a prayer for men—and some few passages where Mohammed (vi. 104, 114; xxvii. 93; xlii. 8), or the angels (xix. 65; xxxvii. 164 *sqq.*), speak in the first person without the intervention of the usual imperative "say" (sing. or pl.), the speaker throughout is God, either in the first person singular, or more commonly the plural of majesty "we." The same mode of address is familiar to us from the prophets of the Old Testament; the human personality disappears, in the moment of inspiration, behind the God by whom it is filled. But all the greatest of the Hebrew prophets fall back speedily upon the unassuming human "I"; while in the Koran the divine "I" is the stereotyped form of address. Mohammed, however, really felt himself to be the instrument of God; this consciousness was no doubt brighter at his first appearance than it afterwards became, but it never entirely forsook him. We might therefore readily pardon him for giving out, not only the results of imaginative and emotional excitement, but also many expositions or decrees which were the outcome of cool calculation, as the word of God, if he had only attained the pure moral altitude which in an Isaiah or a Jeremiah fills us with admiration after the lapse of ages.

The rationale of revelation is explained in the Koran itself as follows:—In heaven is the original text ("the mother of the book," xliii. 3; "a concealed book," lv. 77; "a well-guarded tablet," lxxxv. 22). By a process of "sending down" (*tanzíl*), one piece after another was communicated to the Prophet. The mediator was an angel, who is called sometimes the "Spirit" (xxvi. 193), sometimes the "holy Spirit" (xvi. 104), and at a later time "Gabriel" (ii. 91). This angel dictates the revelation to the Prophet, who repeats it after him, and afterwards proclaims it to the world (lxxxvii. 6, etc.). It is plain that we have here a somewhat crude attempt of the Prophet to represent to himself the more or less unconscious process by which his ideas arose and gradually took shape in his mind. It is no wonder if in such confused imagery the details are not always self-consistent. When, for example, this heavenly archetype is said to be in the hands of an exalted "scribe" (lxxx. 13 *sqq.*), this seems a transition to a quite different set of ideas, namely, the books of fate, or the record of all human actions—conceptions which are actually found in the Koran. It is to be observed, at all events, that Mohammed's transcendental idea of God, as a Being exalted altogether above the world, excludes the thought of direct intercourse between the Prophet and God.

It is an explicit statement of the Koran that the sacred book was revealed ("sent down") by God, not all at once, but piecemeal and gradually (xxv. 34). This is evident from the actual composition of the book, and is confirmed by Moslem tradition. That is to say, Mohammed issued his revelations in fly-leaves of greater or less extent. A single piece of this kind was called either, like the entire collection, *ḳo'rán*, *i.e.* "recitation" or "reading;" or *kitáb*, "writing;" or *súra*, which is the late-Hebrew *shūrā*, and means literally "series." The last became, in the lifetime of Mohammed, the regular designation of the individual sections as distinguished from the whole collection; and accordingly it is the name given to the separate chapters of the existing Koran. These chapters are of very unequal length. Since many of the shorter ones are undoubtedly complete in themselves, it is natural to assume that the longer, which are sometimes very comprehensive, have arisen from the amalgamation of various originally distinct revelations. This supposition is favoured by the numerous traditions which give us the circumstances under which this or that short piece, now incorporated in a larger section, was revealed; and also by the fact that the connection of thought in the present súras often seems to be interrupted. And in reality many pieces of the long súras have to be severed out as originally independent; even in the short ones parts are often found which cannot have been there at first. At the same time we must beware of carrying this sifting operation too far,—as Nöldeke now believes himself to have done in his earlier works, and as Sprenger also sometimes seems to do. That some súras were of considerable length from the first is seen, for example, from xii., which contains a short introduction, then the history of Joseph, and then a few concluding observations, and is therefore perfectly homogeneous. In like manner, xx., which is mainly occupied with the history of Moses, forms a complete whole. The same is true of xviii., which at first sight seems to fall into several pieces; the history of the seven sleepers, the grotesque narrative about Moses, and that about Alexander "the Horned," are all connected together, and the same rhyme runs through the whole súra. Even in the separate narrations we may observe how readily the Koran passes from one subject to another, how little care is taken to express all the transitions of thought, and how frequently clauses are omitted, which are almost indispensable. We are not at liberty, therefore, in every case where the connection in the Koran is obscure, to say that it is really broken, and set it down as the clumsy patchwork of a later hand. Even in the old Arabic poetry such abrupt transitions are of very frequent occurrence. It is not uncommon for the Koran, after a new subject has been entered on, to return gradually or suddenly to the former theme,—a proof that there at least separation is not to be thought of. In short, however imperfectly the Koran may have been redacted, in the majority of cases the present súras are identical with the originals.

