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### Research Article

# Context, Character, And Civilisation: A Comprehensive Review Of Mohammed And Mohammedanism

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**Abstract.** This study offers a comprehensive analytical review of Mohammed and Mohammedanism, combining Reginald Bosworth Smith's 1874 Royal Institution lectures and Emanuel Deutsch's influential essay "Islam". Through historical contextualisation, textual analysis, and comparative reflection, the review reassesses nineteenth-century European interpretations of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), the Qur'an, and Islamic Civilisation. The findings demonstrate that Smith and Deutsch pioneered a more balanced, evidence-based understanding that challenged prevailing polemical narratives. Their work highlights Muhammad's (Pbuh) moral integrity, the linguistic and literary uniqueness of the Qur'an, and Islam's substantial intellectual and civilisational contributions. This study situates their writings within broader Orientalist discourse while underscoring their lasting significance for modern scholarship on interreligious understanding, textual interpretation, and Islamic historiography.

**Keywords:** Islamic Historiography, Prophet Muhammad, Qur'anic Literature, Orientalist Scholarship, Comparative Religion, Intellectual History.

## INTRODUCTION

*Mohammed and Mohammedanism*, comprising Reginald Bosworth Smith's 1874 Royal Institution lectures and Emanuel Deutsch's celebrated essay "Islam", occupy a distinctive position in nineteenth-century Western scholarship. At a time when polemics and superficial conjecture largely shaped European views of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), Smith and Deutsch advanced a markedly different approach grounded in historical inquiry, philological rigour, and intellectual fairness. Smith's stated aim—to do justice both to "what was great in Mohammed's character" and to "what has been good in Mohammed's influence on the world" (p. 295)—signalled a shift from denunciation to contextual understanding. His lectures, titled "Introductory", "Mohammed", "Mohammedanism", and "Mohammedanism and Christianity", were complemented by Deutsch's influential 1869 *Quarterly Review* article. Deutsch, a German-Jewish Semitic scholar renowned for his expertise in the Talmud and Near Eastern studies, offered one of the most linguistically informed and sympathetic interpretations of Islam available to Victorian readers. Together, their works challenged entrenched prejudices and broadened the intellectual boundaries of their age.

A significant contribution of the book is its recognition of the expanding scholarly resources that transformed the study of Islam in the nineteenth century. Smith notes that reliable Qur'an translations and the research of Sprenger, Caussin de Perceval, Muir, and Deutsch had made the study of early Islam accessible "to any earnest student of the Science of Religion" (p. 295). This shift placed the responsibility on readers to abandon inherited misconceptions and to evaluate Islam based on evidence.

Deutsch's insights further strengthen the opinion by situating Islam within a broader Semitic continuum. His remark that "When the Talmud was completed... the Koran was begun" (p. 295) and that Jews in Arabia "watched for his appearance" (p. 296) positions Islam within established Near Eastern traditions rather than as an isolated phenomenon. This framing highlights the cultural and spiritual forces that shaped the emergence of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh).

## PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Polemical or doctrinally biased interpretations dominated previous research on Islam in nineteenth-century Europe. Early Orientalists often relied on fragmented sources, leading to reductive portrayals of the Prophet (Pbuh) and the Qur'an. Scholars like Sprenger, Muir, and Caussin de Perceval began shifting towards historical analysis, while Deutsch's philological work marked a significant step towards empathetic and text-based understanding.

## METHODOLOGY

This study highlights a historical-analytical method grounded in close reading of Smith's lectures and Deutsch's essay. Primary textual analysis, grounded in a

qualitative research method, is combined with a contextual examination of nineteenth-century Orientalist scholarship. The approach emphasises thematic interpretation, comparative reflection, and critical engagement with direct quotations, aiming to reconstruct how the authors conceptualised Muhammad (Pbuh), the Qur'an, and Islamic Civilisation.

