

A Comparative Study of the Nature and Origin of the Qur'an in the Thought of Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Theodor Nöldeke's Historicist Perspective

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Abstract

The nature of revelation and the origin of the Holy Qur'an constitute foundational questions in contemporary Qur'anic studies. The present study investigates whether revelation should be conceptualized as a divine, trans-historical reality or as a religious experience shaped by historical circumstances. Two principal approaches are discernible: "The theological-philosophical perspective of Muslim scholars, which views revelation as the manifestation of divine knowledge within the Prophet's soul, and the historicist perspective of Western Qur'anic scholars, which interprets the Qur'an in relation to the Prophet Muhammad's religious experience and historical context." The present study undertakes a comparative analysis of these two intellectual frameworks by examining the views of Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Theodor Nöldeke. To this aim, was used an analytical-comparative method, drawing on primary sources to examine the epistemological and ontological foundations of both perspectives. The findings demonstrated that Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, drawing upon the principles of Transcendent Philosophy, conceptualizes revelation as a form of presential or present knowledge and as an existential connection between the Prophet and the Divine Source. In contrast, Nöldeke, from a historicist perspective, regards the Qur'an as a gradual phenomenon shaped by the cultural and linguistic conditions of its period of revelation. The study concludes that Ṭabāṭabā'ī's theological and philosophical explanation, due to its greater theoretical coherence and avoidance of historical reductionism, offers a more robust explanatory framework for understanding the nature of the Qur'an. Additionally, it provides a strong theoretical basis for critical engagement with contemporary Western approaches to revelation.

Keywords: Revelation, Nature of the Qur'an, Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Theodor Nöldeke, Historicism.

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Introduction

One of the most controversial issues in contemporary Qur'anic studies concerns the nature of revelation and the origin of the Holy Qur'an. This issue lies at the intersection of two fundamentally different epistemological paradigms: Theological realism and historicism. Muslim thinkers, drawing on their philosophical and theological foundations, have regarded revelation as a trans-historical reality that falls under the category of the Prophet's presential knowledge of the metaphysical realm. In contrast, many Western Orientalist scholars have interpreted it as a human and historical experience that emerged within the cultural and social environment of seventh-century Arabia (Neuwirth, 2019: 27-29).

Accordingly, the divergence between these two approaches stems from fundamentally different ontological and epistemological frameworks. Qur'anic scholars such as Theodor Nöldeke¹ consider revelation to be a linguistic and historical phenomenon that should be examined through philological criticism and historical analysis (Nöldeke, 2013: 54). By contrast, Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, in "*al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*," drawing upon the principles of "Transcendent Philosophy" and the Sadrian doctrine of the unity of existence, understands revelation as a level of presential knowledge that is bestowed from the World of Command upon the heart of the Prophet, and is therefore fundamentally distinct from ordinary human experience and historical processes (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1970 AD/1390 AH: 1, 70).

In recent decades, the increasing prominence of historicist approaches to Qur'anic studies, particularly in Western academic circles, has contributed to the spread of a secular interpretation of revelation. According to this reading, represented by Nöldeke, the Prophet is not regarded as the bearer of a transcendent divine reality; rather, he is interpreted as an individual undergoing a religious experience within his own social and historical context (Reynolds, 2008: 12-18).

Although this trend (according to Orientalist scholars) is methodologically grounded in certain historical and linguistic data, it ultimately culminates in a form of religious experientialism and comes into fundamental conflict with Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's theological and philosophical understanding of revelation. Therefore, a critical reexamination of these perspectives from the standpoint of Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's thought is important not only for providing a rational defense of the divine origin of the Qur'an but also for fostering constructive dialogue between Islamic theology and modern Qur'anic scholarship.

1. Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930) is regarded as one of the most prominent German Orientalists and one of the founders of the historical-critical study of the Qur'an in the West. His scholarly reputation rests primarily on his well-known work *Geschichte des Qorāns* (The History of the Qur'an), first published in 1860 and later revised and expanded in collaboration with Friedrich Schwally, Gotthelf Bergsträsser, and Otto Pretzl. Drawing on methods of historiography, linguistics, and textual criticism, Nöldeke sought to reconstruct the process of the Qur'an's revelation, compilation, and textual development on the basis of historical and literary evidence. Consequently, his views had a profound impact on the formation of academic Qur'anic studies in the West and continue to represent one of the most important foundations of the historical approach in Qur'anic scholarship.

1. Literature Review

A substantial body of scholarship in both Persian and English has addressed the nature of revelation, the origin of the Qur'an, the thought of Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, and the views of Theodor Nöldeke. However, these studies have typically focused on specific aspects of the issue, and there remains a lack of systematic research that directly compares these two intellectual frameworks on the nature and origin of the Qur'an.

Within the field of Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s thought, studies such as "A Comparative Study of the Relationship between Reason and Revelation in the Thought of Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* and the School of *Tafkik*," (Bigdeli Kashani, 2009 AD/1388 SH) "Reason and Revelation in the Thought of Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*," (Beheshtipour, 2011 AD/1390 SH) "The Identity and Nature of Revelation from the Perspective of Mulla Sadra and Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* with Reference to the Theory of Religious and Revelatory Experience," (Shanzari & Taheri, 2012 AD/1391 SH) "The Phenomenon of Revelation from the Perspective of Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*," (Ahmadi, 2015 AD/1394 SH) "The Reality of Revelation in the Qur'an According to Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* and Ayatollah Jawadi Amuli," (Mirzaei, 2023) and "The Reality of Revelation from the Perspective of Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*" (Novinfar & Kariminia, 2023 AD/1402 SH) have explained the philosophical, theological, and exegetical foundations of Allamah's theory of revelation. Although these works have made significant contributions to clarifying the epistemological and philosophical foundations of revelation in Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s thought, they have primarily adopted an intra-Islamic approach and have not examined his views in comparison with those of Orientalist scholars, particularly Theodor Nöldeke.

