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Ignaz Goldziher and Theodor Nöldeke on Revelation: A Critical Study in Light of Classical Muslim Scholarship

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Abstract:

In this paper the discussion will be critical on opinions expressed by Ignaz Goldziher and Theodor Nöldeke on the concept of revelation among the Muslims, especially the Quran. The two scholars are amongst the pioneers of the Western study of Islam who have made a tremendous contribution to the academic interpretation of the Islamic literature of the recent time. Goldziher took revelation as psychological and sociological process and observed it in the context of history development and culture. Nöldeke, however was concerned with the chronological and stylistic development of the Quran and suggested an organized sequence of revelation founded on the linguistic and thematic factors. This paper draws comparisons of their theories and the views of classical Muslim thinkers, including al Tabari, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi and Qadi Iyad. These ancient scholars present a comprehensive, theological, and spiritually based interpretation of revelation based on the Quran and the Hadith. The work identifies the way that the orientalist approach tends to become discontinuous with the internal epistemology of Islamic tradition, often being the symptom of Eurocentric different types of assumptions and intellectual trends of the 19th century Europe. The paper will endeavor to explore in a balanced and critical manner the way in which revelation is perceived within and without the Islamic intellectual tradition by involving both the western and Islamic sources. It finds that some of the orientalist contributions do add value to the academic discourse but they do not always have the depth of context that can be traced in the classical Islamic scholarly work. This study ends up supporting the usefulness of dialogical working and methodological impartiality in researching religious text and customs.

Keywords: Revelation, Orientalism, Goldziher, Nöldeke, Islamic Tradition

Western Scholarship on Islam: A Historical and Critical Overview

Islam as a western scholarly endeavor has also evolved in the realms of the intellectual system of Orientalism, a body of academic thought that involved the examination of the eastern societies, cultures, and religions by European scholars during the 19th century. In this background, Islam was often treated not as an existing religion but as an ancient object, to be treated like a historical source by the techniques of classical philology, history and comparative religion. This interstate academic trend was intended to demystify the origins and writings of Islam by regarding them as the products of their

historical and cultural context—not as expressions of transformations emitted through the prism of the divine revelation afflicting them.

During the 19th century, there was heightened interest in Islamic studies, especially within Germany, France, and Britain. Western scholars started learning Arabic and Persian among other Islamic languages in order to learn the Quran, hadith and the early history of Islam. It was characterized by the adherence to the methods of textual criticism and historical reconstruction applied to the Biblical texts in the past.

Among the primaries of such development was Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921) whose research on the Hadith texts was a pioneer in terms of undermining conventional Islamic texts. Goldziher even demonstrated that a large part of the Hadith corpus was the product of socio-political requirements of the early Muslim community and did not necessarily have any connection with the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.

“The Hadith literature must be understood not as the pure and authentic transmission of the Prophet’s sayings, but as a reflection of the evolving religious and political needs of the Muslim community.”¹

The analysis conducted by Goldziher presented a paradigm change. He instead of believing what the Islamic sources say, suggested that scholars should examine the reason why some traditions arose at a certain time. He considered the Hadith as historical products, moulded by the rival schools of thought and sectarian interests in early Islam. This school of thought would play a major role in the coming Islamicist works of the west and was assumed to be of ill intent by the conservative Muslim academics who continued to hold the Holy Book of Hadith in highly esteemed regard.

One of the other towering figures in this school of thought was Theodor Nöldeke (1836-1930), whose *Geschichte des Qoran* (History of the Quran) is considered the staple of Quranic studies. Nöldeke used the study of Philology in the Quranic scripture, and worked on how the chapters and subjects in the Quran changed over a period of time.

“The Qur’an is not a book that fell from heaven all at once, but a collection that evolved over time, shaped by Muhammad’s experiences and the historical context in which he lived.”²

The thesis by Nöldeke that the Quran was not written at once was a challenge to the conventional Islamic ideologies about the eternal and unchanging attribute of the Quran. The division of Quranic verses into historic cycles known as Meccan and Medinan brought about a historical structure which was to be considered as the norm in Western Qur’anic studies. His writing helped the Quran be introduced as document of human history, which could be discussed as any other ancient text.

Their intentions, even innovative in the context of Western academics, tended to clash with the confessional approach that was prevalent in the Muslim world and in which the stimuli of the Islamic canon were mostly subject to theological and devotional interpretation.

