

Review: Dr. James White, *What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Quran*, South Bloomington, MN, Bethany House Publishers, 2013

Pages: 311

Essential Resource for Christian Preparedness

A comprehensive work demonstrating the author's detailed knowledge of the Qur'an. Apart from insightful apologetics it dispels the illusion of a perfect Quran as dictated by Gabriel to Muhammad, kept pure from its codification in 632 A.D. till today.

Chapters progress logically covering Muhammad, the Qur'an itself, key Islamic doctrines and comparison with Christianity, and textual criticism. Chapters ten and eleven are most valuable—they expose the myth of a divine and perfect Qur'an using the same weapons Muslim apologists use against the Bible.

Some textual criticism theory is interwoven to help understand arguments put forward. While the inferiority of a controlled transmission like the Qur'an is cogently argued, claiming uncontrolled transmission (like the New Testament) can ensure 'what we possess today is what was written in the first century by the apostles' (p. 252) is deceptive. The next page seems to qualify with admission of copyist errors, and that the *meaning* of the text (not necessarily the text *itself*) is known. Adherence to the 'highest standards of truthfulness and accuracy' (p. 10) should have pointed out these subtleties.

In modern English translations Muslims rightly point to significant variant readings as evidence of New Testament corruption. The foundation Greek texts for these (i.e. Nestle Aland/UBS texts) use unreliable codices such as Sinaiticus and

Vaticanus, both of which omit books in the Bible and include *integrated* apocryphal works as scripture.

Unfortunately the best naturalistic textual criticism can offer is neither the Qur'an nor the Bible have been *perfectly* preserved, unlikely to inspire life-changing faith in anyone. This is despite an equivocation to downplay 'corruption' (p. 216, n. 4).

The New Testament apocryphal literature in chapter ten is useful for Christians to know about seeing Muslims place on them great evidence for corruption. Likewise the Babylonian Talmud examples to see how fables are co-opted in the Qur'an.

Material is well footnoted, though some important detail might be better located in the main text. An erratum can be found on p. 127, n. 4 (the Bukhari hadith is in book 3).

The glossary is very useful and most of the terms should be memorised.

Overall the book is worthy of study so Christians can equip themselves with solid answers to common Islamic objections (e.g. the Trinity, crucifixion, Biblical 'prophecies' of Muhammed). This should then be married with the most important part of winning Muslims (and anyone else) to Christ-Gospel preaching.

I) The Qur'an and Muhammad of Mecca (pp. 19-49)

Basic historical facts of Muhammad are given:

*Birth in Mecca¹ 570 A.D.

*His exposure to a 'Christian' Bahira monk during caravan trading under Khadijah (the first convert to Islam). Bahira is said to have recognised a mark of prophet-hood on Muhammad.

*Muhammad married Khadijah when he was 25 (she was 40) [Khadijah had a Roman Catholic cousin named Waraqaah ibn Nawfal].

*'Revelations' began in 610 A.D. upon a cave near Mecca on Mt. Hira. Muhammad thought he was possessed by a *jinn* and became suicidal.

*Two of his noted wives were: Aisha (betrothed age 6) and Zaynab (wife of his adopted son Zayd-not bin Thabit, the Qur'anic codifier).

*[In 615 A.D. two groups of Muslims temporarily fled to the Kingdom of Aksum in Abyssinia for refuge].

*[Muhammad and Khadijah had a daughter named Fatima, who later married Muhammad's cousin Ali].

*In 627 A.D. the Muslims fought off the Meccan army by digging a defensive trench. The Jewish tribe Banu Qurayza faced brutal retributions for allegedly allying with the Meccan army.

*In 628 A.D. Muhammad intimidated the Meccans into signing the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah enabling visitation rights to the Muslims.

*In 630 A.D. [at the head of a 10 000 man army] Muhammad took Mecca. Thus began the military expansion of the Islamic state.

*He died June 8, 632 A. D.

Early Qur'anic corruption is evidenced by Ibn Ishaq. In order to bring in pagan moon-god idolaters, Muhammad added a verse after Surah 53.20 while under the influence of Satan: "these [the three daughters of Allah] are the exalted Gharaniq [the high flying cranes] whose intercession is approved. Corroborating evidence is found in Bukhari 2.19.177 and 6.60.385-6 which states pagans (and the jinn) prostrated alongside all the Muslims after his recitation of Surat Al-Najm.

