CHAPTER 6
Paradise in the Quran and the Music of Apocalypse

Todd Lawson

These people have no grasp of God’s true measure. On the Day of Resurrection, the whole earth will be in His grip. The heavens will be rolled up in His right hand – Glory be to Him! He is far above the partners they ascribe to Him! the Trumpet will be sounded, and everyone in the heavens and earth will fall down senseless except those God spares. It will be sounded once again and they will be on their feet, looking on. The earth will shine with the light of its Lord; the Record of Deeds will be laid open; the prophets and witnesses will be brought in. Fair judgment will be given between them: they will not be wronged and every soul will be repaid in full for what it has done. He knows best what they do.

Q 39:67–70

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An apocalypse is a supernatural revelation, which reveals secrets of the heavenly world, on the one hand, and of eschatological judgment on the other.

JOHN J. COLLINS, The Dead Sea Scrolls 150

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The Quran may be distinguished from other scriptures of Abrahamic or ethical monotheistic faith traditions by a number of features. The first of these is the degree to which the subject of revelation (as it happens, the best English translation of the Greek word ἀποκάλυψις / apocalypsis) is central to its form and contents. In this the Quran is unusually self-reflective, a common feature, incidentally, of modern and postmodern works of art and literature. It is not only a revelation but repeatedly identifies itself as revelation and this identification is also revelation. It is acutely and uniquely self-referential as far as content,
form, and function are concerned. In short, the Quran may be thought of as the “main character” of the Quran. In studies of the Quran, the word “revelation” is usually a translation of *tanzīl*, “sending down” a word with a very different semantic shape than apocalypse, which means “to uncover” (and is thus akin to ἀλήθεια / aletheia). However, there are other Quranic words that also denote or connote revelation; some of these have a closer semantic relationship to apocalypse. Such etymological diversions notwithstanding, it is beyond discussion or dispute that revelation is the form, contents, function, and self-image of the Quran.

So heavy with apocalyptic expectation, the Quran also distinguishes itself from other scriptures of the Abrahamic faiths in the degree and intensity with which it dwells on the question of afterlife and the vividness of that afterlife. In this context, the afterlife may be understood as a theater for the dramatic performance and operation of the glory of God at a most intense level. Revelation is intimately linked with what is called in Biblical and apocalyptic studies, a “glory motif.” There are, besides revelation and paradise, many other moments of glory in the Quran, but in the following exploration of paradise we will restrict reference to two: covenant and divine presence (*al-sakīna*). Paradise, covenant, and divine presence are discussed and explicated through reference to the Quranic literary features of enantiodromia (the interplay of duality, opposition and symmetry) and typological figuration. The hope is to demonstrate that these topics and literary functions are among those parts of the Quran that carry the apocalyptic theme most vividly. Naturally, the more standard ideas of eschatological judgment and the afterlife are also touched upon. This chapter is organized as follows: first, a brief outline of the history of apocalyptic scholarship in Biblical and related studies; second, then a brief outline of the study of apocalypse in Islamic and Quranic scholarship; third,

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1 Madigan, *Self-image*. This Quranic self-awareness is unique in world literature and may be related to the very interesting phenomenon of its personification in the hadith literature, as when the Quran appears as a person at the end of time. On this distinctive literary device in classical Islamic literature, see S. Günther’s article in this volume.

2 This was first emphasized in Koch, *Ratlos* (cf. Collins, *Imagination* 9–11); see also W.R. Cook, *Glory*. For glory in the Islamicate cultural sphere see, e.g., the works of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, *al-Maqtūl* (d. 578/1181) in general and his commentators, including the essential studies of Henry Corbin. For the recognition of a glory motif in the Quran, Lawson, *Duality*. An interesting connection between the literary motif and material culture is suggested by a reading of Winter, *Radiance*.

3 As in Leemhuis, *Apocalypse*, quoted above.
paradise as an apocalyptic motif in the Quran: covenant, glory, and divine presence (sakīna); and fourth, a brief conclusion setting forth the main results.4

1 Apocalypse as Literary Genre

In this context, it is important to first point out that the word apocalypse denotes only “unveiling” or “revelation.”5 It does not denote “destruction” or “catastrophe” or even necessarily eschatology.6 It only connotes these things by what might be thought literary accident. From this point of view, what came to be a very important book entitled The Apocalypse of St. John (known also as The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ) was profoundly and powerfully concerned with eschatology and the “end of the world” as that world was perceived to be a wicked impediment to the plan of God. So, the otherwise unremarkable or at best, possibly unusual, word acquired considerable heft and presence when it was chosen as the title for the last book of the New Testament as we know it today. Indeed, there seems to have been a considerable early-inner-Christian debate whether or not the Apocalypse of St. John should be considered part of the canon. (For example, it is not in the original Syriac Peshitta.7) It is this “literary accident” that has led to the eventual prominence and notoriety of the term as a designation for a category of literature and a designation for the attendant cosmic events and prophecies in what we refer to somewhat solipsistically as Western culture. Prior to this “accident” it had not any history as a marker of genre, as a type of eschatology or social/religious movement, though certainly there had existed books and writings concerned with these topics.8 Because of its somewhat accidental use as the title of the last book of the New

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4 Here one is inspired by Northrop Frye and his desire to see and explain how “Biblical imagery and narrative had set up an imaginative framework… within which Western culture had operated down to the eighteenth century and is to a large extent still operating.” Frye, Great code xi.

5 See part II for a discussion of the relevant Quranic terminology.

6 “[T]he word apocalypse is often associated with the end of the world, or with some great catastrophe. This analogous usage of the word apocalyptic is inevitably imprecise, as resemblance is a matter of degree… The expectation of an ‘end’ of history, or of a new era of radical change, has been enormously important in Christian tradition, but also in Judaism and Islam, and while it is often the subject of a vision or a revelation, it can also be communicated in other ways.” J.J. Collins, Apocalypse: An overview 410b.

7 My thanks to C. Mauder for this and several other important refinements.

8 Smith, On the history 14.
Testament\textsuperscript{9} (for which it also happens to be the first word of that text) and because of the remarkable, dire, dramatic, entertaining, exotic, frightening, and comforting contents of that book, “apocalypse” has also come strongly to connote (and incidentally denote) all of those things — i.e., the content of the book — as well. Thus, apocalypse is a technical, generic designation and applies first to form and second to content.

The Book of Revelation shares a suggestive concept, if not titular word, with one of the more frequent names by which the Quran itself is known and referred to, namely \textit{The Revelation} — \textit{al-tanzīl}. Like the Quran, its contents are determined by the distinctive historical, psychological, and social conditions of the audience to whom it was first addressed.\textsuperscript{10} This audience was, of course, the early Christians suffering not only Roman and Jewish oppression and persecution but also the disarray and insecurity attendant upon the lack of clearly demarcated and universally acknowledged strong and effective leadership. Thus, the purpose of this particular revelation (Grk. \textit{Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰωάννου} = \textit{The Apocalypse of John}): to comfort and reassure the community through a narrative of more or less constant intensity that ultimately they would triumph against the forces of evil (what is referred to in the literature as an “apocalyptic reversal,” i.e., of fortune).\textsuperscript{11} As Hanson states:

In the pressing need to define spiritual identity in the face of challenge, and to sustain hope, a basic perspective is nevertheless identifiable around which apocalyptic systems grow: it is the perspective of apocalyptic eschatology which furnishes a way of viewing reality which denies the apparent superior position of opposing groups of any validity vis-à-vis divine purpose.\textsuperscript{12}

Far from being a narrative of despair and destruction it is a narrative of hope. (It is only a narrative of despair for those who may be identified as the holders of power and authority condemned by the revelation/apocalypse.) The mode of the message, divine revelation, is in the service, among other things, of establishing the highest possible authority for this comforting and encouraging information. But the mood of the discourse is along the lines of sharing a

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 18: “…what was the source from which both it and Paul derived this somewhat unlikely term for such material?”}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{10} Such is an implication of the existence of the traditional Quranic auxiliary study of the media or occasions of revelation (\textit{ʿilm asbāb al-nuzūl}).}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{11} Murphy, \textit{Fallen} 48–55.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{12} Hanson, \textit{Dawn} 433.}
\end{footnotes}
divine secret with the audience. The wealth of frequently strange and “supernatural” detail is in the service of creating a special “reality effect” and lending credence to the proposition that all of this irrefutable information – including the details of judgment (who will be rewarded and who will be punished) – comes from an unseen, mysterious, all-knowing, and divine source. It is, of course, also entertaining in the etymological sense of “gripping.”

But the content of the Book of Revelation, it has been argued, is not responsible for its place of prominence in the Bible. Rather, it is the ascription of that book, its revelation and composition, to “John” – now generally further specified as John of Patmos – who until fairly recently was usually identified as the author of the Gospel of John, i.e., the disciple John and the author of the various epistles bearing his name. It is likely that this identification, more than the actual contents of the book, has made it such an object of veneration, meditation, and exegesis, and that has assured its continued and important place in the canon. It should be remembered, however, that there are many other texts that never made it into the canon although they were attributed to important Biblical figures, such as the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of Thomas, the Acts of Thomas, Paul’s Third Epistle to the Corinthians (which is, actually, accepted as canonical by the Armenian Church) or the Apocalypse of Peter. Thus, there seems to have been something about the Apocalypse of John beyond the mere attribution to the disciple that made members of the early church accept it as part of their scripture, while they were not willing to accept similar claims brought forward with regard to other similar texts. This “something” is doubtless the contents of the book. Another argument claims that such content would otherwise have cast the document beyond the pale of acceptability, and it would have languished with other similarly fantastic and/or dubious texts on the margins of the theological library had it not been for the attribution.