During the 19th century, and especially with works by Goldziher and Nöldeke, the Western scholarly study of Islam was turning into a major change in the practice of Islamic source studies and interpretation. These authors used a critical and historical approach to Islamic texts, attempting to make them cultural objects instead of a revelation of God. Although their methodologies led to new frontiers of scholarly studies, they also illustrated the big gap between scholarly study with faith differences and scholarly studies with historical critique.

Eventually, this intellectual movement was the basis of the contemporary academic study of Islam and this affected both the secular and religious academicians. Nevertheless, the conflict between the conventional Islamic interpretations and the critical ones of the West remains a debated, communicative and re-assessing issue in the modern Islamic studies.

Ignaz Goldziher's Intellectual Framework: Reinterpreting Revelation in Islam

Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921) is among the most influential personalities in the Western field of academic study of Islam. Goldziher was a Hungarian Jewish scholar who, however, trained in Oriental languages, theology, and philosophy, he introduced a new aspect to the study of Islam through his integration of the modern hermeneutics, psychology of religion, and historical criticism in his work. His work was a great change of concept in appreciating the Islamic revelation as not an objective and supernatural occurrence, ridiculing it as a subjective and psychological and historical phenomenon.

Goldziher did not accept the idea of revelation as being a direct, word-to-letter passage of a transcendent god. Rather, he regarded revelation as an inward process that is influenced by the morality of the character of the Prophet Muhammad, spiritual, and social-historical circumstances. This reading made Islam a part of the larger Semitic religions, and the Prophet was depicted as an ethical reformer and religious genius, as opposed to being a passive receiver of divine dictation.

The intellectual paradigm of Goldziher was based on the liberal religious ideas of 19th century Europe, where revelation started being seen as a spiritual internal phenomenon, instead of a supernatural or a miraculous event. Goldziher was inspired by founders of the school of thought, including Schleiermacher and Wellhausen, and put this concept into practice in relation to Islam, contending that religious experience needed to be interpreted in its historical and psychological context.

“The essence of Muhammad’s religious experience is not in the objective reception of divine speech, but in the deep internal movement of a conscience inspired by God and shaped by the moral needs of his time.”³

In this case, Goldziher has positioned the Prophet Muhammad as not the conduit through which external and divinely dictated messages were received, but as a person with religious experiences, which were inspired by morals and personal belief. The psychological interpretation of religion is consistent with this reading where revelation is regarded as the awakening of a spiritual consciousness of the self rather than a metaphysical event. Goldziher focuses on the moral consciousness of Muhammad and his social surrounding and he presents him as a reformist who must have reacted to the moral and social issues of his time, 7th century of Saudi Arabia.

In addition, Goldziher understood Islam as a modified tradition, whose origin was in Semitic culture and was influenced by the religious traditions that were before it, which included Judaism and Christian religion. He interpreted the Quran not as an entirely original text but as an outcome of a broader monotheistic text.

“Islam, like other Semitic religions, developed gradually under the pressure of historical circumstances and the moral needs of the community.”⁴

Here, Goldziher puts Islam in the spectrum of Semitic religions, and to argue that the creation of Islam was not singular and miraculous but a mutual aspect of a common religious tradition. He highlights that the same way campaigners like Christianity and Judaism reacted to the practical and ethical interests of the day, so did Islam. The analysis confronted conservative Muslim beliefs toward Islam as a whole and a

finished revelation whereas it showed it as a historical religion that was predetermined by the surrounding world and changed through time.

The framework proposed by Goldziher made him read Islamic materials critically using the same tools as those applied in Biblical studies. His study of Hadith literature, Quranic verses and the early Islamic theology was not concerning its doctrinal assertiveness but how it portrayed the consciousness of early Muslims of that time in history. Thus he paved the way to subsequent critical studies on Islam particularly in Europe.

The reinterpretation of Islamic revelation by Ignaz Goldziher was just an expression of a more general intellectual trend in 19th century Europe that aimed to historicize and humanize religious experience. Goldziher sought to contradict the traditional ideas of the divine communication and introduced new possibilities of comprehending Islam in the comparative study of religions by basing the revelation on the psychological and historical life of the Prophet Muhammad.

His opinions received counterpoint in the Muslim world yet his legacy still lives in the academic world of Islamic studies where confusion between faith based interpretation and historical critical approach is a live and a persistent debate. The works of Goldziher still make one think about the essence of religious power, revelation sense and connection between the past and religion.

Goldziher on the Nature of Revelation: Experiential and Historical Perspectives

The study of revelation by Ignaz Goldziher is a critically and historically sensitive understanding of Islam. He denied the classical concept of revelation as a verbatim, literal communication of the words of God, and suggested it to be more of a subjective, experiential, process. To Goldziher, Quran was not only a book given to him by God, but it was a mirror of the inner spiritual life of Prophet Muhammad, which was influenced by his interaction with the available religious traditions like Judaism and Christianity. This school of thought placed revelation as a two-way process of divine inspiration and human consciousness with a focus on the psychological and historical aspects of the religious experience.