Conversely, another group of Persian studies has focused on analyzing and critiquing Nöldeke's views on the Qur'an. These include "An Examination of Nöldeke's View of Prophethood and Revelation," (Saadi & Nasiriyani, 2016 AD/1395 SH) "An Evaluation of Nöldeke's Theory of Qur'anic Borrowing," (Rezaei Haftadar & Nasiriyani, 2017 AD/1396 SH) "An Analytical Critique of Nöldeke's Claims in The History of the Qur'an Concerning the Alleged Omission-Based Distortion of the Qur'an," (Iqbal, Sharifi, & Dehqani, 2018 AD/1397 SH) "A Critical Reading of Nöldeke's Theory of the Incoherence of Qur'anic Verses," (Hosseinizadeh & Mirzinli, 2024 AD/1403 SH) and "An Analysis and Critique of Nöldeke's View of Revelation in the Light of Qur'anic Teachings." (Bargahi & Ghazanfari, 2025 AD/1404 SH)

These studies have generally adopted a critical approach in evaluating Nöldeke's views on Qur'anic borrowing, prophethood, revelation, textual alteration, the history of the Qur'an, and the coherence of its verses. However, their analytical framework has been predominantly theological, aiming to defend the traditional Islamic understanding rather than to undertake a comparative examination of Nöldeke's views alongside Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s philosophical and exegetical system. In English-language scholarship, several studies have directly examined Nöldeke's thought. The article "Revelation According to Nöldeke: An Analysis towards the Issue of the Prophethood of Muhammad in Geschichte des Qorans" (Wan Abas & Yusoff, 2012) analyzes Nöldeke's understanding of revelation and prophethood. Likewise, the study "Komparasi Studi Historis-Kritis al-Qur'an Orientalis" (Nur, Iballa, & Azima, 2024) compares the views of Geiger, Nöldeke, and Neuwirth within the framework of historical-

critical Qur'anic studies, highlighting their differing explanations of the relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible. The article "The Compilation of the Qur'an: Prophetic Traditions, Nöldeke's Theory and Recent Scholarship (2020–2025)" (Naz, 2025) compares and evaluates Nöldeke's theory concerning the compilation and codification of the Qur'an in light of recent scholarship. Similarly, "The Efforts of Theodor Nöldeke in the Study of the History of the Qur'an" (al-Mayyah, 2025) examines Nöldeke's methodology and his historical and linguistic foundations in studying the history of the Qur'an, while Ignaz Goldziher and Theodor Nöldeke on "Revelation: A Critical Study in Light of Classical Muslim Scholarship" (Kalsoom & Ghayas, 2025) compares the views of Nöldeke and Goldziher on revelation with those of classical Muslim theologians and exegetes.

Despite the scholarly contributions of these works, their primary focus has been historical and linguistic analysis, Orientalist critique, or comparisons among Orientalists and Muslim scholars. None has conducted a systematic comparative investigation of Nöldeke's intellectual framework in relation to Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's philosophical and exegetical system.

On the other hand, a number of studies have examined Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī alongside Orientalist scholarship. Among these is "A Study of the Miraculous Aspects of the Holy Qur'an from the Perspective of Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Orientalists," (Javadiyan Asl, Farhadian, Khalili, 2022) which compares Allamah's views with those of Orientalists regarding the *I'jāz* of the Qur'an. However, its principal focus is Qur'anic inimitability rather than the nature of revelation and the origin of the Qur'an as independent subjects.

A review of the existing literature reveals that previous studies have addressed only specific aspects of the broader issue. Some have focused on the philosophical foundations of Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's theory of revelation, others on critiquing Nöldeke's views, and still others on historical or linguistic analyses of the Qur'an from an Orientalist perspective. However, no study has yet provided a direct and systematic comparison of Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's and Theodor Nöldeke's views concerning the nature and origin of the Qur'an, particularly with regard to their ontological, epistemological, and linguistic foundations. The originality of the present study lies in its comparative and analytical approach, which reconstructs the theoretical foundations of both thinkers, evaluates their respective explanatory capacities regarding revelation and the origin of the Qur'an, and thereby addresses a significant gap in comparative Qur'anic studies between the Islamic philosophical-exegetical tradition and the Western historicist approach.

2. Research Methodology

The present study is fundamental in purpose and employs a descriptive-analytical methodology with a comparative approach. Data were collected through library research using primary sources in Persian, Arabic, and English. In this regard, Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's views were reconstructed primarily on the basis of "*al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*" and his other writings, while Theodor Nöldeke's perspectives were examined through *The History of the Qur'an* and other authoritative studies within the historical tradition of Qur'anic scholarship.

After identifying the theoretical foundations of both scholars concerning the nature and origin of the Qur'an, the data were analyzed with particular attention to their ontological, epistemological, and linguistic assumptions.

Subsequently, a comparative analysis was conducted to identify the similarities and differences between the two theories and to evaluate their respective explanatory capacities regarding revelation and the origin of the Qur'an. This approach provides a systematic framework for comparing the Islamic philosophical-exegetical tradition with the Western historicist approach and enables a unified assessment of the theoretical foundations and explanatory strengths of both perspectives. The objective of this article is to elucidate the theoretical foundations of these two approaches and compare them at the levels of ontology, epistemology, and the language of revelation. Accordingly, the study addresses three principal questions:

- What are the philosophical and epistemological foundations of Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s theory of revelation?
- How does Theodor Nöldeke explain the origin and nature of the Qur'an?
- What are the principal similarities and differences between these two approaches in their understanding of revelation?

The central hypothesis of this study is that Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s approach is grounded in the metaphysics of the unity of being and the divine nature of prophetic knowledge, whereas Nöldeke's approach is founded upon historical empiricism and the phenomenology of religion. Consequently, Allamah's perspective, by virtue of its coherent philosophical foundations and its internal understanding of revelation, possesses greater explanatory power and may serve as a rational response to secular interpretations of the Qur'an.

3. Conceptual Framework of Key Terms

3.1. Revelation

Revelation is the most fundamental concept in Islamic thought and the central principle for explaining the nature of the Qur'an. In the Qur'an itself, revelation is employed in various senses, including inspiration, symbolic communication, divine guidance, and God's communication with His prophets. In Islamic theology, however, revelation refers specifically to the unique, supra-empirical communication between God and His prophets through which the divine message is conveyed.