## RESULTS

Findings show that Smith and Deutsch offered a markedly progressive reassessment of Islam for their time. Their analyses highlight Muhammad's (Pbuh) moral integrity, the linguistic and structural uniqueness of the Qur'an, and the profound civilisational impact of Islam. The study reveals that their work challenged dominant European misconceptions, providing a more balanced and intellectually grounded understanding of Islamic history and scripture.

## LECTURE I: INTRODUCTORY

The first lecture of *Mohammed and Mohammedanism*, aptly titled "Introductory", delivered at the Royal Institute, London on 14 February, 1874, provides the conceptual groundwork for Smith's reassessment of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) and the religion he founded. Smith begins by discussing the role and importance of the Science of Comparative Religion; he believes that "they have raised man gradually towards God, rather than brought down God at once to man" (p. 27). According to Smith, Judaism originated during the period of Israelite slavery, but over time it evolved into a political religion. He states explicitly that "Judaism, for instance, sprang into existence at the moment when the Israelites passed... from slavery they emerged into freedom; when they ceased to be a family, and became a nation" (p. 27). Likewise, Smith interprets Buddhism as fundamentally social and reformist in origin, asserting that "Judaism, for instance, sprang into existence at the moment when the Israelites passed... from slavery they emerged into freedom; when they ceased to be a family, and became a nation" (p. 28-29). Turning to Christianity, Smith emphasizes that Christ was sent not for political reform but to restore and to link the worship of God with the service of creation. He quotes that the "Enthusiastic love to Christ himself, evidenced by purity of heart, by forgetfulness of self, and by enthusiastic love to all mankind, was the one condition and the one test of membership" (p. 29). From this comparative framework, Smith turns to Islam and directly challenges entrenched European prejudices, theological polemic, and cultural distortion that had long shaped European perceptions of Islam. Rather than perpetuating inherited biases, he situates the study of Islam within the growing nineteenth-century discipline of comparative religion, which sought to understand religious traditions historically, philologically, and anthropologically. From the outset, Smith aims not to deliver another confessional critique but to initiate a disciplined inquiry into the historical realities of seventh-century Arabia. In a literary environment where Muhammad (Pbuh) had frequently been caricatured or vilified, Smith's tone of measured respect marks a significant departure and invites readers to suspend preconceived judgments.

A central theme of the lecture is historical fairness. Smith argues that religious founders must be evaluated with the same intellectual rigour, whether they are

Moses, Jesus, or Buddha (p. 31). He insists that medieval polemics and sectarian rivalries have no legitimate place in modern scholarship. Smith firmly excludes medieval polemic from modern inquiry, arguing that “The controversies of the Middle Ages are no longer possible to us” (p. 31), thereby locating his work within a historically grounded, critical methodology. He insists that religious founders must be judged by consistent scholarly standards, declaring that “If we are to judge at all, we must judge by the same rules” (p. 31), and further stresses that “Mohammed must be judged by the standards of his age and of his country” (p. 31), and the verifiable historical circumstances in which he lived. This emphasis on contextual interpretation anticipates later developments in historical-critical approaches to religion and demonstrates Smith’s methodological sophistication relative to many of his contemporaries. His insistence on fairness reflects a broader ethical commitment that if Victorian intellectual culture claimed loyalty to truth, it must extend that commitment to its analysis of Islam.

Smith also underscores that the nineteenth century witnessed a dramatic expansion in reliable source material for the study of Islam. Earlier European writers lacked accurate translations of the Qur’an and had limited access to early Islamic history. In contrast, Smith’s generation benefited from the scholarship of Sprenger, Caussin de Perceval, Muir, and especially Deutsch. These works enabled, as Smith observes, “For the first time we have before us the materials for an impartial judgment of the Prophet of Arabia” (p. 41), and that such judgment is now available to “any earnest student of the Science of Religion” (p. 295). By highlighting this scholarly transformation, Smith shifts responsibility onto the educated public, arguing that misunderstandings about Islam can no longer be excused by ignorance or lack of sources.

