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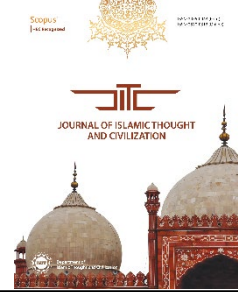
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Author (s): Reda Abdelgalil


Affiliation (s): University of Sharjah, UAE

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Orientalist Interpretations of Wahy: Qur'anic Revelation in 19th and 20th Century Studies

Reda Ibrahim Abdelgalil*
College of Shari'ah and Islamic Studies
University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

Abstract

This research focuses on *wahy* (Qur'anic revelation), a central term in Islamic theology and a focal point in orientalist discourse. It scrutinizes the extensive array of orientalists' interpretations of *wahy* that ranged from scholarly inquiry to outright skepticism. It goes beyond standard linguistic interpretations, unraveling the concept of *wahy*, its translation and broader meanings as viewed by prominent orientalists from the 19th and 20th centuries. The study applies both the analytical and the critical methodologies to provide a contextual analysis to the philosophical and scientific approaches that shaped these orientalists' perceptions on *wahy*, assessing their underlying assumptions. The critique approach aims to engage with their interpretations critically and evaluate their translations of *wahy*, examining the extent to which they are anchored in trustworthy and genuine Islamic resources. The research concludes by revealing disparities among orientalists; some of whom challenged the divine essence of Islam and posited theories suggesting that *wahy* might have stemmed from external influences or personal disposition of Muhammad (*SAW*), contrasting sharply with the Islamic sacred view of *wahy*. Their theories have significantly shaped the broader western perception of Islam, often portraying Islam as a faith rooted in human and lacking divine authenticity and originality. While other orientalists demonstrated more balanced and impartial views on *wahy*, basically rooted in genuine Islamic scholarship. Their views have actively promoted an authentic understanding of *wahy* from within its own Islamic worldview, challenging the orientalists' biased narrative.

Keywords: conceptual analysis, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, orientalist scholarship, translations, wahy

Introduction

The art of translation demands precision, the translator's skills, accuracy, and experience that determines the effectiveness of rendering a text from its original source to a target language. The process is profoundly influenced by the translator's personal beliefs, perspectives, and thought processes. Despite earnest efforts to uphold the ethics of impartiality and precision, translating the beauty, figurative language, and rhetorical elegance of the source text, especially the Qur'an, is an immense challenge.¹ Al-Jurjānī (1009-1078), in his renowned work *Dalā'il al-'Ijāz*, aptly commented on the language of the Qur'an asserting its unique style, grammar, syntax, word choice, phonetics and eloquence.² Therefore, translation profoundly influences how non-Arabic readers perceive and understand Islam and message of the Qur'an. The expansion of Western and European colonial powers into many Muslim countries during the 19th and 20th centuries fostered increased contact between the west and the Islamic world.³ Edward Said remarked, "The occupation gave birth

*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Reda Ibrahim Abdelgalil, Assistant Professor at College of Shari'ah and Islamic Studies, University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates at redaibrahim2008@yahoo.com

¹Mohammad Al-Khawaldi, "The Deterioration of the Usage of in K'anna' the Holy Qur'an via Translation," *Babel* 50, no. 3 (2004): 215–229.

²Abu Bakr Al-Jurjānī, *Evidences of Inimitability of Meanings of the Qur'an* (Cairo: Dar Al-Madānī, 1992), 344.

³Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 2.

to the entire modern experience of the Orient.”⁴ Western scholars, driven by a mixture of intellectual curiosity and colonial motivations, showed great interest in acquisition of the eastern language and cultures. In their studies, they critically scrutinized the history of the Qur’ān and the process of its revelation.⁵

Following the 19th and 20th century timeline, renowned orientalists such as John Medows Rodwell (1808–1900), William Muir (1819–1905), Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930), Edward Palmer (1840–1882), Richard Bell (1876–1952), Regis Blachere (1900–1973), Arthur Arberry (1905–1969), and W. Montgomery Watt (1909–2006) largely aligned their views with those of the early Meccan disbelievers regarding Prophet Muhammad and the Qur’ān at the start of the *waḥy* (revelation). They argued that *waḥy* signified no more than ‘suggestions’ and ‘intellectual locution.’⁶ These orientalists frequently sought to establish connections between the Qur’ān and earlier Judaism and Christianity. Thus, challenging the traditional Islamic perspective that *waḥy* was purely a divine phenomenon.⁷ Their scholarship was often based on the presumption that Muhammad was not a Prophet.

Furthermore, orientalists also introduced chronological theories, reorganizing the Qur’ān from a historical standpoint. These conjectures have shaped their understanding of *waḥy*, sometimes leading to distortions in the portrayal of Islam.⁸ Their works have had a significant influence on how Islam and the Qur’ān are perceived in the West, creating a foundation for academic studies that scrutinize the orientalists’ translations of the Qur’ān. This article explores the concept of *waḥy* within the framework of orientalist scholarship in the 19th and 20th centuries. It analyzes and refutes their perspectives that question the authenticity of *waḥy*, while also presenting a balanced viewpoint that underscores the objective perspective within orientalist scholarship. The article focuses on (a) the intricate linguistic and technical nuances of *waḥy* and its broader relevance in both Islamic and orientalist debates, (b) the methods used by orientalists to translate the concept of *waḥy*, and (c) the impact of these translations on the Western audience’s understanding of the Qur’ān and its fundamental concepts.

The concept of *waḥy* has been extensively explored in many books and studies written by Muslims and non-Muslim scholars. This concept has been analyzed through various perspectives, including linguistics, theology, philosophy and more broadly within the context of Qur’ānic studies. Al-Zarkashī’s Book of *Al-Burhān Fī ‘Ulum al-Qur’ān* and al-Suyutī’s book of *Al-Itqān Fī ‘Ulum al-Qur’ān*, give a special focus to *waḥy* including its nature, types, and the process of revelation from heaven to the Prophet Muhammad through direct speech, the angel Gabriel and as divine inspiration to the heart of the Prophet. The Islamic classical books of Sunnah and Prophet’s biography such as *Sahīh Al-Bukharī*, *Sahīh Muslim*, Ibn Ishāq’s *Sirat Rasūl Allah* and al-Wāqidi’s *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* contain sections on *waḥy* and its impact and role in the life of Prophet Muhammad (*SAW*). Abdul Kabīr’s Hussain Solihu’s article, “Revelation and Prophethood in the Islamic Worldview,” delves into the interplay between revelation and prophethood. Muhammad Rashīd Reda’s Book, *Al-Waḥy al-Muhammadi*, investigates the concept of *waḥy* and its authenticity as a divine revelation given to the Prophet Muhammad. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Razī’s book, *Risālah fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwā*, addresses the rational basis for belief in *waḥy* and its descend upon the Prophet.

⁴Ibid., 87.

⁵Muhammad Mohar Ali, *The Qur’ān and the Orientalists: An Examination of Their Main Theories and Assumptions*. (Ipswich: Jam’iyat Ihyā’ Minhāj al-Sunnah, 2004), 7–8.