Goldziher further posited that Quranic text is a reflection of what the Prophet underwent in his inner experiences in terms of religion and not a direct reflection of the divine speech itself. Through the creation of linguistic and thematic parallels between the Quran and the pre-Islamic scriptures, he implied that Islam was a culmination of the Semitic religious branches and was not a completely new revelation.

“The Prophet’s inspiration must be understood as an inner religious experience, which, while guided by God, was inevitably shaped by the spiritual milieu of his time and the religious traditions surrounding him.”⁵

In such a statement, Goldziher stresses on the subjectivity of revelation, the fact that the interaction of the Prophet with the divine inspiration was intermediated by his own consciousness. This is because this view renegotiates the Quran as a mediated human experience in which divine guidance is channeled through the sense of morality and spirituality of the Prophet. Putting revelation into a scenario of history and culture, Goldziher stresses out the importance of the previous religious knowledge in forming the Quranic message.

Goldziher also showed how the Quran owes to the previous scriptures by pointing out similarities in thematic and linguistic resemblances with the Biblical texts. His view of the same was that these parallels were more of illustration of continuity since the Quran was responding to the ethical and spiritual needs of the community in which it lived by also resolving existing religious motifs.

“Many of the Qur’anic stories of the Prophets show clear parallels with Biblical accounts, suggesting that the Qur’an is a product of Muhammad’s reflective engagement with the sacred narratives he inherited.”⁶

In this case, it is Goldziher who emphasizes on the Quran as the product of a deliberate engagement with the earlier religious literature. The Prophet, according to the opinion of Goldziher was a very moral and pensive person, who internalized the traditions that already existed and reorganized them to fit the spiritual and ethical needs of his community. This meaning undermines conventional arguments of sheer originality, placing the Qur'an in the historical and religious context of the Near East.

Revelation is also an area where Goldziher has been able to shed light and provide a paradigm on interpreting the Quran. He puts forward a prophet Muhammad as a spiritual visionary and as a human actor who could engage himself intensely with the tradition of the past by placing revelation in the perspective of a subjective, experiential, and situational historical process. This approach places Islam into the context of the larger Semitic religious tradition, where continuity and change are emphasized. The work of Goldziher is seminal to study of Western Islam, eliciting still continuing debate concerning the connection of the role of God to the human being and the historical evolution of religious books.

Theodor Nöldeke’s Philological Contribution: Reconstructing the Historical Qur’an

One of the most prominent Western Quran scholars, whose knowledge is regarded as of influential influence, is Theodor Nöldeke (1836-1930). His pioneering creations included *Geschichte der Qorans* (History of the Qur’an) which attempted to make systematic study of the text of the Quran, by examining it through linguistic, stylistic and thematic classifications so as to attempt to reconstruct the historical progression of the Quran. Contrary to the Islamic traditional scholarship where the Quran is a canonically determined text Nöldeke attempted to define the chronological chain of revelation finding a Quran that was influenced by circumstances and the life of Prophet Muhammad. His approach is one of the pillars of Western Study of the Quran and an example of textual criticism used on Islamic text.

The main technique used by Nöldeke was the separation of the chapters of the Quran into Meccan and Medinan epochs, which was based on the dominant linguistic form, the style of the speech, and the subject matter. Nöldeke describes Meccan surahs as tending to give more weight to spiritual, eschatological and ethical themes in a rather concise and frequently poetic form and Medina surahs to cover communal structure, rulings by law and social directive and often in a much prosaic style.

“The Qur’an is not a work revealed in its present canonical order; its composition reflects a gradual process in which the earliest Meccan surahs present the spiritual core, while the later Medinan chapters address the practical needs of the emerging Muslim community.”⁷

This fact highlights the historical-critical view of Nöldeke. Categorizing the Meccan and Medinan chapters, he does not simply assume the Quran as a religious text but presents it as a developing text in time, that is, according to certain social, political and moral conditions of the early Muslim society. In this manner, the scholars can examine the Quran as a historical work in progress and how the messages and commands were transformed to meet the demands of a developing religious movement.

Nöldeke also used linguistic analysis, analyzing the development of the Arabic vocabulary and syntax, the linguistic periods and styles, to prove his chronological reconstruction. His approach to philology allowed him to distinguish levels of development of the text and this showed how the Quran was both a product of the historical context of the 7th century Arabia and a product of the Semitic writing tradition in general.