How these revelations actually arose in Mohammed's mind is a question which it is almost as idle to discuss as it would be to analyse the workings of the mind of a poet. In his early career, sometimes perhaps in its later stages also, many revelations must have burst from him in uncontrollable excitement, so that he could not possibly regard them otherwise than as divine inspirations. We must bear in mind that he was no cold systematic thinker, but an Oriental visionary, brought up in crass superstition, and without intellectual discipline; a man whose nervous temperament had been powerfully worked on by ascetic austerities, and who was all the more irritated by the opposition he encountered, because he had little of the heroic in his nature. Filled with his religious ideas and visions, he might well fancy he heard the angel bidding him recite what was said to him. There may have been many a revelation of this kind which no one ever heard but himself, as he repeated it to himself in the silence of the night (lxxiii. 4). Indeed the Koran itself admits that he forgot some revelations (lxxxvii. 7). But by far the greatest part of the book is undoubtedly the result of deliberation, touched more or less with emotion, and animated by a certain rhetorical rather than poetical glow. Many passages are based upon purely intellectual reflection. It is said that Mohammed occasionally uttered such a passage immediately after one of those epileptic fits which not only his followers, but (for a time at least) he himself also, regarded as tokens of intercourse with the higher powers. If that is the case, it is impossible to say whether the trick was in the utterance of the revelation or in the fit itself.

How the various pieces of the Koran took literary form is uncertain. Mohammed himself, so far as we can discover, never wrote down anything. The question whether he could read and write has been much debated among Moslems, unfortunately more with dogmatic arguments and spurious traditions than authentic proofs. At present, one is inclined to say that he was not altogether ignorant of these arts, but that from want of practice he found it

convenient to employ some one else whenever he had anything to write. After the flight to Medina (A.D. 622) we are told that short pieces—chiefly legal decisions—were taken down immediately after they were revealed, by an adherent whom he summoned for the purpose; so that nothing stood in the way of their publication. Hence it is probable that in Mecca, where the art of writing was commoner than in Medina, he had already begun to have his oracles committed to writing. That even long portions of the Koran existed in written form from an early date may be pretty safely inferred from various indications; especially from the fact that in Mecca the Prophet had caused insertions to be made, and pieces to be erased in his previous revelations. For we cannot suppose that he knew the longer súras by heart so perfectly that he was able after a time to lay his finger upon any particular passage. In some instances, indeed, he may have relied too much on his memory. For example, he seems to have occasionally dictated the same súra to different persons in slightly different terms. In such cases, no doubt, he may have partly intended to introduce improvements; and so long as the difference was merely in expression, without affecting the sense, it could occasion no perplexity to his followers. None of them had literary pedantry enough to question the consistency of the divine revelation on that ground. In particular instances, however, the difference of reading was too important to be overlooked. Thus the Koran itself confesses that the unbelievers cast it up as a reproach to the Prophet that God sometimes substituted one verse for another (xvi. 103). On one occasion, when a dispute arose between two of his own followers as to the true reading of a passage which both had received from the Prophet himself, Mohammed is said to have explained that the Koran was revealed in seven forms. In this apparently genuine dictum seven stands, of course, as in many other cases, for an indefinite but limited number. But one may imagine what a world of trouble it has cost the Moslem theologians to explain the saying in accordance with their dogmatic beliefs. A great number of explanations are current, some of which claim the authority of the Prophet himself; as, indeed, fictitious utterances of Mohammed play throughout a conspicuous part in the exegesis of the Koran. One very favourite, but utterly untenable interpretation is that the "seven forms" are seven different Arabic dialects.

When such discrepancies came to the cognisance of Mohammed it was doubtless his desire that only one of the conflicting texts should be considered authentic; only he never gave himself much trouble to have his wish carried into effect. Although in theory he was an upholder of verbal inspiration, he did not push the doctrine to its extreme consequences; his practical good sense did not take these things so strictly as the theologians of later centuries. Sometimes, however, he did suppress whole sections or verses, enjoining his followers to efface or forget them, and declaring them to be "abrogated." A very remarkable case is that of the two verses in liii., when he had recognised three heathen goddesses as exalted beings, possessing influence with God. (*Supra*, p. 549.)

