as far east as Iran and Central Asia, the Bible furnishes the preeminent example of how scripture came to permeate culture, and communities' self-definition and articulation of their identity were increasingly expressed through exegetical, liturgical, artistic, and literary engagement with it, in a variety of cultural registers, geographical settings, and social environments. As much of the research on the phenomenon of revelation in the manifold forms that it took in Late Antiquity shows, the concept of revelation was held in creative tension with that of scripture as a canon, interacting with it in complex ways, for example, in yielding the idea of exegesis as a renewal of revelation.[17] The Qur'an represents a kind of logical conclusion to this trend, insofar as it presents itself as a revision or renovation of the original *kitāb* that underlies and is manifest in the Bible. It is not so much reinterpreting the canonical Bible of the Jews and Christians as restoring it to its original, uncorrupted, essential state.

Angelika Neuwirth's wide-ranging studies of the Qur'an over more than two decades represent the most significant research on the Qur'anic conception of *kitāb* – in the interrelated senses of writing and scripture – in its Late Antique context, vividly demonstrating its centrality to the

transformations in the religion and culture of Arabia that resulted in the emergence of Islam. For Neuwirth, the concept of *kitāb* as divine writing – "a new hypostasis of the word, the hypostasis of language" – wholly undergirds the Qur'an's sense of itself and self-representation to its audience, a direct challenge to the theology of the incarnate Word that lay at the heart of Christianity.[18] As an emergent scripture evolving in response to its audience's needs and reactions to its message, the Qur'an explicitly and self-consciously adopts a hermeneutic posture vis-à-vis both itself – that is, the sequential revelations in the unfolding of Qur'anic discourse before its audience over the course of decades – and the Bible as the preeminent scripture of old, perpetually revising and correcting the biblical tradition as amplified and modulated through the exegetical and liturgical traditions of both Jews and Christians. This hermeneutic dynamism is key both to the emergence of the Qur'anic corpus (and thus to the genesis of the community that arose in response to it) and to its reception and revision of the legacy of Israel.

Neuwirth's approach is a deliberate corrective to the dominant trend in older scholarship of emphasizing the Qur'an's passive dependence on Jewish and Christian tradition. In her view, the Qur'an is instead responding to and rearticulating the Bible as a mythic structure, engaging in a process concurrent with that of other, older monotheistic communities – what she terms an "epistemic revolution" in Late Antiquity – of which the transformation of pagan Arabia was perhaps the most significant result. The culmination of a prolonged process of exposure to and adaptation of the narratives and symbols associated with the legacy of Israel, the Qur'an's appropriation and reinterpretation of biblical myth served to reconfigure the social imaginary of pre-Islamic Arabia in a variety of ways.

One important example is the Qur'an's recasting of Abrahamic myths, directed toward the repudiation of the pre-Islamic Arab emphasis on genealogy (*nasab*) and the prestige it conveyed, in favor of a notion of spiritual descent in the Abrahamic mode based on piety and covenantal fidelity. The most obvious consequence of this adoption and adaptation of a biblically-based Abrahamic identity for the emergent prophetic community is the revalorization of the formerly pagan Kaʿba as a sign of Abraham's fealty to the one God, the rites of which any *muslim* or sincere "submitter" may partake in regardless of their family ties, social origins, or genealogical descent.[19]

The assimilation and adaptation of biblical tradition in Arab culture in the form of nascent Islam in the prophetic period was part of a larger tendency for marginal communities practicing traditional forms of religion to gradually integrate into the wider Near Eastern and Mediterranean *oikoumene* through religious and cultural transformations, especially through monotheization, a conspicuous trend in both Christian Rome and Sasanian Iran. The notion of divine writing/scripture encoded in *kitāb*, the preeminence of the idea of revelation as the basis of communogenesis, the enchanting of space and time through the overlay of biblical sacred history – these interrelated aspects of nascent Islam led to other scripturalists (or biblical scriptuaries) being recognized both as having commonalities with the new Arabian prophetic movement and as being its natural rivals, if not inevitable opponents. That is, the conception of *kitāb* at the foundation of nascent Islam made other communities literally legible as *Ahl al-Kitāb*, fellow "People of Scripture," living remnants of earlier moments of revelation, while also simultaneously marking them as deficient and superseded in relation to those who followed the new dispensation.

At some point in the proto-Islamic movement's development, it became necessary to draw distinctions between the followers of the new Arabian prophet and those who cleaved to the older dispensations; this most frequently took place through interventions into shared – and contested – sacred history. We have already noted the example of Q 4:153–155 and its alignment of the People of Scripture with the violation of the covenant and the sin of the Golden Calf, presumably deployed as admonition against Jewish opponents to the Qur'anic prophet. A similar example may be cited vis-à-vis Christians. As Gabriel Said Reynolds has lucidly demonstrated, the Qur'an's rejection of Christian trinitarianism and incarnationism are not simply matters of theological difference, as expressed, for example, in Q 4:171, which defines the excesses of *Ahl al-Kitāb* (here clearly

Christians) as the claims they made about Jesus, son of Mary, and in saying God is threefold and begat a son. Rather, these errors are understood to stem from momentous events in history, remembered and recorded differently in the scriptures of various groups. Though their genuine foundation in the ministry and revelation of Jesus is not contested, the Qur'an holds that some of Jesus's sincere *muslim* (again, in the literal sense of the word, "submitting" to God) followers went astray and distorted his message, giving rise to the separate religion of Christianity. Christians are thus severed both from the original faith of their founder and from an authentic recollection of what occurred after their community's foundation, since this corruption is recorded not in the canonical (but distorted) scripture of the Christians themselves but rather only in the Qur'an.[20] Christians are thereby established as part of a stratigraphy of error in the Qur'an, which distinguishes between the hopeless folly of polytheists (mostly the *umam khāliya* or "vanished nations," but by analogy the contemporary *mushrikūn* or "those who associate" created things with God); the Jews as the remnant of the guided people of Moses who have earned God's wrath for their ingratitude and disregard of God's precepts; the Christians as straying followers of Jesus; and finally the believing followers of the Qur'anic prophet as the new saved community that supersedes the others.