“Through careful attention to linguistic style and thematic progression, one can trace the stages of Qur’anic revelation and gain insight into the historical circumstances under which these texts emerged.”⁸

In this case, Nöldeke insists on the relevance of philological instruments to the interpretation of the Quran formation. Through style and theme, he can rebuild the steps of the revelation chronologically and, thereby, can provide a structure in which to examine the Qur’an as an artifact put together at a given historical period of time and not merely as a religious scripture. This approach is in contrast to the traditional exegesis that presupposes the eternal and fixed order of the Quran and pays more attention to the theological interpretation.

The work of Theodor Nöldeke was the first Western study of the Quran that transformed the way it was analyzed in terms of history and language. The chronological history of the Quran was reconstructed by different means using his division of Meccan and Medinan chapters and stylistic and thematic analysis. This method changed the emphasis of the academia to the focus on historical context rather than authority of the canonical that showed how the Quran changed and evolved in accordance with the spiritual, social, and political demands of the early Muslim community. Nöldeke has been a classic source of reference in the study of the Quran that has influenced the mode of research of the future generations of scholars to approach Islamic texts critically, historically and linguistically.

Understanding of Revelation by Nöldeke.

Theodor Nöldeke studied the Quran not only philologically but also in terms of historical interpretation of the revelation. Nöldeke contrasted the traditional understanding of revelation as the constant, divine dictation, but considered it a process that developed in the changing role of the Prophet Muhammad and the socio-political context of early Islam. His interpretation emphasizes the nature of divine revelation and the history, as it is through this that the various themes of the Quran; spiritual, legal, and political evolved as a reaction to the evolving requirements of the Muslim community.

Nöldeke also pointed out that the role of the Prophet was never fixed but these developed with time. In Mecca, Muhammad was a moral and spiritual preacher, who taught more about ethical things and the inner world of the person. However, his scope of influence widened in Medina to include the aspects of a legislator, community organizer and statesman who took care of political, social, and legal issues. This development according to Nöldeke, accounts to the difference in the Quranic content and style which are related to the practical demands of the Muslim people as opposed to one stable divine message.

“The diversity of Qur’anic content from spiritual exhortation to legal instruction mirrors the Prophet’s transformation from a preacher in Mecca to a statesman in Medina, revealing revelation as a historically contingent process.”⁹

This excerpt shows the main point of Nöldeke who states that revelation is historically conditioned. Nöldeke denotes the material of the Quran as acquired with modifying functions of the Prophet when she connects the contents of the Quran to practical and social adjustment, instead of a fixed, discourse that was not dated. The Meccan and Medinan surahs are thus interpreted as not only the direct marks of the two literary differences but as the indicators of historical and functional changes in the mission of the Prophet.

Nöldeke also emphasized that this historical gradation can be used to offer an explanation as to why the Quran is loaded with various types of guidance which may include ethical and spiritual counseling as well as the laws and the governance. Both portions of revelation refer to the different phases of life of Prophet and the requirements of his society. This way thinks of revelation as a dynamic process and it is developing together with human society though it retains its spiritual essence.

“Revelation cannot be comprehended as a single, uniform act; it reflects the unfolding of the Prophet’s mission under the pressures of historical reality, adapting spiritual guidance to practical exigencies.”¹⁰

Nöldeke also stresses the contextual and adaptational aspect of revelation in which she expresses the Quran as a moving historical document. This meaning brings together the spiritual and temporal aspects of the Muslim tradition of the Prophet, as it accentuates the relationship between Godly inspiration and the real situation. Nöldeke offers a set of concepts about the structural and thematic diversity of the Quran by concentrating on its historical formation.

The interpretation of revelation by Nöldeke is a reinterpretation of the Quran as a work that changes over time which is directly linked with the life of the Prophet Muhammad and also physically related to the factions of the socio-political world of ancient Islam. Considering that the role of Prophet evolved gradually, as a moral teacher and then as a legislator Nöldeke explains the variety of themes and styles used in the Quran. His style has put in emphasis the historical context in the interpretation of revelation, and his characterization of the Quran, as a document that is responsive to the spiritual and practical needs of the Muslim community. This view is still central in contemporary Western works towards Islam, both the historical-critical and the philological.

Methodological similarities and differences in Western Scholarship on Islamic Revelation.