So much for abrogated readings; the case is somewhat different when we come to the abrogation of laws and directions to the Moslems, which often occurs in the Koran. There is nothing in this at variance with Mohammed's idea of God. God is to him an absolute despot, who declares a thing right or wrong from no inherent necessity but by his arbitrary fiat. This God varies his commands at pleasure, prescribes one law for the Christians, another for the Jews, and a third for the Moslems; nay, he even changes his instructions to the Moslems when it pleases him. Thus, for example, the Koran contains very different directions, suited to varying circumstances, as to the treatment which idolaters are to receive at the hands of believers. But Mohammed showed no anxiety to have these superseded enactments destroyed. Believers could be in no uncertainty as to which of two contradictory passages remained in force; and they might still find edification in that which had become obsolete. That later generations might not so easily distinguish the "abrogated" from the "abrogating" did not occur to Mohammed, whose vision, naturally enough, seldom extended to the future of his religious community. Current events were invariably kept in view in the revelations. In Medina it called forth the admiration of the Faithful to observe how often God gave them the answer to a question whose settlement was urgently required at the moment. The same naïveté appears in a remark of the Caliph 'Othmán about a doubtful case: 'If the Apostle of God were still alive, methinks there had been a Koran passage revealed on this point." Not unfrequently the divine word was found to coincide with the advice which Mohammed had received from his most intimate disciples. "Omar was many a time of a certain opinion," says one tradition, "and the Koran was then revealed accordingly."

Contents of the Koran.

The contents of the different parts of the Koran are extremely varied. Many passages consist of theological or moral reflections. We are reminded of the greatness, the goodness, the righteousness of God as manifested in Nature, in history, and in revelation through the prophets, especially through Mohammed. God is magnified as the One, the All-powerful. Idolatry and all deification of created beings, such as the worship of Christ as the Son of God, are unsparingly condemned. The joys of heaven and the pains of hell are depicted in vivid sensuous imagery, as is also the terror of the whole creation at the advent of the last day and the judgment of the world. Believers receive general moral instruction, as well as directions for special circumstances. The lukewarm are rebuked, the enemies threatened with terrible punishment, both temporal and eternal. To the sceptical the truth of Islam is held forth; and a certain, not very cogent, method of demonstration predominates. In many passages the sacred book falls into a diffuse preaching style, others seem more like proclamations or general orders. A great number contain ceremonial or civil laws, or even special commands to individuals down to such matters as the regulation of Mohammed's harem. In not a few, definite questions are answered which had actually been propounded to the Prophet by believers or infidels. Mohammed himself, too, repeatedly receives direct injunctions, and does not escape an occasional rebuke. One súra (i.) is a prayer, two (cxiii., cxiv.) are magical formulas. Many súras treat of a single topic, others embrace several.

From the mass of material comprised in the Kóran—and the account we have given is far from exhaustive—we should select the histories of the ancient prophets and saints as possessing a peculiar interest. The purpose of Mohammed is to show from these histories how God in former times had rewarded the righteous, and punished their enemies. For the most part the old prophets only serve to introduce a little variety in point of form, for they are almost in every case facsimiles of Mohammed himself. They preach exactly like him, they have to bring the very same charges against their opponents, who on their part behave exactly as the unbelieving inhabitants of Mecca. The Koran even goes so far as to make Noah contend against the worship of certain false gods, mentioned by name, who were worshipped by the Arabs of Mohammed's time. In an address which is put in the mouth of Abraham (xxvi. 75 *sqq.*) the reader quite forgets that it is Abraham, and not Mohammed (or God himself) who is

speaking. Other narratives are intended rather for amusement, although they are always well seasoned with edifying phrases. It is no wonder that the godless Koraishites thought these stories of the Koran not nearly so entertaining as those of Rostam and Ispandiár related by Nadr the son of Hárith, who had learned on the Euphrates the heroic mythology of the Persians. But the Prophet was so exasperated by this rivalry that when Nadr fell into his power after the battle of Badr, he caused him to be executed; although in all other cases he readily pardoned his fellow-countrymen.

These histories are chiefly about Scripture characters, especially those of the Old Testament. But the deviations from the Biblical narratives are very marked. Many of the alterations are found in the legendary anecdotes of the Jewish Haggada and the New Testament Apocrypha; but many more are due to misconceptions such as only a listener (not the reader of a book) could fall into. The most ignorant Jew could never have mistaken Haman (the minister of Ahasuerus) for the minister of Pharaoh, or identified Miriam the sister of Moses with Mary (=Miriam) the mother of Christ. In addition to such misconceptions there are sundry capricious alterations, some of them very grotesque, due to Mohammed himself. For instance, in his ignorance of everything out of Arabia, he makes the fertility of Egypt—where rain is almost never seen and never missed—depend on rain instead of the inundations of the Nile (xii. 49). It was through the Jews also that he borrowed his account of Alexander "the Horned"; an epithet which is to be explained, after old Hottinger, from the great multitude of coins where Alexander is represented with the ram's-horn of Ammon. Besides Jewish and Christian histories there are a few about old Arabian prophets. In these he seems to have handled his materials even more freely than in the others.