⁶Richard Bell, “Mohammed’s Call,” *The Moslem World* 24, no. 1 (1934): 13–19.

⁷Muhammad Mohar Ali, *The Qur’an and the Orientalists*, 3.

⁸Wadhah Amer Abdel Baqi, “Qur’ānic Readings, Orientalists’ Suspicions, and Scholars’ Responses to Them (collectively and in order),” *KnE Social Sciences* 8, no 6 (2023): 551–563.

Muhammad Mustafah Al-Azamī's book, *The History of the Qur'ānic Text from Revelation to Completion*, explores the authenticity of *wahy* and challenges claim of its human authorships. Muhammad Mohar Ali's book, *The Qur'ān & Orientalists*, provides an analysis and critique to many orientalist's writings that have questioned the divine origin of *wahy* and its authenticity. Ahmad Syukron and Nikmatul Khairiyah's article, "Chronology of the Qur'ān According to Theodor Nöldeke and Sir William Muir (Analysis of the History of the Qur'ān and Life of Mahomet)," gives an analysis and critique to Nöldeke and Muir's perspective of the chronology of the Qur'ān, proving the weakness of their methodologies in making the chronological arrangement of the Qur'ān. Ahmed Gumaa Siddeik's study, *Critical Reading of A. J. Arberry's Translation of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an (Koran Translated)*, explores the linguistic errors in the Arberry's translation and their impact on understanding the concept of revelation. Maaref Majid and Shahande Amene's study, Comment Blachere Compiled the Qur'ān and Its Relation to the Assignment of Distorting the Quran (Reviews and Criticism), provides refutations to Régis Blachère's claim of the distortion of the Qur'ān and the missing of its recording during the era of the Prophet and his companions. Orientalist inquiries into the Gracious Qur'ān have spanned linguistic, historical, and interpretational realms. Nonetheless, this article mainly confines its scope to provide a thorough examination of the concept of *wahy* within the context of orientalist scholarship and translations, aiming to reach an accurate understanding of the exact meaning of the concept of *wahy* through the lens of influential orientalists during the 19th and 20th centuries.

The analytical approach is employed to examine the orientalists interpretations of the concept of *wahy* in the context of their broader understanding of the Qur'ān. By conducting a textual and contextual analysis of specific verses that mention *wahy* in the Qur'ān, this method assesses the orientalists' literal accuracy, theological insights, and interpretative strategies. Additionally, it uncovers potential alterations, omissions, or shifts in their translations of the Arabic term *wahy* while evaluating the proposed word choices and equivalents. The critical method complements this by evaluating the orientalists' perspectives on the role of the Prophet Muhammad (*SAW*) as the receiver of *wahy* and effectively countering claims of his authorship of the Qur'ān.

2. Orientalism in Focus

The term *Istishrāq* (Orientalism) is derived from the Arabic word '*Sharq*' which means 'the rising of the sun.'⁹ Geographically, it signifies the East or people from the eastern regions, while ethnologically, it refers to the people inhabiting those areas.¹⁰ Consequently, orientalism encompasses the scholarly interest of Western academics in studying the Eastern world.¹¹ Furthermore, it encapsulates an East-West encounter representing the Western views and it also interprets the Orient through its own cultural framework.¹²

Edward Said defines an orientalist as any individual engaged in teaching, writing, or researching about the Orient. It includes the fields such as anthropology, sociology, history, and philology, addressing both specific and general aspects of the subject.¹³ The scope of orientalist research extends into various Islamic studies, offering insights across diverse disciplines of Islamic sciences such as the Qur'ānic interpretation, Sunnah, Islamic history, Theology, Arabic language, and

⁹Muhammad Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-Arab (The Tongue of the Arab)*, vol. 10 (Beirut: Dār Sāder, 1990), 173.

¹⁰Alwi Shihab, *Inclusive Islam Towards an Open Attitude in Religion* (Bandung: Mizan, 1990), 41.

¹¹Rudi Paret, *The Study of Arabic and Islam at German Universities: German Orientalists Since Theodor Noldeke* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1968), 11–12.

¹²Hassan Hanafy, *Muqadimah Fī 'Ilm Al-Istighrāb (Introduction to the Science of Occidentalism)* (Cairo: Al-Dār Al-Faniyah, 1991), 29.

¹³Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 2.

Literature. Additionally, the discourse covers scientific, historical, philological, social, economic, and political exploration of Muslim life. With a particular focus on Eastern culture, heritage, civilization, and languages of the East. In an examination of orientalism and its objectives, Guweidi views it as an extensive study of the conditions of Eastern peoples, their beliefs, customs, civilization of Eastern, especially Muslim societies.¹⁴

The global rise of Islam caught the attention of Western and European orientalists, leading them to delve into the study of Islamic beliefs and practices. Some of them have been far fair and objective in their research, writings and perspectives on Islam and the Qur'ān. Their scholarly endeavors center on illuminating aspects of Eastern and Islamic civilization, with a particular emphasis on uncovering the history of various domains of Muslim sciences that thrived during the golden age of Islamic civilization. Their contributions helped to foster a better understanding of Islam in the West.¹⁵ This trend of orientalism was commonly noticed in mid-19th century.¹⁶ However, another group of orientalists took a more critical approach, scrutinizing the beliefs of Muslims and questioning the Prophethood of Muhammad. These scholars often promoted Western ideals and secular laws as superior to Islamic *Shari'ah*. Consequently, their translations of the Gracious Qur'ān and related concepts have engendered confusion and misconceptions about the authenticity of the Qur'ān.

3. Conceptual Insights on *Wahy*

According to Muslims' belief, Qur'ān is a divine scripture immune to falsehood, revealed by the All-Knowing and Praiseworthy.¹⁷ The significance of *wahy* in Islam exists in its status as the foundation of both Muslims' belief and Islamic *Shari'ah*. Through *wahy*, humans can better understand about their creator and the mysteries of the unseen world. Furthermore, *wahy* is an evident proof of the Prophethood of Muhammad and the authenticity of Islam. Obviously, questioning *wahy* might cause uncertainty in a Muslim's belief, making it important to delve deeper into its meaning.

In linguistic terms, *wahy* signifies inspiration or communication through subtle signals.¹⁸ Wahy, in its broader sense, is not limited to prophets; it can occur in various entities.¹⁹ For example, it is mentioned in the Qur'ān concerning Moses' mother,²⁰ the disciples of Jesus,²¹ bees,²² and even the earth.²³ Moreover, *wahy* also signifies signaling, as highlighted in the account of Prophet Zakaria,²⁴ who signaled (*Awha*) to his people to glorify Allah in the morning and evening.²⁵

¹⁴Masar Saadi, "Orientalists and Their Role in Arabic Literature," *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education* 12, no. 1 (2021): 668.

¹⁵Ismail Omairah, *The Historical Roots of Oriental Phenomenon* (Oman: Dār Ḥazeen, 1992), 60.

¹⁶Rudi Paret, *The Study of Arabic and Islam at German Universities: German Orientalists Since Theodor Noldeke*.