The interesting account of Muhammad's Isra (night journey) and Mir'aj (ascent through the seven levels of heaven) is mentioned. The account is in Bukhari 5.58.227:

*Muhammad had a surgical procedure where his heart was washed, filled with belief then replaced.

*Buraq was then brought to him.

*Gabriel accompanied him on the journey.

*The seven levels were ascended, different prophets per level (in order): Adam, Yahya and Jesus, Joseph, Idris³, Harun, Moses, finally Abraham.

*Muhammad goes back to level seven twice under advice from Moses to lessen the required number of daily prayers for Muslims (50 down to 10, then settling at 5).

This rightly smacks of Islamic apologetics in placing Muhammad above all Biblical prophets!

Muhammad's many wives are discussed, focusing of Aisha and Zaynab. An important thought to keep in mind is the eternal tablet of the Qur'an references the affair with Zaynab and sets Muhammad (a paedophile) as the moral standard of mankind:

*24.11-20 contains the scandal of Aisha being carried on the camel of a soldier after falling behind.

*33.37-38 has Allah's approbation of Zaynab's divorce from Zaid, the inferior status of adopted sons as sons⁴, and the heavenly blessing of Allah on Muhammad's marriage to Zaynab (Zaynab was Muhammad's first cousin).

¹The location of the Kaaba (a 50 ft square black cube), a city to this day no non-Muslim is allowed entry.

²83 went, in two groups. Source:

http://www.alquraan.net/history/hist_36.html

³Supposedly Enoch.

⁴Adoption in Islam was 'mortally wounded' by this Qur'anic verse.

II) The Qur'an: A Brief Introduction (pp. 51-58)

Interesting comparisons with the Bible given: it is 56% the size of the NT (NU-27) and only 18% of the OT (BHS).

The 114 surat were compiled over twenty two years (610-632 A.D.¹) but the order they now appear in (i.e. generally longest to shortest) is neither chronological or topical. At 286 ayat the largest surah is *Al-Baqarah*.

The Qur'an itself states the 'Book of Allah' is in Arabic, written on an eternal tablet in heaven².

Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsir*) is drawn from *ahadith*³.

¹This can be divided into two main periods, the Meccan (610-622) and Medinan (622-632).

²Early Islamic theology held the Qur'an was not uncreated.

³Outside Ibn Ishak, Sahih Al-Bukhar is one of the earliest compilations. It is not favoured much by Shiite Muslims (~10% of the Islamic population).

III) Allah: *Tawhid*, *Shirk*, the *Mithaq* and the *Fitra* (pp. 59-74)

Tawhid, or unitarian monotheism¹ 'defines Islamic worship'. Ancestral similarity exists between the Jewish *Shema* (Dt. 6.4) and the Islamic *Shahada* a.k.a *Kalima*².

The Islamic definition of *shirk* applied to Christians forms one of their three main pillars of attack. The others are the crucifixion of Christ and the corruption of the original Old and New Testaments.

Islam has a concept of *mithaq*, a covenant with Adam and all his progeny, that they all acknowledge Allah's *rubbubiyah* (lordship).³

The *fitra* is a natural consequence of the *mithaq*, so that none has excuse for rejecting God. While in agreement with Romans

1.20, the causation of *fitra* is completely different-the Bible appeals directly to the evidence of creation, not an 'implied' covenant with the first man.

Given the centrality of Jesus' deity, Islam and Christianity can never be said to worship the same God.

¹I.e. only one God, as opposed to one God in binitarianism or trinitarianism.

²La ilaha illah Allah or 'there is only one God'.

³Surah 7.172-3

IV) “Say Not Three”: The Qur'an and the Trinity (pp. 75-104)

The central argument is if the Qur'an cannot demonstrate accurate knowledge of the Trinity it cannot be divine revelation. Ambiguity and confusion indicate authorship by someone else.

Erroneous ideas of the Trinity are suggested to have originated with Christians of Najran, a town near the border of Yemen.