Over the last century, the study of apocalypse has burgeoned, producing a more or less distinct and self-contained area of scientific study broadly termed “apocalyptic” or “studies in apocalypticism.” Whereas formerly, while the

14 Ibid., 13 (ad Ezekiel 33:32). On the reality effect see Barthes, Rustle 141–8.
15 Bull, The end 661. See also the remarks in Smith, On the history 18, suggesting that the popularity of the term as the name of a literary genre grew especially in pagan circles in the third and fourth centuries CE. It is also the case that the word began to be substituted by translators of Jewish texts after about the second century CE, when, for example the vision in Daniel 10 came to be called an apocalypse, where the earlier Greek of the Septuagint used a different verb.
16 Even a brief account of this intellectual history is beyond the space limitations of the present chapter. In the bibliography and the footnotes the reader will find reference to
Book of Revelation was certainly considered just that, and was to be fully and gratefully received as the divine word in Christianity, there was at the same time a disinclination to encourage its study or in fact to pay too much attention to it. It meant something, but we must not meddle in things beyond our abilities, and clearly the strangeness of the Book of Revelation indicated in no uncertain terms that it was largely “over our heads” – a mystery. As Collins points out, “Theologians of a more rational bent are often reluctant to admit that such material played a formative role in early Christianity. There is consequently a prejudice against the apocalyptic literature which is deeply ingrained in biblical scholarship.” The last few generations of Biblical and related scholarship, however, have attempted to grapple earnestly, and with minds freed from such prejudice, with what it has simultaneously sought to define as a genre. This highly variegated and productive process finally issued in the (perhaps apocalyptic) year 2000, in the 3-volume *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*. There, a broad and concise definition of apocalypse is offered: “the belief that God has revealed the imminent end of the ongoing struggle between good and evil in history.” This definition is reduced from one formulated previously by the same author:

Apocalypse is a] genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world. . . . Its purpose is] to interpret present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority.

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some of the most important works in modern apocalypse studies. One of the purposes of this chapter, and one of the points one hopes to be forgiven for repeating from time to time, is that studies of the Quran, in the first place and Islamic-related literature and groups in the second place, are virtually completely absent from this monumental and impressive library of scholarship. Exceptions are noted below.

17 Such non-theologians as Francis Bacon (d. 1626) and Isaac Newton (d. 1727) however devoted much energy to a study of Revelation. Force and Popkin (eds.), *Newton*, passim, and 216–20.
Reading these definitions, especially the second, the question immediately arises as to why the Quran and Islam have not been of more interest to scholars of apocalyptic. We forbear from responding to such a question until the conclusion. For now, suffice it to say that even in this recent encyclopedia, which sees as its primary purpose the exploration of the apocalyptic element in the “three Western monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam,” Islam, in fact, occupies comparatively little space and the Quran itself even less. In the meantime, it is widely acknowledged that there are “apocalyptic” aspects to the Quran (e.g., the so-called “hymnic” Suras), just as there is near universal resistance to considering the entire text – as we do here – a bona fide apocalypse. To be clear, it is also assumed that a text can be more than one thing at the same time and to say that the entire text is an apocalypse does not exhaust the possibilities or circumscribe the field of inquiry. Rather, we hope for the opposite: to widen the approach. The Quran today remains virtually unknown as a subject of apocalyptic scholarship as this has come to be largely and quite variously configured. It has not really been invited to (or if invited has not attended) the rather sumptuous banquet of contemporary apocalyptic scholarship.

Current scholarly consensus is adamant that a great disservice to at least the genre of apocalypse is done if the term is taken to mean destruction tout court. Rather the term is now understood to stand for a composition whose nature, as indicated in one of the epigraphs above, may be very briefly summarized as: “a supernatural revelation, which reveals secrets of the heavenly world, on the one hand, and of eschatological judgment on the other.” In order that the reader may be assured that the identification of the Quran as apocalypse does not depend solely upon the lexicological and terminological accident of the equivalence “revelation/apocalypse,” we provide in Table 6.1 a brief list of key constitutive elements of the genre as now recognized in apocalyptic studies, studies no longer restricted to Biblical and apocryphal texts but which take into their purview the study of world literature, whether ancient, modern or contemporary and in a variety of languages representative of a variety of cultures.

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21 Arjomand, Classic 239–44 for the section on the Quran; Amanat, Modern.
22 See, for example, the comments in D. Cook, Studies 269–74.
23 All of the above comments and observations pertain to so-called Western scholarship (an odious formulation). The problem of the study of the apocalyptic nature of the Quran in the Islamic tradition is another matter entirely and is not touched upon here.
24 Collins, Dead Sea scrolls 150 (apocalypse as a genre receives a good discussion at 45–7).
25 As embodied in the landmark Encyclopedia of apocalypticism.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apocalypse</th>
<th>Quran</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cosmogony</td>
<td>Quranic creation narrative</td>
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<td>primordial events</td>
<td>day of the covenant, Q 7:172</td>
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<tr>
<td>recollection of past</td>
<td>stories of the prophets and their communities</td>
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<td><em>ex eventu</em> prophecy</td>
<td>Surat al-Rūm</td>
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<td>persecution</td>
<td>persecution and rejection of prophets and followers; year of the elephant, Maʿrib dam</td>
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<td>other eschatological upheavals, the end</td>
<td><em>al-sāʿa, al-amr, al-wāqiʿa, al-ākhira</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>judgment/destruction of wicked</td>
<td>punishment/leading astray</td>
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<td>judgment/destruction of the world</td>
<td><em>al-sāʿa, al-amr, al-wāqiʿa</em></td>
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<td>judgment/destruction of otherworldly beings</td>
<td><em>jinn</em></td>
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<td>cosmic transformation</td>
<td><em>khalq jadid</em></td>
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<td>resurrection</td>
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<td>other forms of afterlife: angels and demons</td>
<td>heaven, hell, <em>barzakh</em></td>
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<td>pseudonymity/anonymity</td>
<td>authorship of the Quran</td>
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<td>ambiguity and multivocality</td>
<td>passim (cf. <em>tafsīr</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>glory motif</td>
<td>divine presence, <em>tajallī, sakīna, al-haqq</em>, divine names, signs, the word, the book</td>
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<td>illocution</td>
<td>e.g., numerous <em>qul</em> passages</td>
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<td>aurality</td>
<td>oral composition and aural reception, <em>tajwīd/performance tradition</em></td>
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<td>cultural hybridism</td>
<td>numerous loanwords, hybrid eschatology (perso-semitic)</td>
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<tr>
<td>orchestration of authorial voices</td>
<td>various grammatical persons as actor, actant, narrator in Quran</td>
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<td>literary forms and devices</td>
<td><em>sajِ</em></td>
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<td>time and history periodized and determined</td>
<td>time fully controlled and transformed, periodized</td>
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<td>enantiodromia</td>
<td>passim</td>
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<td>otherworldly revelator/angel</td>
<td>Gabriel</td>
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<tr>
<td>closure</td>
<td><em>yawm al-dīn</em></td>
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<td>truth</td>
<td><em>al-haqq</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>revelation</td>
<td><em>tanzīl, baʾth, kashf, bayān, haqq, āyāt</em></td>
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Over-reliance on such lists has been criticized because they tend to be much too abstract, schematic, and imprecise. It has been argued that apocalypse is best thought of as entailing three levels of analysis and study: genre, eschatology, and social movement. The study of apocalypse as “literary genre” would bracket off all considerations of history and theology to focus on the literary form and contents of the particular apocalypse being studied. The study of apocalypse as “eschatology” concentrates on the religious and theological ideas about only the “end things.” Thus it goes beyond the more purely literary investigation to isolate the way in which a particular text, or indeed social movement, teaches about and considers the last things. These last things can pertain to the more purely historical events in “time” or they may refer to the last things as they pertain to a more existential or spiritual realm, the realm of the soul. Most commonly, eschatology refers to a combination of both of these “fields of action.” Finally, the study of apocalypse as “social movement” is an investigation into the history and culture of groups or religions whose primary identity is derived from and constructed on a view of the immediate future and rescue from tyranny, wickedness, and persecution. Their actions and teachings are all connected to a great cosmic or catastrophic event about which they alone have accurate (secret) knowledge. A table such as the above may be thought, therefore, to “indiscriminately mix the three levels” of analysis and “include features which are randomly distributed among the writings in question” (namely Jewish, Greco/Roman, Christian and Zoroastrian apocalypses). In Hanson’s words they are “too abstract to define such a living entity.” Yet, such a list, as the above table perhaps indicates, seems to speak with startling pertinence to the literary form and contents of the Quran.

With such considerations in mind, it is of immediate interest to observe that, in fact, all of the items in the above list occur with greater or lesser frequency and intensity in the Quran and that the Quran, studied as apocalypse, may offer the student of the genre new aspects to consider, or the opportunity to consider a familiar problem in their Quranic manifestation: the topic of the Quran as divine and serious entertainment (viz., ‘that which holds’). The dramatic aspects of apocalypse, in which the Quran itself is the main character of the revelation, is surely also of some interest in the attempt to elucidate the charismatic hold it has on the reader.