Deutsch’s philological insights lend further depth to the lecture. Smith situates Islam within the wider Semitic religious continuum. He quotes Deutsch’s striking observation that “When the Talmud was completed... the Koran was begun” (p. 295), situating Islam within a continuum of Near Eastern monotheism rather than portraying it as an aberration. His additional remark that the Jews of Arabia “were watching for his appearance” (p. 296) reinforces the idea that Muhammad (Pbuh) emerged within a cultural landscape already shaped by prophetic expectation. Such framing undermines the notion that Islam appeared suddenly or without antecedents, presenting it instead as historically intelligible and rooted in broader spiritual currents.

Smith also points to the limitations of European imagination when assessing non-European religious figures. He remarks that “We readily acknowledge greatness where it wears a familiar dress” (p. 32). One of Smith’s aims is therefore to bring Muhammad (Pbuh) into the realm of figures considered worthy of serious moral and intellectual engagement. Doing so, he suggests, is essential if Victorian Britain wishes to uphold its own ideals of fairness and truth.

A further theme is the moral sincerity of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh). Smith argues that any meaningful study of the Prophet must acknowledge the depth of his spiritual experience and the consistency of his ethical message. He states that “There is the full light of day upon all that light can ever reach at all” (p. 41). The trials he

endured, the loyalty he inspired, and the transformative effect of his leadership, Smith contends, cannot be reconciled with claims of imposture or self-interest. While Smith does not make theological claims on Muhammad's (Pbuh) behalf, he insists that intellectual honesty requires recognition of his integrity. He described the Prophet as "a mind seething with the inspiration pent within it; 'intoxicated with God,' but full of human weaknesses" (p. 41).

Ultimately, the introductory lecture sets the tone for the remainder of the book. Smith adopts a respectful, comparative, and evidence-based approach that invites readers to engage Islam on its own terms. This methodological foundation prepares the way for the more profound explorations of Muhammad's (Pbuh) life, the Qur'an, Islamic institutions, and comparative religion that follow.

## LECTURE II: "MOHAMMED"

In the Second Lecture, "Mohammed" delivered on 21 February, 1874, Reginald Bosworth Smith turns to what he considers the intellectual heart of his project: a historically grounded, morally sensitive reconstruction of the life and character of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh). He begins by surveying the long history of European misrepresentation, observing that "A complete history of the opinions that have been held by Christians about Mohammed and Mohammedanism would not be an uninteresting chapter, however melancholy, in the history of the human mind" (p. 80). At a time when European writings often distorted the image of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) through polemics, Smith's treatment stands out for its fairness and balance. He argues that any sincere study of Islam must begin with a sincere study of its founder. Instead of adopting sensationalist narratives, he portrays Muhammad (Pbuh) as a historically visible, psychologically coherent, and morally compelling figure whose biography is preserved with unusual clarity. Echoing Deutsch's insight that Muhammad (Pbuh) stands "most clearly and sharply... against the horizon of history" (p. 41), Smith underscores that the abundance of reliable early sources obliges historians to treat Muhammad (Pbuh) with the same seriousness afforded to other foundational figures of world civilisations.

A core theme of the lecture is Muhammad's (Pbuh) multi-dimensional leadership. Smith insists that the Prophet (Pbuh) cannot be reduced to a single role; instead, he functioned simultaneously as a spiritual visionary, social reformer, political leader, military strategist, and moral guide. Smith challenges the artificial dichotomy between "prophet" and "politician", arguing that Muhammad's (Pbuh) religious and political missions were deeply intertwined. He asserts that "The religion of Mohammed was, in its essence, not original; it was the revival of the old one, a return to the primitive creed of Abraham" (p. 87). Whether confronting hostility in Mecca or establishing a new civic order in Medina, Muhammad (Pbuh) advanced a consistent message grounded in monotheism, justice, and communal solidarity. Such coherence and moral seriousness, Smith contends, reflect genuine conviction rather than opportunism. He further underscores that Muhammad's (Pbuh) perseverance under persecution contradicts accusations of imposture. He observes that "A man who endured persecution, who inspired devotion, who founded a state, and who transformed society, cannot be explained away as a mere impostor" (p. 94).