Ibn Kathir exegetes the spirit in Surah 4.171 as Jibril who delivered Allah's word (which was not Jesus). This is backed up by Surah 3.59 and Allah's command 'Be'. Ibn Ishaq has the Trinity as God (the Father), Jesus and Mary.³

The author's theories of Muhammad's early trading experiences in Syria of Roman Catholicism in colouring his view of the Trinity seem valid (p. 87).

Surah 5.17 bewrays a Patripassian idea of the Trinity (that God the Father was the Son). Surah 5.72 says the same but also mentions those who 'join other gods with Allah', a clear misunderstanding of the Trinity. Surah 5.73 forbids making Allah one of three in a Trinity (of three separate gods). Surah 5.18 tries to reduce the concept of a Son of God to absurdity by stating a multiplicity of sons of God.⁴

The syllogism implied in Surah 5.75 for disproving Christ's deity is as follows:

(false) Premise: Anyone who eats food cannot be God.

Argument: Jesus ate food

Conclusion: Jesus was not God.

Finally, from the Qur'anic verses relating to the Trinity, *none* mention Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

¹Cf. *Bukhari* 3.34.425; 3.43.656; 4.55.657; *Dawud*, 37.4310

²Cf. *A Compilation of the Abridged Tafsir Ibn Kafir Vol. I-X*, pp. 1231-1236

³Cf. Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat Rasul Allah*, trans. Alfred Guillame, Karangi Industrial Area, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 272

⁴Abdullah Yusuf Ali's not (718) betrays confusion in quoting Gn 6.2 and Job 38.7 as speaking of men being the sons of God.

V) Jesus in the Qur'an (pp. 105-126)

Interestingly, Arabic Christians refer to Jesus as Yeshua, not Isa as the Qur'an does. The only Qur'anic title is *Isa bin Maryam*, in direct opposition ('antidote') to *Jesus the Son of God*.

Despite his accepted virgin birth, miracles and prophecies the Islamic view sees him as no more than a prophet in the line of others before, and culminating in Muhammad.

According to Islamic eschatology (it does exist!), Jesus will return for forty years (then die) by Allah's will and destroy the cross, kill the pigs, and abolish the Jizya.¹

Given Jesus' debasement, Muhammad is consequently exalted. According to *ahadith*, he even has intercessory powers to rescue souls from hell² Thus was done for his Uncle Abu Talib (all Muhammad's family died as *mushrikim* (i.e. those in the state of

shirk) meaning they went to hell. Muhammad was able to upgrade his position in hell so only his feet or ankles were on fire (though his brains would still boil)!³ One of these intercessory stories mentions Jesus who although is said to have no sin, defers to Muhammad as the proper intercessor to Allah.⁴

The author accepts the Muslim interpretation of 'Our [Allah's] spirit' to be Jibreel when referencing Surah 21.91.

Allah is subtly ignorant of true Christianity in referring to the Catholic invention of monasticism⁵.

¹Cf. *Bukhari* 3.34.425; 3.43.656; 4.55.657; *Dawud*, 37.4310

²Cf. *Bukhari* 6.60.236

³Cf. *Bukhari* 5.58.222, 224-5

⁴Cf. *Bukhari* 6.60.236

⁵Cf. Surat 57.27, 9.31

VI) The Qur'an and the Cross (pp. 129-143)

Both scriptural and secular evidence is unanimous on the crucifixion as a historical event so the Qur'an is in a weak position. It relies on one Surah (4.157)¹, which contain forty Arabic words for overturning history. The Hadith literature is strangely silent on the crucifixion.

Ancient historical sources are usually secondary and very late, far removed from the events. Given primitive storage technology, precision and detail is usually lacking. Archaeologists are required to try and reconstruct the past with their tool sets. Written documents are important sources, however beyond those only oral tradition and legends exist.²

Even hostile witnesses accept the crucifixion as a concrete fact. Atheist John Dominic Crossan suggests after crucifixion Jesus was buried but dug up from his shallow grave and eaten by

dogs! Agnostic Bart Ehrman admits Jesus was crucified by order of Pontius Pilate.

Ancient secular witnesses of the crucifixion include:

*Josephus, c100 A.D.³.

*Tacitus, c115 A.D.⁴.

Ancient Christian witnesses are:

*Ignatius Bishop of Antioch. Epistle to the Smyrneans, c108 AD.