26 Baukham, Rise.
27 As in A.Y. Collins (ed.), Early. See now Shoemaker, Death.
28 Hanson, Dawn 429.
2  Apocalypse in the Study of Islam and the Quran

In general, studies of the Quran avoid the word apocalypse and its derivatives, even though it certainly embodies enough apocalyptic subject matter to at least raise the question of whether or not it is an apocalypse. One of the reasons this may be so relates to an early twentieth-century dispute in Islamic studies among French, German, and Dutch scholars. The effects of this dispute may be thought to haunt contemporary Quran scholarship. In 1911, Paul Casanova published his famous – soon to be considered infamous – *Mohammed et la fin du monde*, in which he sought to put forth a completely new view of the eschatology of the Quran and Muḥammad’s views on the “end times.” According to this theory, the Quran contains the same eschatological ideas as the New Testament. Casanova read the history of Islam, the life and career of the Prophet Muḥammad, and the travails of the early community in the context of apocalyptic eschatological tension. Casanova differentiates three stages:

1. In the first period, Muḥammad expects the imminent end of the world;
2. In the second, he hesitates and explains that he does not know any longer whether the hour is near or far;
3. In the third period, he is completely preoccupied with his duties as military leader and legislator for the community now formed; he lets the question finally fall and dedicates himself to the necessities of the present hour completely.\(^{29}\)

The Casanova thesis was quickly discredited, first by Becker\(^{30}\) and then by Hurgronjë,\(^{31}\) and his ideas remained marginalized for several decades by dint of the apparently more appealing interpretations of Islamic history and the life of Muḥammad put forth by such eminent scholars as Richard Bell, Montgomery Watt, Harris Birkeland, and the robust and influential ensuing tradition.\(^{32}\) Today, as has been recently pointed out by Shoemaker, many of these arguments against Casanova would be judged quaint and/or biased. How contemporary Islamic studies, whether by Muslim scholars or “Westerners” has come to avoid privileging the eschatological and apocalyptic content so much

\(^{29}\) Casanova, *Mohammed* 68–83.

\(^{30}\) “Die Methode Casanovas stellt alles, was Goldziher und Snouk Hurgonje mühevoll erarbeitet haben, direkt auf den Kopf.” (Becker, Islam 544).


\(^{32}\) Shoemaker, *Death* 121–36. See now also Cuypers, *Une apocalypse coranique*. 
in evidence in the Quran itself, is a fascinating story which Shoemaker sees, beginning in the nineteenth-century, methodological debates between two great German scholars, Ewald and Baur, about the study of early Christianity and the ministry of Jesus. The effects of the debate have continued to make themselves felt until today. Shoemaker’s final word on the subject is germane:

Indeed, when the eschatological traditions of the Qurʾān and early Islam are evaluated according to the same standards used in reconstructing the historical Jesus, the results suggest a need to move beyond modern scholarship’s prophet of social justice in order to recover, as once was similarly necessary in the study of the historical Jesus, the eschatological Warner who stands at the origin of this global religious tradition.33

3 Paradise as Apocalyptic Motif

Paradise is a distinctive, defining theme of the Quran due to the frequency with which it is encountered, either as “paradise (i.e., garden), janna” (which, together with its plural form jannāt occurs over 120 times in the Quran), or by one of the several other synonyms or near synonyms denoting it. Some of these auxiliary terms are: ʿadn (Eden) (6),34 al-naʿīm (grace) (7), firdaws (paradise) (2), al-maʾwā (refuge) (2). Kinberg has noted other Quranic words that through exegesis eventually came to be understood as synonyms for paradise:35 dār al-salām (abode of peace) (2), dār/jannat al-khuld (eternal abode/garden) (1 each), dār al-muqāma (eternal abode) (1), maqām amīn (secure place) (1), maqʿad al-ṣidq (seat of honor) (1), dār al-muttaqīn (abode of the pious) (1), dhāt al-qarār (high ground) (1, Q 23:50), ṭūbā (blessed) (1), ʿilliyyūn/ʿilliyyīn (exalted realms or creatures) (1 each), rawḍa (meadow) (1), rawḍat al-jannāt (heavenly meadow) (1), ḥusnā (best, most beautiful, bliss) (17), al-ākhira (the hereafter) (71), this includes usages in which dār (abode, dwelling place) also occurs. Unlike the others, the term dār may refer to either paradise or hell, depending upon context.36 A number of Quranic words or concepts not mentioned by

33 Shoemaker,Death 136.
34 Numbers in parentheses here and elsewhere refer to the number of times the given word or root occurs in the Quran.
35 Kinberg,Paradise 12–15.
36 For discussions of Quranic eschatological terminology see also the other contributions in part one of the present publication in general and those by M. Abdel Haleem and J. Hämeen-Anttila in particular.
Kinberg may also evoke paradise: ṣiddān (divine good pleasure, approval and acceptance) (8), salsabīl (fountain in paradise) (1), kawthar (frequently understood as a river in paradise) (1), sakīna (divine presence) (6, see above), and even the root s-l-m (divine peace) (140). In the same way, words such as kufr (ingratitude, unbelief) or al-ghayb (the unseen) (48) suggest hell (and therefore paradise through enantiodromia) or the invisible spiritual realm which is, of course, the final destination of souls (al-maʾād). In addition, such important passages as Q 7:172 (see below), and its mythic presentation of a time and place beyond time and place in the divine presence, may also be considered a direct reference to the presence of God – in other words, paradise. With these various usages – and many more yet to be marshaled but for which there is no space here to do so – paradise is implicated in most (if not all) of the Quran, either through direct reference or through the rhetorical gesture of referring to something by mentioning its absence (apophasis, aniconism) or its opposite (enantiodromia, paralipsis, irony).

So, paradise, a myth and symbol of such amplitude, is not only multiple and variegated with regard to its comfort, ease, and pleasures, landscape, vegetation, inhabitants, and weather, it is also multiple and variegated with regard to the numerous terms and adjectives with which the Quran refers to it. In the Bible it is only in Revelation that we find anything approaching the sustained, sumptuous descriptions found here. The promise and description of paradise certainly continues, bolsters, and elaborates strong ethical and moral thematic elements and the general élan of the Quran we are so accustomed to identifying as the raison d’être of the afterlife: an inducement for acceptable behavior and an argument against bad behavior: al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-nahy ʿan al-munkar. However, paradise is also a message of mercy and forgiveness and is thus concerned or speaks to an additional dimension of a personal existential awakening. In the eschatological logic of the Quran, paradise (al-janna, al-jannāt, al-firdaws) is a subset of the broader category of the afterlife or hereafter, al-ākhira. In keeping with this (largely binary) eschatological and apocalyptic logic, its mention immediately brings into view several related categories and topics. The primary topic is hellfire (al-nār, jahannam, al-jaḥīm).

37 On the issue of myth in the context of Islamic apocalypses, see Lange in this volume and his reference to Beltz’s important book on the mythology of the Quran, Sehnsucht nach dem Paradies.
38 Cf. also the relevant passages from the Old Testament, e.g., Isaiah 11–12; 24–27, 35, 60–66; Daniel 7; Amos 9:7–15; Micah 4–5.
39 D. Cook, Moral.
40 Lawson, Duality.
Following this come the specific and characteristic geography, material culture, and inhabitants associated with these “places” (al-kāfūr, al-kawthar, hūrīs, nahār). The mention of such pleasures – comfort, ease, water, wine, milk – also stimulates the Quranically educated imagination to register opposing, related categories and topics in addition to hell and those things associated with these “places” (e.g., al-zaqqūm, al-ghislīn, fruit as repulsive as the heads of devils: ka-annahu ruʿūsu l-shayāṭīni).41 As an example of eschatological symbolism, both scenarios are of course poised in “fearful” or apocalyptic symmetry with life on earth, pre-mortem. They reflect both each other and the existential verisimilitude of being in the world. This dynamic of duality also pervades the rest of the Quranic text so that whenever oppositions are encountered, and they are encountered very frequently, paradise and hell are also part of the subtext. Paradise is a space where divine mercy is made effective and real. Such associations are simply unavoidable for the “Quranized” consciousness,42 and a prime example of the symphonic manner in which the Quran generates both meaning and aesthetic experience.43

5 The Glory Motif

Of the several literary and religious textual features isolated and characterized by recent scholarship as elements of apocalypticism or criteria by which apocalypticism may be identified, the so-called “glory motif” figures prominently.44 Glory is a word that combines power, authority, presence, and light.45 The original Hebrew word kvod connotes “heaviness” and solidity (perhaps along the lines of the Arabic ṣamad), but in its usage throughout the Bible it acquired

41 “Symmetry, in any narrative, always means that historical content is being subordinated to mythical demands of design and form.” Frye, Great code 43. Indeed the interplay of duality is another distinctive feature of the Quran not found to the same degree in other scriptures of the Abrahamic tradition. See Abdel Haleem and Neuwirth in this volume; Neuwirth, Symmetrie; Lawson, Duality.
42 Nwyia, Exégèse 178.
43 Neuwirth, Symmetrie.
44 Koch, Rediscovery 28–33, isolated glory among seven other features.
45 Weinfield, Presence, provides an excellent overview of the relationship between presence and glory in the Hebrew Bible. For glory as apocalyptic motif, see Koch, Rediscovery 28–33; J.J. Collins, Imagination 9–11. See also Kugel, God; W.R. Cook, Glory; Arbel and Orlov (eds.), Letters; Merkur, Cultivating; Fox, Glory. A fascinating study of the phenomena in early Islam is van Ess, Youthful. For Quranic studies of glory outside the Quran but within Islamic intellectual history, see e.g., Corbin, Man.
other features. From being protected and hidden in the ark of the covenant after the exile it became portable beyond the holy of holies as when it visited the prophet Ezekiel in the form of the throne-chariot (*merkabah*) of God (Ezekiel 10) where the glory of God is especially visible in the fiery wheels “within wheels.” Ultimately, the meaning of glory is “that which makes it possible to perceive or sense the presence (Hebr.: *shekhina*) of God or the Lord.” Thus, light and splendor are frequently associated with the idea as is the more abstract notion indicated by the word “presence.” (We will return to the Arabic cognate for *shekhina*, *sakīna*.) For the purposes of this very brief and preliminary examination of the glory motif in the Quran we must be content simply with listing some relevant Arabic roots.