Smith assigns central importance to the relationship between Muhammad and the Qur'an. He notes that "No other book bears so emphatically and clearly the marks of one mind... from beginning to end, as does the Koran" (p. 42). The Qur'an is, in his view, inseparable from Muhammad's (Pbuh) personal experiences—his struggles, victories, disappointments, and revelations. Because the text alludes to specific events, debates, and crises from Muhammad's (Pbuh) life, it becomes an indispensable historical source that reveals the Prophet's evolving spiritual and political consciousness. Deutsch's observation that biographers must constantly rearrange their chapters to follow Muhammad's (Pbuh) life reinforces the intimate connection between his mission and theirs. Smith notes that "The biographer of Mohammed must constantly be rearranging his chapters, in order to keep pace with the revelations" (p. 42).

Smith also addresses Muhammad's (Pbuh) moral character, particularly in response to long-standing European misrepresentations. He highlights the Prophet's early reputation that "He was known among his people by the name of 'Al-Amin', the Trustworthy" (p. 99). He further draws attention to Muhammad's contemplative nature, describing how "He would often retire to the caverns of Mount Hira for purposes of solitude, meditation, and prayer" (p. 99). These episodes, Smith argues, reveal sincerity, humility, and introspection—not manipulation or deceit. The hardships he faced—Quraysh's hostility, boycotts, assassination attempts, and personal losses—further testify to the seriousness of his vocation. Smith argues that such endurance is inconsistent with the notion of a fraudulent leader.

Another central theme is Muhammad's (Pbuh) political and administrative genius. Smith explains that the Prophet's governance in Medina, including the Constitution of Medina, tribal reconciliation, and legal reforms, transformed a fragmented society into a unified community. He contextualises Muhammad's (Pbuh) military actions within the norms of seventh-century Arabia, arguing that warfare, raiding, and retaliation were ubiquitous. Smith argues that "Arabia from time immemorial had been split up into a vast number of independent tribes, always at war with one another" (p. 90). Muhammad's (Pbuh) restraint—most notably his granting of general amnesty after the conquest of Mecca—reflects mercy rather than aggression. Smith argues that "He was the product of his age, but he was also the father of the age that was to succeed him" (p. 94).

Smith concludes by emphasising Muhammad's (Pbuh) exceptional leadership qualities. His capacity to unite tribes, sustain a growing movement, and inspire unwavering devotion demonstrates a rare blend of spiritual insight and practical wisdom. As Deutsch notes, Muhammad (Pbuh) was known "from birth to death... by thousands upon thousands" (p. 98), making reductionist portrayals untenable. Overall, this lecture offers a nuanced and historically responsible reassessment of the Prophet's life, challenging centuries-old prejudices and presenting Muhammad (Pbuh) as a transformative figure central to understanding Islamic civilisation.

### LECTURE III: "MOHAMMEDANISM"

Lecture III, titled "Mohammedanism" delivered on 28 February, 1874, marks a pivotal shift in Smith's analytical framework. While the previous lecture focused on

the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) as a historical and moral personality, this lecture turns toward the religion he founded—its doctrines, institutions, ethical aspirations, and global civilisational influence. Smith approaches Islam not as a static relic, nor as an accidental product of history, but as a dynamic, coherent religious system that transformed Arabian society and left an enduring imprint on world history. As he states, “The essence of Mohammedanism is not merely the submission to the unity of God” (p. 131). In contrast to nineteenth-century European portrayals that reduced Islam to fanaticism or fatalism, Smith presents it as ethically principled, intellectually structured, and socially reformative. He argues that its coherence, longevity, and broad appeal reflect intrinsic strengths rather than historical contingencies.