Because we have virtually no objective historical information about the evolution of the community and the chronology of the revelation of the Qur'anic corpus, we cannot know for sure what the particular breaking points were between the Qur'anic community and the Jews and Christians in their orbit or when these conflicts transpired (although Muslim authors speculated at length on these matters, especially in seeking to interpret Qur'anic allusions to these events). What can be said with some certainty is that the schism between them that would later prove so momentous for the history of Islam and the various communities of the Middle East does not seem to have been a foregone conclusion.

According to the influential thesis of Fred Donner, the communal boundaries of the *umma* or prophetic "community" were originally quite porous. In Donner's reading of the Qur'anic evidence, the *umma* emerged not as a distinct religious formation that sharply distinguished itself from Jews and Christians. Rather, it was a pietistic and eschatologically minded movement that transcended communal boundaries.[21] Jews and Christians of sincere conviction (and who recognized the authority of the Qur'anic prophet) were enfranchised as members of the community, distinguished primarily by their fervent faith, by being *mu'minūn* ("Believers").[22]

Donner's argument hinges on the observation that the term the Qur'an uses for a communal insider, *mu'min* (pl. *mu'minūn*), appears hundreds of times, much more frequently than *muslim*, of which we find only a few dozen instances. He conjectures that *mu'min* was the main appellation for a member of this group – Believer with a capital "b," in our parlance – and is not simply a generic term for a person of faith in the Qur'an. Donner postulates that the term *muslim* was deployed specifically to refer to Arab Believers who had left paganism; those *mu'minūn* who were Jewish or Christian – that is, *Ahl al-Kitāb* – remained known by those terms, for these identities were not incompatible with their identity as followers of the Qur'anic prophet, as *mu'minūn*.[23] This explains the "ecumenical" (admittedly an anachronistic term) quality of numerous statements such as the previously cited Q 29:47: "Thus have we revealed the Book to you; those to whom the Book has been revealed previously believe in it." Similar in import is Q 3:64: "Say, 'O People of Scripture, come to a statement we can agree upon (lit., a "common word") – that we worship only God, and associate nothing with Him, and we do not elevate any among us as lords to worship to the exclusion of God,'" as well as a number of other verses that seem to assert the fundamental compatibility of what the Qur'anic community and the *Ahl al-Kitāb* believe.[24]

In Donner's estimation, these statements of compatibility were not simply ecumenical gestures designed to promote amity between the different monotheist groups or appeal to the Jews and Christians to leave their community for the Qur'anic community (i.e., to formally "convert" in leaving one religion for another). Rather, these statements seem to suggest that in the Qur'anic

"mindset" the monotheists already *were* a single community, at least potentially, if the *Ahl al-Kitāb* in question were genuine people of faith who upheld what their *kitāb* prescribed for them. Notably, the Qur'an explicitly distinguishes between those of the People of Scripture who are faithful and those who are not, as in the intriguing passage at Q 3:98–114, which admonishes the People of Scripture for their rejection of and opposition to the Qur'anic prophet, yet concludes by saying:

> They are not all the same; some of the People of Scripture are an upright community; they recite the signs of God all night long, and prostrate themselves; they believe in God and the Last Day, and command the right and forbid the wrong, and they are quick to do good works – they are among the righteous.[25]

It was only over time that the boundaries between groups became more ossified and being a Jew or Christian and being a follower of Muhammad became mutually exclusive. This process seems to have begun in the lifetime of the Qur'anic prophet himself and accelerated as the prophetic movement developed into an imperial elite and eventually into a sharply distinguished religious formation of its own. It was through this process that the self-identification of its followers specifically as *muslimūn*, "Muslims," and not simply as *mu'minūn*, "Believers," came to prevail. The conception of *Ahl al-Kitāb* as potentially having been part of or overlapping with the early movement was erased, to be replaced with another conception that became dominant in Islamic culture: that of erring scripturalists who merit subjugation and subordination on account of their distortion of God's message.

Implications in Classical and Medieval Islamic Culture

Again, we have very little evidence outside of the Qur'an with which to evaluate Donner's conception of the early community of Believers as being not only open to alliance with Jews and Christians but in fact deeply imbricated with them on the basis of confraternity, pietistic devotion, and adherence to a shared scripturalist identity (at least potentially, based on the appeals the Qur'anic prophet appears to have made to them). One of the main extra-Qur'anic sources cited by Donner and other scholars of the proto-Islamic movement, a document quoted in an early literary source, is conventionally termed the "Constitution of Medina." Its import and underlying intention have been variously interpreted, but it is generally taken as establishing bonds of loyalty and mutual support between the Arab (that is, formerly pagan) followers of Muhammad and the Jewish tribes of the city after the *hijra* from Mecca to Medina in 622. Viewed in the light of Donner's Believers thesis, it appears to support the idea that at this formative stage, communal solidarity on the basis of shared scripturalist identity was possible.[26] Notably, as presented in the *Sīra* of Ibn Isḥāq (d. 767) the document is termed *kitāb*, which in this context may indicate "covenant" or "compact."[27]

If Donner is correct and a common monotheistic enthusiasm did prevail among the early Believers – both Arab followers of the Qur'anic prophet who had abandoned paganism and Jews and Christians attracted to his cause – it is not hard to see how this situation would have rapidly become untenable as the community's circumstances changed. As its members became both more numerous and more dispersed, it would have been impossible for the movement to sustain the kind of eschatological enthusiasm and pietistic fervor that had fueled it early on. Moreover, with the expansion of Muslim authority, especially over vast populations who adhered to those other monotheisms with which the Arab Believers had once putatively made common cause, the institutionalization and consolidation of Islam as an imperial religion made the hardening of boundaries inevitable.