Explaining the true nature of this communication has consistently been a central concern of Islamic theology. Muslim thinkers, particularly Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, have understood revelation as an ontological reality that transcends history and ordinary human experience (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 2, 275-279). In contrast, many contemporary Western Qur'anic scholars, including Nöldeke, have sought to interpret revelation within the framework of religious experience, psychological factors, and historical circumstances (Reynolds, 2008: 10). Consequently, the nature of revelation constitutes the primary point of divergence between the two approaches examined in this study.

3.2. The Origin of the Qur'an

The origin of the Qur'an is one of the most fundamental issues in Qur'anic studies and concerns the ultimate source of the Qur'an, as well as the respective roles of God, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and historical circumstances in its emergence. The answer to this question lies at the heart of two fundamentally different approaches to Qur'anic scholarship.

Within the Islamic exegetical and philosophical tradition, the Qur'an is understood as the literal Word of God and the manifestation of a transcendent reality revealed to the Prophet through divine revelation (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 2, 18-23). By contrast, a substantial body of Orientalist scholarship explains the origin of the Qur'an in terms of the Prophet's religious experience, the influence of earlier religious traditions, and the cultural and social conditions of Late Antiquity (Sinai, 2020: 16). Therefore, the question of the Qur'an's origin is not merely historical but is deeply intertwined with the ontological, epistemological, and theological assumptions of each theoretical framework.

3.3. Historicism

Historicism is one of the most influential approaches in modern religious and scriptural studies, emphasizing the decisive role of historical, cultural, and social contexts in the formation and interpretation of religious texts. According to this approach, no sacred text can be adequately understood independently of the historical circumstances in which it emerged. Proper interpretation therefore requires careful consideration of the political, cultural, linguistic, and intellectual environment of the period in which the text originated.

Within Western Qur'anic scholarship, particularly in the works of Theodor Nöldeke, historicism occupies a central position and serves as the methodological basis for explaining the origin, chronological order of revelation, and historical development of the Qur'an (Nöldeke et al., 2013: 1-8). In contrast, while Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī acknowledges the importance of historical context for understanding certain aspects of the Qur'an, he maintains that the reality of revelation and the origin of the Qur'an transcend history and insists upon their divine and supra-historical source. Accordingly, historicism constitutes one of the principal points of divergence between the two perspectives examined in the present study.

4. Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's Epistemological and Ontological Foundations of Revelation and the Qur'an

In his "*al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*," Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, drawing upon the principles of "Transcendent Philosophy," aims to explain revelation not merely as a linguistic or psychological phenomenon but as an ontological and epistemological reality rooted in the hierarchy of existence and directly bestowed from the divine realm upon the heart of the Prophet. According to his view, revelation is not simply a communicative process between God and humanity; rather, it is a form of presential knowledge, in which the Prophet's being attains a degree of immateriality and intuitive vision that enables him to receive the divine word (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1970 AD/1390 SH: 1, 84). This conception stands in contrast to sensory or empirical understandings of revelation and offers a metaphysical explanation of the connection between the material world and the realm of the Divine Command.

According to Allamah, the reality of revelation is neither an abstract concept nor a mental representation; rather, it is a luminous and intellectual mode of existence that descends from the realm of the Divine Command to the soul of the Prophet. The Qur'an itself alludes to this reality: "Indeed, it is truly a revelation from the Lord of the worlds, brought down by the Trustworthy Spirit upon your heart, so that you may be among the warners." (al-Shu'arā': 192-194)

In his commentary on these verses, Allamah emphasizes that revelation is a descent, not a process of ordinary creation; that is, it is the descent of a degree of divine knowledge upon the Prophet's heart without the mediation of the senses or mental processes. Consequently, within Allamah's epistemological framework, revelation is a non-acquired and supra-empirical reality that is realized through the manifestation of divine knowledge in the Prophet's soul (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1970 AD/1390 AD: 15, 318).

In his philosophical analysis of revelation, Allamah relates it directly to the doctrine of the gradation of existence and the theory of presential knowledge. According to Transcendent Philosophy, knowledge and existence are fundamentally identical, and every degree of existence is identical with knowledge of itself and of higher levels of existence (Mulla Sadra, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 3, 102). Accordingly, revelation is understood as the manifestation of a degree of divine existence in the ontological mirror of the Prophet, such that the Word of God becomes identical with the Prophet's knowledge without diminishing God's independent existence. From Allamah's perspective, receiving revelation does not consist in hearing an external sound or perceiving a material phenomenon; rather, it is the presence of divine knowledge within the Prophet's cognitive faculty, a form of unity between the knower and the known at a higher ontological level (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1970 AD/1390 AH: 2, 154).

Within this intellectual framework, revelation is not a "Message" in the conventional sense but rather a mode of epistemic union between the Active Intellect and the human intellect. Allamah writes that, in the state of revelation, the Prophet perceives divine realities neither through the external senses nor through the faculty of imagination; instead, he apprehends them through the very essence of his soul, which is connected to the intelligible realm (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1970 AD/1390 AH: 2, 314). Accordingly, he regards revelation as a natural continuation of the descending and ascending arcs of existence, the very relationship that links divine knowledge and human knowledge. Thus, revelation is not viewed as an external or contingent event but as a stage in the continuous effusion of being, through which the divine Word descends from the level of unity to the realm of multiplicity (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1970 AD/1390 AH: 3, 182).

One important consequence of this analysis is the distinction between revelation, inspiration, and mystical experience. In "*al-Mīzān*," Allamah carefully distinguishes these concepts, emphasizing that inspiration is an inner form of cognition that may also be granted to saints and believers, but it occupies a lower level than revelation because the knowledge acquired through inspiration originates from the levels of the soul rather than from the realm of intellect and the Divine Command (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1970 AD/1390 AH: 3, 120). Mystical experience likewise involves unveiling and spiritual vision, but by its very nature it is personal and relative, depending upon the individual's spiritual journey. Revelation, however,

is the direct bestowal of divine knowledge upon the Prophet and is entirely free from error or subjective influence (Vaezi, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 148). Accordingly, Allamah regards mysticism and prophethood as essentially distinct: mysticism is the result of humanity's journey toward God, whereas revelation is the manifestation of God's will in the being of His chosen messenger.