¹⁷Reda Abdelgalil, "The Philosophy of Creativity, Innovation, and Technology from an Islamic Perspective," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 13, no. 1 (2023): 228–244.

¹⁸Muhammad Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-Arab*, vol. 15, 379.

¹⁹Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in The Koran* (New York: Arno Books for libraries, 1980), 153.

²⁰Al-Qaṣaṣ 28:7.

²¹Al-Mā'idah 5:111.

²²Al-Naḥl 16:68.

²³Al-zalzalah 99:5.

²⁴Sitar Al-‘Araj, *Wahy and Its Implications in Qur'ān and Islamic Thought* (Beirut: Dār Al-Kutub Al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2001), 141.

²⁵Maryam, 19:11.

In the technical understanding of Islam, *wahy* refers to the process by which God communicates divine revelation to His Prophets. This concept is primarily reflected in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad.²⁶ The methods of delivering *wahy* were diverse,²⁷ encompassing direct communication from God to a Prophet, speaking from behind a veil,²⁸ and even through dreams, as experienced by Prophet Muhammad.²⁹ In fact, 'Aisha (*RAA*) narrated that the Prophet's first experience of divine inspiration came through vivid dreams, which materialized as clearly as bright daylight.³⁰ Furthermore, another significant method of conveying *wahy* involved the angel Gabriel³¹, who delivered the Qur'ān to the Prophet Muhammad over the course of 23 years, word by word.³²

The Qur'ān contains various terms that align closely with the concept of *wahy*. Expressions such as *Tanzīl* (the revelation), '*Anzalna* (sent down), *Nathu* (recite), *Naqussu* (narrate), *Nulqī* (deliver), *Waṣṣalna* (conveyed) and various others consistently affirm, within their respective contexts, that what was bestowed upon Prophet Muhammad was indeed *wahy*—an authentic divine revelation from God.³³ This clarification serves to dispel any misinterpretation or suggestion that might propose the revelation to be merely an inspiration or imaginary vision, as occasionally suggested by orientalist perspectives.

In his influential work, *Islamic Revelation*, Montgomery Watt elucidated *wahy* as a divine mechanism through which the Creator communicates with humanity, evoking responses and actions from individuals.³⁴ However, Watt's definition differs from the Muslim perspective on *wahy*, as he implies that *wahy* emerges from the inner thoughts of an inspired person. In Islam, *wahy* is inseparable from the concept of divine communication, emphasizing the deeper nuances that shape its understanding.³⁵

4. Orientalist Discourse on Wahy (19th -20th Century)

The Qur'ān extensively discusses the concept of *wahy*, with specific emphasis found in Chapters such as An-Najm³⁶ and Al-Takwīr³⁷ highlighting its significance as divine communication to Prophet Muhammad (*SAW*). However, some orientalists have sparked controversy by arguing that *wahy* is simply an outcome of Muhammad's intellectual faculties. Those orientalists have often misread and mistranslated the concept to align with their preconceived ideas.³⁸ An in-depth exploration of the translations and interpretations of *wahy* by prominent orientalists during the 19th -20th centuries is warranted. In this section, orientalists with similar thematic perspectives are grouped together to

²⁶Subhī Al-Sāleh, *Mabāḥeth Fī 'Iloom Al-Qur'ān (Studies in the Science of the Qur'an)* (Beirut: Dār Al-'Ilm, 1977), 22.

²⁷Al-Shūrā 42:51.

²⁸Sitar Al-'Araj, *Wahy and Its Implications in Qur'ān and Islamic Thought*, 151.

²⁹Al-ṣāfāt 37:102.

³⁰Muhammad Ibn Ismail Al-Bukharī, *Sahīh Al-Bukharī*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār Al-Fikr, 1986), 6.

³¹Al-Shu'arā 26:193–194.

³²Sitar Al-'Araj, *Wahy and Its Implications in Qur'an and Islamic Thought*, 142.

³³Stefan Wild, *We have Sent Down to Thee the Book with the Truth... 'Spatial and Temporal Implications of the Qur'anic Concepts of Nuzūl, Tanzīl, and Inzāl In The Qur'ān as Text* (Brill, Leiden, 1996), 146.

³⁴William Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Revelation in the Modern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969), 6.

³⁵Abd Allatīf Al-Subkī, *Al-Wahy 'Ilā Al-Nabi Muḥammad (Revelation to the Prophet Muhammad)* (Cairo: Maṭbu'āt Al-Majlis Al-'Alah Li Al-Shu'awn Al-Islāmiya, n.d.), 83–84.

³⁶Al-Najm 2-10.

³⁷Al-Takwīr 19-27.

³⁸Muhammad Ali, *The Qur'an and The Orientalists: An Examination of Their Main Theories and Assumptions* (Jam'iat 'Ihya'at Minhaaj Al-Sunnah, 2004), 103.

focus on the recurrence of their assertions and to assess how they have translated verses concerning wahy. This critical approach aims to highlight the diverse interpretations and the possible influence of bias in their understanding of this central Islamic concept.

4.1. Theodore Nöldeke,³⁹ William Muir⁴⁰ and John Rodwell⁴¹

In his influential work, *History of the Qur'ān*, Theodore Nöldeke asserted that *wahy* is a compilation of disconnected facts and ideas, largely derived from Judeo-Christian influences. He additionally worked on reorganizing the Qur'ān chronologically, an approach contradicting the Islamic belief in the divine order of the Qur'ān.⁴² Nöldeke's analysis of *wahy* was shaped by his critical stance on Islam, employing textual criticism to scrutinize the Qur'ān. His comparison of the Qur'ānic concept of *wahy* with those in Judaism and Christianity reflects his methodology of using comparative religious framework, challenging the traditional Islamic understanding of *wahy*. Similarly, William Muir, in his renowned book, *The Life of Mahomet*, tried to restructure the Qur'ān chronologically and denied the revelation of *wahy* upon the Prophet Muhammad in the Cave of Hera. He suggested that the Prophet sought refuge in the Cave to alleviate his depression and pursue his ambitions. As a result of his meditation and reflection in the cave, Muhammad came out with his ideas of one God and Resurrection Day and expressed them in fragments of poetry and soliloquy. He then persuaded himself that his thoughts were from God.⁴³

Muir's assertion represents a glaring contradiction, distorting the facts, accounts and reports documented in Islam concerning *wahy*. Moreover, Muir's claims starkly contrast with Islamic tradition, which holds that the Prophet Muhammad could not have fabricated the Qur'ān or change a single letter of it or even violate the divine guidance and attribute something wrongly to Allah. This is explicitly evident by verses in the Qur'ān where Allah says: "And who is more unjust than one who invents about Allah a lie or denies His verses? Indeed, the wrongdoers will not succeed."⁴⁴ And says: "And when Our verses are recited to them as clear evidences, those who do not expect the meeting with Us say, "Bring us a Qur'ān other than this or change it." Say, [O Muhammad], "It is

³⁹Theodore Nöldeke is a German Orientalist. He studies various languages while giving a high focus on Semitic languages. His studies and research were largely relevant to the history of Qur'ān. His writings on the history of the Qur'ān were an indispensable reference for all research of the Qur'ān in West. See: Ahmad Syukron, and Nikmatul Khairiyah, "Chronology of the Qur'ān According to Theodor Nöldeke and Sir William Muir (Analysis of the History of the Qur'ān and Life of Mahomet)," *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal* 5, no. 2 (2022), 16646.