The table above does not take into consideration all of those key prepositions which in the proper context communicate proximity to or contact with divine glory (e.g., *bayna* (with or without *yaday*), *bi*, *inda*, *ladā*, *li*, *ma’a*, *min*, *qurb*). Nor does it take into full consideration the ubiquitous theme and feature of the divine names and attributes. But there can be no doubt about the presence and prominence of a glory motif in the Quran. Indeed, it may be said

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of the Motif</th>
<th>Root</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>glory as power and authority</td>
<td>‘ẓ-m (128); ’z-z (119); j-b-r (10); k-b-r (161); m-j-d (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light, fire and appearance</td>
<td>d-w-ʾ (6); j-l-l (2); j-l-w (5); n-w-r (194); s-f-r (12); s-n-w (3); sh-r-q (17); ʾ-lʾ (19); w-h-j (1); w-q-d (11); ẓ-h-r (1); ẓ-h-r (59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication (including understanding, learning)</td>
<td>ʾw-l (368); ʾw-y (418); ʾr-f (70); b-sh-r (123); b-y-n (523); d-b-r (44); dh-k-r (292); f-h-m (1); f-q-h (20); k-l-m (75); k-sh-f (20); l-b-b (16); n-dh-r (130); n-t-q (12); n-z-l (293); q-l-b (168); sh-ʾr (38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presence, propinquity, immediacy and relation</td>
<td>ʾn-d (201); h-w-l (25); l-d-n (18); q-b-l (294); q-r-b (96); s-k-n (69); w-j-d (107); w-l-y (231); w-s-l (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>praise and glorification</td>
<td>h-m-d (68); s-b-h (60); s-l-m (140)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

46 Merkur, Cultivating, discusses Islamic topics, though not the Quran.
that the glory of God is made manifest whenever revelation occurs. And, as with most topics in the Quran, a positive and a negative perspective are also traceable. A negative aspect of glory (fakhr) is highlighted and condemned in numerous passages: “And turn not thy cheek away from people in [false] pride, and walk not haughtily on earth: for, behold, God does not love anyone who, out of self-conceit, acts in a boastful manner.” (Asad’s translation, Q 31:18; cf. also 57:20 and 20:131) Such condemnation, in obvious conversation with pre-Islamic usages, serves here to offer a foil against which the status of the divine is drawn more finely. This is in perfect harmony with the binary mode of discourse so prominent throughout the Quran.

Pursuing the motif or topos of glory in the Quran, then, quickly becomes an exercise in looking at both the forest and the trees at the same time, and brings into sharper focus the oft-quoted words of Constance Padwick that the Quran is of a special order: “these are not mere letters or mere words. They are the twigs of the burning bush, aflame with God.”47 On the one hand, the entire “recital” is a theophany: a manifestation of God, appearance of the divine; and on the other, the theophanic text is replete with words and ideas and verbal gestures each of which may be thought to indicate an occurrence of the divine presence or to be understood as doing so. However, it is also clear, perhaps even before a thorough survey of the vocabulary of glory is available, that glory as power, presence, and mode of communication is a major theme of the Quran. Hundreds of verses are indicated in the roots and topics mentioned above. Certainly such glory is indicated in the opening epigraph of this paper, quoting Q 39:67–9. Indeed, it may be said that the glory of God is made manifest when revelation occurs. Glory in the Quran is an example of the coalescence of form and function: the glory and greatness of God is the main message of the revelation that is an action of this same glorious God. Nowhere in the Quran (or perhaps for that matter any place else, except perhaps the beatific vision in Dante) is this idea of divine form and function as glory and revelation made more explicit than in the sublime and ravishing Light verse (Q 24:35).

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth; the likeness of His Light is as a niche wherein is a lamp (the lamp in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star) kindled from a Blessed Tree, an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West whose oil wellnigh would shine, even if no fire touched it;

47 Padwick, Devotions 19.
Light upon Light;
(God guides to His Light whom He will.)
(And God strikes similitudes for men,
and God has knowledge of everything.)

This expresses the luminous aspect of glory; however, the equally famous Throne verse (Q 2:255) expresses the power, authority, and [omni-]presence of glory:

God
there is no god but He, the
Living, the Everlasting.
Slumber seizes Him not, neither sleep;
to Him belongs
all that is in the heavens and the earth.
Who is there that shall intercede with Him
save by His leave?
He knows what lies before them
and what is after them,
and they comprehend not anything of His knowledge
save such as He wills.
His Throne comprises the heavens and earth;
the preserving of them oppresses Him not;
He is the All-high, the All-glorious.

Q 7:143 became a locus classicus for later medieval exegetes such as Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) in their attempts to explicate the works of divine self-manifestation, tajallī. It is the Quranic version of Moses’s encounter with God:

When Moses came for the appointment, and his Lord spoke to him, he said, “My Lord, show Yourself to me: let me see You!” He said, “You will never see Me, but look at that mountain: if it remains standing firm, you will see Me,” and when his Lord revealed Himself to the mountain, He made it crumble: Moses fell down unconscious. When he recovered, he said, “Glory be to You! To You I turn in repentance! I am the first to believe!”

48 Arberry translation and versification.
49 Arberry translation and versification.
50 Abdel Haleem translation.
The final key verse is 41:53, the famous “signs” passage in which the function and distribution of the signs of God’s glory and presence are made clear: they are everywhere, in the cosmos and in the souls of individuals. It is understood, of course, that they are also in the Quran since it is a Quranic verse that communicates this knowledge. “We shall show them Our signs in every region of the earth and in themselves (fī l-āfāq wa-fī anfusihim), until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth (ḥattā yatabayyana lahum annahu al-ḥaqq). Is it not enough that your Lord witnesses everything?"51 This last verse, more than any other, emphasizes the Quranic theory of signs, which, in the present context, is also a theory of glory and its transmission by and from its glorious source. It explains why the natural world is a reflection of this glory: the sun, moon, stars, the water, the change of seasons. The natural realm is perceived as a meaningful, “musical” symphony of glory.52

5 Typological Figuration

In the context of the present discussion, glory is of course remarkable in itself and as a marker of apocalypse. The apocalyptic symmetry, which may be thought to generate the light of glory, is at work not only in the trope of duality but also in typological figuration. The connection among the three central poles of glory mentioned above, paradise, covenant, and divine presence (sakīna), is

51 Abdel Haleem translation, Arabic transliteration added.
52 Returning to the question of pre-Islamic “glory” before leaving this too brief discussion of Quranic glory, it is of some interest to note its function in the Burda poem of Ka‘b b. Zubayr where it may be thought to symbolize the question at hand: In line 48 of the poem as given by Ibn Ishāq, the Prophet is presented as a light from which illumination is sought. In the an alternate reading, the Prophet is a sword from which illumination is sought. However, it is important to note that in both readings it is the illumination that is the center of attention, its essence is untouched by the place, manner or mode of appearance. In an important study, Stetkevych demonstrates that glory as illumination and presence was very much a part of the poetic resources of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. (S.P. Stetkevych, Mantle 79–150.) This calls to mind the renowned story surrounding the conception of the Prophet Muḥammad. When his father, ʿAbdallāh b. Abī Muṭallib was on his way to the home of Āmina bt. Wahb (the Prophet Muḥammad’s mother), a light was seen shining from his brow. After the conjugal visit during which the Prophet was conceived the light was no longer visible. (Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām, Sūra i, 115–6.) Thus the Quran’s concern with light as supernatural glory is a natural theme common to its time and place. (See also, for example, Annus, Mesopotamian precursors and Winter, Radiance, for related discussions of other pre-Islamic phenomena.) It is therefore no wonder that it is such a prevalent expectation of the Quran’s audience.
expressed through this powerful literary device of extraordinary imaginative
glor. Though typological figuration has been a key to understanding the com-
position and audience of the New Testament, it has not really attracted the
wide attention of Quran scholars. However, whatever attention it has attracted
has been sufficient to demonstrate its intimate connection to the Quranic pro-
duction of meaning. The figure is so pervasive in literature that we some-
times forget it is functioning and it becomes transparent. So, in the Bible Egypt
frequently stands for evil, darkness, and oppression. Babylon and Rome in
the Bible function as antitypes and also represent the original Egyptian evil.
Jonah delivered from the fish is seen by Christian readers as a prefiguration
of Christ’s resurrection. In Roman mythopoeic history, Augustus is simultane-
ously Romulus, Aeneas, and Caesar. Mary may be, as in the Quran, identified
through typological figuration with Maryam of the Hebrew Bible, and the
ark of the covenant in Christian thought. Jesus, through the Christian read-
ing of the Hebrew Bible and prophetic history is seen as the second Adam,
or a figuration of the prophet Joseph, Moses (based on Deuteronomy 18:15),
Elijah or John the Baptist (Luke 9:7–9) or the Lamb of God. This literary device
also serves to identify the Prophet Muḥammad with every other prophet sent
by God in an exclusive brotherhood of specially chosen emissaries of truth
(al-ḥaqq) and bearers of revelation, just as his community represents all earlier
prophetic communities intent on vanquishing and combating evil to worship
the one true God. Even if the functioning of the device is so pervasive as to be
transparent or undetected, like water for a fish, it nonetheless remains a very
powerful component of the imaginative habitat of Quranic consciousness.