In explaining the epistemological nature of revelation, Allamah appeals to the doctrine of the unity between divine knowledge and prophetic knowledge.

According to this theory, the Prophet's knowledge constitutes a manifestation of divine knowledge within the Prophet's existential capacity. This does not mean that the Prophet's knowledge is identical with God's knowledge of creation; rather, it is a manifestation of that knowledge on a lower ontological plane, just as sunlight is reflected in a mirror without becoming separated from the sun itself (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1970 AD/1390 AH: 5, 80). From this perspective, the Qur'an, as the Word of God, is not the Prophet's linguistic experience but the embodiment of divine knowledge expressed through human language. The divine speech contained in the Qur'an is God's own knowledge manifested in the Arabic language and accommodated to the level of human understanding without losing its supra-historical reality.

With respect to the origin of the Qur'an, Allamah maintains that the Qur'an is the Speech of God, and that the Prophet's relationship to it is one of reception, not composition. Rejecting the phenomenological and psychological interpretations advanced by certain Orientalists, who regard revelation as an inner experience generated by the Prophet's subconscious, Allamah insists that the Qur'an does not belong to the category of human knowledge and therefore cannot be adequately explained through the methodologies of psychology or historicism (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1970 AD/1390 AH: 6, 261). In his view, during the reception of revelation the Prophet is not an active producer of knowledge but rather the recipient of divine grace. In the state of contemplative witnessing, he exercises no intervention whatsoever in the content of revelation; instead, he remains entirely receptive before the divine effusion (Ahmadi, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 161).

In criticizing empirical theories of revelation, Ṭabāṭabā'ī explicitly states that reducing revelation to psychological states stems from a misunderstanding of the ontological nature of the soul and knowledge.

He writes: "Those who regard revelation as a product of imagination or spiritual experience have failed to understand the true nature of knowledge. Knowledge is neither a mental image nor a sensory reflection; rather, it is a mode of existence realized within the immaterial realm." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1970 AD/1390 AH: 10, 263) From his perspective, historical and empirical theories of revelation implicitly deny the hierarchical levels of existence and the soul's immaterial nature. Consequently, they are incapable of adequately explaining revelation, whose essence originates in the immaterial realm of Divine Command.

Ṭabāṭabā'ī's understanding of Divine Speech is rooted in the doctrine of Divine monotheism in action. He holds that every action in existence ultimately proceeds from God, and Divine Speech is no exception. Since revelation is a Divine act, although it appears in the form of human language and words, its true reality subsists at the level of Divine existence. Thus, the Qur'an is not a product of history but a manifestation of God's continuous grace

descending from the realm of Divine Command to the realm of creation (Khosropanah, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 20). This monotheistic perspective distinguishes the Qur'an from all forms of historicism and empiricism, placing it firmly within its metaphysical and trans-historical status.

In summary, *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* understands revelation not as a psychological or cultural event but as a Divine, trans-historical, and epistemic reality grounded in a monotheistic ontology. Within his intellectual system, revelation is a form of presential knowledge; Divine Speech is the manifestation of God's knowledge; the Prophet is the receiver rather than the author of revelation; and the Qur'an itself is the very Speech of God manifested in human language. On the basis of these principles, any historical or empirical interpretation of revelation is necessarily incomplete, since it fails to recognize the relationship between the hierarchy of existence, presential knowledge, and Divine grace. Consequently, *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s intellectual system may be regarded as one of the most coherent and philosophically sophisticated explanations of the nature of revelation within the Islamic tradition, offering substantial resources for responding to the philosophical and theological challenges posed by modern Qur'anic scholarship.

Building upon this intellectual tradition, contemporary scholars such as Javadi Amoli have further developed the metaphysical principles of Transcendent Philosophy and the interpretive approach of "*al-Mīzān*," emphasizing the supra-human reality of revelation and its correspondence with the hierarchy of existence. They have also sought to reinterpret the relationship between revelation, reason, and religious language within a comprehensive philosophical framework (Javadi Amoli, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 241). This continuity demonstrates that the doctrine of the sacred nature of revelation in *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s thought is not merely an individual opinion but forms part of a living tradition within contemporary Islamic theology.

5. Orientalist Historical and Anthropological Interpretations of the Qur'an

In contrast to Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s metaphysical and theocentric approach, a number of Western Orientalists have attempted to explain the origin and nature of the Qur'an through historical, linguistic, and anthropological methods. Within this framework, the Qur'an is regarded as a historical text that emerged in close connection with the religious experience of the Prophet Muhammad and the cultural, social, and linguistic conditions of seventh-century Arabia. The epistemological foundations of this perspective rest upon three principal assumptions: empiricism as the basis of knowledge, historicism in the analysis of religious phenomena, and textual skepticism regarding the authenticity and stability of the Qur'anic text (Sinai, 2020: 136-146; Reynolds, 2008: 17-21). Consequently, the study of the Qur'an is relocated from the domain of theology to that of the history of religions and textual criticism. This scholarly tradition reached one of its most influential expressions in the work of Theodor Nöldeke.

5.1. Theodor Nöldeke: The History of the Qur'an and the Chronological Order of Revelation

5.1.1. A Historical Formulation of the Origin of the Qur'an

Theodor Nöldeke (1836-1930) is widely regarded as the founder of the Western historical-critical tradition of Qur'anic studies. His landmark work, "The History of the Qur'an" (*Geschichte des Qorâns*), first published in 1860, inaugurated an approach that later became known as the Göttingen School, forming the foundation of historical-critical Qur'anic scholarship in the German-speaking academic world. Expanded in later editions by Friedrich Schwally, Gotthelf Bergsträsser, and Otto Pretzl, the work represented the first systematic attempt to reconstruct the historical development of the Qur'an's revelation and compilation through linguistic, stylistic, and thematic analysis (Nöldeke et al., 2013: 4-8).