Smith begins with Islam’s foundational principle: absolute monotheism. The uncompromising declaration of *tawhid*—*La ilaha illa Allah*—forms both the theological heart and the ethical backbone of the religion. He declares that “Mohammed started indeed with the dogmatic assertion that there was but one God, the Creator of all things in heaven and earth, all-powerful, knowing all things, everywhere present” (p. 131). Smith explains that this radical monotheism dissolves tribal divisions, eliminates hereditary privilege, and grounds society in an egalitarian moral order based on accountability to a single, transcendent God. By abolishing intermediaries and local deities, Islam forged a new community—the *ummah*—defined not by lineage but by shared belief and moral responsibility. This doctrinal revolution, Smith argues, was essential for transforming Arabia from a fragmented tribal landscape into a unified moral society. He observes that “The Arabian nation was first called indeed; but as in Christianity, and as it was not in Judaism, the obligations of the Arabs were to be measured by their privileges” (p. 133).

Building on this, Smith examines Islam’s institutional framework. He emphasises that the Five Pillars are not merely ritual obligations but instruments of ethical discipline and social cohesion. He writes that “Nor was there anything much more original in the four practical duties of Islam—in prayer and almsgiving, in fasting and in pilgrimage” (p. 137). Prayer, Smith explains, is “the aspiration of the human soul toward God, common to every religion” (p. 137); fasting cultivates self-restraint; *zakat* redistributes wealth and advances social justice; and pilgrimage reinforces communal identity. For Smith, these institutions helped create a society defined by solidarity and mutual responsibility. He challenges the assumption—common in his time—that Islam spread primarily through force, arguing instead that its institutional and ethical foundations were central to its broad appeal. He remarks that “Islam, in asserting the religious genius of Mohammed and establishing an army, formed the spark from heaven which lit the train” (p. 136).

Smith also addresses Islam’s historical expansion, citing Deutsch’s observation that Islam “counts its believers by more than a hundred million” and “enlarges its domain from day to day” (p. 142). Such growth, he maintains, cannot be explained by military activity alone. Islam resonated across Arabia, Persia, Egypt, Syria, and North Africa because it addressed universal human concerns: justice, order, spiritual purpose, and communal belonging. Its social laws, administrative structures, and ethical framework offered stability and meaning during periods of political and cultural upheaval.

A significant part of the lecture explores Islam's intellectual and civilisational achievements. Smith notes that Islamic civilisation became a vibrant centre of learning, preserving classical knowledge and advancing fields such as medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and law. Although he does not quote Deutsch's later statement that the Arabs "came to Europe as kings... to raise the wisdom of Hellas from the dead" (p. 373), the spirit of that assessment shapes his analysis. Smith challenges Eurocentric narratives that portray medieval Islam as intellectually stagnant, arguing instead that it served as a crucial bridge between antiquity and the European Renaissance. He asserts that "The Koran teems with ideas, allusions, and even phraseology... drawn not so much from the written as from the oral Jewish law" (p. 144). Smith then confronts the stereotype of Islam as inherently violent. He argues that such claims ignore the tribal context of pre-Islamic Arabia, where raiding and vengeance dominated social life. Muhammad's (Pbuh) leadership, in his view, aimed to restrain violence by instituting principles of proportionality, justice, and due process. Smith observes that "The spark from heaven had been laid, and the Arab world ablaze" (p. 136). The Qur'an's reforms regarding marriage, inheritance, orphans, and commercial contracts reflect Islam's commitment to social and moral improvement, not coercion.

Finally, Smith highlights Islam's spiritual depth. Beyond law and politics, Islam emphasises devotion, remembrance, and reflection on divine signs in nature and human experience. He says that "Islam', that is, Man must resign his will to God, and find his highest happiness in so doing" (p. 134). This integration of contemplation and ethics, he argues, reveals Islam as a holistic system that nurtures both inner spirituality and outer moral order. In summary, this lecture presents Islam as a religion of moral clarity, institutional strength, intellectual vitality, and civilisational leadership. Smith's balanced and progressive treatment challenges prevailing prejudices and prepares the ground for the comparative reflections that follow in the next lecture.