The opinion has already been expressed that Mohammed did not make use of written sources. Coincidences and divergences alike can always be accounted for by oral communications from Jews who knew a little and Christians who knew next to nothing. Even in the rare passages where we can trace direct resemblances to the text of the Old Testament (comp. xxi. 105 with Ps. xxxvii. 29; i. 5 with Ps. xxvii. 11) or the New (comp. vii. 48 with Luke xvi. 24; xlvi. 19 with Luke xvi. 25), there is nothing more than might readily have been picked up in conversation with any Jew or Christian. In Medina, where he had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with Jews of some culture, he learned some things out of the Mishna, *e.g.* v. 35 corresponds almost word for word with Mishna *Sanh.* iv. 5; compare also ii. 183 with Mishna *Ber.* i. 2. That these are only cases of oral communication will be admitted by any one with the slightest knowledge of the circumstances. Otherwise we might even conclude that Mohammed had studied the Talmud; *e.g.* the regulation as to ablution by rubbing with sand, where water cannot be obtained (iv. 46), corresponds to a talmudic ordinance (*Ber.* 15 *a*). Of Christianity he can have been able to learn very little even in Medina; as may be seen from the absurd travesty of the institution of the Eucharist in v. 112 *sqq.* For the rest, it is highly improbable that before the Koran any real literary production—anything that could be strictly called a book—existed in the Arabic language.

In point of style and artistic effect, the different parts of the Koran are of very unequal value. An unprejudiced and critical reader will certainly find very few passages where his æsthetic susceptibilities are thoroughly satisfied. But he will often be struck, especially in the older pieces, by a wild force of passion, and a vigorous, if not rich, imagination. Descriptions of heaven and hell, and allusions to God's working in Nature, not unfrequently show a certain amount of poetic power. In other places also the style is sometimes lively and impressive; though it is rarely indeed that we come across such strains of touching simplicity as in the middle of xciii. The greater part of the Koran is decidedly prosaic; much of it indeed is stiff in style. Of course, with such a variety of material, we cannot expect every part to be equally vivacious, or imaginative, or poetic. A decree about the right of inheritance, or a point of ritual, must necessarily be expressed in prose, if it is to be intelligible. No one complains of the civil laws in Exodus or the sacrificial ritual in Leviticus, because they want the fire of Isaiah or the tenderness of Deuteronomy. But Mohammed's mistake consists in persistent and slavish adherence to the semi-poetic form which he had at first adopted in accordance with his own taste and that of his hearers. For instance, he employs rhyme in dealing with the most prosaic subjects, and thus produces the disagreeable effect of incongruity between style and matter. It has to be considered, however, that many of those sermonizing pieces which are so tedious to us, especially when we read two or three in succession (perhaps in a very inadequate translation), must have had a quite different effect when recited under the burning sky and on the barren soil of Mecca. There, thoughts about God's greatness and man's duty, which are familiar to us from childhood, were all new to the hearers—it is hearers we have to think of in the first instance, not readers—to whom, at the same time, every allusion had a meaning which often escapes our notice. When Mohammed spoke of the goodness of the Lord in creating the clouds, and bringing them across the cheerless desert, and pouring them out on the earth to restore its rich vegetation, that must have been a picture of thrilling interest to the Arabs, who are accustomed to see from three to five years elapse before a copious shower comes to clothe the wilderness once more with luxuriant pastures. It requires an effort for us, under our clouded skies, to realize in some degree the intensity of that impression.

Rhetorical form and rhyme.

The fact that scraps of poetical phraseology are specially numerous in the earlier súras, enables us to understand why the prosaic mercantile community of Mecca regarded their eccentric townsman as a "poet," or even a "possessed poet." Mohammed himself had to disclaim such titles, because he felt himself to be a divinely-inspired prophet; but we too, from our standpoint, shall fully acquit him of poetic genius. Like many other predominantly religious characters, he had no appreciation of poetic beauty; and if we may believe one anecdote related of him, at a time when every one made verses he affected ignorance of the most elementary rules of prosody. Hence the style of the Koran is not poetical but rhetorical; and the powerful effect which some portions produce on us is gained by rhetorical means. Accordingly the sacred book has not even the artistic form of poetry; which, among the Arabs, includes a stringent metre, as well as rhyme. The Koran is never metrical, and only a few exceptionally eloquent portions fall into a sort of spontaneous rhythm. On the other hand, the rhyme is regularly maintained; although, especially in the later pieces, after a very slovenly fashion. Rhymed prose was a favourite form of composition among the Arabs of that day, and Mohammed adopted it; but if it imparts a certain sprightliness to some passages, it proves on the whole a burdensome yoke. The Moslems themselves have observed that the tyranny of the rhyme often makes itself apparent in derangement of the order of words, and in the choice of verbal forms which would not otherwise have been employed; *e.g.* an imperfect instead of a perfect. In one place, to save the rhyme, he calls Mount Sinai *Sínín* (xcv. 2) instead of *Sínâ* (xxiii. 20); in another Elijah is called *Ilyásín* (xxxvii. 130) instead of