This shift in perspective is manifest in classical discussions of the status of *Ahl al-Kitāb*, in which they were often located in a clearly delineated hierarchy of disbelief. In such a hierarchy, the pagan *mushrikūn* are always placed at the bottom. Next come quasi-*kitābīs* who possess something

resembling scripture but are outside the tradition of legitimate prophetic revelation primarily associated with the Israelites. Then, at the top of the pyramid, yet distant from the true dispensation of Islam, appear the "classical" *Ahl al-Kitāb*, the Jews and Christians, who persist in error despite possessing some remnant of legitimate revelation and being the descendants, however deviant, of followers of Moses and Jesus.[28]

In some discussions, *Ahl al-Kitāb* are not placed in a hierarchy above pagans at all but may be seen as equivalent to, albeit different from, polytheists. For the early exegete Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 767), the *Ahl al-Kitāb* are not so much the opposites of the *mushrikūn* as their mirror image. According to Muqātil, while the Arab polytheists refused to believe in God and the Last Day, they did honor to their ancestor Abraham by preserving the rites of the Hajj he instituted and revering the Kaʿba; in contrast, the *Ahl al-Kitāb* (here Jews specifically) authentically believe in God and the Last Day but have abandoned the Kaʿba and the Hajj, taking Jerusalem as their qibla and place of pilgrimage.[29] The clear implication is that these groups resemble each other more than they do the Muslims, especially in that they are united in their disbelief in Muhammad, who revives and restores the entire legacy of Abraham and the prophets who followed him; both groups merit punishment for this denial.[30] Overall, one might say that whereas the Qur'an addresses *Ahl al-Kitāb* in a spirit of fellowship, recognizing the fundamental similarity between its message and their beliefs, as Islam matured, it became imperative for Muslims to assert their difference from such people, even to the point of casting *kitābī*s as virtual infidels. As a famous maxim puts it, "all varieties of unbelief are the same" (*inna al-kufr kullahu milla wāḥida*).[31]

Rather than adduce more of the Qur'anic exegetes' reflections on the specific passages in the Qur'an dealing with *Ahl al-Kitāb*, in the space remaining to us here, it is perhaps more productive to consider the larger implications of this still pluralistic, yet supersessionist aspect of the Qur'anic worldview as it has historically conditioned or inflected real relationships between Muslims and other scripturalists, particularly those under their political control.

Long before the promulgation of the canonical Qur'an and the other initiatives undertaken by the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (r. 685–705), at the beginning of the caliphal period and the advent of the Arab conquests of the Roman and Persian domains, polytheism became largely irrelevant in the community's social map, especially with the overcoming of the pagan opposition to the early community in the establishment of the first state in the Hijaz and the subsequent assertion of Muslim control over all of Arabia. As those brought under Muslim rule as imperial subalterns at this stage were overwhelmingly Jewish, Christian, and Zoroastrian – that is, adherents of scriptural religion, more or less monotheistic – adherence to a different scripture, as concretely applied to the social and legal environment, was no longer a basis for asserting affinity but rather difference.[32] The Qur'anic passages admonishing *Ahl al-Kitāb* were read not as corrective and hortatory but rather as polemical and justifying domination, though also guaranteeing safety and some modicum of tolerance under a system of regulated corporatism.

In the early Islamic state during the conquest period, the passages in the Qur'an pertaining to warfare were interpreted as mandating aggression against polytheists, as most famously expressed in Q 9:5: "Slay the idolaters wherever you find them . . . but if they repent and perform prayer and pay the poor tax (*zakāt*), clear the way for them." Other verses were understood as legislating protection for fellow monotheists if they surrendered their arms and claims of sovereignty and acknowledged Muslim dominion over their communities:

> Fight those who believe not in God or in the Last Day [presumably a rhetorical flourish], nor prohibit what God and His messenger have prohibited, nor accepted the religion of truth – those to whom scripture was previously brought – until they pay the poll tax (*jizya*) in submission, having been subdued.
>
> (Q 9:29)[33]

The Arab Muslim conquerors who established the caliphal state (typically by supplanting previous ruling elites, often without major social or economic disruption) were well equipped to establish a new social order based on religious hierarchization, as suggested by these verses.[34] Conquered communities who were eligible for the status of tolerated fellow monotheists or scripturalists were understood to be under the protection of their Muslim rulers, following the precedent purportedly set by the second caliph ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 634–644).

The social category that Jews, Christians, and other scripturalists were typically placed into was not that of *kitābī*, ultimately a theological construct, but rather that of *dhimmī*, a specifically legal construct elaborated on the basis of the idea that the early Muslims, especially the caliph ʿUmar, established a pact of protection (*dhimma*) in perpetuity between the Muslim *umma* and its non-Muslim subjects.[35] While the reduction of *Ahl al-Kitāb* to subalterns may have represented a significant shift in relations as originally imagined during the prophetic period, this state of affairs was likely nothing new for many of the communities brought under the rule of the Islamic state. It is widely recognized that the corporatist system of regulated tolerance employed in the early state was ultimately derived from that of the Sasanian Empire, down to the borrowing of the poll tax (*jizya*) they imposed on subalterns.[36] The Sasanian system appears to have been readily recalibrated for employment under a different but analogous imperial ideology, with the supremacy of Islam substituted for the divinely appointed dominion of the Sasanian *shāhānshāh*.[37] While some contemporary ideologues operating in Europe and America have lamented the discrimination and even persecution supposedly suffered by the *dhimmīs*, a more equitable evaluation recognizes in this system the legislation of authentic pluralism rooted in an enduring concept of the basic legitimacy of all revealed religions, a form of "tolerance" not achieved in Europe until the Enlightenment many centuries later.[38]

The ossification of social boundaries and attitudes at the point of transition from the early proto-state to the period of the Arab conquests (and from prophetic to caliphal leadership) is directly related to changes in the conception and status of scripture in the early Islamic movement. The shift in understanding from *kitāb* as a dynamic process to *kitāb* as a specific textual artifact (the Qur'an as the earthly manifestation of an eternal heavenly prototype) was encouraged by the transition from diverse early witnesses to the Qur'anic corpus to an official codex – that is, by canonization. The formalization of the Qur'an as a discrete physical object, the *muṣḥaf*, transmissible through technologies of codex reproduction as well as orally, foreclosed on other conceptual possibilities. The most obvious casualty was that more pluralistic conception of *kitāb* largely lost to (or ignored by) the tradition and only recently recovered by scholarly inquiry: the idea of *kitāb* as something to which all monotheists could lay claim, something informing their common experience and identities – a shared *kitāb* revealed in, underlying, and manifest through both Qur'an and Bible.