#### **LECTURE IV: "MOHAMMEDANISM AND CHRISTIANITY"**

In the Fourth Lecture, "Mohammedanism and Christianity" delivered on 07 March, 1874, Reginald Bosworth Smith offers a thoughtful and ambitious comparative study of Islam and Christianity—two traditions often treated as theological rivals despite their shared monotheistic foundations. Smith's goal is not to diminish the distinctiveness of either faith but to replace polemical distortions with a historically informed understanding. He observes that "The notions Mohammedanism have formed of a future state... have scandalized those who view Mohammedanism from a distance" (p. 189). He argues that Islam is not a derivative or simplified form of Judaism or Christianity; rather, it is a faith with its own coherent theological system, spiritual logic, and historical mission. By placing both religions side by side, Smith seeks to encourage readers to move beyond inherited hostilities and recognise the intellectual and moral seriousness with which Islam articulates its worldview.

A central theme in this lecture is Islam's critique of the doctrines of the Trinity and Divine Sonship. Drawing on Emanuel Deutsch's analysis, Smith highlights Qur'anic verses expressing Muhammad's (Pbuh) unwavering rejection of attributing

divine sonship to Jesus. Deutsch writes that “The Sonship... Mohammed fought against with unswerving consistency” (p. 207), describing Muhammad’s “abhorrence” at a doctrine so striking that “the Heavens might tear open, and the earth cleave asunder” (p. 207). The Qur’an’s succinct proclamation—“Say, God is One... He begetteth not, and He is not begotten” (p. 207)—is presented as the firm anchor of Islam’s uncompromising monotheism. Smith interprets this critique not as hostility toward Christianity but as an effort to reaffirm the radical unity of God in a context where religious ideas needed to be asserted with the utmost precision to challenge entrenched polytheistic beliefs.

Smith further argues that Islam’s rejection of sonship must not be misunderstood as a rejection of Jesus himself, whom Muslims venerate as a prophet. Instead, he reads this divergence as a doctrinal clarification designed to restore monotheism to its original purity. The result is a religious system that is both connected to and distinct from Christianity: Islam emphasises divine unity, universal moral accountability, and prophetic guidance, while Christianity develops its theology around incarnation and redemption. These differences, Smith contends, should be recognised “without being turned into tools of contempt” (p. 207).

Another aspect of the lecture explores shared ethical teachings. Smith notes that both Islam and Christianity advocate mercy, justice, charity, and compassion. The Qur’an’s repeated commands to protect orphans, care for the poor, and uphold justice align closely with Gospel ethics. Quoting the Qur’an, he highlights descriptions of the righteous as “the patient, and the truthful, the lowly and the charitable, and they who ask for pardon as each day breaks” (p. 192). Smith uses this convergence to challenge simplistic contrasts that frame Islam as legalistic and Christianity as purely spiritual. Both religions, he argues, contain complex blends of law, ethics, and spirituality. Smith also examines the long historical interaction between Islamic and Christian civilisations. He emphasises that Islam played a key role in preserving and advancing Greek philosophy, science, and medicine—knowledge later transmitted to Europe. Rather than viewing Christianity alone as the guardian of civilisation, Smith highlights the intellectual vitality of Islamic societies and their contributions to world heritage. He reminds his audience that “Mohammedanism... contended itself with planting principles in the hearts of its followers which would, when the time was ripe for it, work out their abolition” (p. 198).

Importantly, Smith does not idealise Islam or ignore differences. He acknowledges Islam’s more explicit legal structure and greater integration of religious law into governance, interpreting these features as responses to Arabia’s specific historical needs rather than signs of inferiority. He argues that differing contexts naturally give rise to distinct institutional forms. Arabia, he explains, required a religion that could function as “a legislator and a statesman, as well as the founder of a religion” (p. 200).