Ilyás (vi. 85: xxxvii. 123). The substance even is modified to suit exigencies of rhyme. Thus the Prophet would scarcely have fixed on the unusual number of *eight* angels round the throne of God (lxix. 17) if the word *thamániyah*, "eight," had not happened to fall in so well with the rhyme. And when lv. speaks of *two* heavenly gardens, each with *two* fountains and *two* kinds of fruit, and again of *two* similar gardens, all this is simply because the dual termination (*án*) corresponds to the syllable that controls the rhyme in that whole súra. In the later pieces, Mohammed often inserts edifying remarks, entirely out of keeping with the context, merely to complete his rhyme. In Arabic it is such an easy thing to accumulate masses of words with the same termination, that the gross negligence of the rhyme in the Koran is doubly remarkable. One may say that this is another mark of the Prophet's want of mental training, and incapacity for introspective criticism.

Stylistic weaknesses.

On the whole, while many parts of the Koran undoubtedly have considerable rhetorical power, even over an unbelieving reader, the book, æsthetically considered, is by no means a first-rate performance. To begin with what we are most competent to criticize, let us look at some of the more extended narratives. It has already been noticed how vehement and abrupt they are where they ought to be characterized by epic repose. Indispensable links, both in expression and in the sequence of events, are often omitted, so that to understand these histories is sometimes far easier for us than for those who heard them first, because we know most of them from better sources. Along with this, there is a great deal of superfluous verbiage; and nowhere do we find a steady advance in the narration. Contrast in these respects the history of Joseph (xii.) and its glaring improprieties, with the admirably-conceived and admirably-executed story in Genesis. Similar faults are found in the non-narrative portions of the Koran. The connexion of ideas is extremely loose, and even the syntax betrays great awkwardness. Anacolutha are of frequent occurrence, and cannot be explained as conscious literary devices. Many sentences begin with a "when" or "on the day when" which seems to hover in the air, so that the commentators are driven to supply a "think of this" or some such ellipsis. Again, there is no great literary skill evinced in the frequent and needless harping on the same words and phrases; in xviii., for example, "till that" (*ḥattá idhá*) occurs no fewer than eight times. Mohammed, in short, is not in any sense a master of style. This opinion will be endorsed by any European who reads through the book with an impartial spirit and some knowledge of the language, without taking into account the tiresome effect of its endless iterations. But in the ears of every pious Moslem such a judgment will sound almost as shocking as downright atheism or polytheism. Among the Moslems, the Koran has always been looked on as the most perfect model of style and language. This feature of it is in their dogmatic the greatest of all miracles, the incontestable proof of its divine origin. Such a view on the part of men who knew Arabic infinitely better than the most accomplished European Arabist will ever do, may well startle us. In fact, the Koran boldly challenged its opponents to produce ten súras, or even a single one, like those of the sacred book, and they never did so. That, to be sure, on calm reflexion, is not so very surprising. Revelations of the kind which Mohammed uttered, no unbeliever could produce without making himself a laughing-stock. However little real originality there is in Mohammed's doctrines, as against his own countrymen he was thoroughly original, even in the form of his oracles. To compose such revelations at will was beyond the power of the most expert literary artist; it would have required either a prophet, or a shameless impostor. And if such a character appeared *after* Mohammed, still he could never be anything but an imitator, like the false prophets who arose about the time of his death and afterwards. That the adversaries should produce any sample whatsoever of poetry or rhetoric equal to the Koran is not at all what the Prophet demands. In that case he would have been put to shame, even in the eyes of many of his own followers, by the first poem that came to hand. Nevertheless, it is on a false interpretation of this challenge that the dogma of the incomparable excellence of the style and diction of the Koran is based. The rest has been accomplished by dogmatic prejudice, which is quite capable of working other miracles besides turning a defective literary production into an unrivalled masterpiece in the eyes of believers. This view once accepted, the next step was to find everywhere evidence of the perfection of the style and language. And if here and there, as one can scarcely doubt, there was among the old Moslems a lover of poetry who had his difficulties about this dogma, he had to beware of uttering an opinion which might have cost him his head. We know of at least one rationalistic theologian who defined the dogma in such a way that we can see he did not believe it (Shahrastání, p. 39). The truth is, it would have been a miracle indeed if the style of the Koran had been perfect. For although there was at that time a recognized poetical style, already degenerating to mannerism, a prose style did not exist. All beginnings are difficult; and it can never be esteemed a serious charge against Mohammed that his book, the first prose work of a high order in the language, testifies to the awkwardness of the beginner. And further, we must always remember that entertainment and æsthetic effect were at most subsidiary objects. The great aim was persuasion and conversion; and, say what we will, that aim has been realized on the most imposing scale.