⁴⁰William Muir was a Scottish historian and orientalist. He published several works in the field of history of Islam. One of his major works was *Life of Mahomet* and *The Coran: Its Composition and Teaching and The Mohammedan Conversely* which made him a popular historian on studies of Islam in the west. See: C.J. Lyall, *Obituary Notices of Sir William Muir, Journal of The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1905), 874–876.

⁴¹John Meadow Rodwell, a British Orientalist, made significant contributions in the field of translation, translating many works from Hebrew, as well as materials from Ethiopic and Coptic Liturgies. Notably, in 1861, he published a groundbreaking translation of the Qur'ān, wherein he organized its suras into a chronological sequence. See: Muhammad Sultan Shah, "A Critical Study of Rodwell's Translation of the Qur'an," *Pakistan Journal of Islamic Research* 12 (2013): 53–66.

⁴²Ibn Warrāq, *The Origins of the Koran Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), 59.

⁴³William Muir, *Life of Mahomet and History of Islam to the Era of the Hegira* (London: Elder Smith & Co., 2002), 35.

⁴⁴Al-An'ām 6:21.

not for me to change it on my own accord. I only follow what is revealed to me. Indeed, I fear, if I should disobey my Lord, the punishment of a tremendous Day.”⁴⁵

In the preface of his masterpiece, *‘The Koran: Translated from the Arabic, the Suras Arranged in Chronological Order, with Notes and Index,’* John Rodwell discusses the historical context of the Qur’ān, suggesting a tactical approach for Christian missionaries in their dialogue with Muslims. He recommends steering away from outright criticism and instead proposing an argument that highlights Islam as containing fragments of truth, albeit in a disjointed manner. Rodwell advocates emphasizing the influence of Christianity and Judaism, particularly the latter, in the formation of Islam, while underscoring the belief that these religions foreshadow Christianity as the ultimate dispensation.⁴⁶ The commentary of Rodwell mirrors the perspectives of Muir and Nöldeke on *wahy*. He claimed the influence of Judaism and Christianity on Muhammad’s authorship of the Qur’ān. The title of his translation, reveals his intention as he arranged the *Suras* (chapters) of the Qur’ān chronologically to confuse the English readers about the Qur’ān. He ignored the crucial historical fact that the Qur’ān was revealed in response to the immediate needs and circumstances of Muslim community, providing them with relevant guidance and laws.⁴⁷

4.2. Richard Bell⁴⁸ and Arthur Arberry⁴⁹

According to Richard Bell, the term "*wahy*" should not be viewed as the simple verbal communication of the Qur’ān's text but rather as a form of suggestion, prompting, or inspiration given on to the Prophet Muhammad for practical guidance.⁵⁰

Bell argued that words such as ‘suggest,’ ‘prompt,’ or ‘place in the heart of’ more accurately capture the essence of "*wahy*" than the commonly used term 'reveal.' In his 1937 translation titled “The Qur’ān: Translated with a Critical Rearrangement of the *Surahs*,” Bell contended that the Arabic term "*yantiqū*"⁵¹, signifying that the Prophet Muhammad never spoke independently, is an absolute expression unrelated to "*wahy*".⁵²

Moreover, Bell speculated that the term "Qur’ān" itself could be traced back to the Syriac word “*qeryana*”, and claimed that Prophet Muhammad drew inspiration from his readings of Christian scriptures and Jewish sources. Additionally, Bell's translation of the word "*awha*" as “suggestion” or “prompting” came from his view that the Qur’ān’s content arose in the Prophet’s mind from external

⁴⁵Yūnus 10: 15.

⁴⁶John Rodwell, *The Koran* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1861), preface, xxv.

⁴⁷Farid Esack, *Qur’ān, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), 54.

⁴⁸Richard Bell was a Scottish orientalist. He obtained his PhD in divinity. He paid a high level of concern to the studies and translations of Qur’an. The first edition of Bell’s translation was published in 1937 under the title of “The Qur’an Translated with A Critical Rearrangement of Suras.” Then his translation appeared in six more editions. The last of them was published in 1991 with a new title “A Commentary on the Qur’ān.” Mahmoud Elnemr, “The Ideology and Translations of the Quran by the Orientalists: A Comparative Study of Richard Bells Translation,” *Global Journal of Human-Social Science* 20, no. 20 (2020):1–15.

⁴⁹Arberry was an English orientalist who held the chair of Arabic at Cambridge College starting in 1947. He devoted his academic career to the comprehensive study of the Islamic world. See: Richard Owen Watkin, *Arthur John Arberry: A Critical Evaluation of an Orientalist* (University of Wales Trinity, 2020), iv.

⁵⁰Richard Bell, “Mohammed’s Call,” *The Moslem World* 24, no. 1 (1934): 13–19.

⁵¹Al-Najm 53:3.

⁵²Richard Bell, “Mohammed’s visions,” *Journal of The Moslem World* 24, no. 2 (1934):145–154.

sources.⁵³ To support this perspective, Bell added the word “there” in his translation of *Surat An-Najm*, verse no. 5 to read, “There taught him one strong in power.”⁵⁴

Notably, this inserted word “there” lacks a corresponding counterpart in the original Arabic text. This particular choice of translation aimed at reinforcing his argument against the connection between Prophet Muhammad and Gabriel. Absolutely, from Muslim perspective, the accurate translation is “none other than an angel, one of potent power, has taught it to him” explicitly referring to the angel Gabriel.⁵⁵ Bell’s approach to translating *wahy* as ‘suggestion’ reflects his reliance on a historical-critical method common in biblical studies of his time. This method, while innovative in its application to the Qur’ān, failed to fully engage with the Islamic exegetical tradition, leading to misinterpretations of such key concepts of the Qur’ān as *wahy*.

In his translation of *Surat An-Najm*, verse no.11, Bell rendered it as “the heart did not falsify what it saw,” notably replacing the pronoun “he” with “it.”⁵⁶ This deliberate substitution appears to support his argument against a physical meeting between Prophet Muhammad and the angel Gabriel. By interpreting the event as a mental vision rather than a concrete encounter, Bell aimed to deny any direct, physical interaction between the Prophet and the angel Gabriel. His misinterpretations of *wahy* and its related terms were in line with his assumption that Prophet Muhammad began composing the Qur’ān after a vision of the Archangel. Furthermore, he dismissed authenticated hadiths that affirm the descent of *wahy* upon the Prophet Muhammad and his frequent interactions with the angel Gabriel.