In one of the most ethically charged sections of the lecture, Smith addresses Islam’s treatment of women, enslaved people, and the vulnerable. He argues that Islam significantly improved the condition of women by “freeing them from the arbitrary patriarchal power of the parents or the heirs of their husbands” (p. 201), and by granting legal protections against abuse. Likewise, Islam’s approach to slavery,

though not abolitionist, aimed at mitigation and moral reform. Smith states that “Islam emancipated slaves actually, as well as potentially, equal to a free-born citizen” (p. 202). Such reforms, he argues, must be evaluated within their historical context rather than solely against modern ideals.

Smith concludes with a call for mutual respect. He asserts that “To say that in spite of the theoretic intolerance of Mohammedanism, it ought, unless its theory is put into practice, itself to be tolerated” (p. 207). Regarding true intellectual maturity, he suggests, lies not in denouncing Muhammad (Pbuh) but in recognising him as a sincere and morally earnest leader. He insists that Muhammad (Pbuh) is “really doing Christ’s work, even if he had revered Christ less than in fact he did” (p. 207). For Smith, Islam and Christianity—despite doctrinal differences—share a profound monotheistic heritage, and future relations between them should be rooted in fairness and understanding rather than rivalry.

#### APPENDIX: DEUTSCH’S “ISLAM”

The appendix to *Mohammed and Mohammedanism* reproduces Emanuel Oscar Menahem Deutsch’s influential 1869 essay “Islam”, which reshaped European perceptions of the Qur’an and Islamic civilisation during the late nineteenth century. Long regarded as one of the most sympathetic and scholarly treatments of Islam written by a Western thinker of his period, Deutsch’s work differs markedly from conventional Orientalist writings. While Smith’s lectures approach Islam through historical narration and comparative moral reasoning, Deutsch’s contribution is grounded in philological precision, literary sensitivity, and a profound respect for the Qur’an as a linguistic and revelatory masterpiece. His analysis is not filtered through polemical inherited judgments; instead, it derives from direct engagement with Arabic, Semitic philology, and Islamic textual traditions. For many Victorian readers, the essay offered their first encounter with Islam, presented as a substantive intellectual and spiritual tradition rather than a polemical adversary. Thus, within the structure of Smith’s lectures, Deutsch’s essay serves both as a scholarly complement and as an intellectual culmination, elevating the discussion from historical description to literary and philosophical appreciation.

Deutsch begins by situating the Qur’an within a long-standing continuum of Semitic literature. His well-known observation— “When the Talmud was completed... the Koran was begun” (p. 295)—is not intended to imply prophetic succession but to emphasise Islam’s emergence within an enduring cultural and textual tradition. He further notes that “In those days Arabia expected her own Prophet. The Jews in Arabia are said to have watched for his appearance” (p. 296), an indication of the widespread anticipation of a prophetic figure. These insights counteract earlier European portrayals of Islam as an abrupt, isolated phenomenon. Instead, Deutsch presents Islam as part of a broader religious landscape shaped by moral longing, metaphysical inquiry, and the human search for divine guidance.

Central to Deutsch’s essay is his depiction of the Qur’an as Muhammad’s (Pbuh) sole miracle, unique among world scriptures. He cites Muhammad’s reported words: “My miracle is the Koran which shall remain forever” (pp. 337–338), highlighting the Prophet’s belief that revelation—not supernatural spectacle—was the enduring proof

of his mission. The Qur'an, in Deutsch's view, functions as a self-authenticating *ayah*, its linguistic grandeur and moral power offering continuing evidence of divine origin. Unlike miracles confined to time and place, the Qur'an possesses universality through language, ethics, and transformative effect.

Deutsch's analysis of the Qur'an's structural features remains one of the most celebrated portions of his essay. He observes that "The Koran is a wonderful book... with no real beginning, middle, or end" (p. 368), insisting that its non-linear composition reflects the unfolding intensity of Muhammad's prophetic experience rather than random arrangement. He notes that one may "begin at every page and end at every page" (p. 369), capturing the text's tapestry-like character. Deutsch further identifies stylistic phases in the Qur'an's revelation—the early Meccan verses marked by "poetic fervour", the later Meccan chapters shaped by moral and theological argument, and the Medinan sections emphasising law, community, and political ethics (p. 370). These stages reveal the psychological and communal evolution of Muhammad's (Pbuh) mission.

