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Qurʾānic Narratives in d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale* (1697)

An Ethical Reception of Islamic Scripture in Early Modern Europe

Emmanuelle Stefanidis

1 Introduction

To early modern European sensitivities, the Qurʾān was, in Alastair Hamilton's telling metaphor, a "forbidden fruit" (Hamilton 2008). Desired and despised, coveted and feared, the Scripture founding a rival religion and competing political power had attracted European scholarly attention since the Middle Ages. From its early stages, the European reception of the Islamic scripture was marked by ambivalence for, while the Qurʾān was perceived as blatant forgery, it also celebrated Jesus and Mary and called for the worship of one God. It was, furthermore, the founding text of a powerful religion and an admired civilization. Until the twelfth/eighteenth century, when profound intellectual and political changes gradually set the stage for the emergence of a secular framework of analysis, engagements with the Qurʾān were habitually framed by religious polemics. Translations of the Muslim scripture were prefaced with customary denunciations of the "false religion" and a concern for Christian missionary efforts (Ben-Tov 2015, 119–120; Hamilton 2008; Tolan 2018, 198). Such conventional declarations, whether sincere or not, were necessary to avoid censorship, preserve patronage ties, and generally conform to social expectations. They should not, however, conceal the multifaceted interest that the Islamic scripture elicited from European intellectuals. As several recent studies have demonstrated, religious antagonism did not preclude genuine curiosity, scholarly rigor, or an emotional engagement with the Qurʾān (Hamilton 2004, 91–118; 2005, 2008; Burman 2007; Elmarsafy 2009; Ben-Tov 2017; Bevilacqua 2018; Bevilacqua and Loop 2018).

This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the complex reception of the Qurʾān in early modern Europe through the study of a work that shaped Occidental understandings of Muslim civilizations for two centuries. The *Bibliothèque Orientale* (BO), published in 1697 in Paris, has been described as embodying "the sources of Orientalism" (Laurens 1978), "the most ambitious and wide-ranging European reference work about Islamic topics

that had ever been produced” (Bevilacqua 2018, 109). In *Orientalism*, Edward Said (d. 2003) deemed d’Herbelot’s (1625–1695) work to represent the beginnings of European scholarly discourse on Muslim civilization. It was in the *Bibliothèque*, he argued, that “Europe discovered its capacities for encompassing and Orientalizing the Orient” (Said 1978, 64–65). A vast collection of more than 8,000 entries on Muslim culture, history, and religion (Laurens 1978, 37), arranged alphabetically and drawn on dozens of sources in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, the *Bibliothèque* was the life work of one man. Barthélemy d’Herbelot was a member of the French petty nobility who made a name for himself in the Paris of Louis XIV (d. 1715) as a talented savant of Oriental languages and cultures. Little is known about his personal life. According to his obituary, his interest in Oriental languages arose from his desire to understand the Hebrew Bible—perhaps a conventional way of legitimizing a fascination that remained contentious.¹ D’Herbelot traveled to Italy to perfect his linguistic skills. Rome was a major European center of Oriental erudition (Pizzorusso 2010). Piracy and enslavement on both sides of the Mediterranean also offered opportunities for contact and learning. Evidence shows that d’Herbelot studied closely with a Muslim scholar of North African origins, who was held in the prison of Livorno before converting to Catholicism (Tommasino 2018). Whatever his interest in the Bible may originally have been,² d’Herbelot spent the last three decades of his life studying oriental manuscripts with the aim of presenting European readers a panorama of “everything that concerns the knowledge of the People of the Orient,” as the full title of his work specifies.³ D’Herbelot died at the age of seventy, two years before the printing

- 1 “Il apprit les Langues Orientales, & s’appliqua principalement à l’Hebraïque, à dessein d’entrer dans l’intelligence du Texte original des Livres de l’ancien Testament.” The eulogy, written by Louis Cousin for the *Journal des Sçavans* in 1696, was added to the first edition of the *Bibliothèque Orientale*. Cousin’s eulogy is the main source of information on d’Herbelot’s life. Charles Perrault’s obituary (1700, 71–72) is essentially a paraphrase of Cousin’s account. For modern studies of d’Herbelot and his *Bibliothèque Orientale*, see Gaulmier 1969; Laurens 1978; Larzul 2008; Dew 2009; Carnoy-Tourabi 2012; Haddad 2017; Bevilacqua 2016; 2018.
- 2 Nicolas Dew, in his extensive efforts at reconstructing d’Herbelot’s scholarly network and patronage, provides evidence of the French scholar’s connection with theological *assemblées*, first around the Abbé Bourzeis (1606–1672) and then, led by the eminent bishop Bossuet himself (1627–1704) (Dew 2009, 51–77). We have, unfortunately, no traces of d’Herbelot’s contributions to these scholarly circles. I return to Bossuet and his central role in the intellectual life of the period at the end of this study.
- 3 The whole title goes as follows: *Bibliothèque orientale ou dictionnaire universel contenant généralement tout ce qui regarde la connoissance des Peuples de l’Orient. Leurs histoires et traditions véritables ou fabuleuses; leurs religions, sectes et politique, leurs gouvernements, loix, coûtumes, mœurs, guerres & les révolutions de leurs Empires; leurs sciences et leurs arts, leurs théologie, mythologie, magie, physique, morale, médecine, mathématiques, histoire naturelle,*

of the *Bibliothèque* was completed. After his death, the publication process was supervised by his younger colleague, Antoine Galland (1646–1715), most famous for his adaptation and translation of the tales of *Alf Layla wa-Layla* (“A Thousand and One Nights”) into French. The collaboration between these two scholars of the Orient is particularly noteworthy, for it is through these two works, the *Bibliothèque* and the *Mille et Une Nuits*, that the European intellectual and literary fascination with the Orient crystallizes at the turn of the eighteenth century.⁴

The *Bibliothèque Orientale* comprises more than 8,000 entries covering a wide range of topics related to Islamic civilization based on Arabic, Persian, and Turkish sources (Laurens 1978, 47). The longest entries focus on historical figures and dynasties: ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), Hārūn al-Rashīd (d. 193/809), Tīmūr (Tamerlane, d. 807/1405), “Nouschirvan” (i.e., Anushirvan or Khusruw I, d. 579 CE), etc. Many more entries simply list literary works and their authors.⁵ Others offer geographical details of towns, regions, and mountains or introduce cultural practices and techniques.⁶ A few, mostly long and elaborate, address religious beliefs and representations: “Gennah” (Ar. *janna*), “Gehennam,” “Afu” (Ar. *ʿafw*, divine forgiveness), etc.⁷ The twin entries on the Qur’ān (“Alcoran,” d’Herbelot 1697, 85–88) and Muḥammad (“Mohammed Aboukassam Ben A’bdallah,” d’Herbelot 1697, 598–603) display a conventional hostile tone. The Qur’ān is a “detestable Book,” a “pack of crude falsehoods” (*un tissu d’impostures fort grossières*, d’Herbelot 1697, 599) assembled by “that famous impostor.” Reflecting both longstanding hostilities and emerging

chronologie, géographie, observations astronomiques, grammaire et rhétorique; les vies et actions remarquables de tous leurs saints, docteurs, philosophes, historiens, poètes, capitaines, et de tous ceux qui se sont rendus illustres parmi eux, par leur vertu et par leur savoir; des jugements critiques, et des extraits de tous leurs ouvrages, de leurs traités, traductions, commentaires, abrezes, recueils de fables, de sentences, de maximes, de proverbes, de contes, de bons mots, et de tous leurs livres écrits en Arabe, en Persan, ou en Turc, sur toutes sortes de sciences, d’arts et de professions.

4 There is, however, no indication that Galland participated in the writing of the original entries of the BO (Laurens 1978, 25; Abdel-Halim 1964, 86).

5 These entries draw extensively on the famous bibliographical catalog of the Ottoman author Ḥajjī Khalifa (d. 1067/1657), *Kashf al-Zunūn* (“The Removal of Doubt”). The debt is acknowledged in the preface by Galland who states that Ḥajjī Khalifa’s catalogue is “inserted here almost in its totality.”

6 See, for example, the entry on “Abriz” (Ar. *ibrīz*) meaning “pure gold” (d’Herbelot 1697, 17), “Cahuah” (Ar. *qahwa*), coffee (d’Herbelot 1697, 42), “Louk” (Ar. *lakk*), meaning natural lacquer used in the composition of certain colors (d’Herbelot 1697, 522).

7 Laurens (1978, 37–47) has provided a detailed analysis of the topics covered in the BO, which he divides into eight categories: 1. Bibliographical entries (by title), 2. Bibliographical entries (by author), 3. Culture, 4. Linguistics, 5. Civilisation, 6. Religion, 7. History, 8. Geography.

Enlightenment biases, the French scholar scoffs at the exaggerated “fables” and “superstitions” in which Muslims and particularly *Alcoranistes*—*gens attachés à la lettre de l’Alcoran* (d’Herbelot 1697, 87)—believe. Nevertheless, when it comes to presenting the Qur’ānic stories of prophets and other narratives, d’Herbelot’s appreciation of the various accounts recorded in the Muslim Scripture becomes apparent. The entries on figures such as Adam, Nuh al-Nabi (Nūḥ), Abraham (or Ebrahim), Jousouf ben Jacob (Yūsuf), Moussa ben Amran (Mūsā), Issa and his mother Miriam are among the longest of the encyclopedia. Adopting an insider’s perspective (exemplified by the use of the Arabic form of the prophets’ names), d’Herbelot not only faithfully preserves the ethical dimension of the narratives but also often reinforces it by adducing Muslim mystical or philosophical interpretations.