In his commentary on *Surat An-Najm*, (verses 5-10), Bell suggested that Prophet Muhammad initially claimed to have seen God but later corrected this assertion by saying that it was the angel, Gabriel.⁵⁷ This view directly contradicts the Qur’ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet, which affirm that Gabriel conveyed *wahy* to the Prophet from the very beginning of his mission. Additionally, the Qur’ān mentions *wahy* approximately forty times, consistently referring to it as Allah’s divine revelation conveyed through the angel Gabriel.

In his 1955 translation, *The Koran Interpreted*, published by Oxford University Press, Arberry integrated theological terminology from other faiths into his translation of *wahy*.⁵⁸ He rendered *Ruh Al-Quds*, meaning Gabriel who brought the *wahy*, to read: “Say: The Holy Spirit sent it down from thy Lord.”⁵⁹ Additionally, Arberry translated *Al-Nabi Al-Ummiy*⁶⁰ as “the Prophet of the common folk,”⁶¹ although, the precise translation is the “unlettered Prophet.”⁶² Arberry’s work influenced the study of Arab culture from the late 19th century through World War II.⁶³

⁵³Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in Its Christian Environment* (Routledge, 1968), 147.

⁵⁴Richard Bell, “Mohammed’s Call,” 13–19.

⁵⁵Ahmad Hammad, *The Gracious Qur’ān: A Modern-Phrased Interpretation in English* (USA: Lucent Interpretations, LLC, 2009), 924.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 925.

⁵⁷Muhammad Ali, *The Qur’ān and The Orientalists: An Examination of Their Main Theories and Assumptions*. (Jam’iat ‘Ihyaā’ Minhaaj Al-Sunnah, 2004), 130.

⁵⁸A. R. Nykl, “Notes on E. H. Palmer’s The Qur’ān,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 56, no. 1 (1936): 77–84.

⁵⁹Al-Nahl 16:102.

⁶⁰Al-A’rāf 7:157.

⁶¹Arthur John Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (Oxford University Press, 1983), 270.

⁶²Ahmad Hammad, *The Gracious Qur’ān: A Modern-Phrased Interpretation in English*, 424.

⁶³Richard Owen Watkin, *Arthur John Arberry: A Critical Evaluation of an Orientalist* (University of Wales Trinity, 2020), 19.

4.3. William Montgomery Watt⁶⁴

According to Watt, *wahy* is essentially an internal communication or perhaps an intellectual insight.⁶⁵ In his masterpiece, *Muhammad at Mecca*, Watt reflected Bell's method in translating *Surat An-Najm*, verse no. 4, interpreting 'wahy' as "suggestion". His translation reads: "it is nothing but a suggestion suggested."⁶⁶ Similarly, Watt translated *Surat An-Najm*, verse no. 11 as "the heart did not falsify what it saw," replacing "he" with "it." This substitution supports Watt's theory that Prophet Muhammad's encounter with the angel Gabriel was spiritual vision rather than physical event.⁶⁷ Watt also brought psychological interpretations into his analysis of *wahy*, portraying it as a psychological phenomenon. He considered the Prophet's stay in the cave of Hira where he received his initial revelations of *wahy*, as merely a recreational outing and a retreat from the sweltering climate of Mecca.⁶⁸ Watt translated the word *Iqra'*, the initial word of *wahy* recorded in the chapter of *Al-'Alaq*, verse no.1, to read "recite from memory what has been communicated to you supernaturally."⁶⁹

Furthermore, he translated *Al-Muddathir*⁷⁰ as "O man who is obscure and of no reputation."⁷¹ This translation aligns with the derogatory treatment the Meccan pagans inflicted upon the Prophet (SAW) as he conveyed the truth to them. Watt's translations to the verses in the chapters of *Al-'Alaq* and *Al-Muddathir* deviate from the traditional Islamic views outlined in the Qur'an and Hadiths, which unequivocally affirm the descend of *wahy* upon the Prophet.

According to Watt, "*Namūs*" is synonymous with *wahy*. He suggested that *Namus* signified that the revelation given to the Prophet Muhammad was on par with or related to the Jewish or Christian scriptures. Additionally, Watt argued that the Qur'anic *wahy* mirrored the inspirations and divine messages conveyed to the Christian prophets and saints, which were then recorded in writing.⁷²

Watt dismissed the idea of God's direct communication with Prophet Muhammad from beyond a veil, translating 'wahy' in the chapter of *Ash-shūrā*, verse no. 51-52, as merely an inspiration and suggestion in the Prophet's mind.⁷³ He overlooked the explicit meaning of the verse and introduced the phrase: "words are heard and that therefore this in an imaginative locution or even exterior locution."⁷⁴ Additionally, Watt claimed that the angel Gabriel is not mentioned in the verse, arguing that the angel Gabriel was only named during the *Medinan* period. He further suggested that Muslims' retroactively imposed later conceptions onto earlier periods. Consequently, he regarded the manner of *wahy* as merely an imaginative locution.⁷⁵ He also speculated that Muhammad might have reorganized or altered the content of the revelations when necessary for amendments.⁷⁶ He also

⁶⁴William Montgomery Watt was a Scottish orientalist and historian. He was the chairman of the English Society for Oriental Studies. A great deal of his publications gave focus to the study of Islam and Muslim societies. One of his popular publications is *Muhammad at Mecca*. See: Ali Pajaziti, "Orientalist Sociology: W. M. Watt's Concept of History and Religion," *Journal of Balkan Studies* 1, No. 2 (2021): 69.

⁶⁵Watt, William Montgomery, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960), 55.

⁶⁶Ibid., 42.

⁶⁷Ibid., 43.

⁶⁸Ibid., 44.

⁶⁹Ibid., 47.

⁷⁰Al-Muddathir 74:1.

⁷¹Ibid., 49.

⁷²Reuben Levy, "Review: Muhammad at Mecca," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1, no. 2 (1962): 86–87.

⁷³Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 54.

⁷⁴Ibid., 56.

⁷⁵Ibid., 57.

⁷⁶Ibid., 58.

speculated that Muhammad might have reorganized or altered the content of the revelations when necessary. In the view of Muslims, Watt's translation of the word 'yuḥiya' in 42:51 to mean a suggestion and inspiration was deemed inaccurate. Pickthal, Yusuf Ali and Muhsin Khan argue that the correct translation is "He sends a messenger (i.e., angel Gabriel) to reveal." In his book, *The Qur'ān and The Orientalists: An Examination of Their Main Theories and Assumptions*, Muhammad Mohar Ali asserted that the orientalist perspective regarding waḥy as a human production of Muhammad is an endeavor to assail the Qur'ān.⁷⁷

Watt supported his interpretation by discussing *Ash-shu'arā*, verse no. 193, which confirms the Gabriel's descent upon the Prophet. He argued that the Spirit conveyed the message to Muhammad's heart and mind, not through direct speech, but possibly through an internal, intellectual process. He also commented on the Hadīth of Al-Hārith Ibn Hishām, illustrating Gabriel's descend upon the Prophet through *ṣalsalt al-Jaras* (reverberation of the bell), suggesting that it amounted to nothing more than an intellectual expression.⁷⁸ According to the Muslim perspective, the "trustworthy spirit" mentioned in the chapter of *Ash-shu'arā*, verse no. 193 is understood to be the angel who delivered the revelation to the Prophet, a concept synonymous with the intended meaning of "Rasul Kareem"⁷⁹ (Noble Messenger) as described in the Qur'ān.⁸⁰