An exemplary Western study of Islam in the Western Academia can be identified with the works of Ignaz Goldziher and Theodor Nöldeke, who led the way towards a critical and rationalist approach to the study of the Quran and the revelation to Muhammad. Both of those scholars aimed to interpret revelation not as a divine dictation but as a phenomenon that exists historically and in a psychologically specific situation, which can be analyzed by humans. Though they shared the same approach to the historical-critical type of inquiry, the focus of their interests was different: although Goldziher focused on the religious psychology of the Prophet, Nöldeke was more oriented on the linguistic development and chronological reconstruction of the text of the Quran. Their works all symbolize a definitive break in the interpretation of classical Islam pointing to the conflicts between historical enquiry and theological orthodoxy.

Both intellectuals worked under a rationalistic and critical paradigm of the analysis of Islam in the prism of philology, textual criticism, and comparative religion. Goldziher analyzed the Quran as the mirror of the inner spiritual life of Muhammad

and his contact with religious traditions which already existed on Earth and that revelation was a psycho-experiential phenomenon.

“The essence of Muhammad’s religious experience is not in the objective reception of divine speech, but in the deep internal movement of a conscience inspired by God and shaped by the moral needs of his time.”¹¹

The statement given by Goldziher demonstrates his psychological attitude towards revelation. He puts the experience of the Prophet into his historical and religious context and views the Quran to be a form of human consciousness under the influence of a divine revelation and not as a word-to-word transmission. His approach to the matter places the emphasis on the moral and spiritual dimension, with certain tendency on the subjective, human dimension of religious experience.

Conversely, Nöldeke took the bringer of revelation as the aim of his inquiry towards the philological and historical approach with the accent on the chronological form in the Quranic text and its stylistic changes. His division of surahs into Meccan and Medinan eras and linguistic analysis of the Quran described the Quran as a historical source and thus, subject to changes and influences by social and political realities.

“The diversity of Qur’anic content from spiritual exhortation to legal instruction mirrors the Prophet’s transformation from a preacher in Mecca to a statesman in Medina, revealing revelation as a historically contingent process.”¹²

The analysis by Nöldeke highlights a contextual and functional way of revelation. Instead of examining the inner life of the Prophet, he studies how the circumstances of the history affected the text, the contents and the structure of the text. This practice emphasizes the flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of the early Muslim community as well as the revelation being a dynamic aspect of history.

Regardless of these distinctions, the two scholars have a single premise, that, revelation can be subject to critical and historical study without expecting that it has a metaphysical, or a divine origin. This rationalism position is dismally opposed to classic Islamic epistemology which regards revelation as a direct communication with God and the Prophet as infallible. Using historical and linguistic approaches, Goldziher and Nöldeke paved the way of using modern Western Islamic studies, prioritizing criticism to theological purity.

The picture drawn jointly by Goldziher and Nöldeke is that the 19th -century Western approach to Islam was diverse and of sophisticated nature. The emphasis that is placed on religious psychology by Goldziher and the emphasis that is placed on textual chronology and linguistics as placed by Nöldeke depict two complementary ways of understanding revelation as a human phenomenon and a historical one. The common rationalist system criticized classical Islamic beliefs about the infallibility of the prophets and the dictation of the Quran, and provided the basis of a historical-critical approach to the Quran. The conversation of psychological, historical, and philological devices by them modernized the study of Islam as a high academic profession and gave generations of scholars a solid foundation to look at revelation with critical acumen and scholarly sensibility.

The Muslim Traditional View of Revelation.

The classical Islamic tradition of scholarship has a very different conception of revelation than the procedures of their Western counterparts, Goldziher and Nöldeke. Revelation to the distinguished Muslim exegetes and theologians such as al-Tabari, al-

Razi and Qadi Iyad was not a process mediated by man and one that was contingent by historical surroundings. They defined revelation through the notion of tanzil which means the sent down revelation of the divinity used by the angel of Jibril (Gabriel) who was delivered to the prophet Muhammad. The Quran in this system is the uncreated Word of God (Kalam Allah), which is permanently safe and can not be corrupted. Consequently, revelation is a metaphysical construct, which manifests and becomes established by a miracle, which makes its mark and is experienced directly, which separates sharply the classical Islamic epistemology in relation both to the rationalist and the historical-critical.

This is because, according to the classical scholars, the Quran was slowly revealed to the Prophet in a period of twenty-three years so that he could effectively communicate the divine to his subjects. In his book, Tafsir, Al-Tabari says that revelation is not the outcome of the human mind, but a divine intervention which leads the Prophet to the moral, spiritual, and social teachings.