From its own – perhaps somewhat “imperialistic” – point of view, Islam
is the third in a series of three stages of what might be called a succession
of typological readings or exegeses of scripture: (1) Hebrew Bible; (2) New

Goppelt, Typos; Auerbach, Figura.
Zwettler, Mantic; Stewart, Understanding; Lawson, Typological.
A notable exception is Isaiah 19:25b: “Blessed be Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of
My hands, and Israel My inheritance.”
Hardie, Metamorphosis.
Cf. the Quranic Maryam, e.g., at Sura 19. “Christian commentators on the Koran naturally
say that this is ridiculous, but from a purely typological point of view from which the
Koran is speaking, the identification makes good sense.” (Frye, Great code 172. See now
Abboud, Mary.)
Kreuzer, Ark.
Fairbairn, Typology 126.
Zwettler, Mantic.
Paradise in the Quran and the Music of Apocalypse

Testament; (3) Quran. These three scriptures are united in their concern with divine glory and presence. And, we see from this Islamic perspective that this same typological hermeneutic simultaneously unites and distinguishes each of these scriptures and communities. The workings of typological figuration and interpretation, especially in the instance of Abrahamic religion, has perhaps been best characterized by Northrop Frye. Frye’s words on this are most instructive:

Typology points to future events that are often thought of as transcending time, so that they contain a vertical lift as well as a horizontal move forward. The metaphorical kernel of this is the experience of waking up from a dream, as when Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus speaks of history as a nightmare from which he is trying to awake. When we wake up from sleep, one world is simply abolished and replaced by another. This suggests a clue to the origin of typology: it is essentially a revolutionary form of thought and rhetoric. We have revolutionary thought whenever the feeling “life is a dream” becomes geared to an impulse to awaken from it.

The aptness of this insight for the Islamic instance and the literary workings of the Quran would appear to be borne out by the very fact and reality of what might be called the “revolutionary élan” of the formative years of Islam. Thus, a “mere literary device” is both imbued with and expresses the imaginative energy of apocalypse, another term for which might be “spiritual revolution,” “paradigm shift” or “enlightenment.” The apocalyptic revolution, as Collins says, is first and foremost “a revolution in the imagination.”

6 Covenant

Glory and divine presence permeate the Quran and are encountered when it is encountered. In the Quranic historiography of revelation, the very first instance of their appearance is at the day of the covenant (ʿahd, mīthāq), recounted at Q 7:172:

61 Indeed, exegesis as such is a well-attested mode for the apocalypticist: Collins, Imagination 205–10; Lawson, Gnostic 1–20.
62 Frye, Great code 82–3.
63 Collins, Imagination 215; Goppelt, Typos; Auerbach, Figura; Frye, Great code; Collins, Dead Sea scrolls 204.
When your Lord took out the [yet unborn future generations of] offspring from the loins of the Children of Adam and made them bear witness about themselves, He said, “Am I not your Lord?” and they replied, “Yes, we bear witness.” So you cannot say on the Day of Resurrection, “We were not aware of this.”

This is the day on which all were part of a greater unity, that of humanity, banū Ādam. Such primordial unity had been a secret, but now it is disclosed and in the process of disclosure solves numerous problems facing the young community, not least of which is the problem presented by the “chaos of religions” (sometimes referred to as the “sectarian milieu”) out of which Islam may be seen to have arisen. With the doctrine of the covenant, the unity of humanity under one God is not a mere “political” expediency but an eternal, inviolable, sacred truth. The luminous spirit of that day of intimacy (Ar. unsiyya > nās, insān) and unity in the covenant, an occasion for the manifestation of divine glory, circulates through every word and letter of the Quran. And through typological figuration the reality of the primordial covenant is enhanced, elaborated, given substance; it is repeated through the line of prophets and in the recitation of the Quran.

Apocalypse is characterized by urgency and intensity. Paradise and hellfire are two mutually exclusive and, paradoxically, mutually enhancing tropes of intensity. They are also spatial. From a literary point of view, they balance each other. As for time, the counterpart of space, there are two similarly balancing tropes of intensity. The epic scope of the Quran proceeds from or begins with the first of these intensity tropes, namely the day of the covenant described at Q 7:172. When God posed the key Quranic question: Am I not your Lord? All humanity, there assembled for the occasion, responded with an enthusiastic (in the literal sense) and immediate: Yes indeed! The presence of God on the day of the covenant is repeated and fulfilled on the day of

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64 Note the words used to refer to the two previous scriptures in Arabic: al-ʿahd al-qadīm = “the older or former testament/covenant” and al-ʿahd al-jadīd = “the new testament/covenant,” cf. e.g.: al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas ay kutub al-ʿahd al-qadīm wa-l-ʿahd al-jadīd (“The Holy Book, namely the books of the old or former testament/covenant and the new testament/covenant”), Beirut 1951. Strictly speaking, the main title should be understood as: “The Book Deemed Holy [by God].”

65 Wansbrough, Sectarian; Lawson, Coherent chaos.

66 The trope of intensity was first suggested as a characteristic of the Quran as apocalypse in Lawson, Duality 25.

67 Abdel Haleem (trans.), The Qur’an ix–xx.

68 For a recent comprehensive study of what emerges as the central mytheme of the Quran and Islam, see al-Qāḍī, Primordial.
judgment which in its symmetry with the great gathering on the day of a-last provides literary and apocalyptic balance. The Quranic covenant is the place where everything began. The return may be thought to be to that same place of the covenant, though now embellished with the effects and contents of the process or “adventure” of consciousness: paradise. Its lavish description may be seen as a way in which this intensity – an intensity of nearness, presence, expectation, and encounter (ittiṣāāl, “attaining connection with,” or maʿiyya, “propinquity, nearness” as distinct from ittiḥād, “unification with”) – may be repeated, replayed, re-experienced through precisely remembrance (another name for the Quran – al-Dhikr). As such, then, the Quranic paradise is made “present” through a literary, imitative recital (ḥikāya) and melismatic prolongation and continuance of this first moment (dramatized here as consciousness) which in the characteristic supra-logical atmosphere of myth, is beyond space and time “before creation.” That it is beyond time and place, however, does nothing to vitiate or weaken the spiritual and existential intensity of the drama of the covenant. Quite the reverse, its mythic voice produces the opposite effect.

Apocalypse communicates the intuition that time is that which keeps everything from happening at once, and language is that which articulates meaning out of the undifferentiated transcendent – from our pre-enlightened point of view – massa confusa to keep everything from being said at once and to thus be understandable and meaningful here in the sublunar realm. Put another way, it reminds us of the true nature of reality and history.

Between the beginning and the end, however, divine presence recurs in various forms. This presence is of course an apocalypse, whether from the point of view of the revelations themselves, the “miraculous signs” which have been placed in the souls, in the cosmos, and in the book (Q 41:53) or the

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69 As it is universally known in the Islamic world, the day of “Am I not” echoes the sacred question from Q 7:172: a-lastu bi-rabbikum = Am I not your Lord?


71 Something of the idea is captured in this characterization from Franz Rosenthal: “The entire world in all its variety was created by the one creator at one particular moment. It follows that oneness was the ideal state for it at all times and that to which it should always aspire. As the beginning was one, so the expected end of the world is one for everyone and everything. Whatever is and takes place in between these two definite points of created time, no matter how varied in detail, follows a set overall pattern. Thus the history of the past and of the future, including that of the present, is fundamentally uniform. No distinction between the three modes of time need be made by the observer of human history.” Rosenthal, History 430.
more dramatic descent from time to time of the apocalyptic “divine presence” (sakīna, see below).\textsuperscript{72}

The day of the covenant remains solidly and firmly established in the mind of the Quran, the mind of Islam and Muslims as the beginning of everything; most importantly, as the beginning of consciousness and the beginning of history. Such is a major component of what might be termed Islamic “soul formation” or religious and spiritual imagination: the education of the soul (cf. alma mater). From a literary point of view, such intensity may only be balanced by its opposite, namely the end of everything or the destruction of the world, time, and consciousness of these “things.” A word from the Islamicate mystical vocabulary for this event is annihilation, \textit{fanāʾ}. The Quranic word for it is the Hour, \textit{al-sāʿa}. Paradise functions in this context as a promise of intensified or “abundant” (cf. John 10:10) life and the continuance of the primordial intensity of love and intimacy indicated at Q 7:172. Indeed, the entire Quran and its contents may be thought of as a (perhaps operatically) prolonged instance of textual melisma – to borrow a technical term from the tradition of religious chant in the Christian tradition – in which the controlling “syllable” is precisely the covenant mytheme of Q 7:172.\textsuperscript{73} Such revelatory music provides both a causal and typological argument for the unity of the Quranic prophets and their communities.\textsuperscript{74} In this, all contents also simultaneously refer to and depend upon the promised denouement of \textit{al-ākhira}.\textsuperscript{75} The light surrounding all Quranic

\textsuperscript{72} Lawson, Apocalypse 39.

\textsuperscript{73} On the pervasive feature of melisma in Arabic music in general and in Quran recitation in particular, see Nelson, \textit{Art} 127, 128, 132, 148, 235. My thanks to Prof. G. Sawa for valuable discussion on this topic.

\textsuperscript{74} Levitin, \textit{Your brain} 6. See also Jarret, \textit{Drifting}. The question is not so much how the Quran itself might have changed from one generation to the next – from pre-canonical to pre-exegetical. Rather, the revealing question concerns how and in what ways the audiences from generation to generation changed. How did their “musical expectations” both differ from and relate to the expectations of the Quran’s first hearers. For the example of \textit{al-sakīna} see Goldziher, \textit{La notion} 11.