The status of Qur’ānic accounts in the *Bibliothèque* is the subject of this study. I argue that d’Herbelot displays a receptivity to the ethical and spiritual potential of the prophetic narratives as told in the Muslim tradition. His reference to the “heretical” nature of the Qur’ān, which (unoriginally) he sees as a forged scripture concocted by Muḥammad with bits and pieces of the biblical heritage, did not prevent him from finding spiritual inspiration and nourishment in the Muslim religious imaginary. How, to what extent, and under what conditions was d’Herbelot able to draw ethico-spiritual guidance from a rival scripture? What role did narratives play for him and his readers in forming a novel gaze on the Qur’ānic message? How can we best situate the BO’s representation of Qur’ānic heritage within the tradition of Christian polemics?

The chapter starts with a brief presentation of the literary context to which d’Herbelot belonged. The Grand Siècle’s fondness for edifying storytelling and, notably, tales from the East provides an important backdrop to the ethical reception of the Qur’ān. Appreciation for “oriental” narrative creativity as well as “curiosity,” a highly esteemed courtly value, meant stories drawn from the Qur’ān could be read as literary artifacts and not solely as religious objects. The second part of this chapter summarizes BO entries on major contested figures such as Adam, Jesus, Mary, and Abraham. It gives an overview of the reshaping of older polemical trends by new literary, historical, and confessional concerns that arose in the seventeenth century. The third section consists of a close reading of a specific entry on the prophet Hūd. By comparing d’Herbelot’s retelling of the story of Hūd with his Arabic and Persian sources, I examine the French scholar’s editorial and literary choices. I show that d’Herbelot’s depiction combines polemical statements with an appreciation of the universal meaning of the Qur’ān and empathy with Islamic expressions of mysticism. A final section examines further the intersection, in the *Bibliothèque*, between narratives and spirituality. D’Herbelot’s sensitivity to the edifying scope of the Islamic

Scripture and religious tradition, beyond a predictable formal hostility, is facilitated by the mystical lens that the French scholar adopts. By invoking a *théologie mystique* that transcends conventional religious boundaries, d'Herbelot allows for a narrow but effective release of Islam from Christian polemical reflexes. This section ends with some remarks on d'Herbelot's understanding of mysticism in the turbulent context of the French Catholic Revival.

Previous analyses of the tensions running through d'Herbelot's work have highlighted the continuity between his painting of Islam and earlier polemical engagements. As far as the strictly religious dimension of Islamic civilization is concerned, these authors contend, d'Herbelot remains indebted to traditionally hostile framings of Islam (Laurens 1978, 71–78; Gunny 1996, 47–54; Haddad 2017, 612–617). While recognizing the ambivalence that characterizes the *Bibliothèque*, I present d'Herbelot's work as an early European attempt to look at the Qur'ān and the Islamic tradition as legitimate vehicles of spirituality and right conduct.

2 “Oriental” Fables

A cursory reading of d'Herbelot's massive opus reveals the central function played by narratives. Qur'ānic stories and prophetic tales form but a fraction of the narrative storehouse of the BO. Long entries on historical figures similarly collate a series of vivid biographical vignettes, ranging from entertaining to edifying. Thus, in the entry on the caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 158/775), we learn of his bravery in battle and generosity in dealing with an inopportune courtier. The long entry on Timur, after detailing his rise to power, battle after battle, proceeds with four pages of varied anecdotes illustrating the Turco-Mongol's warrior character, humor, and humanity. The variety, exoticism, and liveliness of the narrations found in d'Herbelot's work explain, to a large extent, the wide appeal of the BO, an otherwise dense and erudite work packed with foreign names and exotic words. Voltaire (d. 1778), who drew extensively on the *Bibliothèque* for his *Essai sur les mœurs* (1756), would describe the book as “The Arab and Tartar tales that go by the name of the *Bibliothèque Orientale*” (private correspondence cited by Dew 2009, 169). Nicolas Dew aptly remarks that Voltaire's comment suggests an affinity with Galland's translation of *A Thousand and One Nights*, “as if the [BO] was to be read as an Arabian Nights in dictionary form.” The BO was published—with the help of the same Galland—seven years before the first volume of the highly popular collections of Arabian tales came out. The immediate success of Galland's volume, which was joined by eleven others (1704–1717), set the eighteenth-century literary

captivation with the Orient in motion. Authors soon followed the trend by publishing collections of tales with similar titles, such as Pétis de la Croix's *A Thousand and One Days* (1710–1712).⁸

While the *Arabian Nights* marks the beginning of the oriental vogue that would charm European elites, the idea of a privileged relationship between storytelling and the Orient precedes Galland's publication. "Orientals" were simply better at telling good stories; the very invention of novels and stories is ascribed to them.⁹ This supposed ability was eyed with ambivalence, for only a civilization incapable of reason would indulge in such states of heightened imagination. The prominence of fables—that is, *l'art de mentir agréablement* (Huet 1670, 13)—was a sign of archaic thinking. Furthermore, as one orientalist put it, fabulation was the natural consequence of despotic governments; subjects, unable to freely express themselves to the king, were compelled to develop a literary subterfuge (Gaulmin 1644). Yet, oriental stories were pleasing and entertaining and often abounded in wisdom. In 1634, the diplomat André Du Ryer introduced European audiences to a masterful Persian work of moral storytelling, Sa'dī's (d. 691/1292) *Gulistān* ("Rose Garden"). The Persian text was already well-known and much sought after by collectors and specialists.¹⁰ Du Ryer made it accessible to a wider audience through a concise and easily readable French translation. Ten years later, Gilbert Gaulmin published a translation of a Persian version of the tales of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*.¹¹ The two translations appear to have had limited immediate success, but their discovery by

8 On François Pétis de la Croix (1653–1713), a respected scholar of Oriental languages, and his five-volume collection of Persian tales, see Franz Hahn 2002. In France, collections of tales with titles inspired by the Arabian nights include Tartar tales (*Les Mille et un quarts d'heure*, 1733), Peruvian tales (*Les Mille et une heures*, 1740), Gaulish tales (*Les Mille et une faveurs*, 1760), and French tales (*Les Mille et une folies*, 1771) (see Zakaria 2004). The love of tales also owes much to Charles Perrault's *Les contes du temps passé*, published in 1697, the same year as the BO (Hahn 2002, 15–53; Reynolds 2006, 279–280). On the foundational role of the *Mille et une nuits*, one may refer to the article by Madeleine Dobie (2008) and the references therein.

9 The oriental origin of fiction was first stated by Pierre-Daniel Huet in his *Traité de l'origine des romans* (1670, 10), which he wrote as a preface to the novel of his friend Mme de La Fayette, *Zayde*. Thereafter, asserting a link between the Orient and storytelling became commonplace in early modern France (Corradi 2019).

10 For an in-depth analysis of the reception of the *Gulistān* in Europe, see Babinski 2019.

11 *Le Livre des lumières ou la conduite des roys composé par le sage Pilpay indien traduit en françois par David Sahid d'Isfahan* (1644) is a translation of Ḥusayn Wā'iz al-Kāshifī's (d. 910/1504) *Amvār-i Suhaylī* ("Lights of Canopus"). David Sahid of Isfahan has mistakenly been understood to be Gaulmin's pseudonym (see Dandray 2017, 122). It was, in fact, the name of his assistant, Dāvūd bin Sayyid Iṣfahānī, a Christian originally from Isfahan (Babinsky 2019, 269).

the most famous fabulist of the century ensured the dissemination of their “Oriental” wisdom.

Indeed, after an encounter with Du Ryer and Gaulmin's translations, Jean de La Fontaine (d. 1695) was inspired to compose another set of moral fables (1678–1679) following the enormous success enjoyed by his first volume. In the preface to this second volume, La Fontaine singles out Pilpay as his new source, on a par with the Greek Aesop who inspired his first volume; unless he adds, that Pilpay is himself, Aesop, also “known under the name of the sage Locman” (cited in Dandrey 2017, 121).¹² The seventeenth-century identification of the mythical Aesop with the oriental (indeed, Qur'ānic) wise man Luqmān epitomizes the association, in European eyes, between wisdom, storytelling, and the East. D'Herbelot, too, rehearses this imagined connection and what it may reveal of the cultural origins of fables. The entry on “Locman Al Hakim,” after reporting numerous anecdotes of his life, considers the possibility that he was Aesop, for both are said to be from Ethiopia and remembered for their “parables, proverbs, and apologues” (d'Herbelot 1697, 517). This may only be a conjecture, d'Herbelot continues, but it is certain that “the manner of instruction through fables is more in line with the genius of the Orientals than that of the peoples of the Occident.”

The *Bibliothèque Orientale* must then be situated in the same intellectual circles of late seventeenth-century France, which appreciated the wisdom of the *Gulistān* and Pilpay's tales, applauded La Fontaine's *Fables*, and would, a few decades later, relish the exoticism of Antoine Galland's *Les Mille et Une Nuits*. These circles were fashioned by the socio-cultural courtly ideal of the *honnête homme*, which weaves together knowledge and pleasure, curiosity and novelty, edification and storytelling.¹³ Galland's introduction to the *Bibliothèque*, written soon after the death of the author, eloquently reflects how knowing the foreign yields both “satisfaction” and “utility” (d'Herbelot 1776, xiii):

Nothing in the world is more pleasurable than to have learned what we did not know ... [W]hat is pleasing, particularly to the mind, is also at the same time useful. Can one uphold that it is useless to get to know what so many excellent writers have thought, what they wrote regarding their religion, their histories, their countries, their customs, their

12 Dandrey (2017, 125–127) identifies at least one fable as deriving from Du Ryer's translation of the *Gulistān* and about twenty from *Le livre des lumières* (see also Bassan 1970).