Canonization and the conceptual shifts it entailed occurred as part of a larger process through which Islam became a formally articulated, officially promoted imperial religion under the caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik. It can hardly be coincidence that canonization and promulgation of an official recension of the Qur'an accompanied other initiatives that positioned Islam as superior to other errant, superseded monotheisms and made concrete progress toward the official subordination of the *Ahl al-Kitāb*, especially members of the Christian Levantine elite who had until then managed to maintain a position of relative prominence in the transition from Roman to caliphal rule while maintaining their original religious affiliation. The most conspicuous such gesture would have been the construction of the Dome of the Rock, adorned with Qur'anic verses asserting the error of Christian belief – including one of the clearest indictments of them addressed as *Ahl al-Kitāb*, Q 4:171, to which we have referred previously:

> O People of Scripture, do not commit excesses in your religion, and speak only the truth about God; the Messiah Jesus son of Mary was the messenger of God and His Word, which

> He caused to enter Mary, a spirit proceeding from Him; so believe in God and His messengers. No more saying "Trinity"! Stop! This is better for you – God is one, glory be to Him; He is far above having a son. What He has is dominion over heaven and earth; putting your trust in Him should suffice for you.[39]

In this era, if not before, the concept of *Ahl al-Kitāb* would have been gradually sheared of its more ecumenical associations from the prophetic period, acquiring a new connotation as signifying those communities in possession of corrupt and obsolete scriptures who were naturally subject to Muslim rule. A state of limited pluralism (at least defined in relation to other societies, viz., Christian Europe) was still maintained, though it was to be significantly tempered by a conception of the *kitābī* as errant and subordinate.[40]

Over subsequent centuries, spokesmen of the Sunnī tradition in particular in the classical and medieval periods commonly adopted a strident attitude of opposition to and disregard for *Ahl al-Kitāb*. Major figures such as Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855), Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350) used Jews and Christians as a negative foil for their construction of an ideal Muslim subject who was the model of orthodoxy and ritual rectitude. To the degree to which a Muslim cleaved to, exhibited interest in, or held sympathy for Jews and Christians (particularly the former), their religious integrity and personal moral rectitude became questionable, and their salvation possibly jeopardized.[41] Although this is the view that commonly dominated Muslim discourse, especially in later centuries, there were exceptions, as recent investigation into the works of the Mamluk-era author al-Biqāʿī (d. 1480) has demonstrated.[42]

In many cases, it is clear that material and political conditions were simply not conducive to ecumenism, especially in the post-Mongol era, though material remains and other evidence suggests that a modus vivendi of openness and liberality between Muslims and *kitābīs* typically persisted on the ground.[43] A distinction must be drawn between the ideologically driven representation of the ideal found in apologetic and polemical literature – publicly manifest from time to time in the *munāẓara* or "public disputation" – and the conviviality that was no doubt the default in Muslim–*dhimmī* relations in most times and places. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that Western observers often recorded the dismal, impoverished state many *dhimmī* populations in the lands of Islam had fallen into by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The debasement and oppression *dhimmī*s faced by this time reflected the general decline in the political and social conditions of many Muslim societies on the eve of modernity (which was itself due to the stresses induced by European colonialism and economic exploitation) and not simply an innate persecuting mentality on the part of Muslim "despots."[44]

Conclusion

The ambivalence of Muslim societies toward *Ahl al-Kitāb* is mirrored by that of Western observers of Islam in the modern era regarding the concept itself. As noted, some contemporary critics emphasize the systematic and religiously legislated discrimination against *dhimmī*s as a sign of Islam's backwardness and incompatibility with Western values.[45] An appropriate rejoinder to such criticisms, duly noted by many scholars, is that Jews and Christians living under Islamic rule during the height of Muslim dominion over the Middle East and neighboring regions actually enjoyed something resembling officially recognized status as protected persons whose rights could not or should not be traduced. This is far better treatment than Jews and Muslims living under Christian rule in Europe received, when their physical presence was permitted at all. At the same time, the very phrase *Ahl al-Kitāb* has become something of a token of an ideal of tolerance, a cipher for a precocious precursor to modern ecumenism in medieval Islamic culture which is surely exaggerated, if not, at its extreme, fictitious.[46]

It is certainly true that centuries of imperial rivalry with Christian Europe, followed by the experience of colonial intrusion and economic exploitation, conditioned many Muslims to perceive their fellow scriptuaries – both those abroad and those closer to home – negatively in the modern period. Many exegetes, both traditionalists and modern iconoclasts like Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966), read the Qur'an's admonitions against *Ahl al-Kitāb* as invective, even reading these Qur'anic statements as directly relevant today. For example, Quṭb interprets Q 9:31, "[T]hey take their rabbis and monks as lords instead of God," as a condemnation of Jews and Christians establishing and obeying laws made by mortal men at the expense of divine law; today, as in the past, the *kitābī*s give authority to human leaders arbitrarily (the implication being that this verse applies to secular ideologies and the states that enforce them as much as to the religious personnel who governed communities of *Ahl al-Kitāb* in the past).[47] At the same time, it is important to recognize that many spokesmen of schools of thought in modern Islam who could hardly be cast as advocating Enlightenment-style liberalism nevertheless emphasize the inalienable rights of *Ahl al-Kitāb* in Muslim society under the traditional dictates of the Pact of ʿUmar.[48] This is to say nothing of contemporary Muslim scholars working in a variety of contexts who read the Qur'an against the grain of tradition as actually advocating a positive ecumenism fully compatible with modern liberal values. In this, they perhaps restore the concept of *Ahl al-Kitāb* to something of its original valence in the Qur'an, as a device intended more to signal genuine pluralism than to assert insurmountable difference.[49]

Notes

1 See M. Sharon, "People of the Book," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān* (Leiden: Brill, 2001–2006), 4.35–44 for a systematic survey and discussion of the relevant verses.