Its significance lies in establishing the academic study of the Qur'an in Western universities as an independent enterprise, detached from the traditional interpretive framework of Islamic scholarship. Nöldeke classified the Qur'anic chapters into four chronological periods based on their stylistic and thematic characteristics: Early Meccan, Middle Meccan, Late Meccan, and Medinan (Nöldeke et al., 2013: 65-71). This classification subsequently became one of the principal foundations of Western scholarship on the chronology of Qur'anic revelation and continues to influence contemporary academic research.

According to Nöldeke, these stylistic developments reflect the gradual formation of the Qur'an within the broader social evolution of the early Muslim community. In this interpretation, the Prophet Muhammad functions as the principal historical agent in this developmental process, and the Qur'anic text are understood in close relation to the circumstances of the first Islamic society. Through his analysis of vocabulary, syntactic structures, and the linguistic rhythm of the early Meccan surahs, particularly Surah *al-Qamar*, *al-Raḥmān*, and *al-Najm*, Nöldeke argued that these passages display a close affinity with the oral tradition and literary conventions of pre-Islamic Arabic culture (Nöldeke et al., 2013: 126-131).

Nöldeke also established a direct link between the historical evolution of the Qur'anic text and the transformation of the Prophet's religious personality, viewing changes in the themes of the surahs as reflections of the gradual development of the prophetic experience. Utilizing computational linguistics methods, some contemporary Western researchers have also proposed similar models for studying the structural evolution of the Qur'anic text, which remain based on the premise of the historical origin of the text (Sawalha et al., 2025).

In later editions of his work, in collaboration with Schwally, Nöldeke claimed that the current arrangement of the Uthmanic codex lacks divine order and is the product of political decisions made during the third caliphate. By analyzing narratives concerning the compilation of the Qur'an in Islamic sources, including *Suyūṭī's "al-Itqān"* and *Ibn Nadīm's "al-Fihrist,"* he concluded that the compilation process began in the early decades of the Hijrah and continued into the second century; a process wherein limited changes occurred in the order of the surahs and recitations (Nöldeke & Schwally, 2022: 57-63). From his perspective, the final form of the codex is considered the result of a historical process of text stabilization within the early Muslim community.

5.1.2. Nöldeke's Methodological Legacy and a Critical Evaluation of His Approach

In later Qur'anic studies influenced by the Nöldekean tradition, scholars such as Richard Bell and Arthur Jeffery expanded these historical and linguistic foundations by incorporating modern methods of textual criticism. They viewed the Qur'an as a historical document that, like other ancient texts, should be investigated through reconstructing its internal textual strata, comparing it with earlier religious traditions, and analyzing the gradual development of its linguistic structure (Jeffery, 1980: 10-18; Bell, 2012: 15-22). As a result of this approach, Qur'anic studies in Western universities progressively moved away from theological inquiry and became firmly situated within the disciplines of the history of religions and textual criticism.

One of the epistemological consequences of Nöldeke's approach was the emergence of a form of historical positivism in Qur'anic studies. Within this perspective, scientific knowledge is considered valid only insofar as it is grounded in historical evidence and empirical data, while metaphysical explanations are excluded from scholarly investigation. Consequently, revelation as a supernatural phenomenon is replaced by historical analyses of the formation of the Qur'anic text. This methodological foundation later exerted a profound influence on the development of modern academic Qur'anic studies in Europe and North America (Fudge, 2025: 483).

From an anthropological perspective, Nöldeke's theory fundamentally redefines the role of the Prophet Muhammad in the process of revelation. In this view, the Prophet is no longer regarded as the recipient of a transcendent divine reality but rather as the central figure of a religious experience shaped by the social and cultural conditions of his time. Revelation is therefore interpreted not as an act of Divine grace but primarily as an expression of religious consciousness, inner experience, and the spiritual genius of a historical individual. Consequently, the Qur'an itself is understood as the product of the Prophet's intellectual and social engagement with his surrounding reality.

Another implication of this perspective is the reduction of the Qur'anic text to a cultural and linguistic phenomenon. Once the origin of the text is explained exclusively within the historical horizon, concepts such as the Qur'an's *I'jāz*, its status as the Word of God and its revealed character lose their epistemological significance. The Qur'an thus becomes subject to historical reconstruction in the same manner as other religious texts. For this reason, many Muslim scholars have regarded Nöldeke's approach as marking the beginning of a reductionist tendency in the study of revelation (Riahi-Mehr, 2024 AD/1403 SH).

In recent years, however, manuscript studies of the Qur'an have posed significant challenges to some of Nöldeke's classical hypotheses concerning the history of the Qur'anic text. Research on the Ṣan'ā' manuscripts, paleographical studies of the early Ḥijāzī script, and new investigations into the oral transmission of the Qur'an have indicated that a substantial portion of the Qur'anic text had already been stabilized during a period very close to the lifetime of the Prophet. Scholars such as Harald Motzki (2001: 1-34) and Nicolai Sinai (2020: 88-95) have argued that the 'Uthmānic recension was concerned primarily with the standardization of existing recitations rather than with rewriting or substantially editing the text itself. More recent studies employing multispectral imaging technologies and advanced

codicological methods have likewise dated several early Qur'anic manuscripts to the first decades of Islam, thereby prompting a reassessment of classical theories that posited a significantly later compilation of the Qur'an (Déroche, 2021: 148). Moreover, a number of contemporary Western scholars of the Qur'an have begun to distance themselves from strongly historicist interpretations. Recent studies increasingly emphasize that although historical investigation is indispensable for understanding the Qur'an, reducing the text entirely to the social and cultural circumstances of its revelation cannot adequately account for its conceptual coherence or its remarkable linguistic complexity. Within this framework, some researchers have sought to establish a balance between historical analysis and recognition of an independent structural integrity in the final formation of the Qur'anic text (Sinai, 2023: 18-24).