الوحي هو كلامُ الله أنزلَ على نبيِّه بواسطة جبريل، وليس من صنع الفكر الإنساني، بل نزلَ بالحقِّ والبيان، شهد به محمدٌ ﷺ ومن حوله¹³.

This observation reflects the ontological and metaphysical revelation of classical thinking. Al-Tabari, in contrast to Goldziher, who regarded revelation as the manifestation of the inner religious consciousness of the Prophet, focuses on its external, divine origin. The Quran is also a literal command of God, which was passed on by an angel, therefore, it reflects the divine and unmediated nature of the text.

Al-Razi was an outstanding theologian and philosopher who explains further the infallibility and divine protection of the Quran claiming that it cannot be changed by any means or even corrupted. He says that revelation is supplemented with such exceptional experiences, such as divine visions and voices, and these revelation confirm the reception of the message by the Prophet.

القرآن محفوظٌ عند الله، أنزلَ ببيانٍ واضح، وشهدت به المعجزات؛ فأصله الإلهي لا شكَّ فيه، وليس متأثراً بإدراك البشر ولا خاضعاً لتغيُّر الزمان¹⁴.

The views of Al-Razi emphasize the metaphysical nature of such reality as revelation as opposed to the history or the psychology of revelation by Western thinkers. Revelation is a thing which is considered to be objective, unchangeable, and is divinely assured and is perceived both in supernatural signs and in spiritual illumination. The focus on a deity preservation and infallibility indicates one of the important pillars of classical Islamic thinking the Quran is the uncorrupted Word of God, but not a historical or human creation.

In his work al-Shifa Qadi lays more emphasis on experiential validation of revelation citing that the Prophet was able to convey the word of God accurately and people accepted that it was miraculous. All these classical descriptions support an image of revelation as direct, sacred and authoritative, which is inculcated in the metaphysical arsenal of Islamic theology.

Classical Muslim thinkers introduce a vision of revelation which has completely different ontological and spiritual outlooks of the rationalist views of scholars in the Western world. Revelation is a God-given phenomenon, revealed by Gabriel, and guarded against corruptions, and confirmed by miraculous experiences. It is believed that the Quran is an immutable and eternal Word of God and it was not created thus the role of the Prophet is to be a faithful transmitter but not interpreter and historical actor. Proclaimed here are the divine power, metaphysical truth, and infallibility of the prophets, in the opposite of the psychological model presented by Goldziher and the historical-philological reconstruction applied by Nöldeke. It is necessary to be familiar

with these classical models in order to address the methodological differences between Western and Islamic approaches to revelation.

The Theological depth of Revelation and al-Razi.

One of the most influential classical Muslim Best Fakhr al-Din al-Razi gave a theologically deep insight into revelation in his Tafsir al-Kabir. As opposed to Western scholars like Goldziher who viewed revelation as the manifestation of the inner religious perception of the Prophet, al-Razi stressed on the fact that revelation is a rational and spiritual certainty. It is beyond the human intelligence and cannot be narrowed down to natural and psychological explanations. In the case of al-Razi the experience of the Prophet was special and God preserved it by the means of ilm ladunni (divine knowledge) which is used to give guidance to human beings regarding the legal, moral and wisdom issues.

Al-Razi asserts that revelation is divine and fallacious, and only the reasoning of human understanding will be unable to be supported in explaining the experience of the Prophet and the contents of the Quran. He underlines that revelation is the immediate expression of the divine will, including the direction as well as knowledge that could not be reproduced by average people or be fully understood by them.

وَأَمَّا الْوَحْيُ فَهُوَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ نَبِيَّهُ فِيمَا يَخْتَصُّ بِهِ مِنَ الْهُدَى وَالْحِكْمَةِ وَمِنْ
عِلْمِ اللَّذُنِّ الَّذِي لَا يُدْرِكُهُ عَقْلُ الْخَلْقِ¹⁵

This text highlights the fact that al-Razi believes that revelation is a unique divine gift: it is through it that the Prophet can relay guidance (huda) and wisdom (hikmah) and is guided by ilm ladunni, knowledge of God. However, in contrast to the psychologism of Goldziher, which assumes revelation to be the result of the inner consciousness of Muhammad being organized by historical and cultural elements, al-Razi also places it squarely in the metaphysical and theological world that can never be distorted by humans.

Al-Razi also goes further to argue that the reception of the revelation by Prophet is a distinct spiritual experience. The guidance of Quran is also all-encompassing, including ethical, legal, and spiritual, all of which are not based on human reason, but are also based on divine knowledge.