2 The biblical heritage was much more transparent – and generally relevant – for the Muslim audience, which thus cemented Jews and Christians as the preeminent or even exclusive *kitābī*s in their eyes. The status of Zoroastrians and others (including communities farther afield, such as Hindus) is more ambiguous. In the legal tradition, the prevailing (but not exclusive) view is that these others qualify as *dhimmī*s and merit protection and tolerance the same as Jews and Christians, though they are not technically *Ahl al-Kitāb*, per se. The primary issue at hand is often whether communities may legitimately be compelled to accept Islam, or – conversely – whether some pretext may be found for tolerating them as *dhimmī*s so as to exploit them economically. See Yohanan Friedman, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. ch. 2.

3 E.g., the passage at Q 2:101–113, in which the disbelief attributed to *Ahl al-Kitāb* is associated with members of both communities ("They say, 'No one can enter the Garden unless he is a Jew or a Christian'," v. 111). Obviously much more specific is the phrase *Ahl al-Injīl*, "People of the Gospel," attested once in a Qur'anic passage in which Jesus is explicitly marked as confirming the Torah and Christians are called upon to faithfully uphold that which was revealed to them in their scripture (Q 5:47). The corresponding locution *Ahl al-Tawrāt,* "People of the Torah," is not attested in the Qur'an but does appear in the hadith, as in a tradition in which Muhammad juxtaposes *Ahl al-Tawrāt* and *Ahl al-Injīl* as precursors to his own community (Bukhārī, *al-Tawḥīd:* 7467 and parallels).

4 Sidney H. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the "People of the Book" in the Language of Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 15–41 offers a concise and up-to-date treatment of the Qur'anic portrayal of Jews and Christians. There are about a dozen direct references in the Qur'an to *naṣārā* ("Nazoreans"); the noun *yahūd* is at times supplemented by the verbal locution *allādhīna hādū* ("those who are Jews"), together making up again about a dozen references.

5 Discussed at length in Uri Rubin, *Between Bible and Qurʾān: The Children of Israel and the Islamic Self-Image* (Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 17; Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1999).

6 On the trope of Jews or *Ahl al-Kitāb* as slayers of the prophets, see Gabriel Said Reynolds, "On the Qurʾān and the Theme of Jews as 'Killers of the Prophets'," *Al-Bayan* 10 (2012): 9–32.

7 Notably, one sometimes finds the locution *Ahl al-Kitāb al-Awwal* ("People of the First Scripture") in early Muslim authors such as Ibn Isḥāq, seemingly in reference to Jews with knowledge of the Torah in particular; the Jewish Torah is also called the "First Scripture" or "Foundational Book" in Zoroastrian texts, for example the polemical *Skand Gumanig Wizar.*

8 See al-Ṭabarī's comments *ad* Q 2:49: *ahl* and *āl* are the same, except that *āl* is more typically used with the names of well-known people, like *āl Muḥammad*. See Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *The Commentary on the Qurʾān, Volume I*, trans. J. Cooper (Oxford: Oxford University Press and Hakim Investment Holdings, 1989), 297–298.

9 See the discussion of Donner on the *umma* as the community of Believers (*muʾminūn*) later in the chapter.

10 More specifically, the noun *kitāb* appears just over 200 times, while forms of the root *k-t-b* appear over 300 times. In several passages *kitāb* is the term for the Torah of Moses, which, like the Qur'an itself, may be referred to a number of different ways (see next note).

11 The Gospels (*al-Inǰīl*, i.e., *euangélion*) are mentioned a dozen times in the Qur'an, typically juxtaposed with the Torah (*al-Tawrāt*), and thus generally represent the New Testament as opposed to the Old (though notably the Qur'an seems to reflect no understanding of the New Testament apart from the Gospels themselves). Rather than being construed as inspired accounts of the life of Christ, the Gospels are clearly imagined as a revealed source taught by God to Jesus, or given directly to him and then conveyed to his people (cf. Q 3:48; 5:46–47, 110; 57:27). Qur'an 53:36–37 and 87:18–19 refer to the "pages" (*ṣuḥuf*) revealed to Abraham and Moses. The Psalms, called *al-zabūr*, are described as revealed directly to David at Q 4:163 and 17:55; the term *al-zabūr* appears again at Q 21:105 in what appears to be a direct quotation of Psalm 37:29.

12 Daniel Madigan, *The Qurʾān's Self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

13 While asserting its own authentic divine origin, the Qur'an energetically denies the assertions of its skeptical opponents that scripture was supposed to be conveyed from heaven by an angel. See Patricia Crone, "Angels versus Humans as Messengers of God: The View of the Qurʾānic Pagans," in Philippa Townsend and Moulie Vidas (eds.), *Revelation, Literature, and Community in Late Antiquity* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 146; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 315–336.