13 On the culture of *honnêteté*, Emmanuel Bury's classic work (1996) remains central; more recent references can be found in Dotoli (2019). On curiosity for the Orient in the Grand siècle and its role in the *honnêteté* sociability, see Dew 2009, 81–130; Kenny 2004, 160–286.

laws, the virtues they adhere to, the vices they detest; and, thus, does one not acquire without trouble and without leaving one's home, what we should get from them by traveling, *to perfect's one character and become an accomplished man*, a man who judges all things wisely, who speaks of them correspondingly, and who confirms his actions to his thoughts and to his words, which one only does in proportion to the knowledge acquired not only from what happens under the horizon where we breathe but from the whole universe?¹⁴

While oriental wisdom, dressed in fables, was attractive to European seventeenth-century taste, it also raised the problem of transferability: how do tales travel from one culture to another? How are religious elements presented and received at times discordant with the target culture? In 1634, Du Ryer's solution to this problem was to truncate from his translation whatever may "give offense to religion" (Du Ryer 1634, dedication).¹⁵ His *Gulistan* is minimally Islamic, the minaret at times becoming a tower bell (Brancaforte 2017, 455–457). Gaulmin's *Livre des Lumières*, while taken from a ninth/fifteenth-century Persian author, did not present the same challenge. Its narrative frame is set in a time and space (ancient India) that did not pose a strong theological threat to Christianity. D'Herbelot, on the other hand, by presenting Muslim accounts of Biblical prophets, treads upon delicate terrain. Galland is aware of the tension such an enterprise may cause. He attempts to pre-empt criticism by invoking, again, the joy of discovery: "Whether their traditions are false or whether they are truthful, it is always very pleasing to know them" (d'Herbelot 1776, viii). Stories and dictums possess an ability to cross the religious divide, which dogmas do not. "Mahomet's perverse doctrine" has caused much damage to Christianity, Galland admits, but entertaining tales, marvelous stories, moral

14 My italics. All translations from the BO are mine. Since the 1697 edition provides no page number for Galland's preface, quotations from that preface use the pagination of the 1776 Maastricht edition of the BO. The 1776 edition is a reprint of the original 1697 edition with a slightly simplified alphabetical order of the entries. All other references to the BO are to the original 1697 edition.

15 Interestingly, it is the same Du Ryer who, a few years later (1647), produced the first translation of the Qur'an from Arabic into a vernacular language (French). From wanting to avoid the religious dimension of the "Orient", he went on to translate the Muslim scripture. Du Ryer's puzzling evolution is less surprising if, as Hamilton has argued, we take into account that his translation was not, at its core, religiously motivated but a literary project, as the *Gulistan* has been. Du Ryer wanted to introduce European readership to the Qur'an as "a work of literature and entertainment" (Hamilton 2008, 4–6). Like the *Gulistan*, his *Alcoran* was published by Antoine de Sommerville, who was a prominent literary publisher.

fables, maxims, and proverbs from the Orient will be a source of wonder and a cause for reflection for readers whose taste is not deprived.¹⁶

3 Sacred History in the *Bibliothèque*

The *Bibliothèque* provides more than thirty entries on Qur'ānic figures, in a total of around seventy pages.¹⁷ The alphabetical structure of the BO results in some narratives being told over different entries in a fragmented fashion which, to a small extent, may be likened to that of the Qur'ān. Important details of the story of Mūsā, for example, are provided in the entries on "Feraoun" (Fir'awn) and "Sho'ayb" (considered to be Jethro, Moses' father-in-law). Qur'ānic narratives are presented and fleshed out in the manner of the popular genre of the "tales of the prophets" (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*): Qur'ānic and extra-Qur'ānic elements are woven together into an integral, fluid narrative. Some entries, such as that on "Houd" presented below, report a single dramatic story, but longer entries on major prophets (Adam, Abraham, Moses ...) juxtapose different episodes, some of them, such as the birth and childhood of Abraham, devoid of any Qur'ānic references. When citations of the Qur'ān do appear, they usually consist of the protagonists' direct speech, are few, and are outweighed by the narrative plot. D'Herbelot is not primarily interested in how the Qur'ān depicts a specific prophet or in the particular way it recounts episodes of his life. What attracts the French scholar's attention, rather, is the storytelling tradition of Muslim authors. D'Herbelot intends to share the original structure of the tale and a selection of the details that Muslim authors deemed important. In other words, he is offering his readership a "matter of map" to use Martha Montello's evocative expression (2014, 4) of the religious narrative imagination of the Islamic tradition. A conscientious approach to Muslim sources is characteristic of the BO, which is, to a large extent, a work of linguistic and cultural translation. It is telling, in this regard, that d'Herbelot intentionally refrained

16 "La doctrine perverse de Mahomet, qui a causé de si grands dommages au Christianisme est suivie depuis tant de siècles par ce nombre prodigieux de Sectateurs" (d'Herbelot 1776, x). "Les Savants et toutes sortes de personnes qui n'auront pas le gout dépravé, admireront, sans doute, cette quantité prodigieuse d'ouvrages.... Livres de Fables morales, de Collections, de Proverbes, de Sentences ou Maximes, de paroles remarquables et de bons mots, de Contes divertissants, & d'Histoires fabuleuses que nous appellons Romans" (d'Herbelot 1776, xiii).

17 The entries on Qur'ānic figures and narratives are listed in the appendix.

from referring to the critical work of fellow European scholars.¹⁸ His extensive reliance on oriental sources is both “pragmatic and sincere” (Bevilacqua 2016, 225). While d’Herbelot’s general methodology is to let Orientals speak uninterrupted, religious topics constitute, as Bevilacqua notes, the primary site for the scholar’s insertion of “editorial comments.” The Prophet is typically qualified as “false” or “impostor”—a reverse expression of the pious formulas accompanying his name in Muslim writings and a conventional qualifier in Christian polemics. However, that apart, hostile statements remain an exception. Most entries, including those on religious matters, adopt an insider’s perspective, at times reproducing conventional Islamic phrases such as “God says” (*Coulho Taala*) to introduce direct divine speech in the Qur’ān (*inter alia*, d’Herbelot 1697, 87, 50, 287).

Qur’ānic accounts that diverge from their biblical counterparts are, at times, denounced. But d’Herbelot’s polemical voice is uneven, even within the frame of a single entry. The article on Mary, for example, starts by underlining the commonalities between Christian and Muslim beliefs until Mary’s childhood under Zachariah’s care is addressed. Here, d’Herbelot makes a clear judgment on where the truth lies. Muḥammad’s custom, he writes, “is to always inflate the stories of the Ancient and New Testament by adding circumstances which the Scriptures do not mention, thus often corrupting the truth of the sacred text” (d’Herbelot 1697, 589).¹⁹ The entry on Jesus, “Issa,” focuses on the points of agreement between the Muslim and Christian perspectives and carefully avoids anti-Islamic statements. Such a conciliatory tone is not unprecedented. Early on, Christian missionaries had realized that the Qur’ānic portrait of Jesus, as “the word of God” (*kalimatuhu*) and a “spirit” from him (*rūḥ^{un} minhu*), could be used in their favor (Kritzcek 1962, 394).²⁰ The narrative of Adam’s creation and fall, told over two entries (“Adam,” “Eblis”), is reported with colorful details and not once compared to the Biblical version. D’Herbelot’s non-judgemental, even appreciative reading of Adam’s story contrasts with the anonymous annotator’s comment on Robert of Ketton’s (d. 1160) Latin translation (ca. 1140). He wrote: “an extremely stupid fable—I do not know where he

18 On d’Herbelot’s choice not to refer to other European scholars, see Galland’s observations in his preface to the BO (d’Herbelot 1776, xvii).

19 Elsewhere, in the entry on Zachariah, d’Herbelot scorns again at Qur’ānic “absurdities.” In this case, he means the confusion of Marie the sister of Aaron with Marie the mother of Jesus, and that of Zachariah the prophet with Zachariah the father of John the Baptist (d’Herbelot 1697, 922).

20 In d’Herbelot’s time, Michel Nau’s (d. 1683) missionary handbook subtitled *La vérité de la religion chrétienne défenduë & prouvée contre l’Alcoran, par l’Alcoran même* (1684) followed a similar approach.

[Muḥammad] found it" (cited in Burman 2007, 102).²¹ The extensive entry on Abraham contains several anecdotes, some of which are Qur'ānic while others are traditional. D'Herbelot appears to particularly enjoy a long and eventful "fable" on the birth and childhood of the biblical patriarch. When, however, he comes to discussing the respective status of Abraham and Muḥammad, he lambasts the "impious and ridiculous exaggerations of the Muslims." Yet, in the same entry, we also find a bold suggestion. D'Herbelot considers that European chronologists, who have struggled to reconcile different passages of the Bible on the chronology of Abraham's life, could benefit from the Qur'ānic genealogy of Abraham as the son of Āzar (Q 6:74), thus inserting a generation between Abraham and Terah, his father according to the Bible. Here, timidly yet explicitly, d'Herbelot indicates that the Muslim scripture may, at times, inform Biblical scholarship.