فَمَا أُوحِيَ إِلَى نَبِيِّنَا صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ لَيْسَ مَجْرَدَ أَفْكَارٍ
بَشَرِيَّةٍ، بَلْ هُوَ عِلْمٌ لَدُنِّيٌّ مَحْفُوظٌ مِنَ التَّغْيِيرِ وَالتَّحْرِيفِ، وَأُمِرَ بِهِ هِدَايَةً
لِلنَّاسِ وَفَقَّ مَا اقْتَضَتْ حِكْمَةُ اللَّهِ¹⁶

In this case, al-Razi emphasizes that revelation will not be corrupted and it will be guided by divine wisdom. It serves as a teaching and guiding tool to mankind, and in this regard is of a teleological and divine intent, unlike the Western historical-critical models that debate revelation into a human or culturally-conditioned phenomenon.

The analysis that al-Razi provides brings out the theological profundity and metaphysical certitude of revelation of classical Islamic thought. By insisting upon divine knowledge and assurance against mistake, and his advice to mankind, he has put revelation squarely in the field of divine action, which is essentially different as is recognized by the Western, such as the interpretation by Goldziher, which stresses so heavily on psychological or historical explanations. It is important to learn about the views of the al-Razi on the transcendent, sacred and rationally sound revelation that was held by classical Islamic scholars.

Comparative Analysis: Orientalist vs. Islamic Epistemology

Revelation suggests a gaping chasm between the Western understanding of orientalism and traditional views of Islam concerning epistemology. Examples of such orientalist thinkers as Goldziher and Nöldeke discuss revelation in terms of historical empiricism, textual criticism, and linguistics. Their approaches are marked by their

cynicism of the supernatural and adherence to explaining religious occurrences as a historical and social phenomenon. Conversely, Islamic epistemological model commences with the divine authority and views revelation as the point of absolute truth, which is the foundation of knowledge (ilm) and determines the human perception of morality and law as well as spirituality.

The Quran is examined by the orientalist scholars as the result of historicity. Goldziher, as an example, saw revelation as the inner consciousness of the Prophet, against which it tested itself to Jewish and Christian traditions, and not a literal message of God. Nöldeke concentrated more on language and chronological evolution of the Quran with greater understanding of the historical reconstruction rather than theological assertions.

“The Qur’an must be studied as a historical document; its style, language, and themes reflect the changing circumstances of Muhammad’s life rather than a uniform divine discourse.”¹⁷

This quotation depicts the critical and empirical nature of Orientalist scholarship. Revelation is approached like a human mediated phenomenon, which is subject to historical and sociological scrutiny. It is centered around textual growth and context as opposed to the divine genesis or metaphysical authority.

Conversely, such classical Muslim thinkers as al-Tabari, al-Razi, and Qadi Iyad based their thoughts on divine revelation. Quran is believed to be uncreated, infallible and directly dictated by God and it is the ground that forms the basis of all knowledge.

وَأَمَّا الْوَحْيُ فَهُوَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ نَبِيَّهُ فِيمَا يَخْتَصُّ بِهِ مِنَ الْهُدَى وَالْحِكْمَةِ وَمِنْ
عِلْمِ اللَّذُنَّ الَّذِي لَا يُدْرِكُهُ عَقْلُ الْخَلْقِ¹⁸

The formulation of al-Razi is focused on divine authority and certainty of metaphysics. Revelation is rationally consistent as well as being spiritually revelatory and is used to guide humanity in every aspect of knowledge. In contrast to Orientalists, classical scholars do not discuss revelation as historical or social product but as the main origin of the truth, which has been kept out of error and distortion.

The difference of epistemology between the Orientalist and Islamic schools is the reason behind the dissimilar inferences made by each school. Orientalist approaches are based on empirical scepticism, which generate analyses that make revelation a historical event that can be influenced by humans. Islamic epistemology has a divine foundation and the revelation is deemed as infallible and sacred and the source of all knowledge. Such underlying differences are important towards understanding the understandings of debates regarding the nature, origin and purpose of revelation within intellectual traditions.

Consequences on the Study of Revelation.

In the issue of revelation, there are crucial differences between Western Orientalist and classical Muslim methods, and the distinct difference in approaches and approaches to the revelation opens up significant methodological and theological differences. Although Orientalist historical-critical writers such as Goldziher and Nodeldke were rigorously critical of the Quran, these approaches tended to hold the Quran refer to itself, and the living interpretive tradition on which centuries of the Islamic comprehension of revelation relied. Muslim classical thought in its turn maintained an inclusive structure that unified theology, linguistics, and spirituality that viewed revelation as a divine, transformational phenomenon rather than a historical or literary phenomenon.