Deutsch's admiration for the Qur'an's diction is equally striking. He praises its "dignified, impressive, sonorous" linguistic character (p. 371), shaped by Semitic morphological structures. He vividly describes Arabic's layered prefixes and roots as surrounding meaning "like a garment of many folds" (p. 371). This literary sensitivity allows him to appreciate how sound, rhythm, and structure enhance the Qur'an's persuasive force. His invocation of Goethe—who wrote that the Qur'an "repulses anew... then attracts... and in the end forces into admiration" (p. 370)—places the Qur'an firmly within the realm of world literature rather than limiting it to the religious sphere. Deutsch also highlights the Qur'an's moral and cosmological imagery. He emphasises its constant appeal to signs in nature—the alternation of night and day, the mountains, the rain, the stars—and its recounting of destroyed civilisations such as Thamud, 'Ad, and Pharaoh as moral warnings (pp. 337–338). These elements integrate ethical exhortation, historical reflection, and spiritual contemplation.

Deutsch concludes with a robust assessment of Islam's civilisational influence. He observes that by the Qur'an's inspiration, the Arabs "conquered a world greater than that of Alexander... came to Europe as kings... raised the wisdom of Hellas from the dead... and stood at the cradle of modern science" (p. 373). This sweeping vision asserts Islam's pivotal intellectual role in global history, challenging Eurocentric assumptions and highlighting the deep interconnectedness of civilisations. Deutsch concludes by emphasising the historical transparency of Muhammad's life, noting that "Few religions have been founded in plain day like Islam... Most clearly and sharply does Mohammed stand out against the horizon of history" (pp. 296–297). In sum, Deutsch's "Islam" blends philology, literary analysis, and historical insight into a profound appreciation of the Qur'an and Islamic civilisation. It not only enriches Smith's lectures but stands as a landmark of nineteenth-century scholarship—an enduring testament to the power of rigorous and empathetic inquiry.

## CONCLUSION

*Mohammed and Mohammedanism* represent one of the most thoughtful nineteenth-century attempts to re-examine Islam beyond the constraints of polemics and inherited prejudice. Bringing together Smith's historically grounded lectures and Deutsch's philologically refined essay, the volume offers a remarkably forward-looking effort to engage Islam on its own terms. What emerges is a work that places the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), the Qur'an, and the civilisational achievements of Islamic societies within a coherent analytical framework—one shaped by intellectual honesty, historical sensitivity, and a genuine desire for understanding.

Smith's contribution lies in his ability to re-centre Muhammad (Pbuh) as a complex historical personality—morally serious, politically astute, and spiritually committed. By contextualising the Prophet's life within the realities of seventh-century Arabia, he dismantles stereotypes that had long distorted Western views. His treatment of Islamic doctrine and institutions likewise challenges assumptions, demonstrating that Islam's endurance and global influence stem not from accident or force, but from its moral clarity, social reforms, and capacity to construct ethical community life. His comparative reflections on Islam and Christianity further signal a rare Victorian willingness to approach religious difference with humility and respect.

Deutsch's essay enriches the volume by revealing the literary, linguistic, and intellectual depths of the Qur'an and Islamic civilisation. His philological insight, combined with his sensitivity to the historical and cultural forces that shaped early Islam, provides readers with a more nuanced appreciation of the tradition's intellectual magnitude. By situating Islam within broader human civilisation, he expands Western audiences' understanding of its contributions to global thought, science, and culture. Although grounded in its Victorian context, the book remains profoundly relevant. Its commitment to fairness, evidence, and cross-cultural respect offers an enduring model for contemporary scholarship and interfaith engagement. It reminds modern readers that meaningful understanding requires curiosity, humility, and the courage to question inherited narratives. Ultimately, Smith and Deutsch provide not only a historical study but an invitation to think more generously, judge more honestly, and recognise the intertwined destinies of human civilisations.

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