Muslim critics, including 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (1983) and Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd (1996), despite their differing intellectual orientations, agree that Nöldeke's methodology is fundamentally grounded in the presupposition of historical secularism. According to this presupposition, the possibility of genuine divine revelation is excluded from the outset, and the Qur'an is interpreted solely within the framework of human religious experience. In the view of these critics, the principal weakness of Nöldeke's approach lays not so much in its historical conclusions as in its prior epistemological assumptions, which effectively preclude acknowledgment of the Qur'an's divine origin (Kermani, 1996: 684; Badawī, 1997: 150-160).

Overall, Nöldeke may rightly be regarded as the founder of a Western scholarly tradition that interpreted the Qur'an primarily within the framework of historical development and social transformation. Although many of his specific historical conclusions have subsequently been revised or challenged, his methodological legacy continues to exert considerable influence on critical Qur'anic studies in the West. An examination of Theodor Nöldeke's perspective demonstrates that his explanation of the origin and nature of the Qur'an rests on three main presuppositions: historicism, which regards revelation as a phenomenon dependent on the historical context of the Prophet's era; empiricism, which limits valid knowledge to historical and empirical data, thereby excluding the metaphysical explanation of revelation from the domain of scientific research; and a critical approach to the text, which subjects the Qur'an, like all other historical texts, to scrutiny regarding its authenticity and the process of its formation (Reynolds, 2008: 25-29). Overall, despite certain methodological achievements in the historical and linguistic study of the Qur'an, Nöldeke's approach leads to an epistemological reductionism that interprets revelation at the level of human experience. Therefore, from an Islamic perspective, while this approach is useful in understanding the historical contexts of the Qur'an, it appears insufficient for explaining the reality of revelation, as it overlooks the fundamental relationship between divine knowledge, existential grace, and the meta-historical origin of the Qur'an (Asadi, 2024 AD/1403 SH).

6. Comparative Analysis and Critical Evaluation

A comparative examination of Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's thought and Theodor Nöldeke's perspective on the nature and origin of the Qur'an demonstrates that their disagreement extends far beyond differences over particular exegetical claims. Rather, it is rooted in two

fundamentally distinct epistemological and ontological paradigms, each grounded in a different worldview. These paradigms embody contrasting conceptions of God, humanity, and the reality of revelation. Within Allamah intellectual framework, God is the ultimate source of being, knowledge, and meaning, while revelation constitutes a mode of presential knowledge realized within the Prophet's sacred intellect. By contrast, Nöldeke's historicist approach interprets revelation as a religious experience shaped by the historical development of religious language and conditioned by its historical context. From an ontological perspective, Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, drawing upon the principles of "Transcendent Philosophy" and the doctrine of the gradation of existence, understands revelation as an act of God. Within this framework, the Qur'an is the manifestation of divine knowledge at the level of the Prophet's cognition, and the Prophet's existence serves as the locus in which revealed reality is disclosed. Consequently, the Qur'anic text is not regarded as a product of human cognition or literary composition (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, 1970 AD/1390 AH: 12, 136).

By contrast, Nöldeke explains the origin of the Qur'an in relation to the gradual evolution of the Prophet's religious experience and the socio-historical conditions of the period of revelation. This perspective interprets revelation as a historical phenomenon and a process conditioned by human circumstances (Neuwirth, 2019: 44).

From an epistemological standpoint, the divergence between the two approaches becomes even more evident. Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* regards revelation as a form of certain, presential knowledge attained through sacred intuition and therefore immune to error and historical alteration. In this conception, revelatory knowledge arises through an existential connection with the Divine Source and thus belongs to an entirely different order from ordinary forms of human knowledge (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, 1970 AD/1390 AH: 12, 292).

Conversely, Nöldeke, working within the framework of modern empiricism, confines the study of revelation to historical evidence and human experience, considering any supra-empirical interpretation to lie beyond the scope of legitimate scientific inquiry (Reynolds, 2008: 25-29).

A similarly fundamental difference appears at the linguistic level. In Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s thought, the language of the Qur'an is a language of truth and divine guidance, whose words genuinely refer to objective realities. Meaning ultimately originates in the Divine, and the language of revelation functions as the medium through which truth is communicated. Nöldeke, by contrast, regards Qur'anic language as the product of the gradual evolution of the literary and cultural structures of early Arabian society and therefore studies the Qur'anic text according to the general principles governing linguistic development and the history of Semitic literature (Neuwirth, 2019: 51-54).

The principal differences between the two perspectives may be summarized as follows:

Dimension	Allamah <i>Ṭabāṭabā'ī</i>	Theodor Nöldeke
Ontology of Revelation	Revelation is a mode of presential knowledge and a divine act.	Revelation is a religious experience conditioned by historical circumstances.
Epistemology	Revelatory knowledge is certain and supra-empirical.	Revelation is interpreted through human experience and historical evidence.
Language of the Qur'an	The Qur'an employs a truthful and reality-correspondent language of	Qur'anic language is a historical and literary phenomenon that evolved over time.

Dimension	Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī	Theodor Nöldeke
	guidance.	
Origin of the Qur'an	The Qur'an has a divine origin and is protected from corruption.	The Qur'an emerged gradually within the early Muslim community.
Method of Interpretation	Qur'an-by-Qur'an interpretation within a theocentric framework.	Historical-critical methodology.

Methodologically, the principal difference concerns the way revelation itself is approached. Nöldeke's historical-critical method deliberately brackets theological presuppositions and treats the Qur'an as one historical text among others. As a consequence, the internal reality of revelatory experience becomes largely inaccessible within this framework. Moreover, this methodology often fails to clearly distinguish revelation, inspiration, and other forms of religious experience, thereby reducing prophethood to the spiritual experience of a historical individual. Several contemporary scholars have identified this limitation as a principal weakness of secular methodologies in the study of revelation (Fudge, 2025: 489). By contrast, Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's intellectual system exhibits a considerably greater degree of philosophical coherence. Ontologically, it rests on the doctrine of the gradation of existence and the intrinsic unity of knowledge and being; epistemologically, it carefully distinguishes between presential and acquired knowledge, thereby providing a coherent philosophical account of the very possibility of revelation. From this perspective, Allamah's theory possesses greater explanatory power in addressing contemporary philosophical and hermeneutical questions concerning the origin of the Qur'an.