4.4. Regis Blachere and Edward Palmer⁸¹

Regis Blachere, a prominent French Orientalist renowned for his dedicated study of the text and history of the Qur'ān, inserted the verse of *Gharāniq* in his 1949 translation of *Surat An-Najm of the Qur'ān, "Le Coran."* The *Gharāniq* verse is often mistakenly thought to have been unconsciously recited by the Prophet Muhammad during the revelation of *Surat An-Najm*, supposedly with Satan's interference. The polytheists rejoiced as their Gods were acknowledged and praised within this Qur'ānic verse. *Gharāniq* refers to the idols worshiped in Mecca prior to Islam, which the Polytheists believed could intercede for them.⁸² Blachere's inclusion of the verse is not supported by scholarly evidence and contradicts the belief in the Prophet's infallibility in conveying God's message.⁸³ Many Muslim thinkers and scholars disapprove the validity and the existence of the *Gharāniq* narrative.⁸⁴

⁷⁷Ali, Muhammad Mohar, *The Qur'ān and The Orientalists: An Examination of Their Main Theories and Assumptions*. 99.

⁷⁸William Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 55.

⁷⁹Muhammad A. S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'ān: A New Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 237.

⁸⁰Al-Hāqah 69:40 and Al-Takwīr 81:19.

⁸¹Edward Henry Palmer, an English Orientalist, dedicated his scholarly endeavors to the study of Arabic and Islamic Literature. Unlike John Rodwell, Palmer chose not to arrange the Qur'ān chronologically but rather adhered to its traditional order. In 1880, he released his translation of the Qur'ān accompanied by an introduction that delved into the life of Prophet Muhammad. See: R. L. Bidwell, "Edward Henry Palmer (1840-1882)," *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies* 13, No. 1 (1986): 45–50.

⁸²Maḥmud b. Umar Al-Zamakhshari, *Al-Fā'iq Fi Gharīb al-Hadīth (The Outstanding Reference in the Strange Hadīth)* (Beirut: Dar Dar Al-Koto Al-ilmiyah, n.d.).

⁸³Nurun Najmatul Ulya, "Telaah Terhadap Interpretasi Nicolai Sinai Dalam an Interpretation of Surah Al-Najm (QS. 53)," (A Study of Nicolai Sinai's Interpretation in an Interpretation of Surah Al-Najm (QS. 53)," *Al-Dzikra: Jurnal Studi Ilmu al-Qur'an Dan al-Hadits* 14, no. 2 (2020):179–204.

⁸⁴Mahmoud Arif, and Mohammad Kurjum, "On Validity of the *Gharāniq* 'Hadīth: Examining the Religious Reason of Exegesis Literatures," *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 31, no. 2 (2020): 340–360.

Blachere speculated that large portions of the Qur'ān could have been lost because the Prophet Muhammad failed to remember them due to the intense fear, he felt at the time of his first revelation. As a result, he claimed that these portions went disregarded and unwritten by his companions.⁸⁵ Even though Blachere gave recognition to the process of *wahy*, he suggested that neither Prophet Muhammad nor his companions were focused on recording the Qur'ān. Blachere obviously disregarded the fact that the fears experienced by the Prophet Muhammad during his first encounter with Gabriel and receiving the *wahy* didn't impede his remarkable ability to memorize the verses conveyed by the angel. Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad promptly recalled the verses and recited them to his wife Khadijah after leaving the cave of Hira, and his companions diligently memorized and recorded the verses as he instructed. The Qur'ān was written down in both Mecca and Medina with the direct guidance of Prophet Muhammad.⁸⁶

In *Sacred Book of the East*, Edward Palmer criticized the language of the Qur'ān as being coarse and lacking literary elegance.⁸⁷ His translation aimed to portray the Qur'ān as merely a rhymed text, neglecting its divine miraculous nature. Although he rendered the concept of “*wahy*” as “revelation” in a literal sense, avoiding theological implications, his translation errors revealed his insufficient knowledge of Arabic language and its idiomatic expressions. Moreover, he deprived himself to grasp the cultural and religious background of the Qur'ānic text.⁸⁸

Orientalists from the 19th and 20th centuries took a similar approach in translating the concept of *wahy*, often casting doubt on the Qur'ān's divine origins. They denied the illiteracy of the Prophet which is one of his remarkable attributes in order to support their assertion that the Qur'ān was composed by the Prophet Muhammad and merely plagiarized from the Bible. Their translations lacked accuracy, disregarding the vast scholarship on *wahy* found in renowned and authentic references of *Tafsīr* authored by prominent scholars like Ibn Abbas, Al-Ṭabari,⁸⁹ Al-Qutubī,⁹⁰ Al-Nasafī,⁹¹ and many others. The prefaces and footnotes of their translations gave the impression that the Qur'ān was an ordinary text composed by a talented poet. It is crucial to emphasize that Imam

⁸⁵F. S. Kamara, *Dirast Tarjamāt M'ānī Al-Qur'ān Al-Kareem Ilā Al-Lugha Al-Frinsiya (Studies on the Translations of the Meanings of the Gracious Qur'an into French Language)*, (Nadwat Tarjamāt M'ānī Al-Qur'ān Al-Kareem: Taqweem Li-Al-Maḍī Wa Takhtīṭ Li Al-Mustaqabal, Majama' Al-Malik Fahd Le-Tib'at Al-Musahaf Al-Sharif Bi Al-Madina, 2012).

⁸⁶Muhammad Abu Layla, *Qur'ān from an Orientalists' View* (Cairo: Dār Al-Nashr Li-Al Jam'āt, 2002), 374–376.

⁸⁷Edward Palmer, *The Qur'ān* (Oxford University: Clarendon Press, 1880), Introduction, lxxvii.

⁸⁸Aziz Yowell, and Muftah Lataiwish, *Principles of Translation* (Benghdazi: University of Qaryounis, 2000), 111.

⁸⁹Muhammad Ibn Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī (839-923) was an eminent scholar of his time. He mastered and contributed his knowledge in areas of Qur'anic Sciences, legal theory and Islamic history. In particular, he excelled in the field of *Tasīr* (interpretation of the Qur'an). See: Franz Rosenthal, *The History of Al-Ṭabarī* (Albany: University of New York Press, 1989), 45–46.

⁹⁰Abu Abdullāh Muhammad bin Ahmed Al-Qurtubī (1214-1273) was one of the greatest interpreters of the Qur'ān in the seventh century of Hijrah. He authored many books in the field of *Tafsīr* and the most well-known book among them is *Al-Tafsīr Al-Jamī' Fī Ahkāmī al-Qur'ān* (The Exegesis' Compilation of the Rulings of the Qur'an). See: Azamat Zhamashev, “Historical Sciences: Al-Qurtubī, Origin, Teachers and Scientific Works,” *Sciences of Europe* 90 (2022): 23–27.