Mohammed repeatedly calls attention to the fact that the Koran is not written, like other sacred books, in a strange language, but in Arabic, and therefore is intelligible to all. At that time, along with foreign ideas, many foreign words had crept into the language; especially Aramaic terms for religious conceptions of Jewish or Christian origin. Some of these had already passed into general use, while others were confined to a more limited circle. Mohammed, who could not fully express his new ideas in the common language of his countrymen, but had frequently to find out new terms for himself, made free use of such Jewish and Christian words, as was done, though perhaps to a smaller extent, by certain thinkers and poets of that age who had more or less risen above the level of heathenism. In Mohammed's case this is the less wonderful, because he was indebted to the instruction of Jews and Christians whose Arabic—as the Koran pretty clearly intimates with regard to one of them—was very defective. Nor is it very surprising to find that his use of these words is sometimes as much at fault as his comprehension of the histories which he learned from the same people—that he applies Aramaic expressions as incorrectly as many uneducated persons now employ words derived from the French. Thus, *furkán* means really "redemption," but Mohammed (misled by the Arabic meaning of the root فرق "sever," "decide") uses it for "revelation." *Milla* is properly "Word," but in the Koran "religion." *Illiyún* (lxxxiii. 18, 19) is apparently the Hebrew name of God, *Elyón*, "the Most High"; Mohammed uses it of a heavenly book (see S. Fraenkel, *De vocabulis in antiquis Arabum carminibus et in Corano peregrinis*, Leyden, 1880, p. 23). So again the word *mathání* is, as Geiger has conjectured, the

regular plural of the Aramaic *mathnîthâ*, which is the same as the Hebrew *Mishna*, and denotes, in Jewish usage, a legal decision of some of the ancient Rabbins. But in the Koran "the seven *Mathânî*" (xv. 87) are probably the seven verses of súra i., so that Mohammed appears to have understood it in the sense of "saying," or "sentence" (comp. xxxix. 24). Words of Christian origin are less frequent in the Koran. It is an interesting fact that of these a few have come over from the Abyssinian; such as *hawâríyún*, "apostles," *mâída*, "table," and two or three others; these all make their first appearance in súras of the Medina period. The word *shaitân*, "Satan," which was likewise borrowed, at least in the first instance, from the Abyssinian, had probably been already introduced into the language. Sprenger has rightly observed that Mohammed makes a certain parade of these foreign terms, as of other peculiarly constructed expressions; in this he followed a favourite practice of contemporary poets. It is the tendency of the imperfectly educated to delight in out-of-the-way expressions, and on such minds they readily produce a remarkably solemn and mysterious impression. This was exactly the kind of effect that Mohammed desired, and to secure it he seems even to have invented a few odd vocables, as *ghislín* (lxix. 36), *sijjín* (lxxxiii. 7, 8), *tasnîm* (lxxxiii. 27), and *salsabîl* (lxxvi. 18). But, of course, the necessity of enabling his hearers to understand ideas which they must have found sufficiently novel in themselves, imposed tolerably narrow limits on such eccentricities.

The constituents of our present Koran belong partly to the Mecca period (before 622 A.D.), partly to the period commencing with the flight to Medina (from the autumn of 622 to 8th June 632). Mohammed's position in Medina was entirely different from that which he had occupied in his native town. In the former he was from the first the leader of a powerful party, and gradually became the autocratic ruler of Arabia; in the latter he was only the despised preacher of a small congregation. This difference, as was to be expected, appears in the Koran. The Medina pieces, whether entire súras or isolated passages interpolated in Meccan súras, are accordingly pretty broadly distinct, as to their contents, from those issued in Mecca. In the great majority of cases there can be no doubt whatever whether a piece first saw the light in Mecca or in Medina; and for the most part the internal evidence is borne out by Moslem tradition. And since the revelations given in Medina frequently take notice of events about which we have pretty accurate information, and whose dates are at least approximately known, we are often in a position to fix their date with at any rate considerable certainty; here again tradition renders valuable assistance. Even with regard to the Medina passages, however, a great deal remains uncertain, partly because the allusions to historical events and circumstances are generally rather obscure, partly because traditions about the occasion of the revelation of the various pieces are often fluctuating, and often rest on misunderstanding or arbitrary conjecture. But at all events it is far easier to arrange in some sort of chronological order the Medina súras than those composed in Mecca. There is, indeed, one tradition which professes to furnish a chronological list of all the súras. But not to mention that it occurs in several divergent forms, and that it takes no account of the fact that our present súras are partly composed of pieces of different dates, it contains so many suspicious or undoubtedly false statements, that it is impossible to attach any great importance to it. Besides, it is *a priori* unlikely that a contemporary of Mohammed should have drawn up such a list; and if any one had made the attempt, he would have found it almost impossible to obtain reliable information as to the order of the earlier Meccan súras. We have in this list no genuine tradition, but rather the lucubrations of an undoubtedly conscientious Moslem critic, who may have lived about a century after the Flight.