*Clement of Rome. Epistle to the Corinthians, c95 AD.

*Polycarp. Epistle to the Philippians.

Dismissing the above would be fatal to the entire discipline of Ancient History.

Muslims sometimes quote Gnostic literature in their favor, however (like liberal critics) these hostile witnesses are dangerous to Islam. Given their belief of the creator deity, Allah would be considered pure evil by them!

¹The antecedent of the 3rd personal pronoun 'they' (i.e. the ones who thought they slew or crucified him) is unknown.

²Cf. I Tm 1.4.

³Cf. The Complete Works of the Learned and Authentic Historian, Flavius Josephus &c., trans. Prof. William Whiston, Green Forest, AZ, Master Books, 2008, p.426

⁴Cf Tacitus, *Annals*, c106 A.D., bk. XV, chp. 44.

VII) The Scales: Salvation in the Qur'an (pp. 145-164)

Surah 21.47 is stated as the essential text on Qur'anic salvation which like all non-Christian religions is works-based. However there is strong contrary evidence Allah is really a Calvinistic god, with *qadar* (Ab. 'power')-an ability to decree from the

smallest act right up to salvation or damnation. The following surat strongly suggest predestination:

*7.178, 32.13, 10.99, 7.29-31, 81.28-9

The *ahadith* reinforces:

*'A'isha quotes Muhammad stating Allah creates Hell for those yet in their father's loins¹.

*Abdullah ibn Masud in Muslim's hadith 33.6393 says evil ones are made so from the womb. This also makes plain every detail of the unborn's life is decided beforehand.

Allah's act of forgiveness are capricious and empty of morality. The famous 100² murder murderer story in Sahih Bukhari 4.56.676 sums up this morality-forgiveness absent of any divine justice. Allah's system would work both ways-he who does a lifetime of good can be damned upon a whim.

One notion of (imperfect) Islamic substitutionary or vicarious atonement can be discerned:

*Surah 29.13 says they [unbeliever's] will bear other's sins.

*Sahih Muslim 37.6666 says for every Muslim a Jew or Christian is required to be admitted to Hell-fire.

What atonement could possibly be extracted from one (i.e. a Jew or Christian) who is *already* damned?

¹Cf. *Sahih Muslim*, 33.6436

²Ninety-nine, plus a pious monk for an even hundred!

VIII) Did the "People of the Book" Corrupt the Gospel? (pp. 165-191)

Ahl al-Kitab refers to Christians, Jews and sometimes both. The Qur'an admits these people have been sent 'the Book', but that

Muslims have also been sent 'the Book'. The attempt is to link in a chain both the scriptures and prophets adding on Islam.

Notwithstanding noble sentiments towards the ahl al-Kitab, Surat 3.70-72 claims they have ignored the signs of Allah, deliberately deceived and are very unstable. Further, to intimidate any valid arguments (i.e. obvious contradictions) that may be raised against the 'new' book or prophet the penalty is death¹.

The choice boils down to either rejecting Muhammad or accusing Christians of corrupting the Bible.

In Surat 98.1,4 it is claimed doctrinal disputes only arose with the advent of the 'Clear Evidence'². This evidence is claimed to be intentionally hidden within the Torah and Injil (dealt with thoroughly in the next chapter).

While corruption is assumed by Muslims, they are unable to specify precise details (i.e. when and what). Holding to pre-Muhammad corruption results in a catch 22 situation seeing the Qur'an at the time of its writing makes authoritative reference to the Bible. Similarly, post-Muhammad corruption fails as the Qur'an states not a word of Allah can be altered by man³.

Corruption is defined by three forms:

* *tahrif al-mana*: Meaning is altered, not necessarily the text.

* *tahrif al-nass*: The text has been altered.

* *tahrif al-lafz*: This seems to be the same as *tahrif al-nass*.

A philosophically naturalistic text-critical definition of corruption is given using the Bible as an example. Basically, all copying processes (especially pre-printing press, photocopier and digitisation) result in errors, but this only results in a minor 'level' or 'range' (far below any Muslim's assertion). Given this philosophy this is actually a provable statement. The difficulty

with this approach is once corruption and error is conceded at any 'level' or across any 'range', against a 'perfect' Qur'an the Bible has already lost credibility.