⁹¹Abu Albarakāt Al-Nasafī (1223-1310) was an eminent scholar in the field of Qur'an interpretation and one of his famous book is *Tafsīr Madārik al-Tanzīl wa Haqā'iq al-Ta'wīl* (The Occasions of Revelation and the Realities of its Interpretations).

Al-Suyutī⁹² and Az-Zarkashī⁹³ extensively addressed this misconception, refuting any suggestion of poetic form or rhyme in the Qur'ānic Text. They emphasized the Qur'ān's linguistic uniqueness and inimitability set it apart from conventional poetic norms.⁹⁴

5. Fair Testimonies of Orientalists on *Wahy*

Many Western and European readers have been influenced by orientalist's translations of the Qur'ān, which have led to widespread misconception regarding Islam and the *wahy* of the Qur'ān. Their translations have reinforced negative attitudes towards Islam, fostering Islamophobia in scholarly and popular discourses. Furthermore, they have hindered readers from understanding the authentic meanings and contexts encapsulated within the Qur'ān. A faithful translation that accurately conveys the Qur'ān's message would attract attention and guide readers to its divine truths, particularly if they come to know that the Prophet Muhammad, who received the revelation, was unlettered, adding to the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān.⁹⁵

To downplay the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān, orientalist's biased attempts of translations of the concept of *wahy* intended to present Islam as a faith plagiarized from earlier Abrahamic traditions. These biased translations underscore the need for accurate Muslim's translations that debunk such claims and preserve the accurate meaning of *wahy*. Among the notable Muslim translations of the Twentieth century are: *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran: An Explanatory Translation* by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, published in 1930; *The Holy Qur'ān* by Abdallah Yusuf Ali, published in 1934; *Explanatory English Translation of the Holy Qur'ān* by Muhammad Muhsin Khan and Muhammad Taqi Ul-deen Hilālī, published in 1977; *The Bounteous Koran: A Translation of the Meaning & Commentary* by Mohammad Khatib, published in 1986; *Towards Understanding the ever-Glorious Qur'ān* by Muhammad Mahmoud Al-Ghalī, published in 1997; *The Qur'ān: A New Translation* by Muhammad Abdel Haleem, published in 2004; *The Gracious Qur'ān: A Modern Phrased Interpretation in English* by Ahmed Zaki Hammad, published in 2007; and *The Clear Qur'ān* by Mustafa Khattab, published in 2015.

Muslim's translations have been commendable in their efforts to faithfully convey the true essence of the Qur'ān while affirming the authenticity of *wahy*, thus confirming its revelation to the Prophet Muhammad. These works consistently emphasize the revelation is not a product of the Prophet Muhammad himself, rather it is originated directly from Allah and is delivered to the Prophet through the Trustee of Revelation. These translations meticulously reference and draw upon reputable sources of *Tafsīr* (exegesis) and other Islamic sciences, thereby bolstering their credibility and depth of portrayal.

⁹²Jalal al-Din Abul-Fadl Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Abī Bakr Ibn Muhammad al-Suyutī (1445-1505) authored hundreds of works in different areas of knowledge. In particular, he was a well-known scholar in the field of Arabic grammar and Qur'ān interpretation. One of his famous books is *Al-Itqān Fī Ulum al-Qur'ān* (The Perfection of the Sciences of Qur'ān).

⁹³Abu al-Qasim Mahmud ibn Umar al-Zamakhsharī (1075-1143) was a prominent Muslim scholar in the field of Tafsīr, Arabic language and its literature. One of his well-known books is *Al-Kashaaf Fī Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān* (the Revealer in the interpretation of Al-Qur'ān).

⁹⁴Muhammad Al-Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān Fī 'Uloom Al-Qur'ān (A Manual of the Qur'anic Sciences)* (Cairo: Dār Al-Hadīth, 2010), 55. See also: Abdu Al-Rahamān Al-Suyutī, *Al-Itqān Fī 'Uloom Al-Qur'ān (The Perfection of the Sciences of Qur'ān)* (Beirut: Dār Al-Kotob Al-'ilmīyah, 2003), 104.

⁹⁵Mahmoud Elnemr, "The Ideology and Translations of the Qur'ān by the Orientalists: A Comparative Study of Richard Bells Translation," *Global Journal of Human-Social Science* 20, no. 20 (2020): 3.

It is crucial to objectively acknowledge that some orientalists included William Lees, Will Durnat, and Lightner Gottlieb, have significantly contributed to foster a deeper understanding of Islamic thought and culture. Their objective discourse of the Qur'ānic concepts and terminologies have conveyed the true essence of Islam in western and European contexts.⁹⁶ While recognizing the challenges posed by some orientalist perspectives, it is important to appreciate the contributions of others in facilitating a more nuanced understanding of Qur'ānic concepts.

Acknowledging the objective accounts from impartial orientalists about the Qur'ān and its notion of *wahy*, William Lees stands out prominently. Lees, a modern orientalist, served as the principal of the leading institution of Islamic education in Bengal. He dedicated considerable effort to transform this institution into a hub for Arabic Language and Literature studies.⁹⁷ Lees provided a constructive view on *wahy*, asserting: "In comparison with most of the Arabic works, the style and language of the 'Koran' must certainly be considered not only elegant, but even beautiful. It is highly expressive... Indeed, in parts the language is lofty, and in passages where the majesty and grandeur of the Deity are described, may be said to approach the sublime. It has been universally allowed by Arabs of all ages...to be written with the greatest elegance and in the purest of incomparable language."⁹⁸

In contrast to the orientalists who denied Prophet Muhammad's illiteracy in a bid to support the idea that *wahy* was Muhammad's self-creation, Will Durant, an American orientalist, took a more affirmative approach. He stated that there is no evidence indicating that anyone ever instructed Muhammad in reading or writing. Furthermore, Muhammad himself was not known to have written anything. However, this did not prevent him from developing a deep understanding of human management, a trait that is seldom seen even in the highly educated individuals.⁹⁹ Similarly, Thomas Carlyle, a Scottish orientalist, reiterated this perspective by stating that it is essential to remember that Muhammad had no formal education and even the concept of writing had only recently emerged in Arabia. Consequently, it appears highly plausible that Muhammad never acquired the writing skills.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, Lightner Gottlieb, a British orientalist, maintained an objective and impartial view that supports the authenticity of *wahy*. Reflecting on the chapter of 'Abasa (80:1-10), he noted that when God revealed to the Prophet, reproaching him for neglecting a poor blind man to speak to a wealthy nobleman, this revelation was made public. If Muhammad, as falsely alleged, had authored such verses, they likely would not have been included.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, Lightner rejected the notion that the *wahy* was merely borrowed from Torah and Gospels. Based on his understanding of Judaism and Christianity, he emphasized that what Muhammad received was not a mere adaptation but a divine revelation.¹⁰²

⁹⁶Ayşegül Aylin Aytekin, "An Analysis on the Orientalists' Early Studies on the Qur'ān," *Kıbrıs İslâm Tetkikleri Merkezi Dergisi* 9, no. 1(2023):1–14.