The possibility that the Qur'ān may contain authentic religious knowledge draws on long-standing Christian characterizations of the Qur'ān as a patchwork of canonical and apocryphal Biblical material gathered by Muḥammad from Christian heretics and ill-intentioned Jews ("Alcoran," d'Herbelot 1697, 88). In the emerging critical spirit of the seventeenth century, this understanding allows d'Herbelot to deploy Islam's foundational text as a historical document. The Qur'ān and the early commentaries, even if despised theologically, could be valued for preserving Christian (and Jewish) traditions which would "perhaps have been lost otherwise" ("Miriam," d'Herbelot 1697, 588). The recovery of early Christian beliefs wasn't purely of historical interest. In the confessional disputes that marred Europe since the reformation, determining early Christian worship and creed was of central importance. The status of Mary, in particular, generated intense debates. In this regard, a saying attributed to Muḥammad (a Prophetic *ḥadīth*), which appeared to support the doctrine of Immaculate Conception, was often cited by Catholics to prove that the doctrine was not a late Roman invention but dated back to the first centuries (Gay-Canton 2010). It is the content of this *ḥadīth* that d'Herbelot reports in the entry on "Miriam" as one of those traditions that would be lost were it not for the Qur'ān.²²

21 The comment is found on the manuscript (Robert of Ketton 1142–1143, f. 26r) as an anonymous annotation next to the translation of Q 2:30–38 which recounts the creation of Adam, the divine command to the angels to prostrate themselves, the teaching of the "names" to Adam and Iblis' disobedience.

22 D'Herbelot was not the first to view the Qur'ān as a piece of evidence of early eastern Christianity. In his *Historia Orientalis* (1651), the Swiss Protestant theologian and orientalist Johann Hottinger, had similarly resorted to the Qur'ān as a historical document, this time to support Protestant positions (Loop 2013, 192–202; see also Ben-Tov 2017, 75). For a

While Qur'ānic statements may pose a theological difficulty because of their revelatory claim, narrative appendices developed by the exegetical tradition could be enjoyed more freely. D'Herbelot appears to appreciate the commentators' capacity "to fill with their glosses the great gaps that are found in the stories that Mahomet reports only through detached scraps" (*par lambeaux détachés*, "Loth," d'Herbelot 1697, 521). The famed storytelling creativity of the Orient produced fine tales, entertaining as well as edifying. D'Herbelot aims to convey their meaning by closely adhering to his sources. Having clarified that these stories are "fables" "added to the truth of story [or history]" (*ajoutees à la vérité de l'histoire*, "Loth," d'Herbelot 1697, 521), he can proceed with a translation uninterrupted by polemical remarks. Literary truth is what is at stake here, not theological or historical veracity.

The entry on Abraha offers a good example of d'Herbelot's respect for the moral world of the stories he reports. Abraha, the Abyssinian governor of Yemen, was said to have marched towards Mecca on the back of an elephant the year Muḥammad was born. His military expedition is well-known for providing the backdrop to Q 105 (*sūrat al-Fīl*, The Elephant). D'Herbelot's narration starts as the neutral report of a distant dispute. The reader is told of the governor's plan to build a majestic church that would detract Arabs from visiting the Ka'ba. One day, a group from Mecca mischievously defiled the newly built cathedral, and Abraha, mad with anger, resolved to destroy the Meccan temple. At this point, the distinctly Muslim point of view of d'Herbelot's sources becomes apparent. Indifferent to the fact that Abraha was a Christian defending the sanctity of a church, the narration rejoices at the divine will to protect the Ka'ba, "a temple built by the prophet Abraham" himself. As Abraha's threatening army and his awe-inspiring elephants encircled Mecca, "Heaven" (*le Ciel*) intervened. A cloud of birds descended, each carrying a stone in its beak. The birds bombarded Abraha's army, which was annihilated. Abraha himself escaped, continues d'Herbelot, but "one of these birds executing Heaven's revenge" chased the Abyssinian throughout the land, for "divine justice" demanded that he should die a "memorable death" for his crime.²³ The story ends with a theatrical description of Abraha dying at the feet of his

study of the intimate connection between scriptural scholarship, historical criticism, and confessional debates in the seventeenth century, see Hardy 2017.

- 23 "Abraha, après avoir vu son armée périr par un si étrange accident, repassa la mer, & alla trouver le Negiashi pour luy faire sçavoir son desastre: mais la Justice divine qui vouloit laisser un exemple memorable de la punition de ceux qui avoient osé entreprendre la ruine d'un Temple bâti par Abraham, ne quitta pas ce malheureux Prince d'un seul pas; car un de ces oiseaux executeurs de la vengeance du Ciel, le suivit dans toute sa route avec sa pierre au bec" ("Abraha," d'Herbelot 1697, 12).

king, the Negus. By embracing an Islamic perspective, d'Herbelot presents the reader with a compelling story and a coherent Muslim moral universe.

4 D'Herbelot's Retelling of the Story of Hūd

D'Herbelot's reliance on accepted humanist practices (translation, compilation, encyclopedism) allows him to minimize the polemical apparatus that usually framed the knowledge of Islam. This, however, raises a central methodological question: if d'Herbelot's role is essentially that of a translator and compiler, to what extent can we access his own appreciation of the Qur'ānic stories? While the narrative voice is not his but that of his sources, his editorial choices indicate that he considered many of these stories to be meaningful. D'Herbelot's retelling of the story of Hūd is informative in this regard. Comparing the BO's account with its Arabic and Persian sources reveals significant narrative adjustments to make the moral of the story accessible to a European audience.

The BO entry on "Houd" provides a well-formed narrative of the disobedience and ensuing trials of the people of 'Ād, ending with their destruction by the blowing of *ṣarṣar*, a violent and cold wind for a duration of seven nights and seven [*sic*] days (cf. Q 69:6–7).²⁴ The account starts with 'Ād suffering a three-year-long drought as divine punishment for their rejection of Hūd's mission. The people of 'Ād, formerly the greatest of all Arabian tribes, agonize in terrible misery, finding their false idols to be of no help. They resolved to send a delegation to the Ḥijāz, "where Mecca is presently situated," and where it was believed that God was answering petitions. Two men headed the delegation, one of whom, "Morthad" (Marthad), had secretly accepted the message of Hūd. When they arrived, Marthad admonished his fellow leader "Kil" (Qayl), pointing out that there was no point asking God anything if they were rejecting Hūd's call and persisting in their unbelief (d'Herbelot 1697, 469),

For, he told them, how do you wish for God to pour out the abundant rain of mercy on us if we refuse to listen to the voice of the one he sent to instruct us?

On hearing these words, Qayl, who was "most obstinate in his error," prevented Marthad from accompanying the delegation to the place of the petition. Once there, and having asked God for rain for his people, Qayl was presented with

24 Q 69:6–7 mentions seven nights and eight days.

three clouds—red, white, and black—while a heavenly voice asked him to choose one. Qayl confidently selected the black cloud, which he believed to be the most promising, and returned to his people boasting of his achievement. The black cloud, however, was not full of water but of God's revenge (*la vengeance divine*) by which all the people of 'Ād, except Hūd and his followers, died. D'Herbelot closes the narrative with what he presents as a verse from *sūrat Hūd* (Q 7:72):²⁵

Nous avons delivré Houd & tous les siens par nôtre misericorde, & nous avons exterminé entierement ceux qui ont meprisé nos signes, & qui sont demeurez dans l'infidélité.

D'HERBELOT 1697, 460

D'Herbelot tells the narrative of 'Ād's destruction on the authority of three late Persian works: the "Tarikh Montekheb," also called by its Persian title "Tarikh Khozideh" (eighth/fourteenth century);²⁶ "Khondemir" (ninth–tenth/fifteenth–sixteenth century);²⁷ and the popular *Tafsīr* ("Exegesis") of "Houssayn Vaez" (ninth/fifteenth century).²⁸ He habitually cites these sources for all Qur'ān-related narratives, and he notes that they typically concur (d'Herbelot 1697, 460). However, in this case, these three works give too concise an account of the destruction of the 'Ād to be d'Herbelot's only sources: they focus exclusively on the tragic irony of the leader of 'Ād unknowingly choosing

25 "We saved him, and those who were with him, through Our mercy; We destroyed those who denied Our revelations and would not believe." I follow Abdel Haleem's translation of the Qur'ān (2004).

26 *Tārīkh-i Guzīda* ("Selected History"): a history from creation until the author's time, written by Ḥamd Allāh al-Mustawfī al-Qazwīnī (d. 750/1349–1350). See the entry "Tarikh Khozideh" in BO (d'Herbelot 1697, 868–869).

27 Khwāndamīr (ca. 1475–1535): Persian historian, author of *Khulāṣat al-Akhbār* ("Summary of the Reports"). See entry "Khondemir" in BO (d'Herbelot 1697, 994). A full edition of the Khwāndamīr's *Khulāṣat al-Akhbār* has not yet been published. For the purpose of this chapter, I am referring to a digitized copy of a manuscript kept at the National Library in Tehran, available at <http://dl.nlai.ir/UI/dee40921-of2f-417f-92a6-81a2f6b1288e/LRRView.aspx>. The story of Hūd can be found on pages 37–39 of that online copy.