\textsuperscript{75} Melisma is a prominent distinguishing feature of Arabic music even as it has fallen out of favor in other cultural contexts. This bespeaks the profound appreciation of the relationship in Arabic literature and poetics between sound and sense and its continued vitality. The type of ideational melisma suggested here is a natural implication of this and the kind of characterizations found, for example, in Scholem, \textit{Major trends} 130–5, in discussing the kabbalistic contemplations of Abu Lafia as structured on a “music of pure thought.”
statements is the glorious and awesome relationship between the day of the covenant and the end.76

One of the chief accomplishments of typological figuration is the manipulation or control of time, in the same way music may be thought to control and exploit time and its illusions of movement and sequence. Thus, the reading act may become a “technique of ecstasy” in the sense that the ephemeral self – as a construction or function of space/time – is escaped and the true identity of the reader/believer is instantly “found” (cf. wajd “ecstasy” derived from wajada “to find” from which is derived wujūd “existence, being”) at the primordial moment of the covenant “beyond time and space,” the day of a-last.77 Time, after all, has the habit of making us think that only the present is real.78 Quite apart from this collapse or erasure of historical time which Quranic typological figuration accomplishes,79 existential and “normal” historical time is also quite malleable in the hands of the apocalypticist. Through historical periodization – another marker of apocalypse80 – (jāhiliyya ≠ islāmiyya, or the “times” of the various pre-Islamic prophets and their communities) and similar narratological turns, “dumb” and “amorphous” time is transformed into eloquent, teleological, and monumental or epic history.81 Muḥammad’s virtuoso performance is no exception. With the replacement of mindless time (dahr) and formless space with Quranic history and place and then the erasure of this same construction to return to “the presence of God” at the “moment of covenant” a formidable, imaginative power is deployed. To be in Quranic time and space is to be at the beating heart of apocalypse where past, present, and future all meet and whose worldly/dunyawī distinctions somehow disappear altogether. Instrument and music merge. Performance and performer, as in a dream, become one. After all, it is a relatively recent development in Western culture, which saw the severe separation of two previously rather imperfectly delineated groups: performers and audience. And “literal reading” of scripture is also a relatively recent preoccupation. Ancient readers tended to read

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77 Al-Qāḍī, Primordial; Zwettler, Mantic; Frye, Fearful symmetry; Auerbach, Figura; Lawson, Duality.
78 G. Böwering, Ideas of time in Persian Sufism, in Iran 30 (January 1, 1992), 77–89; Stowasser, Time sticks.
79 Lawson, Duality.
80 In addition to J.J. Collins, Imagination, see Funkenstein, Perceptions.
81 Baumgarten, Apocalyptic time; Funkenstein, Perceptions; García Martínez, Apocalypticism; VanderKam, Calendars; Rosenthal, History.
typologically and poetically.\textsuperscript{82} To chant the Quran, a \textit{reminder} (though the word seems very pallid in the present context) of the covenant, is to cause the divine presence (\textit{sakīna}) to descend and literally to enchant the now sacred space. The architecture and structure of such enchantment is sturdier than a cathedral.\textsuperscript{83} The divine presence, so conjured, communicates and anticipates something of the essential reality of paradise.

A suggestive example for comparison with the experience of Quranic space/time is found through the medium of the magnificent fresco in the crypt of the cathedral of Anagni. Surrounded by the images and events disclosed in the Apocalypse, the biblical Book of Revelation which adorn the contours of the ceiling of the crypt (see illustration below) and conceived by an unknown artist from the twelfth century, one may be moved to ponder how this virtuosic, essentially artistic, performance struck the medieval beholder.\textsuperscript{84} The natural questions arising to our beholder are: did all of these events already happen? Are they destined to occur in the future? Or, are they actually happening now? The crypt itself answers “Yes” in the grammatical mood of simultaneity to all three questions and the observer nods assent. This understanding or reading derives partly from the skill of the painter and partly from the observer’s own experience of being in this particular apocalyptically-charged, enchanted “divine” space.

Obviously, in the case of the Quran the reader/auditor is surrounded, absorbed in, and engulfed not by graphic images, but by the sonorities and meanings of the Quranic theophany, which include frequent, sumptuous depictions of paradise. The noetic and experiential effect (cf. \textit{hāl}) may be thought similar: awareness, enlightenment, recognition.\textsuperscript{85} Prophetic utterance is somehow timeless, and constitutes a tense of its own – the “prophetic perfect.”\textsuperscript{86} Now the world is experienced as singular and undifferentiated – a reflection of the transcendent unity of God, ontologically prior to what might

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{82} Frye, \textit{Great code} 6–17 and his discussion of the phases of language. See also the numerous supportive examples in Günther (ed.), \textit{Ideas} and Neuwirth et al. (eds.), \textit{Myths}.
\item \textsuperscript{83} Hajjaji-Jarrah, \textit{Enchantment}.
\item \textsuperscript{84} Ravasi, \textit{Crypt} 38.
\item \textsuperscript{85} With regard to the move away from such “mythic thinking” in western intellectual history, the following comment is suggestive: “Leibniz believed in the \textit{Prisca Theologia} just as much as Newton did, but he could envision submarines, airplanes and all kinds of things absent from ancient texts. For that matter so could Roger Bacon and Leonardo da Vinci. Past perfect and future perfect only began to be separated during Newton’s lifetime. It would take the eighteenth century to accomplish this separation, at a cost well-documented by Romantics and conservatives of every subsequent generation.” (Coudert, Newton 42.)
\item \textsuperscript{86} Wilson, \textit{Red} 128.
\end{itemize}
be considered a “melismatic” process of creation. It is as if the past the present and the future are all “in the same room.” In this case, the room is an enchanted (“sung into being”) “room” defined and produced by the recitation. The room is the Quran. So, even though the original covenant “has occurred” somewhere in the remote and mysterious placeless and timeless (lā makān and lā zamān) it is potentially revivified and relived at every moment of passing time with the same message: we are all now united as we were “then.” The process, the content, and the form the message takes is apocalyptic, revelatory: al-ḥaqq. On the day of the covenant, glory was experienced fully and completely. In the world (dunyā), glory is experienced intermittently. While it may be that some spiritual athletes (ἀσκησις /áskēsis < asceticism) and virtuosi experience it more steadily, it remains at best, we are told, a fleeting and interrupted experience. Paradise, however, is the promise of a return to the primordial presence of glory and intimacy indicated at Q 7:172. Thus glory connects what has been characterized as the three cardinal periods of Islamic time: the primordial covenant – the life in or of the world – and the hereafter.87 One dramatic symbol of this intermittency (and simultaneous eternity), during the ephemeral vagaries of being in the world, is found in the Quranic word sakīna and its various descents in time.

87 See above, fn. 71, the long quotation from Rosenthal.
7 Divine Presence: Al-sakīna

The function of this distinctive Quranic “character,” scholars agree, relates to the experience of the divine presence and glory pre-mortem, as it were. The sakīna, undoubtedly an emblematic evidence of Islam’s Abrahamic genealogy, occurs in the Quran when important “sacramental” requirements are felt: first, under the tree of oath-taking at al-Ḥudaybiya (6/628), we have a typical figuration of the cosmogonic day of the covenant (highlighted above) and a simultaneous celebration of an Abrahamic genealogy for which it is also an instance of typological invocation. Al-Ḥudaybiya was of course inestimably important for the future of Islam, establishing as it did a détente between the Prophet Muḥammad and the Quraysh of Mecca. Second, the divine presence “descends” at the battle of Badr (2/624), when help and encouragement were sorely needed. Third, it appears during the hijra (began 26 Safar 1/13 June 622) when the Prophet and Abū Bakr were seeking refuge in the cave and sakīna descended and inspired confidence and faith so that the Prophet could also encourage his companion. The circumstances of the three remaining instances are akin to the above: the establishing of authority, the reassuring of both Muhammad and the believers, and an experience of the presence and glory of God.

As a sign of the divine presence, sakīna is also an example of the many ways in which the glory motif functions in the Quran. Indeed, it may be said that the glory of God is made manifest when revelation occurs. What distinguishes the other world from this world, in the logic of the Quran, is the added degrees and intensities of propinquity, either to divine reward (nearness) or divine punishment (remoteness). Al-sakīna is a timeless (though periodic) emblem (and personification) of this intensity, mentioned six times in this form of the verbal root s-k-n. To give a clearer idea of the way in which the Quran privileges this spiritual reality, we list here the six verses in the order in which they appear in the muṣḥaf:

1 Their prophet said to them, “The sign of his authority will be that the ark [of the covenant] will come to you. In it there will be [the gift of] tranquility (fiḥi sakīnatun) from your Lord and relics of the followers of Moses and Aaron, carried by the angels. There is a sign in this for you if you believe.” (Q 2:248)

88 Goldziher, La notion; Fahd, Sakīna.
89 Abdel Haleem translation, Arabic transliteration added.
2 Then God sent His calm down to His Messenger (thumma anzala Allāhu sakīnatahu 'alā rasūlihi) and the believers, and He sent down invisible forces. He punished the disbelievers – this is what the disbelievers deserve. (Q 9:26)

3 Even if you do not help the Prophet, God helped him when the disbelievers drove him out: when the two of them were in the cave, he said to his companion, “Do not worry, God is with us,” and God sent His calm down to him (fa-anzala Allāhu sakīnatahu ‘alayhi), aided him with forces invisible to you, and brought down the disbelievers’ plan. God’s plan is higher: God is almighty and wise. (Q 9:40)

4 It was He who made His tranquility descend into the hearts of the believers (huwa l-ladhī anzala l-sakīna fī qulūbi l-muʾminīna) to add faith to their faith – the forces of the heavens and earth belong to God; He is all knowing and all wise. (Q 48:4)

5 God was pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance to you under the tree: He knew what was in their hearts and so He sent tranquility down to them (fa-anzala l-sakīna ‘alayhim) and rewarded them with a speedy triumph. (Q 48:18)

6 While the disbelievers had fury in their hearts – the fury of ignorance – God sent His tranquility down on to His Messenger (fa-anzala Allāhu sakīnatahu ‘alā rasūlihi) and the believers and made binding on them [their] promise to obey God, for that was more appropriate and fitting for them. God has full knowledge of all things. (Q 48:26)

In all but one case (Q 2:248) the sakīna is sent down directly by God and is thus, in line with the Quranic technical lexicon, a revelation or apocalyptic event – an obvious event (and trope) of intensity and encounter with the divine presence echoing the primordial encounter described at Q 7:172.90 In the hadith literature, as is well known, this virtue or “sacramental value” is extended to apply to the “normal” recitation of the Quran by the believer. Thus, the idea that whenever the Quran is chanted this same glorious, reassuring, peace-inducing presence descends with the recitation and conditions the space in which it is chanted which space thus becomes, literally, enchanted. Such enchantment is of course exponentially enhanced and intensified through the verbal artistry of the Quran.91

90 Ryan, Descending; see also Ghaemmaghami’s chapter in the present volume, especially concerning the descent of the qāʿīm.