14 See Madigan's discussion, "Appendix: The People of the *Kitāb*," in *The Qurʾān's Self-Image*, 193–213.

15 All translations of the Qur'an here are the author's. The Qur'an emphasizes its own status as a new revelation in Arabic being brought to the Arabs by a "gentile" (*ummī*) prophet (cf. Q 7:157–158, 62:2), hearkening back to Abraham who, like the Qur'anic prophet, was neither Jew nor Christian (Q 3:67). This is the basis for both the Qurʾan's supersessionism – its prophet and community being paradoxically more original and more authentic than the older communities of *Ahl al-Kitāb* – and its gestures of kinship with those communities as remnants of instances of authentic prophetic revelation in the past that likewise hearken back to Abraham. There is a significant body of literature on the discourse surrounding the terminology of *ummī* in the Qur'an and later Muslim interpretation; see Mehdy Shaddel, "Qurʾānic *ummī*: Genealogy, Ethnicity, and the Foundation of a New Community," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 43 (2016): 1–60 and sources cited therein.

16 The rejection of the prophets by their communities is a poignant theme explored by many Muslim authors in different contexts. For the Shiʿa, the failure of most of the followers of the Israelite prophets to steadfastly cleave to the guidance that was brought to them foreshadows the rejection of the leadership of the Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 661) and his descendants by the majority of Muslims; see Michael Pregill, "Measure for Measure: Prophetic History, Qur'anic Exegesis, and Anti-Sunnī Polemic in a Fāṭimid Propaganda Work (BL Or. 8419)," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 16 (2014): 20–57. The Ottoman-era poet Fuẓūlī (d. 1556) depicted the lives of the prophets as full of suffering and tribulation; despite their election by God, they commonly suffered rejection of their missions, persecution, and even horrible deaths. See Gottfried Hagen, "Salvation and Suffering in Ottoman Stories of the Prophets," *Mizan: Journal for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations* 2 (2017), www.mizanproject.org/journal-post/salvation-and-suffering-in-ottoman-stories-of-the-prophets/.

17 On the Late Antique context, see the chapters in Townsend and Vidas (eds.), *Revelation, Literature, and Community in Late Antiquity*.

18 Neuwirth's scholarly output is vast. For a resume of her methodological approach to the Qur'an, see the introduction to her *Scripture, Poetry and the Making of a Community*: *Reading the Qur'an as a Literary Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2014), esp. xxi–xxiv on the Qur'an's location in Late Antiquity (quote appears on p. xxiii). On the Late Antique conceptual revolution concerning writing as phenomenon and *topos* as it impacted the Qur'an and its milieu, cf. her "The 'Discovery of Writing' in the Qurʾān: Tracing an Epistemic Revolution in Arab Late Antiquity," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 42 (2015): 1–24.

19 See Angelika Neuwirth, "Locating the Qurʾan and Early Islam in the 'Epistemic Space' of Late Antiquity," in *Islam and Its Past: Jahiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Qurʾan*, ed. Carol Bakhos and Michael Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 165–185.

20 Gabriel Said Reynolds, "The Quran and the Apostles of Jesus," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 76 (2013): 209–227.

21 The intensely eschatological orientation of "proto-Islam," which eventually metamorphosed into an imperial apocalyptic ideology, was itself an element that linked the movement to other contemporary cultural and religious formations. On this, see Stephen Shoemaker, *The Apocalypse of Empire: Imperial Eschatology in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

22 Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

23 It is in the sense of *islām* as Donner interprets it (with the term literally referring to the "submission" of the Arab polytheists who joined the prophetic community) that Islam – as the dispensation revealed through the Qur'an was later called – may be recognized as a specifically Arab religion. Rudiments of this concept survived well into the early Islamic period, in a number of forms. As is well known, the legitimacy of conversion by non-Muslims under Arab rule was often challenged in the Umayyad period. Some early authorities had such a strong conception of Islam as the unique legitimate religion for the Arabs (or rather the religion of *ḥanafiyya* to which Abraham belonged that preceded and anticipated Islam) that they denied the status of *Ahl al-Kitāb* to Arabs who had accepted Judaism or Christianity before the time of Muhammad. This is the view of the jurist al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820) in his *Kitāb al-Umm*, who in his discussion of the legality of Muslim intermarriage with *Ahl al-Kitāb* limits this category to communities descended from the Israelites, primarily the Jews and Christians but also including the Samaritans and Sabians. See Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī, *Al-Umm li'l-Imām Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī*, 11 vols., ed. Rifʿat Fawzī ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (Al-Manṣūrah: Dār al-Wafāʾ, 2001), 4.16–23.

24 Some scholars have plausibly argued that – as is wholly appropriate to the context – the *kalīma sawāʾ* ("common word") that the Qur'an enjoins the People of Scripture to agree upon is the Decalogue, a number of versions of which are related in the Qur'an itself (perhaps most famously, Q 17:22–39). See Sebastian Günther, "*O People of the Scripture! Come to a Word Common to You and Us* (Q 3:64): The Ten Commandments and the Qur'an, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 9 (2007): 28–58.

25 This is only one of several passages in which the Qur'an seems to posit the existence of sincerely believing *kitābīs*, which would support Donner's argument significantly. However, Nicolai Sinai has recently contested many of Donner's readings of key passages, observing that it is rather ambiguous whether the Qur'an actually recognizes some Jews and Christians as believers (or Believers) or rather is speaking of such Jews and Christians hypothetically. Thus *pace* Donner's reading of (e.g.) Q 5:65 as "*If* the *Ahl al-Kitāb* believe and are pious. . . ." Sinai argues that the specific appearance of the contrafactual particle *law* here suggests that a more accurate reading would be, "*Were* the *Ahl al-Kitāb* to believe and be pious . . ." – the clear implication being that in reality they do *not* believe and are *not* pious. See "The Unknown Known: Some Groundwork for Interpreting the Medinan Qur'an," *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 66 (2015–2016): 47–96, esp. 48–51 and 76–80. That said, some of the passages that attribute sincere belief or moral rectitude to *Ahl al-Kitāb* and thus may be adduced in support of Donner's thesis are not ambiguous at all, e.g., Q 3:199 and (regarding Jews specifically) Q 7:159.