Ultimately, the central question concerns which of these two theoretical frameworks provides the more satisfactory explanation of the true nature of revelation. Nöldeke's radical historicism appears vulnerable to a form of epistemological self-refutation: "If every religious text and every interpretation is entirely determined by historical conditions, then this principle must also apply to the historian's own historical analysis. Furthermore, although the historical method is highly valuable for explaining the social and linguistic context of the Qur'an, it remains limited in accounting for the origin of meaning and the reality of revelatory experience, reducing an essentially ontological phenomenon to a merely cultural and historical process."

In contrast, Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's theory integrates ontology, epistemology, and the language of revelation into a unified explanatory framework that simultaneously accounts for prophetic experience, the structure of the Qur'anic text, and its divine origin. Accordingly, if theoretical coherence and explanatory adequacy are taken as the primary criteria of evaluation, Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's philosophical framework offers a more comprehensive and analytically robust account of the nature and origin of the Qur'an.

7. The Epistemological and Theological Implications of the Two Approaches

The differences between the ontological and epistemological foundations of these two approaches have far-reaching consequences for both Qur'anic interpretation and the theology of revelation. Within Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's intellectual system, the interpretation of the Qur'an must be conducted in the light of the Qur'an itself, following the method of

"Interpreting the Qur'an by the Qur'an." This is because the revealed text possesses an intrinsic, coherent structure founded upon the interconnectedness of its multiple layers of meaning. Accordingly, a correct understanding of the Qur'an depends on uncovering the internal relationships among its verses and the conceptual network that governs the text as a whole, rather than merely reconstructing the historical circumstances of revelation (Vakili, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 130).

By contrast, within Nöldeke's historicist framework, meaning is regarded as fundamentally historical and dependent on the circumstances surrounding the text's formation. The Qur'an is therefore understood as a historical document whose interpretation requires reconstructing the cultural, social, and linguistic context of the earliest Muslim community. Consequently, textual interpretation becomes inseparable from the interpreter's historical horizon, while meaning itself emerges through a continuous process of historical reinterpretation. Although this approach facilitates interdisciplinary research, it ultimately relegates the sacred unity and intrinsic coherence of the Qur'anic text to a secondary concern.

The divergence between these approaches becomes even more pronounced in the theology of revelation. According to Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, revelation represents the continuation of divine grace and the manifestation of the Divine Name "*al-ʿAlīm*" (the All-Knowing) within the existential rank of the Perfect Human.

Within this framework, God, while remaining absolutely transcendent, manifests Himself within the Prophet's cognitive faculty, and the relationship between God and humanity is understood as an existential relationship grounded in the hierarchy of being.

By contrast, in Nöldeke's approach, revelation is understood primarily through the lens of human religious experience and the gradual formation of religious consciousness. Consequently, God's role in the analysis of revelation is reduced to an indirect interpretive principle, while revelation itself is explained chiefly within the framework of religious experience and historical development (Reynolds, 2008: 25-29).

From the standpoint of Islamic philosophy, reducing revelation to human experience carries significant implications for the understanding of religion itself. Once the origin of revelation is explained solely in terms of humanity's historical experience, the sacred dimension of religious knowledge is likewise transformed, and its connection with the transcendent source of knowledge becomes attenuated. As Sayyid Hossein Nasr (2012) observes, modern historicism severs religious knowledge from its metaphysical foundation, thereby transforming religion into an essentially human phenomenon in which its relationship to divine reality gradually diminishes (Nasr, 2005: 15-18).

For this reason, reconsidering the theory of revelation in light of Islamic philosophy has become more important than ever. At a time when critical Qur'anic studies have expanded considerably within academic scholarship worldwide, providing a philosophical account of revelation, such as that developed by Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* and later elaborated by Islamic philosophers including Mulla Sadra and Javadi Amoli, offers a coherent foundation for engaging contemporary hermeneutical approaches. This is especially important when responding to interpretations that explain the origin of the Qur'an exclusively within the historical horizon.

Reconstructing a theory of revelation on the basis of Islamic philosophy requires three fundamental steps:

- 1) Redefining revelation as a mode of presential knowledge and a divine act;
- 2) Explaining the language of the Qur'an in light of the inseparable relationship between expression and meaning in divine speech;
- 3) Developing an epistemological critique of religious empiricism on the basis of a theocentric ontology of existence.

Such a reconstruction would make possible a theory that remains faithful to the intellectual foundations of the Islamic tradition while simultaneously engaging modern humanities and contemporary critical approaches to Qur'anic studies. Such an approach is not merely an apologetic defense of the sacred nature of the Qur'an; rather, it opens new philosophical horizons for understanding the relationship between God, humanity, and the reality of revelation in the contemporary world.

8. Comparative Implications for Theology and Contemporary Qur'anic Studies

The question of the nature of revelation and the origin of the Qur'an is not merely a historical or exegetical issue. Rather, it represents the point of convergence between two fundamentally different theological paradigms: "Modern historical theology and Islamic metaphysical theology."

Within this broader perspective, comparing Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s theory with the approaches of Western Orientalists serves not merely as a defense against contemporary reinterpretations of revelation but also provides an opportunity to rethink the theory of revelation itself in the modern world, a world in which religious language, religious experience, and metaphysical truth have increasingly been subjected to anthropocentric and relativistic interpretations.

8.1. The Influence of the Two Approaches on Contemporary Islamic Theology

Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s conception of revelation, grounded in the intimate relationship between divine knowledge and prophetic cognition, has, over recent decades, contributed to the emergence of a distinctly rational theology within the Islamic intellectual tradition. Thinkers such as Motahhari, Javadi Amoli, and Sayyid Hossein Nasr have expanded this conception through the philosophical principles of "Transcendent Philosophy," constructing a comprehensive philosophical system in which revelation is understood as a manifestation of the Reality of Being within the human realm.