91 For a masterful article on this, see Hajjaji-Jarrah, Enchantment.
8 Conclusion

In addition to all of the above tabulated and listed elements present in the Quran, several of them may be thought to converge and indeed be harmonized in the controlling topos (or perhaps better *temenos* / τέμενος) of paradise, which then emerges as the *center of apocalyptic synergy in the Quran*.92 Paradise accounts, directly, for a significant portion of the contents of the Quran, significantly more than the 500 or so verses of content dedicated to legal and prescriptive matter.93 However, if we consider indirect references to paradise, the situation is even more impressive. From this perspective even the “unapocalyptic,” “rational,” “unpoetic,” “unhymnic” laws and regulations of the Quranic legal code may also be thought to pertain to and evoke paradise inasmuch as their obedience or disobedience has direct bearing on whether the individual will be admitted to paradise or its counterpart, hell, in the postmortem drama of salvation and damnation of the Quran. It has been shown, in Biblical and apocalyptic scholarship (including studies of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran community) that calendars and other legal prescriptions, rather than being the opposite of apocalyptic, actually harmonize with the apocalyptic vision of a text or series of texts, depending upon context.94 This, in fact, is one of the more persuasive elements in judging the Quran an apocalypse, as opposed to simply noticing this or that apocalyptic verse or Sura. The mood and mode of apocalypse actually takes over the entire text.

It is superfluous to attempt a differentiation between chronologically later revealed so-called Medinan and the chronologically earlier revealed so-called Meccan Suras on the subject of paradise, even though the actual topic of the last day is less explicit in the Medinan Suras.95 The idea unites both periods in that there is a direct correspondence between an individual’s deeds and their “eschatology.” The subject or “target” of apocalypse – of revelation – is precisely humanity, whether as individual or community. Paradise, as noted, is the key to understanding the spirit of Islam.96 It certainly continues and reinforces the strong ethical and moral élan we are so accustomed to identifying as the raison d’être of the afterlife. But it also adds an overlay, an additional dimension of a personal existential awakening and experience by repeating or replaying the

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92 Such harmony is an essential feature of the Quran’s music of apocalypse.
93 Hallaq, Law 150.
94 VanderKam, *Calendars*; cf. also the Dead Sea scroll entitled Community Rule; Collins, *Was the Dead Sea sect*; Roth, *Dead*.
95 Kinberg, Paradise 18–9.
96 Ibid., 19.
experience of presence indicated at Q 7:172. Here the much-loved and much-quoted hadīth of the Prophet is germane: “Men are asleep and when they die they awake.” The moments of descent when the event of the covenant is recalled (cf. dhikr) are in this connection so many preludes or foretastes of the great awakening referred to in the hadīth. Such foretastes of paradise, through the evocation of glory and intimacy indicated in the myth of the covenant, abound. With these prefigurations of awakening (enlightenment/apocalypse), the subject may indeed “ascend” through various stages (cf. e.g., here the traditional 100 “abodes” of al-janna, in which firdaws – paradise – is frequently, though certainly not always, the highest) until the presence or vision of God is experienced. A defining and controlling model for this is the prophet’s journey and ascension, which came to figure prominently early on, both as an exegesis of otherwise mute and mysterious Quranic statements and as an example to be emulated or aspired to. It may be added that the traditional interpretation of this powerful, living, spiritual Bildungsmythos as a somewhat comedic explanation of the institution of the ritual prayer service (al-ṣalāt) is an obvious ploy for taming the otherwise potentially destabilizing and perhaps “dangerous” image of a profound personal and authoritative spiritual or mystical experience. The story is an attempt at domesticating the apocalypse. Doubtless, this was sincerely felt to be for the best. The familiar term visio beatifica and its English translation is, in this context, misleading and thus avoided.

Paradise as an otherworldly “supra-rational” location is, as in the above table, a recognized marker of apocalyptic literature. But, paradise is especially interesting because of the number of other apocalyptic themes that are directly connected to it: triumph of good over evil; judgment; strange and fantastic beings; typological figuration; enantiodromia; glory motif; true home; the foil and consummation for time/history and periodization; synesthesia; and divine presence. In this, paradise may be thought the chiasmic center of the entire Quran, where the other contents of the book meet as spokes of a wheel. It was an earlier wheel, after all, that represented the “escape” of kvod, divine glory, from the now “occupied” temple to join and comfort the Jews in their painful exile. Kvod is at the very foundation for the study of the glory motif in the Hebrew Bible. Glory in the Quran is known by a number of names and situations. It is frequently “brought to light” through duality, opposition,

97 Furüzānfar, Akhādīth-i mathnawi #222.
98 Günther, Paradieseverstehungen 44–9.
99 On importance of chiasmus in the Quran, see Cuypers, Le festin; Ernst, How to read.
and symmetry in the Quran, and their narrative and doctrinal issue of typological figuration and oneness (\textit{wahda/tawh\text{ī}d}).\textsuperscript{100}

The consideration of the Quran as an apocalypse invites questions about the nature of apocalypse, what it has meant, what it means in current scholarly discussions, and why the category is or is not useful in the study of religion and literature generally and in the study of the Quran and Islam specifically. It is hoped that the discussion above demonstrates the unique usefulness of such methodological tools as a generic notion of apocalypse for the study of the Quran. We have seen that when paradise is described in the Quran it is certainly not mere literary allusion. Rather, due to the complexity, interconnectedness, harmony, and mutual resonances of the images – that is to say the literary nature of the discourse – along with their eternal/final implications, one might refer to the cultivation of an “apocalyptic sensorium.” It is such a sensorium that is now in operation and deployed and employed by the audience, believer, and reader. The eyes and ears that register the descriptions of paradise are organs of the imagination – an apocalyptic or revelatory imagination. The secret of paradise is revealed in the Quran through this sensorium. The apocalyptic sensorium is the one that leads beyond the earthly diurnal world to a new (but not completely different\textsuperscript{101}) realm.

A more intense trope than the end or destruction of the world can hardly be imagined and, in literary and perhaps psychological terms, this “negative intensity” is balanced by the positive intensity of paradise and its Quranic description-cum-celebration. Intensity is a “venue” or “occasion” (cf. \textit{sabab}) for truth telling, as in natural catastrophes, wars, famines, funerals, weddings, and births. During such occasions one delivers oneself of the truth. Thus, the “mere” notion of “the Truth” (cf. \textit{al-haqq}) carries apocalyptic resonances of certainty and finality. Such truth and honesty are demanded by virtue of the Hour and end of days imagery. Intensity is also encountered, read, and experienced in numerous other Quranic passages, or – perhaps better, at various Quranic “moments” (sing. \textit{waqt}, cf. \textit{al-s\text{"a}‘a}). Some of these more conspicuous instances are the “moment” and very idea of revelation (= \textit{\acute{a}pox\text{\acute{a}l}w\text{\upsilon}ς / apocalypse}), \textit{baiy\text{ā}n}, \textit{kashf}, \textit{tanzil}, \textit{haqq} (cf. \textit{\acute{a}letheia}), which is, of course, everywhere in the Quran, and may be thought particularly “thickened” at such celebrated passages as the Light verse, the Throne verse, the Night of Power.

\textsuperscript{100} Lawson, Duality; Lawson, Apocalypse; Lawson, Typological; Lawson, \textit{Le Coran et l’imaginaire}.

\textsuperscript{101} As argued in Nagel’s contribution in this volume.
or the descent of the heavenly table, *al-māʾida*. All descents/revelations are moments of disclosure, encounter, and intensity. The language used to describe them is therefore perforce experienced as a trope of intensity and understood also as topos or topoi of intensity since such communication is the main event of the Quranic apocalypse: meaning and form are perfectly fused. The Quran is more concerned with revelation than with anything else, including God/Allah, prophets, and community. From this perspective, each of these separate subjects function as occasions or modes of revelation (literally *asbāb al-nuzūl*). However important they are for Islamic religious thought and practice, they are second in importance to the event (cf. *al-wāqiʿa*) of revelation, without which there would be no knowledge of any kind. It is useful here to think of such “major themes of the Quran” as first order or meta-occasions of revelation/apocalypse and the traditional *asbāb* as secondary or subsidiary or contingent occasions of revelation.

It is not being argued here that the Quran be somehow squeezed into a category determined by etic, non-native, invasive or “neo-colonialist” considerations and “outsider” practitioners in a gesture of “neo-Orientalism.” Rather the opposite idea is key: the Quran, because it embodies so much in common with current scholarly notions and definitions of apocalypse (while simultaneously displaying obvious departures), may offer insight about such a genre and its structures, limitations, and dynamics. To the extent that the New Testament acquires meaning in the context of a Holy Bible having a beginning, middle, and end (Genesis, Life of Christ, Revelation), it is also the case that it is an apocalyptic text read and imagined by an apocalyptic community. To the extent that the Quran focuses on revelation, the day of judgment, paradise, and hell it is also the book of an apocalyptic community, a book in which every letter and every word, every verse and every Sura is imbued with the same intensity and “presence” (cf. *sakīna*). One might suggest that paradise in the Quran, while certainly an eschatological theme, is also something more. A provisional taxonomy may go something like this: eschatology in the key of speculative or dialectical theological, philosophical, and mystical “religious” discourse is a subject and result of logocentric scholarly pursuit. Eschatology in the key of

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102 Cf. the holy descent of the banquet in the Dead Sea Scrolls . . . It is a symptom of the current state of our studies that there is no reference at all to Qumran in Cuypers’ magnificent and truly groundbreaking study of the fifth Sura. See, with caution, Gallez, *Messie*.