26 See discussion in Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, 72–75 and Appendix A. Judging in particular by its archaic language, the current consensus is that the document as quoted by Ibn Isḥāq is authentic, though there continues to be significant disagreement over what exactly it means. For a trenchant discussion that surveys and critiques previous interpretations, see Paul Lawrence Rose, "Muhammad, the Jews and the Constitution of Medina: Retrieving the Historical Kernel," *Der Islam* 86 (2011): 1–29.

27 Just as *kitāb* represents the most prevalent but not exclusive term for scripture in the Qur'an, so too does the term occasionally admit meanings and usages other than "scripture" or "book," as when it appears with the meaning of a letter (Q 27:28–29) or as a register of a person's deeds (e.g., Q 69:19, 25).

28 This is the view of the jurist-commentator al-Māwardī (d. 1058); notably – and disagreeing with al-Shāfiʿī – he identifies not only the Zoroastrians and Sabians but the conspicuously Mosaic Samaritans as quasi-*kitābīs* ranking lower than true *Ahl al-Kitāb* (cited in Friedman, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam*, 71).

29 Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, 5 vols., ed. ʿAbd Allāh Maḥmūd Shiḥāta (Cairo: Muʾassasat al-Ḥalabī, 1967), 1.291 *ad* Q 3:95–96. While this presentation of the situation may be dismissed as a mere polemical tactic on Muqātil's part, it is worth noting that Q 5:82 characterizes the Jews and the polytheists together as most hostile to the faithful.

30 As Muqātil puts it: whatever his religion, whoever has disbelieved in the Kaʿba and refused to perform the required rites of Hajj is an infidel pure and simple (*man kafara min ahl al-adyān bi'l-bayt wa-lam yaḥujj wājiban fa-qad kafara*; *Tafsīr,* 1.291 *ad* Q 3:97).

31 This is to say nothing of the fact that, as Ayoub and others have observed, the literal semantic field of the term *mushrik* itself shifted over time. Formerly used to differentiate between *kitābī*s on the one hand and pagans on the other (at least as the Qur'an is traditionally understood, and this distinction propagated in the early community), the word *mushrik* came to be openly applied to Christians in particular, obviously

due to the "associationism" (the literal meaning of *shirk*) that the Christian Trinity represents to the Muslim observer. See Mahmoud Ayoub, "Dhimmah in Qur'an and Hadith," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 5 (1983): 172–182, 179–180.

32 It is perhaps self-evident that such a shift in perspective may have been natural, given that even by the later first and second centuries AH few if any Muslims had any contact with or experience of polytheists at all. The distinction between *Ahl al-Kitāb* and pagans may have been a totally moot one in social environments effectively evacuated of the latter.

33 Despite the reference to those who do *not* believe in God and the Last Judgment – presumably a baseline criterion for inclusion in the category of *Ahl al-Kitāb* – this verse was universally understood as mandating treatment for these people specifically, in distinction to polytheists. There are a number of other passages in the Qur'an that mention *Ahl al-Kitāb* explicitly not only in what appears to be a martial context but specifically in circumstances of direct conflict with the Qur'anic prophet and his community, e.g., Q 33:26 and 59:2. These passages are typically correlated to events in the *maghāzī* or accounts of Muhammad's "campaigns" to establish the early Islamic state, in particular his battles against the Jewish tribes of Medina and their allies.

34 For a survey of the establishment of the caliphal empire and our sources for its history, see Robert G. Hoyland, *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). For a lucid overview of how the relevant Qur'anic passages were correlated to the historical scheme of Muhammad's campaigns in order to articulate a coherent "theory" of jihad and the circumstances under which it could be waged (as well as its limits), see David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), ch. 1.

35 For a concise overview of the basic concept of *dhimma* and account of how it evolved from its basis in Qur'an and hadith into a blanket term for non-believers living under Muslim protection, see Ayoub, "Dhimmah," 179 ff. On the history and evolution of the *shurūṭ* or "stipulations" making up the Pact of ʿUmar, see Milka Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). On the evidence for the early concept of *dhimma* as a guideline for governing relations between the Arab conquerors and the conquered, see Robert Hoyland, "The Earliest Attestation of the *Dhimma* of God and His Messenger and the Rediscovery of P. Nessana 77 (60s AH/680 CE)" (with Appendix by Hannah Cotton), in *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts: Essays in Honor of Professor Patricia Crone*, ed. Behnam Sadeghi et al. (Islamic History and Civilization 114; Leiden: Brill, 2015), 51–71. In Egypt during the Fatimid period, not only Jews and Christians but also those Muslims who were not among the faithful elect of believers in the Ismaʿili Shiʿi imamate claimed by the dynasty (self-evidently the majority of their subjects) were considered *dhimmī*s under their protection as agents of God's covenant with humanity; see Michael Brett, *The Fatimid Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 78–79.

36 The Sasanian poll tax on minorities, the *gizidag*, was instituted as part of the wide-ranging reforms of Khosro I Anūshervān (r. 531–579). On the collection of *jizya* in the larger context of early Islamic fiscal administration, see Abd al-Aziz Duri, *Early Islamic Institutions: Administration and Taxation from the Caliphate to the Umayyads and ʿAbbāsids* (Contemporary Arab Scholarship in the Social Sciences 4; London: I.B. Tauris in Association with the Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 2011), ch. 2, *passim*. The concept of the Sasanian sociopolitical order as a regime of regulated tolerance has been scrutinized by Adam Becker; see "Political Theology and Religious Diversity in the Sasanian Empire," in *Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians: Religious Dynamics in a Sasanian Context*, ed. Geoffrey Herman (Judaism in Context 17; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2014), 7–25.