⁹⁷Muhammad Ali, *History of the Muslim of Bengal* (Riyadh: Imām Muhammad Islamic University, 1988), Chapter VII.

⁹⁸*Bengal Education Proceedings*, House of Commons, Parliamentary Ppam, Session II, Paper 186, 20 September, 1855.

⁹⁹Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, Trans. Muhammad Badrān, Vol.13 (Beirut: Dār Al-Jeel, 1981), 21–22.

¹⁰⁰Thomas Carlyle, *Heroes* (Cairo: Al-Dār Al-Qawmiyah, n.d.), 5.

¹⁰¹Gottlieb Lightner, *The Religion of Islām*, Trans. Abdelwahāb Seleim (Damascus: Al-Maktabah Al-Salafiyyah, H. 1342), 132–133.

¹⁰²Henry De Castries, *Al-Islām Khawāter Wa Sawānih (Islam: Thoughts and Ideas)*, Trans. Ahmad Fathī Zaghloul (Cairo: Dār Al-Sh'ab, (1911), 6.

From an objective standpoint, William Muir's rejection of the false notion that Prophet Muhammad experienced epileptic seizures during the reception of *wahy*. He clearly demonstrated that the symptoms of epilepsy are different from the experiences Muhammad had at the time of *wahy*. Furthermore, scientific evidence supports this distinction, as individuals with epilepsy typically cannot recall any events that happen during seizure episodes. In contrast, Prophet Muhammad consistently conveyed and instructed his companions regarding everything he received from Gabriel. Muir emphasized that it is implausible for someone experiencing epilepsy to exhibit the level of wisdom and guidance exhibited by Muhammad.¹⁰³

Theodore Nöldeke, like many orientalists, rearranged the chapters of the Qur'ān into a chronological order. However, shortly before his death, he expressed regret for dedicating significant time to what he later deemed an irrelevant endeavor.¹⁰⁴ Muslim scholars argue that any orientalist endeavor to rearrange the chapters of the Qur'ān either chronologically or thematically has been unsuccessful, emphasizing that the order of Qur'ānic chapters is divinely ordained by Allah alone and cannot be altered by any human effort.

Furthermore, Nöldeke disputed the claims made by the orientalist G. Weil, particularly in his denial of the *wahy* of the verses 21:35, 29:30 & 39:30 which address the Prophet Muhammad's death. Weil argued that the reactions and astonishment of figures like Omar Bin Al-Khaṭṭāb and other companions at the time of the Prophet's demise indicated that these verses were neither recited nor heard from him. He suggested that these verses were later inserted into the Qur'ān by Abu Bakr after the Prophet's death to persuade Omar and others to accept the reality of Muhammad's demise. Nöldeke illustrated that Weil's assumption lacks logical coherence and contradicts the well-established facts regarding Muhammad's life. Muhammad openly informed his companions of his certain mortality.¹⁰⁵ This notable change in Nöldeke's perspective might explain his failure to adhere to a solid scientific methodology in his translation of the Qur'ān.

To summarize, it is significant to observe that certain orientalists have offered impartial and objective insights, translations, and writings regarding the concept of *wahy* (divine revelation) and the Qur'ān as a whole. These scholars have arrived at accurate conclusions regarding *wahy* by drawing upon reliable Islamic reports. They have actively rejected the hostile attitudes of earlier orientalists toward Islam. It is noteworthy that such scholarly contributions, marked by their unbiased views on the Qur'ān and the Prophet of Islam, can serve to strengthen communication and foster cultural ties between the East and the West.

6. Conclusion

Orientalism, as an academic discipline, gained prominence in the 19th and 20th centuries, leading to numerous publications and translations regarding the Qur'ān and the concept of *wahy*. Despite these endeavors, no translation has been able to capture the absolute perfection and inimitability of the original Arabic text and intent of the Qur'ān.

The Gracious Qur'ān cannot be accurately translated word by word or be replicated in another language. Apart from Arberry's translation of the Qur'ān, titled "The Koran Interpreted," many orientalists' translations of that era often carried titles such as "Translation of Qur'ān" or "Mohammadian Koran." Notably, these translations with their titles and introductions indicate a translation philosophy that favors literal interpretations. They often ignore the complex

¹⁰³William Muir, *Life of Mahomet and History of Islam*, 14.

¹⁰⁴Omar Lutfi Al-Alem, *Orientalists and Qur'ān* (Malta: Markaz Dirasāt Al-'Ālam Al-Islāmī, 1991), 7.

¹⁰⁵Theodor Nöldeke, *Geschichte Des Qurans*, Trans. *History of The Qur'an*, Vol. 2 (Germany: Hanserbooks, 2016), 82.

morphological and phonological intricacies of the Arabic text, opting instead to rely on citations from their peers' translations and neglecting the original Qur'ānic text. Thus, they disregard reliable, authentic, and scholarly Islamic resources.

The orientalist's translations of the 19th and 20th century have posed challenges on the authenticity and divinity of the Qur'ān. In translating the Qur'ānic concept of *wahy*, they argue that the Qur'ān is entirely the creation of Prophet Muhammad, fostering this perspective based on three key foundations: First, they challenge the historical fact that the Prophet Muhammad was an unlettered person. This significant characteristic of the Prophet is sufficient to refute the orientalist's claims on the authorship of Prophet Muhammad to the Qur'ān. Moreover, it would be exceedingly difficult for an unlettered person to plagiarize from the Jewish and Christian scriptures, and in less than a century and half, his religion would surpass Judaism and Christianity in influence. Second, they portray the Prophet Muhammad as merely a reformer, denying any link to the angel Gabriel. Third, they assume that the Prophet experienced epilepsy.

Broadly speaking, the orientalist's perspectives on *wahy* have often involved a strategy of inextricable intertwining literal translations with Qur'ān's interpretation; which are two distinct different sciences. Hence, they persistently disconnected the concept of *wahy* from its divine significance to support their erroneous claim that *wahy* is just a fabrication of Prophet Muhammad and nothing more than a rehearsal of Judeo-Christian sources. "And they say, "Legends of the former peoples which he has written down, and they are dictated to him morning and afternoon."¹⁰⁶

However, there has been a notable shift in Orientalism from mere criticism of Islam to scholarly inquiry. Objectively, some orientalist's of the 19th and 20th century fostered sound and impartial perspectives on the *wahy* of the Qur'ān. Their profound and scholarly study of the Qur'ān and its history from its reliable resources have considerably influenced their perception of Islam and the veracity of the Qur'ān. These scholarly resources are very crucial for accurately grasping understanding of Qur'ānic concepts such as "*wahy*" (revelation). Thus, if orientalist's translations of Qur'ān and its concepts are objectively and scholarly well addressed, have the potential to contribute in developing cultural bridges, clearing wrong misconceptions about Islam and fostering interfaith harmony at a global level.

Conflict of Interest

The author of the manuscript has no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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¹⁰⁶Al-Nūr 25:5.

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