28 Ḥusayn Wā'iz al-Kāshifī (d. 1504), a Persian polymath and exegete, author of *Mawāhib-i 'Alīyya* ("Lofty Gifts"), also known as *Tafsīr-i Ḥusaynī* ("Ḥusayn's Tafsīr"), a commentary which includes a Persian paraphrase, mystical interpretations, poetry and tales (Sands 2003). See the entry in BO on "Vae'dh" (d'Herbelot 1697, 904). Al-Kāshifī is also the compiler of the Persian collection of Pilpay's tales which Gaulmin translated in 1644. D'Herbelot's copy of this *tafsīr* is held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Paris, BNF Supplément persan 54), accessible online at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10099882s/f8.item.zoom>. References are to this manuscript.

the cloud that will annihilate his people and, most tellingly, the central character of Marthad is either omitted (al-Qazwīnī 1910, 28–29; Khwāndamīr n.d., 37–39; Kāshifī n.d., 411–413) or is barely mentioned (Kāshifī n.d., 279–281).

Marthad's role in the story of 'Ād's destruction is well-known, however, from the account given by Ibn Ishāq, the author of the famous *Sīra* ("Biography") of the Prophet. In its original form, Ibn Ishāq's (d. ca. 151/768) *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* ("The Biography of the Messenger of God") contained a *Kitāb al-Mubtada'* ("Book of Beginnings"), which chronicled the lives of the prophets.²⁹ Though the *Kitāb al-Mubtada'* has for long been lost, Ibn Ishāq's account of Hūd and the fate of 'Ād has been transmitted, among others, by al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) in his *Tārīkh* ("History") and al-Tha'labī (d. 427/1035) in his *Arā'is al-Majālis fī Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'* ("Tales of the Prophets"), also known as *Nafā'is al-'Arā'is*. D'Herbelot must have had access to both these texts, as he refers to and quotes from them in numerous locations in the BO.³⁰ A comparison between d'Herbelot's account and that attributed to Ibn Ishāq reveals important narrative elements that d'Herbelot chose to omit.³¹

Both al-Ṭabarī's and al-Tha'labī's accounts recount how the 'Ād delegation shamelessly enjoyed lavish hospitality nearby Mecca for the duration of a whole month "while their people at home were perishing of distress and thirst."³² Their host, a certain Mu'āwiya who is also their relative, attempts to remind them of their mission. Too embarrassed to contravene the laws of hospitality, Mu'āwiya confides in his two slave girls. They, in turn, cleverly suggest that he address his guests indirectly via poetry. The host composes an emotional and lambasting poem which the two singers then recite to the 'Ād envoys anonymously. The message is immediately received, and the delegation, with Qayl at its head, proceeds to petition God. The rest of the account is found in

29 For an attempted reconstruction of this lost work, see Newby 1989.

30 D'Herbelot mentions al-Tha'labī in numerous locations in the BO and explicitly refers to his *Nafā'is al-'Arā'is* (d'Herbelot 1697, 54). Al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh* is mentioned equally often and d'Herbelot devotes two relatively long entries to the author (d'Herbelot 1697, 1014) and his work (d'Herbelot 1697, 866). A Persian translation of the first volume of the *Tārīkh*, which belonged to d'Herbelot, is kept at the BNF (MS Supplément persan 164).

31 I give precedence to al-Tha'labī's version of Ibn Ishāq's account because the structure of the BO entry more closely reflects that of the *Arā'is al-Majālis* but I refer when necessary to al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*. Indeed, d'Herbelot precedes the account of 'Ād's destruction with an indication of their geographical location and an explanation of the Qur'ānic term *aḥqāf* (sand dunes) which follows closely al-Tha'labī's expression (n.d., 66). This detail is not transmitted by al-Ṭabarī in the *Tārīkh* section on Hūd, though elements of it can be found in a preceding section (al-Ṭabarī 1967, 1:204). It is also not found in the three Persian sources named by d'Herbelot.

32 "وقد هلك من وراءهم من قومه جهداً وعطشاً" (d'Herbelot 1697, 67; cf. al-Ṭabarī 1967, 1:220).

the *Bibliothèque*: Qayl gladly chooses the black cloud, which, ironically, brings doom to his people (al-Thaʿlabī n.d., 67). The hospitality anecdote in Thaʿlabī’s account is central for two reasons. First, it highlights the extent of the moral degeneration of the notables of ʿĀd, who enjoy themselves, eat, and drink while their families are dying. Secondly, it provides an element of entertainment to the reader (or hearer), who can identify with Muʿāwiya’s predicament and rejoice at his clever trick. D’Herbelot’s account retains a trace of the hospitality episode, but it is summarized with a laconic [*ils*] *furent très-bien recus* (“they were very well received”) (d’Herbelot 1697, 461). Rather, d’Herbelot’s retelling of the story centers on the wise words of Marthad—quoted above—which are highlighted by the fact that they are reported in direct speech. Consequently, the narrative structure followed by d’Herbelot, much in accord with Qurʾānic discourse, underscores the irony of a people who refuse to worship God in normal circumstances but come to him for help in desperate times. The Hūd narrative, as told in the BO, transcends the specific case of a morally degenerate people to, more generally, point out the hypocrisy and inconsistency of human beings.

5 Mysticism in the *Bibliothèque*

D’Herbelot’s receptivity to the wisdom in Hūd’s story is consistent with his interest in spiritual and theocentric motifs, such as surrendering to God, purity of heart, and self-sacrifice. The prevalence of “mysticism” in the BO has been noted before (Carnoy-Tourabi 2012, Haddad 2017) but has not yet been the object of a detailed study.³³ D’Herbelot’s portrait of Islam as a fountain of mysticism and moral truths sits awkwardly with the more conventionally hostile statements he makes regarding Muḥammad and his legacy. To explain this tension in d’Herbelot’s work, it has been suggested that the scholar was relaying Sufi interpretations in order to expose the absurdity of orthodox, literal Islam: “Selecting citations that are mystical or theosophical in nature, d’Herbelot sees an opportunity to poke holes in the Islamic faith” (Haddad 2017, 617; see also Gunny 1996, 47). Such an explanation is not entirely convincing. D’Herbelot rarely opposes mystics to orthodox scholars. Rather, he considers both groups

33 While the term *mysticism* is a nineteenth-century neologism that does not appear in the BO, d’Herbelot uses the term *mystique*, as an adjective and noun. I employ the term here in the sense of “a belief that union with or absorption into the Deity ... may be attained through contemplation and self-surrender” (Oxford English dictionary definition). D’Herbelot’s expression *Théologie mystique* comes very close to that meaning (see below).

to be in agreement regarding the essence of Islam, defined as “the complete submission and resignation of body and soul to God and to what Mahomet revealed on his behalf” (“Esla'm,” d’Herbelot 1697, 325–326).³⁴ A thorough examination of d’Herbelot’s treatment of Islamic mysticism remains beyond the scope of this chapter. My focus here is on the intersection between stories and mysticism. Through examples taken from the entries on Hūd, Abraham, Adam, Pharaoh, Joseph, and Lot, I show how narrative motifs in the BO often become pretexts for mystical contemplation.

In the latter part of the entry on Hūd, the narrative of ‘Ād’s destruction gives way to a meditation on the necessity to abandon oneself to God. The topic is introduced by a Qur’ānic verse containing Hūd’s exclamation to his people (Q 11:56),³⁵ which d’Herbelot translates (somewhat freely) as:

J'ay mis toute ma confiance en Dieu, qui est mon Seigneur & le vôtre; car il n'y a aucune creature sur terre qu'il ne tienne entre ses mains par la touffe des cheveux de son front, pour les conduire par le droit chemin où il lui plaît.

D'HERBELOT 1697, 461

[I have put all my faith in God, who is my Lord and yours; for there is no creature on earth that he doesn't hold in between his hands by the forelock, to steer them through the straight path wherever he pleases.]

D’Herbelot’s translation may appear, at first sight, to expose Muslim belief in “fatalism,” which would become a topos of European representations of the East (Daniel 2009, 181–185). The clarifications the author adduces, however, show that he reads this verse as a compelling affirmation that God is the final destination of all creation. Quoting another verse (Q 53:42), he observes that the “straight path” is the one that ends in God.³⁶ D’Herbelot then paraphrases an anonymous *poète mystique* whose glorification of the ultimate nature of God results, in a typical Sufi vein, in relativizing the nature of heaven and hell as well as underlining the inevitability of the ultimate meeting with one’s Lord:

34 D’Herbelot’s precise definition of Islam would call for nuancing Laurens’s statement that the French scholar was incapable of grasping *la logique même de la religion musulmane* (Laurens 1978, 74).

35 Q 11:56 “I put my trust in God, my Lord and your Lord. There is no moving creature which He does not control. My Lord’s way is straight” (Abdel Haleem 2004).

36 Q 53:42 “That the final goal is your Lord” (Abdel Haleem 2004).

Puisque tous les chemins qui se trouvent soit à droite, soit à gauche, tendent à lui, tu as beau faire, quelque chemin que tu prennes, tu iras vers lui, ou pour être récompensé, si tu as pris la droite, ou pour être puni, si tu as pris la gauche. Comme tout prend son origine de lui, il faut aussi que tout s'y termine.

D'HERBELOT 1697, 461–462

[Since all paths that exist, either on your right or on your left, lead to him, whatever you do, whatever the path you take, you will go to him, either to be rewarded if you took [the path on] the right or to be punished if you took [the path on] the left. Since everything originates from him, it must also be that all returns to it.]