Among the revelations put forth in Mecca there is a considerable number of (for the most part) short súras which strike every attentive reader as being the oldest. They are in an altogether different strain from many others, and in their whole composition they show least resemblance to the Medina pieces. It is no doubt conceivable—as Sprenger supposes—that Mohammed might have returned at intervals to his earlier manner; but since this group possesses a remarkable similarity of style, and since the gradual formation of a different style is on the whole an unmistakable fact, the assumption has little probability; and we shall therefore abide by the opinion that these form a distinct group. At the opposite extreme from them stands another cluster, showing quite obvious affinities with the style of the Medina súras, which must therefore be assigned to the later part of the Prophet's work in Mecca. Between these two groups stand a number of other Meccan súras, which in every respect mark the transition from the first period to the third. It need hardly be said that the three periods—which were first distinguished by Professor Weil—are not separated by sharp lines of division. With regard to some súras, it may be doubtful whether they ought to be reckoned amongst the middle group, or with one or other of the extremes. And it is altogether impossible, within these groups, to establish even a probable chronological arrangement of the individual revelations. In default of clear allusions to well-known events, or events whose date can be determined, we might indeed endeavour to trace the psychological development of the Prophet by means of the Koran, and arrange its parts accordingly. But in such an undertaking one is always apt to take subjective assumptions or mere fancies for established data. Good traditions about the origin of the Meccan revelations are not very numerous. In fact the whole history of Mohammed previous to the Flight is so imperfectly related that we are not even sure in what year he appeared as a prophet. Probably it was in A.D. 610; it may have been somewhat earlier, but scarcely later. If, as one tradition says, xxx. 1 *sq.* ("The Romans are overcome in the nearest neighbouring land") refers to the defeat of the Byzantines by the Persians, not far from Damascus, about the spring of 614, it would follow that the third group, to which this passage belongs, covers the greater part of the Meccan period. And it is not in itself unlikely that the passionate vehemence which characterizes the first group was of short duration. Nor is the assumption contradicted by the tolerably well-attested, though far from incontestable statement, that when 'Omar was converted (A.D. 615 or 616), xx., which belongs to the second group, already existed in writing. But the reference of xxx. 1 *sq.* to this particular battle is by no means so certain that positive conclusions can be drawn from it. It is the same with other allusions in the Meccan súras to occurrences whose chronology can be partially ascertained. It is better, therefore, to rest satisfied with a merely relative determination of the order of even the three great clusters of Meccan revelations.

In the pieces of the first period the convulsive excitement of the Prophet often expresses itself with the utmost vehemence. He is so carried away by his emotion that he cannot choose his words; they seem rather to burst from him. Many of these pieces remind us of the oracles of the old heathen soothsayers, whose style is known to us from imitations, although we have perhaps not a single genuine specimen. Like those other oracles, the súras of this period, which are never very long, are composed of short sentences with tolerably pure but rapidly-changing rhymes. The oaths, too, with which many of them begin, were largely used by the soothsayers. Some of these oaths are very uncouth and hard to understand, some of them perhaps were not meant to be understood, for indeed all sorts of strange things are met with in these chapters. Here and there Mohammed speaks of visions, and appears even to see angels before him in bodily form. There are some intensely vivid descriptions of the resurrection and the last day which must have exercised a demonic power over men who were quite unfamiliar with such pictures. Other pieces paint in glowing colours the joys of heaven and the pains of hell. However, the súras of this period are not all so wild as these; and those which are conceived in a calmer mood appear to be the oldest. Yet, one must repeat, it is exceedingly difficult to make out any strict chronological sequence. For instance, it is by no means certain whether the beginning of xcvi. is really, what a widely-circulated tradition calls it, the oldest part of the whole Koran. That tradition goes back to the Prophet's favourite wife 'Áisha; but as she was not born at the time when the revelation is said to have been made, it can only contain at the best what Mohammed told her years afterwards, from his own not very clear recollection, with or without fictitious additions. And, moreover, there are other pieces mentioned by others as the oldest. In any case xcvi. 1 *sqq.* is certainly very early. According to the traditional view, which appears to be correct, it treats of a vision in which the Prophet receives an injunction to recite a revelation conveyed to him by the angel. It is interesting to observe that here already two things are brought forward as proofs of the omnipotence and care of God: one is the creation of man out of a seminal drop—an idea to which Mohammed often recurs; the other is the then recently introduced art of writing, which the Prophet instinctively seizes on as a means of propagating his doctrines. It was only after Mohammed encountered obstinate resistance that the tone of the revelations became thoroughly passionate. In such cases he was not slow to utter terrible threats against those who ridiculed the preaching of the unity of God, of the resurrection, and of the judgment. His own uncle Abú Lahab had rudely repelled him, and in a brief special súra (cxi.) he and his wife are consigned to hell. The súras of this period form almost exclusively the concluding portions of the present text. One is disposed to assume, however, that they were at one time more numerous, and that many of them were lost at an early period.