103 As such a term is used to refer, for example, to Qumran. See Collins, Was the Dead Sea sect; Collins, *Dead Sea scrolls* 45–7 and 130 where he characterizes both the Essenes and the early church as apocalyptic communities. See also Collins, *Imagination* 145 and passim Vermès, *Jesus*. On Qumran see also the more recent VanderKam, *Apocalyptic tradition*. 
Lawson

prophecy is something else. To articulate an only somewhat circular argument, the distinctive nature of Islamicate apocalypsis may be understood more perfectly by focusing on the Quran, in contradistinction to extra Quranic material and historical events. And, it brings us closer to understanding the nature of a sacramental dimension in reading the Quran. As Hodgson said so eloquently:

For the Qurʾān continued, as in Mecca and Medina, to be a monumental challenge. In its form, it continued, even after the ending of active revelation with Muḥammad’s life, to be an event, an act, rather than merely a statement of facts or of norms. It was never designed to be read for information or even for inspiration, but to be recited as an act of commitment in worship; nor did it become a mere sacred source of authority as the founding of Islam receded into time. It continued its active role among all who accepted Islam and took it seriously. What one did with the Qurʾān was not to peruse it but to worship by means of it; not to passively receive it but, in reciting it, to reaffirm it for oneself: the event of revelation was renewed every time one of the faithful, in the act of worship, relived the Qurʾānic affirmations.104

Suppose our knowledge of the Quran began only recently with a discovery of mysterious scrolls in a desert cave. Suppose there was no Muslim community, no Islamic history, no Islamic science or civilization to help us read these scrolls. Is it conceivable that we might mistake these Quran scrolls for the central text of a long vanished apocalyptic community whose ideas about the next world, colorful and fantastic as they appear, nonetheless are understood to make perfect sense in the context of one of the more prevalent genres of late antiquity? There seems to be little reason for us to continue to avoid referring to this powerful and glorious imagery of a transcendent realm and its role in the reward and punishment – the judgment – of good and evil, as apocalyptic.

The prejudice of Church scholasticism toward the Book of Revelation mentioned above may have been inherited and elaborated by modern and some contemporary Quranic scholarship, through a long and complicated process and result in a kind of strange “political correctness” in the present instance. Note this strong statement transcribed from a medieval and dismissive critique of the Quran’s paradise discourse: “All these descriptions of paradise suit only stupid ignorant people who are inexperienced and unfamiliar with reading texts and understanding old traditions, and who are just a rabble of

104 Hodgson, Venture i, 367.
rough Bedouins accustomed to eating lizards and chameleons.” Surely, the
descriptions of paradise in the Quran are no more outlandish or fantastic than
the contents of the Book of Revelation. Perhaps it is the tendency to think of
“apocalyptica” as simultaneously irrational, marginal, and peripheral to a con-
ceptualized necessary mainstream that has caused a de facto tendency, out of
well-meaning respect – to not to consider the Quran an apocalypse (whatever
else it may also be). Of course, not all judgments have been so negative.

Another reason for the neglect of such a potentially fruitful and stimulating
method for the study of the Quran centers on the undesirable (and acciden-
tal) associations with the mere word “apocalypse” and its untutored and collo-
quial acceptance as destruction and violence. A third possible reason for such
neglect relates to the role of “narrative” in most definitions (and instances)
of the apocalypse genre. The perceived absence of a continuous narrative,
or the perceived presence of a deeply flawed and defective narrative layer of
the Quran, has long been a bulwark of western studies of the Quran. Recent
scholarship, however, has drawn attention to a robust (but heretofore elusive,
if not totally unrecognized) chiasmic narrative structure in the Quran, a struc-
ture that derives from oral “composition” and is found throughout history in
orally composed poems and narratives. The “discovery” of the ring or chiasmic
structure of the Quran’s longer Suras and sequences of shorter Suras has shone
floods of light on the study of Quranic narrative. Sometimes referred to as
“Semitic rhetoric,” this structure entails the deployment of a series of symme-
tries which direct attention toward the center of the composition that thus
emerges as the main point of the text both physically and conceptually, in con-
trast to the main point of a text being located at the conclusion, as is the case
in other types of compositions. In addition, various distinctive features of the
text, such as duality and typological figuration, have been shown to provide
a coherent and powerful narrative spine or stream for the entire book. It
emerges that the Quran may be simultaneously an apocalypse and whatever
else it so obviously is: prophetic scripture of ethical monotheism. The two
modes need not be mutually exclusive. Furthermore, current work on the epic

105 Kinberg, Paradise 12. Kinberg continues, that such statements “transcribed by Jews in
Hebrew characters and translated from Arabic into Latin, taught the Spanish Christians
how to fight Islam in the most vigorous and harsh way.”
106 Cook, Studies.
107 Leemhuis, quoted above as one of three envoys from his Apocalypse, 111–2.
108 Cuypers, La composition; Cuypers, Une apocalypse; Cuypers, Le festin; Ernst, How to read.
109 Lawson, Duality.
dimension of the Quran is likely to shed more light on the fascinating topic of the narratological complexity and coherence of the Quran.  

The purpose here has been to highlight the Quranic mode and mood of apocalypse as expressed through the theme of paradise and precisely as that which constitutes the pre-canonical or pre-exegetical setting of the text. Thus do we understand or hear the voice of the Quran – before it became an object of study by the learned Muslim and non-Muslim traditions – in its originary musicality. By musicality is meant that the grammar of the performance and the grammar of a text merge – audience and performance merge so that the audience is part of the performance or revelation. There is circularity and closure, a sense of “home” very much akin to the effect of music.

Paradise in the Quran is a comprehensive and symmetrical depiction of the world we know; yet it somehow takes us out of that world through a gnostic or noetic apocalypse taking place in the imagination. These striking artistic qualities somehow suffuse the entire text of the Quran and lend it its specific identity and unmistakable character. Certainly, such qualities are also found in other scriptures (e.g., the Song of Songs, the Book of Nahum), but their pervasiveness throughout the entirety of the Quran (a book of approximately the same length as the New Testament) is quite remarkable. These features and their profusion are simultaneously what seem to set the Quran apart from other scriptures while paradoxically providing a link to them. But most importantly, they may provide evidence for the ebbing of an originary apocalyptic imagination as it gave way to a more domesticated Islam. In terms quite foreign to the present instance, it helps us understand how in Islam heresy became orthodoxy. Obviously, the apocalyptic imagination did not disappear completely. Recent scholarship has discovered and analyzed the apocalyptic center of such various historical Islamic (and therefore religio-political) movements as the Abbasid rise to power, the various claims to religious authority among Muslims in general, the rise of the Ottomans, the Safavids, the Ḥurūfīs, the Babis and the Baha’is, as well as even more

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110 Lawson, The Qur’an and epic.
111 Neuwirth, Negotiating; Lawson, Duality; Ernst, How to read.
112 See Günther’s contribution to this volume.
113 Yücesoy, Messianic.
114 Cook, Studies; Rubin, Apocalypse.
115 Fleischer, Lawgiver; Fleischer, Mahdi.
116 Quinn, Historical 63–9; Babayan, Mystics.
117 Bashir, Messianic.
118 Lawson, Gnostic; Amanat, Resurgence.
119 Friedmann, Prophecy; Valentine, Islam.
recent and contemporary phenomena. However, the source of such apocalyptic imaginative and spiritual energy in the Quran – whether as text or document, scripture or prophecy – remains to be fully understood, described, and appreciated.

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CHAPTER 7

Paradise and Nature in the Quran and Pre-Islamic Poetry

Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila

Nature is mentioned in both pre-Islamic poetry and the Quran.\(^1\) In the former, verdant nature is mostly described in the *nasīb* (amatory prologue), but occasionally also in extended similes in other parts of the *qaṣīda* (polythematic ode). Desert descriptions of the *riḥla* (narration of the poet’s journey) are mainly irrelevant for comparison with the Quran, which does not contain similar descriptions.\(^2\) The Quran focuses on nature mainly in the semantic range of the garden/Paradise. In addition, rain and thunder, comparable to similar elements in the poems, are mentioned, mainly in stories and parables related to divine punishment, the former also as a sign of God (*āya*). Otherwise, Quranic nature descriptions comparable to those of poetry are rare.\(^3\)

The Quran describes two different Paradises.\(^4\) The original home of Adam and the scene of the Fall is mentioned in dozens of verses, although it is never extensively described. The eschatological Paradise is mentioned in hundreds of verses, but it, too, is rather rarely described *in extenso*.

The Quranic words for Paradise are manifold, partly loans from other languages, partly of Arabic origin. The basic element for the concept is the word *janna* “garden” (pl. *jannāt* – *jinān* is not used in the Quran) used either absolutely (*al-janna, (al)-jannāt*) or in genitive constructions (*jannat/jannāt X*). Paradise, thus, is primarily conceived of as a garden, or a set of gardens. The

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1. Both corpora have their own problems of authenticity. A partial aim of this paper is to elucidate the relations between the two corpora by a close study of selected features in both. All translation of the Quran are based on those of N.J. Dawood.
2. It should be emphasized, though, that desert descriptions form the majority of nature descriptions in pre-Islamic poetry, cf., e.g., Schoeler, *Naturdichtung* 13. In the Quran, nature is always related to man, which may explain why the empty desert receives so little attention there, despite its overwhelming presence on the Arabian Peninsula.
3. One passage reminiscent of the themes of the *qaṣīda* is worth pointing out, i.e., Q 74:30–1, *ka-annahum humurun mustanfirah* “farrat min qaswarah – “like frightened asses fleeing from a lion.” Bellamy’s proposed emendation of the crucial word (see most recently Bellamy, Textual criticism 245–6) is rather fanciful.
4. Later tradition has created a more complicated system of Paradises, but this is a post-Quranic development.