The notion that all creation ultimately aims for God, besides being common in Sufi thought and supported by Qur'ānic verses, is also essential in Christian scholastic philosophy. In *Summa Contra Gentiles* ("The Absolute against the Infidels"), Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) famously argued that God is "the end of all things" and that ultimate felicity is only attained in his contemplation (Aquinas 1956, 97–103; Davies 2016, 222–243). D'Herbelot, and his theologically trained readers, could not fail but notice the striking convergence between the Qur'ānic citations, especially Q 53:42, and Thomistic theology. In highlighting these verses and their interpretations, d'Herbelot is presenting the finality of Islam in terms that must have impressed his fellow religionists. Islam may be a competing religion founded by an "impostor," but its values, goals, and methods converge, to a large extent, with those of Christianity. While D'Herbelot projects a Christian light onto Islam, he does so by citing Muslim authorities and, not least, the Qur'ān itself. His editorial choices are critical, but his voice defers to that of his sources. D'Herbelot's main challenge was not to accept the ethical and spiritual significance of Hūd's *exemplum* but to come to terms with the fact that it had been composed by a much-hated "heretic." The strong hostility he expresses towards the Prophet comes out at the end of the Hūd entry, where, as a counterweight perhaps to the charitable presentation that preceded, he stresses what he qualifies as the "great hypocrisy" of the founder of Islam:

Il y a plusieurs passages dans ce même chapitre intitulé *Houd*, touchant la predestination & la reprobation positive, qui ont fait dire à l'imposteur qui l'a fabriqué par une hypocrisie qui n'a point sa pareille, que le chapitre Houd lui avoit fait venir les cheveux gris avant le temps, tant il en avoit été effrayé.

D'HERBELOT 1697, 462

[There are many passages in this short chapter [i.e., *sūra*] called Hūd that touch on predestination and positive [i.e., certain] reprobation, which led the impostor who fabricated it to say, with unparalleled hypocrisy, that the chapter Hūd had given him grey hair before its time because of the fright it caused him.]

While d'Herbelot intersperses his discourse with bouts of contempt for the Prophet, his appreciation for the wisdom contained in the Islamic tradition is consistent and extends, beyond mystical poetry, to the Qur'ān and its exegetical tradition. In the entry on Abraham, the scholar reports a lengthy citation of al-Bayḏāwī's (d. 719/1319) *Anwār al-Tanzīl* ("The Lights of Revelation"), which he describes as a literal *tafsīr* ("Anuar al-tanzil," d'Herbelot 1697, 118). The passage is an allegorical interpretation of the Qur'ānic account of Abraham's desire to witness the resurrection (Q 2:260). In response, God orders Abraham to take four birds, kill them,³⁷ mix their parts, and place a portion of the assortment on four hills. Abraham is then told to call the birds and witness their miraculous bodily revival. Al-Bayḏāwī's interpretation explains the symbolism of the four birds and offers d'Herbelot an opportunity to dwell on the theme of pious self-negation.

L'Auteur d'Anuár allégorise ainsi cette fable : "Tous ceux qui veulent faire vivre leur ame de la vie spirituelle, doivent égorger et sacrifier toutes leurs passions avec le glaive de la mortification, & faire en sorte qu'elles soient tellement confonduës, que l'on les trouve disposées à se laisser conduire par les ordres de Dieu : car alors le Seigneur en les appellant, les fait courir dans le chemin de sa Loy, jusqu'à ce qu'ils s'envolent au séjour du bonheur éternel. Ces quatre espèces d'oiseaux, dit le même Auteur, nous représentent les quatre passions principales qui doivent être mortifiées. La colombe qui est le symbole de l'amitié, & de la familiarité doit être sacrifiée par la retraite qui nous separe d'un trop grand commerce avec les hommes ; Le coq, qui est l'image de la concupiscence, est immolé par la continence ; Le corbeau, qui nous représente la gourmandise, est dompté par l'abstinence, et enfin le Paon, c'est-à-dire la vanité, & la complaisance pour nous-mêmes, doit être humilié."

D'HERBELOT 1697, 16

37 This is how d'Herbelot, following the majority of the exegetes, understands the verse. The phrase used (*surhunna ilayk*) isn't clear and has been glossed and translated as "incline them to you." The killing and dismembering of the birds are read into the following injunction *ij'al 'alā kulli jabin minhunna juz'an* ("put on each hill a portion of them").

[The author of the *Anwār* allegorizes this fable thus: “All those who want to make their soul live the spiritual life must slaughter and sacrifice all their passions with the sword of mortification, and work towards blending them to the point that they are ready to be led by God’s orders: for then, the Lord, by calling them, makes them run on the path of his Law until they fly to the abode of eternal bliss. These four species of birds, says the same author, represent for us the four principal passions that need to be mortified. The dove, which is the symbol of friendship and intimacy, must be sacrificed by the seclusion that separates us from too great commerce with people; the rooster, which is the image of concupiscence, is immolated by continence; the crow, which represents gluttony is tamed by abstinence, and, finally, the peacock, that is vanity and complacency for ourselves, must be humiliated.”]³⁸

As in the entry on *Hūd*, the markedly Christian notions (mortification, gluttony as sin, the importance of seclusion, eternal bliss) present d’Herbelot’s readers with an intelligible and appealing account of Muslim spirituality. A spiritual “eternal life” (*al-ḥayāt al-abadiyya*) is what awaits the virtuous, not sensual, delights. Since the Middle Ages, Christian authors mocked the material dimension of the Qur’ānic paradise and pointed to it as proof of Islam’s “irrational” character (Tolan 2002a). Wise men, by definition, can have no interest in earthly desires. D’Herbelot agrees—which is why he sets to demonstrate, in

38 The manuscript of al-Bayḍāwī’s *Tafsīr* consulted by d’Herbelot is held at the BNF, MS Arabe 629–630. Compare d’Herbelot translation with the original passage (MS Arabe 629, f. 84r and f. 84v):

قيل طاووساً وديكاً وغراباً وحمامة، ومنهم من ذكر النسر بدل الحمامة وفيه إيماء إلى أن إحياء النفس بالحياة الأبدية إنما يتأتى بإماتة حب الشهوات والرخارف التي هو صفة الطاووس، والصلوة المشهور بها الديك وخسة النفس وبعد الأمل المتصنف بهما الغراب، والترفع والمسارة إلى الهوى الموسوم بهما الحمام. (...) وفيه إشارة إلى أن من أراد إحياء نفسه بالحياة الأبدية، فعليه أن يقبل على القوى البدنية فيقتلها ويمزج بعضها ببعض حتى تنكسر سورتها، فيطأوعنه مسرعات متى دعاهن بدعاية العقل أو الشرع

“It was said [that the four birds were] a peacock, a rooster, a crow and a pigeon, while some mentioned the eagle instead of the pigeon. This verse alludes to the fact that the revival of the soul with eternal life only comes with the killing of desires and [the relinquishing of] the ornaments which are characteristic of the peacock, the [love of] power for which the rooster is famous, the meanness of the soul and the excessive hope which both characterize the crow, and the presumption and haste towards passion which distinguish the pigeon ... [This verse] points towards the fact that whoever desires the revival of the soul with eternal life must face the bodily forces, kill them and blend them together until their vitality is crushed so that they obey him without delay whenever he calls on them for the purpose of reason or law.”

a dedicated entry (“Gennah,” d’Herbelot 1697, 377) and through a selection of citations, that the “vision of God” is actually the highest reward for pious Muslims. By doing so, he explicitly invites his readers to amend old prejudices: “It is therefore not true, he writes, what many Authors who fought against Mohammedanism have told, namely that Muslims do not recognize any beatitude other than the enjoyment of the senses” (*Il n’est donc pas vray, ce que plusieurs Auteurs qui ont combattu le Mahometisme, ont avancé que les Musulmans ne reconnaissent point d’autre beatitude dans le ciel, que jouïssance des plaisirs des sens*, d’Herbelot 1697, 376).

In the entry on Adam (d’Herbelot 1697, 54–55), the non-biblical motif of the primordial covenant between God’s and Adam’s progeny attracts d’Herbelot’s attention and leads him to a reflection on the nature of time. The Qur’ānic episode, known in the exegetical tradition as *āyat al-mīthāq* (verse of the covenant), is reported in *sūrat al-A’rāf* (The Heights, Q 7:172–173):

when your Lord took out the 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.” Or, “It was our forefathers who, before us, ascribed partners to God, and we are only the descendants who came after them: will you destroy us because of falsehoods they invented?”

D’Herbelot considers what the concept of time entails in this passage. How should we understand the relationship between humanity’s past testimony and our present condition? The French scholar reports four answers provided by “spiritual and devout” Muslims, which he orders according to the intensity of their mystical leanings. The first one (a certain “Ali Sahal Esfahani”) recognizes the validity of this covenant and offers an ordinary conception of time divided between past, present, and future. To the question of whether he remembers having attested to God’s lordship, “Esfahani” piously replies: “How could I forget what I uttered yesterday?” (*Comment se pourroit il faire que j’eusse oublié ce que je dis hier?*). According to the second figure (‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī), however, “the true servant of God has no yesterday and no tomorrow” (*Le véritable serviteur de Dieu n’a point d’hier ni de demain*). This perspective is further developed by the third (anonymous) opinion: “The one who walks in God’s presence and who minds him continuously also holds the past and the future to be always present” (*Celui qui marche en la presence de Dieu, & qui l’a continuellement*

dans sa pensée, a aussi le passé et le future toujours présent). The last opinion is that of the famed mystic al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), who not only dissolves the distinction between past, present, and future but also shatters the misleading belief in human autonomy. As in the entry on Hūd, the point is made that, ultimately, God is all there is:

Houssayn, surnommé Hallage, ajoute à ces beaux sentiments, que le même qui fait cette interrogation, en forme aussi la réponse: car c'est Dieu qui nous dit dans le coeur: *Ne suis-je pas votre Maître*, & c'est lui qui répond aussi-tôt: *Ouy*.