37 Lena Salaymeh has argued for the importance of payment of *zakāt* as a "public expression of sociopolitical membership" for Muslims in the early empire, with this fundamental fiduciary responsibility functioning as a key index of identity ("Taxing Citizens: Socio-legal Constructions of Late Antique Muslim Identity," *Islamic Law and Society* 23 (2016): 333–367; quote on 342). By the same token, we might construe a similar function for payment of the *jizya* by Jews, Christians, and others as *dhimmī*s in the classic Islamic political order. To pay *zakāt* or *jizya* was not merely symbolic of Muslim or *dhimmī* identity; rather, payment of the appropriate tax was in some substantial way actually *constitutive* of identity, indexing submission to the disciplinary political regime of the Islamic state.

38 There is a copious literature on the history, experience, and cultures of the *dhimmī* communities, both as they persisted (and even thrived) under Muslim rule for centuries and their decline in the modern age. The foundational studies remain useful: A.S. Tritton, *The Caliphs and Their Non-Muslim Subjects: A Critical Study of the Covenant of ʿUmar* (London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1930) and Antoine Fattal, *Le statut legal des non-musulmans en pays d'Islam* (Recherches de l'Institut de Lettres Orientales de Beyrouth 10; Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1958). A number of classic studies are anthologized in Robert Hoyland, ed., *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society* (Formation of the Classical Islamic World 18; Hampshire, UK:

Ashgate, 2004). Regarding the variety of legal issues that came to bear in the *dhimmī* experience, see *Islamic Law and Society* 10:3 (2003), a special thematic issue edited by Ze'ev Maghen, "The Interaction between Islamic Law and Non-Muslims: *lakum dīnukum wa-lī dīni*" and Anver M. Emon, *Religious Pluralism and Islamic Law:* Dhimmis *and Others in the Empire of Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

39 This passage corresponds to the portion of the inscription that runs from the southeast to the northeast on the inner octagonal façade of the building. For a concise resume of the inscription, see Bruce Lawrence, *The Qur'an: A Biography* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006), 64–70.

40 Most contemporary scholars date the decisive transmutation of the Believers movement into classical Islam – featuring a corresponding ossification of social and religious boundaries – as the result of processes undertaken during the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik. Cf., e.g., Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, ch. 5, and Chase F. Robinson, *ʿAbd al-Malik* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005).

41 The germinal, wide-ranging treatment of the subject by Ignac Goldziher is still useful over a century after its publication: "Ueber muhammedanische Polemik gegen Ahl al-kitāb," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 32 (1878): 341–387. It may be supplemented by any number of modern studies, especially Camilla Adang's *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm* (Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Science 22; Leiden: Brill, 1996). A corresponding synthetic survey of classic Muslim authors on Christianity is still a desideratum, though the interested reader might consult Charles Tieszen, *A Textual History of Christian–Muslim Relations, Seventh–Fifteenth Centuries* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015). Studies of individual authors abound, e.g., Jon Hoover, "The Apologetic and Pastoral Intentions of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's Polemic against Jews and Christians," *Muslim World* 100 (2010): 476–489.

42 See, e.g., the groundbreaking study of Walid Saleh, *In Defense of the Bible: A Critical Edition and an Introduction to al-Biqāʿī's Bible Treatise* (Islamic History and Civilization 73; Leiden: Brill, 2008).

43 This is the basic historiographic principle observed in Mark Cohen's classic comparative study, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), which emphasizes the relative benefits of the *dhimmī* system for Jews in the Islamic world as compared to those living under Christian rule in Europe. The copious information yielded by decades of study of the trove of documentary evidence preserved in the Cairo Geniza has consistently supported this approach to the *dhimmī* experience and guided research into the convivial social and economic relations that were the rule rather than the exception for non-Muslim communities under Muslim rule. See, e.g., Phillip I. Ackerman-Lieberman, *The Business of Identity: Jews, Muslims, and Economic Life in Medieval Egypt* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014).

44 Discussions of modernity often describe the fate of the *dhimmī* communities as a gradual diminution (or "long twilight" in Stillman's words), briefly punctuated by advantages brought by favored status through association with and patronage from Europeans but eventually leading to the debasement and near-annihilation of these communities by the second half of the twentieth century. See, e.g., Norman Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Sourcebook* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 64–110.

45 This strand in contemporary historiography has its roots in the trend towards what Cohen terms "neo-lachrymose" history that began in the 1960s and generated a significant bibliography (*Under Crescent and Cross*, 9–14) but at present is taking on a more and more conspicuously Islamophobic guise, fueling hostility toward a subversive and insidious Muslim threat to Western culture percolating from within.

46 Cf. the much lauded bestselling novel of Geraldine Brooks, *People of the Book* (New York: Penguin, 2008), which plays upon a dichotomy between Christian intolerance and brutality and Muslim progressivism and humanity.

47 Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Indianapolis, IN: American Trust, 1990), 60. See also James Toth, *Sayyid Qutb: The Life and Legacy of a Radical Islamic Intellectual* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Appendix, part iii.

48 On this strand in modern jurisprudence, see Andrew F. March, "Sources of Moral Obligation to Non-Muslims in the 'Jurisprudence of Muslim Minorities' (*Fiqh al-aqalliyyāt*) Discourse," *Islamic Law and Society* 16 (2009): 34–94.

49 See, e.g., the constructive work of Jerusha Tanner Lamptey, *Never Wholly Other: A Muslima Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), who explores the category of *Ahl al-Kitāb* and related formations in the Qur'an as not opposed to but rather on a continuum with the historical community of Muhammad; she emphasizes that the Qur'an presupposes a basic affinity with other scriptuaries as authentic moral agents and recipients of divine guidance. Cf. Mun'im Sirry, *Scriptural Polemics: The Qur'an and Other Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), which discusses key Qur'anic passages pertaining to intercommunal relations as problematized by modern reformist exegetes. These continue to be thorny issues for scholars and critics of the Qur'an in the Islamic world, as illustrated, for example, by the case of the progressive scholar Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, who was ruled an apostate by the Egyptian Court of Cassation in 1996 on the basis of his position (among others) that the prescription of the *jizya* is a temporally bounded decree of the Qur'an without universal and eternal validity since it cannot objectively be considered to contribute to the betterment of general humanity.