Within this framework, reason, mystical intuition, prophethood, and divine knowledge are not regarded as isolated phenomena but as interconnected stages within a single hierarchy of existence. Revelation thus represents the logical continuation of divine knowledge at the level of the Perfect Human. Consequently, the Qur'an is understood not merely as a written text but as a reality possessing an ontological dimension, whose fullest comprehension ultimately requires a form of presential and intuitive cognition.

By contrast, a significant body of contemporary Western Qur'anic scholarship, particularly approaches influenced by the historical-critical study of the Bible, has developed a historically oriented understanding of revelation that emphasizes the human, linguistic, and

cultural dimensions of the Qur'anic text. Scholars such as Angelika Neuwirth (2019) and Theodor Nöldeke have employed historical, linguistic, and socio-cultural methodologies to explain revelation within the gradual formation of the early Muslim community and the evolution of religious discourse in the Arabian Peninsula.

Within this framework, the Qur'an is interpreted in close connection with the historical development of the first Islamic community, while revelation itself is examined through the lenses of religious experience and the text's historical formation. Analytically, the principal epistemological consequence of this approach is its tendency toward a historicization of religion, which, in certain contemporary interpretations, approaches an essentially cultural understanding of sacred scripture (Reynolds, 2008: 78-82).

These two paradigms have produced markedly different consequences for contemporary Islamic theology. Allamah's approach has contributed significantly to the development of rational Shi'i theology and to the expansion of scholarly discussions concerning the philosophy of religion and the Islamization of the human sciences. By contrast, the Orientalist tradition has, in many Western universities, reinforced historical, language-centered, and, in some cases, postmodern interpretations of revelation.

8.2. The Possibility of Dialogue Between Western Hermeneutics and Islamic Theology

At first glance, the gap between modern hermeneutics and Islamic theology appears to be fundamental. Nevertheless, moving beyond mere opposition to genuine philosophical dialogue reveals important common ground between these two intellectual traditions in interpreting and understanding texts. In Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, understanding a text is conceived as a living, ontological process in which meaning emerges through the interaction between the text and the interpreter's existential horizon (Gadamer, 2013: 305). Likewise, in Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s philosophy, interpretation is not merely a linguistic activity but an epistemic process that originates from the interpreter's existential disposition and the nature of his relationship with truth. Accordingly, the Qur'an is ultimately understood through humanity's existential relationship with God (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, 1970 AD/1390 AH: 13, 206).

The principal distinction between these two perspectives lies in the source of meaning. In Western philosophical hermeneutics, meaning is generally sought within the horizons of history, language, and human experience. In Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s thought, however, the ultimate horizon of meaning resides within the ontological degrees of the Divine Reality. Despite this fundamental difference, such a distinction does not necessarily preclude dialogue. Rather, it may serve as the foundation for developing a theocentric hermeneutics, in which understanding the text is not confined to reconstructing its historical circumstances but also incorporates an awareness of the text's supra-historical reality. Within such an approach, careful attention to the linguistic structure of the Qur'an is complemented by recognition of its connection to transcendent truth as an indispensable element of interpretation.

From this perspective, one may envision an interpretive model that integrates the achievements of contemporary philosophy of language with the metaphysical foundations of Islamic theology. Such a model would acknowledge that although the language of revelation

is articulated within history, it simultaneously possesses a supra-historical and ontological significance. Consequently, an adequate understanding of the Qur'an requires simultaneous attention to both the linguistic dimension of the text and its transcendent origin. This approach may therefore provide one of the most promising avenues for reconstructing Islamic theology in dialogue with contemporary critical approaches to Qur'anic studies.

Conclusion

The present study has undertaken a comparative and analytical examination of two fundamentally different intellectual frameworks concerning the nature and origin of the Holy Qur'an. The first is the philosophical and theological perspective of Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, who understands revelation as a divine, ontological, and supra-historical reality. The second is the historicist approach of Theodor Nöldeke, who explains the origin of the Qur'an within the framework of historical development and the Prophet Muhammad's religious experience. The findings demonstrate that the disagreement between these two perspectives extends far beyond differing methods of Qur'anic interpretation; rather, it originates from fundamentally different ontological and epistemological assumptions.

In Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s thought, revelation is the manifestation of divine knowledge within the existential rank of the Prophet, while the Qur'an itself constitutes a level of divine speech. Accordingly, the Prophet, functioning through his sacred intellect, receives a transcendent reality, and the Qur'anic text represents the linguistic manifestation of a truth that transcends history. This understanding is firmly grounded in the principles of "Transcendent Philosophy" and in the intimate relationship between existence, knowledge, and the hierarchical structure of being. By contrast, Nöldeke's historical-critical approach views the Qur'an as a text that gradually came into being through the social and historical processes of the early Islamic community and as the expression of the Prophet's religious experience within its historical context. Within this framework, revelation is interpreted as an essentially human phenomenon, while meaning is regarded as dependent upon the historical circumstances of the period of revelation. Although this approach has produced significant historical and linguistic insights, it ultimately encounters philosophical limitations due to its reductionist character, as it cannot adequately account for the existential relationship among God, the Prophet, and the reality of revelation.

The findings of this research indicate that Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s perspective possesses greater explanatory power by virtue of its philosophical coherence, epistemological depth, and integrated understanding of reason, revelation, and the semantic structure of the Qur'an. The superiority of this framework does not rest merely upon confessional commitment but rather upon its greater capacity to explain the nature of prophetic experience, the origin of meaning simultaneously, and the reality of revelation itself.

Accordingly, the answer to the central question of this study, "Divine Revelation or Historical Experience," is that historical analysis can indeed illuminate certain social, cultural, and linguistic contexts surrounding the Qur'an, but it cannot adequately explain either the origin or the essential reality of revelation. By contrast, Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s theory offers an ontological account of revelation that provides a unified explanation of the Qur'an's divine

origin, prophetic experience, and semantic structure. Therefore, judged according to the criteria of theoretical coherence and explanatory adequacy, the Qur'an is most convincingly understood as the manifestation of the Divine Word articulated through the medium of human language.

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