D'HERBELOT 1697, 55

[Ḥusayn, known as al-Ḥallāj, adds to these lofty feelings that the one who asks is also the one who answers: for it is God who tells us in our heart: *Am I not your Master* and it is him who immediately responds: *Yes*.]

Al-Ḥallāj is a figure much admired by d'Herbelot. In the entry on “Feraoun” (d'Herbelot 1697, 345), d'Herbelot contrasts al-Ḥallāj's famous historical statement, “I am God” (*Je suis Dieu*), with Pharaoh's words, “I am your God” (*Je suis votre Dieu*, ar. *anā rabbukum al-a'lā*, cf. Q 79:24). D'Herbelot, relying on the opinion of another mystic, explains that “Pharaoh only cared for himself” and had forgotten God, whereas al-Ḥallāj, thinking only of the Divine, had forgotten himself. The entry dedicated to the famous mystic (“Hallage,” d'Herbelot 1697, 423–424) reports verses attributed to the “wondrous man” (*l'homme merveilleux*) on the “burning of the love of God” and divine union. D'Herbelot is tempted to declare al-Ḥallāj a Christian, as—he notes—others before him have, but observes that the man insisted *ma foy est celle des vrais Musulmans, & ma secte est orthodoxe* (d'Herbelot 1697, 423).

The themes of self-sacrifice, radical love, and divine union are also prominent in the entry on Joseph (“Jousouf”). D'Herbelot devotes a long paragraph to the passionate love for him on the part of Zulaykha, the wife of his Egyptian master. Yūsuf and Zulaykha, explains d'Herbelot, have come to signify the irrepressible character of the believer's love for his Creator. The story teaches us that “to reach the possession of divine love, one has first to let go of all human considerations” (*Pour arriver a la possession de l'amour divin, il faut se défaire auparavant de toutes considérations humaines*, d'Herbelot 1697, 496). Elsewhere, the French scholar states that, according to the “most spiritual” of Muslim scholars, “life consists in the love of God” (“Haiat,” d'Herbelot 1697, 421). The entry on Lūt, which describes the prophet's anguished concern for his celestial guests, represents an opportunity to paraphrase a verse from Rūmī's

(d. 672/1273) *Mathnawī* (“Couplets”): “Whoever has bound his heart and submitted his mind to Him, has successfully freed himself from all afflictions that can befall him in this world and the next” (*Quiconque a attaché son cœur et soumis son esprit à luy s’est délivré heureusement de toutes les afflictions qui luy peuvent arriver dans ce monde & dans l’autre*) (d’Herbelot 1697, 521).

D’Herbelot’s awareness of the importance of love in Islam is remarkable, although not entirely unprecedented. Before him, the Catalan medieval maverick—philosopher, mystic, missionary, and poet—Rámon Llull (1232–1316) wrote *Llibre d’Amic e Amat* (“Book of the Lover and the Beloved”) following the example of “Saracen” religious men who “had words of love and brief examples which aroused great devotion in men” (Llull 1985, 189).³⁹ For the vast majority of European Christians, however, the notion of an ardent love that binds the believer to God is not one that was readily associated with Islam. Muḥammad’s “carnal” religion was not supposed to be conducive to such spiritual elevation. European travelers struck by the piety and moral values that Muslims displayed, remarked that these virtues developed *despite* their faith rather than *because* of it. In the words of a contemporary missionary, devotion and good morals among Muslims are “no proof of the goodness of their religion, only of the goodness of their nature” (Nau 1684, “Avertissement”; see also Carnoy 1998, 238–258).

D’Herbelot’s reserves an entry for the Sufi notion of “passionate love” (Ar. *‘ishq*). There, he suggests an equivalence between Islam and Christianity: “Mahometans (...) have had such lofty feelings on the love of God that they seem to have matched Christians.”⁴⁰ Elsewhere in the BO, a convergence between Christianity and Islam is interpreted as evidence of Islam’s Christian (heretical) origin.⁴¹ Here, however, Muslim expression of the love of God is presented as indigenous. The entry on the “love of God” is rich and well structured (“Eschk Allah,” d’Herbelot 1697, 321). After introducing the Arabic vocabulary used to denote love (*ḥubb*, *maḥabba*, *‘ishq*, *shawq*, *ishtiyāq*, *wajd*), d’Herbelot examines the interpretations of the foundational Qur’ānic passage on the subject (“God loves them, and they love him,” Q 5:54) and, finally, concludes with several Sufi poems and aphorisms celebrating the union of the soul with God. D’Herbelot’s entry on “divine love” pictures Islam, possibly for the first time in

39 For a study of Llull’s relation to Islam, see Simon 1998.

40 “Eschk Allah,” d’Herbelot 1697, 321: “il ne faut pas s’étonner si les Mahométans qui ont plus de lumière que les Idolâtres, ont eu des sentiments si relevés touchant à l’amour de Dieu, qu’ils semblent avoir égalé les Chrétiens sur cette matière.”

41 This is the case in the entries on forgiveness (“Afu,” d’Herbelot 1697, 66), paradise (“Gennah,” d’Herbelot 1697, 376) and wisdom (“Hekmah,” d’Herbelot 1697, 441).

European intellectual history, as a coherent, rich, and inspiring tradition in its own right.

How does d'Herbelot justify his consideration for mystical insights from a rival religion? Some passages of the *Bibliothèque* delineate what we may call, relying on modern terminology, an inclusivist theology of religion (Kärkkäinen 2003, 24–25). D'Herbelot confers a unique status onto Christian truth:

Le pur, & le véritable amour de Dieu, ne se trouve que dans le Christianisme, puisqu'il est le propre effet de la grace de Jesus-Christ, & une operation particulière du Saint Esprit suivant les paroles de l'Apotre qui dit, que la charité de Dieu est repandue dans nos coeurs par l'esprit saint qui est communiqué.

"Eschk Allah," D'HERBELOT 1697, 321

[The pure and veritable love of God is only found in Christianity since it is the proper effect of the grace of Jesus Christ and a particular operation of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the words of the Apostle who said that charity of God is extended in our hearts by the Holy Spirit that is communicated.]⁴²

Yet, D'Herbelot grants non-Christians the ability to know God, for, indeed, "the invincible force of truth (...) pierces even the thickest darkness of error" ("Gennah," d'Herbelot 1697, 376). D'Herbelot values the lived experience of the Divine above its rational or dogmatic understanding. The body of knowledge dedicated to attaining divine intimacy constitutes a *théologie mystique* aiming at "the intimate union with the Divine, that takes place in the heart of man once it is detached from the love of material things and transported out of himself" ("Hallage," d'Herbelot 1697, 424).⁴³ The expression "mystical theology" draws on a long Christian tradition going back to the Neoplatonist theologian pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (fifth century CE), author of a Greek treatise entitled *Peri Mustikes Theologias* ("On Secret Scriptures").⁴⁴ D'Herbelot innovatively extends the notion to the esoteric traditions of non-Christian religions.

42 While we have no reason to doubt d'Herbelot's commitment to Christianity, the textbook formulation and the reference to Paul would indicate that it serves here as a token of the author's orthodoxy before he embarks on an exposition of Muslim understandings of love.

43 "L'union intime de la Divinite au Coeur de l'homme détaché de l'amour des choses de la terre, & transporté hors de soy."

44 For an insightful account of the relationship between Neoplatonist thought and Christian and Islamic mysticism, see Sedgwick 2016.

Muslims have their own *Docteurs de la Theologie mystique* (d'Herbelot 1697, 5) to whom al-Ḥallāj, Rūmī, and Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240) ("Arabi," d'Herbelot 1697, 121) belong. The experience of divine presence is shared regardless of one's beliefs. The clearest exposition of d'Herbelot's theology of religions is found in the entry on the Islamic concept of "Din" (religion), where he reports that God "is the circle where all the lines and all the ways from different religions lead" ("Din," d'Herbelot 1697, 296). The statement is attributed to the Sufi philosopher Sadreddin Kenaoui (Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, d. 673/1274). D'Herbelot duly notes the heretical potential of a view that denies religious exclusivism, and he refrains from fully endorsing it. Still, it is a view that seems to accord with his own non-confessional understanding of mysticism.

D'Herbelot's universal understanding of mysticism was not entirely novel. More than two centuries before, the Renaissance theologian and philosopher Nicholas of Cusa (d. 1464) had suggested that elements of truth can be found in other religions, although Christianity was its most perfect embodiment. An advocate of *docta ignorantia* (learned ignorance) and *theosis* (union or assimilation in God), Nicholas held all religions to be expressions of one universal faith shared by all humanity: *una religio in rituum varietate*, as he famously put it. His religious pluralism may well have been inspired by the Qur'ānic doctrine of prophetology (Valkenberg 2014). The Cusan theologian was deeply familiar with the Qur'ān, which he had studied in its Latin translation. In *Cribatio Alchorani* ("Sifting the Qur'ān," 1461), Nicholas argued that the "Book of the Arabs" confirmed the Christian truth.