Since Mohammed's strength lay in his enthusiastic and fiery imagination rather than in the wealth of ideas and clearness of abstract thought on which exact reasoning depends, it follows that the older súras, in which the former qualities have free scope, must be more attractive to us than the later. In the súras of the second period the imaginative glow perceptibly diminishes; there is still fire and animation, but the tone becomes gradually more prosaic. As the feverish restlessness subsides, the periods are drawn out, and the revelations as a whole become longer. The truth of the new doctrine is proved by accumulated instances of God's working in nature and in history; the objections of opponents, whether advanced in good faith or in jest, are controverted by arguments; but the demonstration is often confused or even weak. The histories of the earlier prophets, which had occasionally been briefly touched on in the first period, are now related, sometimes at great length. On the whole, the charm of the style is passing away.

There is one piece of the Koran, belonging to the beginning of this period, if not to the close of the former, which claims particular notice. This is i., the Lord's Prayer of the Moslems, and beyond dispute the gem of the Koran. The words of this súra, which is known as *al-fátiḥa* ("the opening one") are as follows:—

(1) In the name of God, the compassionate compassioner. (2) Praise be [literally "is"] to God, the Lord of the worlds, (3) the compassionate compassioner, (4) the Sovereign of the day of judgment. (5) Thee do we worship and of Thee do we beg assistance. (6) Direct us in the right way; (7) in the way of those to whom Thou hast been gracious, on whom there is no wrath, and who go not astray.

The thoughts are so simple as to need no explanation; and yet the prayer is full of meaning. It is true that there is not a single original idea of Mohammed's in it. Several words and turns of expression are borrowed directly from the Jews, in particular the designation of God as the "Compassioner," *Raḥmán*. This is simply the Jewish *Raḥmánâ*, which was a favourite name for God in the Talmudic period. Mohammed seems for a while to have entertained the thought of adopting *al-Raḥmán* as a proper name of God, in place of *Alláh*, which was already used by the heathens.[1] This purpose he ultimately relinquished, but it is just in the súras of the second period that the use of *Raḥmán* is specially frequent. It was probably in the first súra also that Mohammed first introduced the formula, "In the name of God," etc. It is to be regretted that this prayer must lose its effect through too frequent use, for every Moslem who says his five prayers regularly—as the most of them do—repeats it not less than twenty times a day.

Latest Meccan súras.

The súras of the third Meccan period, which form a pretty large part of our present Koran, are almost entirely prosaic. Some of the revelations are of considerable extent, and the single verses also are much longer than in the older súras. Only now and then a gleam of poetic power flashes out. A sermonizing tone predominates. The súras are very edifying for one who is already reconciled to their import, but to us at least they do not seem very well fitted to carry conviction to the minds of unbelievers. That impression, however, is not correct, for in reality the demonstrations of these longer Meccan súras appear to have been peculiarly influential for the propagation of Islam. Mohammed's mission was not to Europeans, but to a people who, though quick-witted and receptive, were not accustomed to logical thinking, while they had outgrown their ancient religion.

Medinan súras.

When we reach the Medina period it becomes, as has been indicated, much easier to understand the revelations in their historical relations, since our knowledge of the history of Mohammed in Medina is tolerably complete. In many cases the historical occasion is perfectly clear, in others we can at least recognize the general situation from which they arose, and thus approximately fix their time. There still remains, however, a remnant, of which we can only say that it belongs to Medina.

The style of this period bears a pretty close resemblance to that of the latest Meccan period. It is for the most part pure prose, enriched by occasional rhetorical embellishments. Yet even here there are many bright and impressive passages, especially in those sections which may be regarded as proclamations to the army of the faithful. For the Moslems, Mohammed has many different messages. At one time it is a summons to do battle for the faith; at another, a series of reflexions on recently experienced success or misfortune, or a rebuke for their weak faith; or an exhortation to virtue, and so on. He often addresses himself to the "doubters," some of whom vacillate between faith and unbelief, others make a pretence of faith, while others

[1] Since in Arabic also the root رحم signifies "to have pity," the Arabs must have at once perceived the force of the new name