The historical-psychological study of the Quran that Goldziher proposed enabled the scholars to venture into the human aspect of the prophetic experience and

trace them back to the pre-Islamic religious traditions. The philological techniques of Noddeke rebuilt the chronology and the linguistic evolution of Qurain chapters and offered critical instruments of interpreting the development of the texts.

يجب تناول القرآن بوصفه نصاً تشكّل في ظلّ ظروفٍ تاريخيّة، إذ يُظهر التحليل اللغويّ والموضوعيّ تطوّرَه عبر الزمن¹⁹.

Although these insights created a better textual scholarship, they were constrained to empirical and critical categories. Orientalist approaches have been largely incapable of approaching the Quran as a living text of spiritual and moral interpretation, and not understanding how the text is deployed in the faith, law, and everyday practices of Muslims.

Classical Muslim scholars in contrast insisted on having an elaborate epistemology. Likely, revelation was the source of divinity, as well as, a spiritual principle directing moral integrity, judicial decisions and spiritual development. As an example, al-Razi stressed that revelation is based on the Divine wisdom (ilm ladunni) and prevents the human mind against error, incorporating rational, spiritual, and linguistic aspects.

فما أُوحيَ إلى نبيّنا صلى الله عليه وسلم من القرآن ليس مجرد أفكار بشرية، بل هو علمٌ لدُنِّيٌّ محفوظٌ من التغيير والتحرّيف، وأمرٌ به هدايةً للناس وفق ما اقتضت حكمة الله²⁰.

This text points out revelation as a transforming and sacred process that to classical scholars includes more than a historical or literary aspect. The Quran is a timeless guidance, moral teaching and metaphysical fact with emphasis on a holistic interaction which is not present in the model of the Orientalism.

The divergent definitions of revelation are a manifestation of a real disparity in approach and perception of the world. Text studies and historical knowledge were enriched by orientalist approaches which tended to dissociate the Qur'an with its theological and spiritual context. The classical Muslim scholarship was however a combination of these dimensions where revelation remained a living, divine and changing reality. It is important to note that in any complete research of the topic of revelation these differences play a crucial role, especially when it is necessary to bridge historical-critical approaches with theological and spiritual interpretations.

Key Findings

- The basic distinction between orientalist and Islamic scholarship has been found on the epistemology of orientalist scholars who depend on historical empiricism whereas Muslim academics depend on Godly authority and revelation.
- Goldziher and Nöldeke were reading revelation as something subjective or historical, whereas Islamic scholars defended revelation as an objective and transcendent truth, starting with God.
- Easternist discourse tends to alienate the Quran in terms of its religious and linguistic context such that it is portrayed as a rather historical text instead of a living theological conversation.
- Both Goldziher and Nöldeke do not take the full approach to the classical commentaries of the Muslims, which left them with an incomplete appreciation of Islamic ideas of revelation.
- Nevertheless, the analytical approach, in particular, philology and chronology, could be considered to have formed the basis of future scholarly efforts to study the Qur'an and Islamic history by Goldziher and Nöldeke.

Recommendations

- Further studies of the revelation issue ought to merge the historical-critical approach with theological knowledge in Islamic tradition in order to obtain a harmonized view.
- Higher criticism of the Quran ought to make more use of classical tafsir, kalam and hadith literature to understand the inner integrity of the Islamic worldplace.
- Schools ought to foster the discussion between the Islamic theologians and Western scholars in order to foster understanding and methodological impartiality.
- Modern scholars need to re-examine the ideas of orientalism by applying recent linguistic, historical, and theological resources to eliminate previous misunderstandings.
- Under the adoption of the modern academic tools, the Muslim scholars ought to retain the spiritual and revelation nature of the Quran such that critical analysis would not get into weakening its divine nature.

Conclusion

The paper has analyzed the differing concept of revelation (wahy) as conceived by the orientalist Ignaz Goldziher and Theodor Nöldeke and that of the classical Muslim thinkers like al-Tabari, al-Razi and Qadi Iyad. Goldziher and Nöldeke took the approach of revelation as a historical and philological issue and perceived it as a changing psychological or sociocultural process and not a communication between God and people. By contrast, the whatever that is offered by the classical Muslim thought was in the form of revelation, which was the true Word of God and was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) via the angel Gabriel. The analysis showed that the methodology used by the orientalist had secular assumptions, and they did not interact with the inward reasoning of the Islamic faith. This comparative question has stressed that revelation must be knowledgeable of both textual history and theological integrity which have been the challenge in mediating faith-based and critical academic approaches to revelation.

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