There was, nevertheless something specific about the time and place in which d'Herbelot was writing. A "crisis of mysticism" was about to shake Europe, particularly France (McGinn 2021). From the Middle Ages to the Spanish Golden Century of Teresa of Avila (d. 1582) and John of the Cross (d. 1591), religious authorities reacted to mystical outbursts with ambivalence, celebrating the mystics' insights while reaffirming traditional orthodoxy. In its fight against the Reformation, the French Catholic Revival had initially welcomed the popular enthusiasm for mystical forms of piety. As a result, France became the center of Catholic mysticism in the early part of the seventeenth century. The writings of mystics such as Francis of Sales (d. 1622), Pierre de Bérulle (d. 1629), Brother Lawrence (Laurent de la Resurrection, d. 1691), and François Malaval (d. 1719) popularized the themes of self-abnegation, the unification of the soul with the Divine, and the pure love of God, which figure prominently in the religious entries of the *Bibliothèque* (McGinn 2020). Mystical yearnings became increasingly popular in France and beyond until political and religious authorities of the Catholic world, fearing an erosion of their power, aggressively clamped down on the movement. The latter part

of the century was marked by what became known as the “quietist” controversy. The origins of the controversy lay in the 1675 publication of Miguel de Molinos’ (d. 1696) *Guida Spirituale* (“The Spiritual Guide”), which quickly became an international bestseller.⁴⁵ The inner practices preached by Molinos, in particular, the “prayer of the quiet” advocated by Teresa of Avila (d. 1582), drew on a tradition of monastical mysticism. While many of Molinos’ ideas were not new, their instant popularity was deemed threatening by religious authorities invested in consolidating their institutional control. Direct contact with the Divine was theologically problematic and politically dangerous because it nullified the need for the Church, the sacraments, good works, and even the incarnate Christ. Claiming one’s total surrender to God’s will raised, in turn, complex issues of moral responsibility and free will (Lennon 2019). While the Spanish theologian was arrested and excommunicated in 1687, the papal condemnation did not put an end to the quietist controversy.

The second act of the dispute took place in France, in d’Herbelot’s immediate intellectual circle. Known as “the dispute on pure love” (*la querelle du pur amour*), it opposed two of the most powerful churchmen at the court of Louis XIV: Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (d. 1704) and François de Salignac de La Mothe-Fénélon (d. 1715). The latter, under the guidance of Madame Guyon (d. 1717), a disciple of Molinos whom he had met in 1688, advocated love for God so absolute that it rendered the hope for salvation irrelevant. Bossuet, on the other hand, considered “pure love” to contradict the Christological doctrine of the Church. After years of intense polemical sparring between the two French intellectuals, the Pope intervened in 1699 at the request of Louis XIV to officially condemn Fénélon—four years after d’Herbelot’s death. The composition of the *Bibliothèque Orientale* occupied d’Herbelot for three decades, from the end of the golden period of French mysticism to the beginning of the quietist controversy. A massive enterprise of orientalist erudition, the *Bibliothèque* cannot be reduced to the mystical elements found in a fraction of its entries. However, neither can it be read in isolation from one of the great intellectual disputes of the time, whose philosophical ramifications had captivated Europe’s intellectual elite.⁴⁶ D’Herbelot had frequented the “Petit concile,” a study group founded by Bossuet in 1673 to address the theological challenges

45 “Spiritual Guide, which releases the soul and conducts it through the interior path to acquire the perfect contemplation and rich treasure of interior peace” (1675). Originally in Spanish.

46 The philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (d. 1716), who had closely followed the debate from Germany, exclaimed his relief when the papal condemnation of Fénélon (d. 1715) in 1699 put an abrupt and final end to the dispute on pure love: “God be praised, let the newspapers at last speak of something else!” (cited by Lennon 2019: x).

posed by the reformation and humanist philology, dissolved in 1682. Since Fénelon was also one of its members, it has been suggested that the personal dimension of the dispute on pure love can be traced back to that assembly (Preyat 2007, 19 and 58). The mystical advocacy characterizing the religious entries in the *Bibliothèque* suggests the work was also an intervention in contemporary Catholic debates. Oriental erudition, to which d'Herbelot dedicated his life, allowed the author to safely explore controversial themes common to both Christian and Muslim mystical traditions.

6 Conclusion

The Qur'ān in the *Bibliothèque Orientale* is variously conceptualized as the fake scripture of a rival religion, the product of Christian Eastern heretical traditions, a historical document, a purveyor of literary entertainment, and a source of spiritual wisdom. In this chapter, I have focused on how d'Herbelot construed Qur'ānic narratives as vehicles of ethical insights. Three conditions made the ethico-spiritual reception of Qur'ānic narratives possible in early modern France: humanism, the literary fascination for the oriental tradition of storytelling, and debates about mysticism in the Catholic Revival.

The *Bibliothèque's* humanist practices of translation and encyclopedic knowledge offered a relatively direct encounter with the "Orient." By adopting his sources' point of view, d'Herbelot was able to preserve the integrity, entertaining quality, and moral focus of the Qur'ānic narratives. Polemical remarks target the prophet primarily and rarely interrupt the exposition of beliefs or narratives.

The *Bibliothèque* must also be placed in the context of the seventeenth-century literary fascination for the "oriental" tradition of storytelling. D'Herbelot and his readers approached the stories of prophets as products of that tradition. The appeal of oriental storytelling opens a space where the Qur'ān itself can be engaged outside the context of Christian polemics. Tales from the colorful *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* genre no longer need to be systematically evaluated according to their compatibility with biblical counterparts. Seen as the product of a lively imagination, these stories can be valued for their exotic novelty, narrative richness, and clever moral, not unlike Pilpay's tales and Sa'dī's *Gulistān*.

Finally, at a time when intense theological debates were beginning to polarize the Church, d'Herbelot's valorization of mysticism pushed him towards allegorical interpretation. The traditional exegesis of Qur'ānic narratives provides him with occasions to meditate on the increasingly controversial themes of self-abnegation and divine union. In the early stage of what would become

the quietist dispute, years before the shocking condemnation of Fénelon, “mystical theology” was the talk of the day. The similarities between Christian and Islamic mysticism rendered the latter both intelligible and familiar to the *Bibliothèque*’s readers. Drawing on an old polemical motif, d’Herbelot considered the Qur’ān to be a hodgepodge of biblical traditions resulting from Muḥammad’s cunning, but this did not deter him from valuing the mystical interpretation that it gave rise to.

The approach to the Orient delineated in the monumental *Bibliothèque* enabled the new valorization of Islam that emerged in Europe in the eighteenth century. For over a century, the BO constituted the most important European reference to Islamic civilization. It is based on d’Herbelot’s work that the great figure of the French Enlightenment, Voltaire, confidently outlined the ethical gist of Islam’s foundational text (cited in Elmarsafy 2009, 109):

Tous les interprètes de ce livre conviennent que sa morale est contenue dans ses paroles : “recherchez qui vous chasse ; donnez à qui vous ôte ; pardonnez à qui vous offense ; faites du bien à tous, ne contestez point avec les ignorants.”

[All the interpreters of this book agree that its moral message is contained in these words: Seek those who persecute you; give to those who take from you; forgive those who offend you; do good to all and do not argue with the ignorant.]⁴⁷

Voltaire’s representation of the ethics of the Qur’ān shows the extent to which Enlightenment thinkers embraced d’Herbelot’s characterization. The Christian orientation implicit in d’Herbelot’s account of Qur’ānic ethics aptly represents the complex sensibility of its author. D’Herbelot’s work invites us to rethink the rupture between pre- and post-Enlightenment European engagements with the Qur’ān. The mysticism that shaped d’Herbelot’s work demonstrates that a less antagonistic reading of Islam emerged from within religious thought, not outside of it (Bevilacqua 2018). The *Bibliothèque* highlights the role played by the Qur’ān and the Islamic religion in European intellectual and literary life at the dawn of the Enlightenment.

47 Voltaire’s source is the BO entry on “Alcoran” (d’Herbelot 1697, 88). The English translation is Elmarsafy’s.

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Appendix

Figures or Narratives from the Qur'ān in the *Bibliothèque Orientale*

- i. Abraha, p. 12
- ii. Abraham, pp. 12–16
- iii. Abu Nava's, pp. 29–30 (on *sūrat* al-Burūj, The Mansions of the Stars)
- iv. Ad/Add, pp. 51–52
- v. Adam, pp. 53–56
- vi. Aiub, p. 81
- vii. Cabil, p. 222
- viii. Eblis/Iblis, pp. 307–308
- ix. Edris/Idris, p. 310
- x. Escander/Iskander, pp. 317–318
- xi. Feraoun/Firaoun, pp. 345–347
- xii. Gebrail, pp. 365–366
- xiii. Hagiar, p. 420
- xiv. Ham Ben Nouh, p. 425
- xv. Haroun, p. 434
- xvi. Havah, pp. 428–429
- xvii. Houd, pp. 460–462
- xviii. Jacob fils d'Isaac, pp. 466–467
- xix. Iahia Ben Zacaria, pp. 471–472
- xx. Jounous, p. 495
- xxi. Jousouf ben Jacob, pp. 496–497
- xxii. Issa Ben Miriam, pp. 499–500
- xxiii. Ismael, p. 501
- xxiv. Locman, pp. 516–517

- xxv. Lot, pp. 520–522
- xxvi. Miriam, pp. 583–584
- xxvii. Moussa Ben Amran, pp. 647–650
- xxviii. Nemrod, pp. 668–669
- xxix. Nouh AlNabi, pp. 675–677
- xxx. O'zair, pp. 697–698
- xxxi. Salah, pp. 740–741
- xxxii. Scho'aib, pp. 790–791
- xxxiii. Soliman Ben Daoud, pp. 819–821
- xxxiv. Zakaria, p. 922
- xxxv. Khazkil (Ezechiel), p. 992
- xxxvi. Kheder, pp. 992–993
- xxxvii. Thalout, pp. 1021–1022
- xxxviii. Thamoud, p. 1023

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