The above apologetic also fails miserably in countering 'radical scepticism based on humanistic and liberal scholarship' (p. 173). The above is notwithstanding a damage-control quote placed in from the unbelieving liberal Bruce Metzger. The venerable Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, as well as early papyri are also offered in support.

Interestingly, perfect natural preservation was only made possible in 1949 with the invention of the photocopier.

The more common and traditional view was meanings were changed rather than the text, which the Qur'an in general agrees with.

As to pre or post -Muhammad corruption, the *ahadith* rule out the Torah. In Abu Dawud, 33.4434, Muhammad before giving a judgement places the Torah on a cushion beside himself in reverence.

As in chp. 11, al-Kindi is referenced and he makes two important points:

*Despite being hostile parties, Jews and Christians both accepted the Torah as scripture without error.

*Quoting Surah 5.72, the Muslim is in an impossible position seeing as the Qur'an bears implicit witness to the integrity of the text of the Gospel. Surah 5.47 is also difficult for the Muslim as the Ahl al-Injil are to judge by the Injil, an impossibility if it is corrupt.

Interestingly, the view of Paul as an icon of *shirk* and *tahrif al-mana* is challenged by Ibn Kathir-one *bulus* (Ar. for Paul) is mentioned with two other 'Messengers of Allah' sent to Antioch.

¹Cf. Bukhari 9.57. This behaviour is called *shirk*.

²Yusuf Ali in n6223 says this was Muhammad himself, his life and teachings. The other view is it is the Qur'an itself.

³Cf. Surat 15.9, 6.114-5, 18.27, 10.64.

IX) Prophecies of Muhammad in the Bible (pp. 193-216)

The Qur'an is clear the 'unlettered' prophet Muhammad is to be found prophesied in the Torah and the Injil, with even Jesus claiming his name will be 'Ahmad'¹ (Surah 61.6). This surah interesting for two reasons: No textual evidence exists for the people to be able to *remember* Jesus' prophecy; the Hilali-Khan interpretation of Surah 10.94 actually points Muslims back to the people of the Book to inquire whether 'Ahmad' is written therein-in light of the above they would have to reply in the negative!²

In general, tradition has it Jews (Rabbis) and Christians (Priests) were waiting for a prophet out of Arabia. One Islamic account is given where a Jewish boy disagrees with his father (who denied Muhammad was written in the Torah)³. This is interesting as it echoes Alberto Rivera's testimony the Catholic Church (through Khadija, and the monk Buhira) planned to raise up an Arabic leader who could unite the large Arabic population and help conquer Jerusalem.

The three most common arguments (in order of popularity) are dealt with (all popularised by Ahmed Deedat):

*Qur'anic prophecy in the Law: Dt. 18.15-18. Muhammad is the providential prophet, a military leader just like Moses (which Jesus was not).

When the chapter is read in context it is seen v1 mentions the Levites and v2 'their brethren⁴, meaning only those of [the tribes of] Israel (back in v1). Being of a branch before Jacob/Israel, no son of the bondwoman Hagar can be part of Israel.

Verse 18 is also prophetically fulfilled in John (e.g. 12.50), and made crystal clear by Luke in Ac. 3.20-26.

*Qur'anic prophecy in the Injil: Jn 14.16. Muhammad is the 'παρακλητος' providential prophet.

The facile argument made is the Greek has been corrupted-it originally read 'περικλυτος' (!). Περικλυτος means 'praised one' or 'ahmed' in Arabic.

Also, since the Holy Spirit had not been given yet and Jesus says 'another' Comforter (v. 15), Muslims assert this comforter must also be human like Jesus.

Obvious problems for the Muslim:

*The Comforter was to be given to the disciples yet they couldn't wait till 610AD.

*From v. 26 Muhammad would have to have been sent by Jesus, proceed from the Father *and be the Spirit of truth* (!)

*Muhammad in SS 5.16: Hebrew root word behind the description [of the groom] 'altogether lovely' is *machamaddim* which in turn is from *chamad*. *Machamaddim* is from Machamad (singular) which can be changed into Muhammad! Similar uses of the Hebrew root are found in I Kn 20.6 ('pleasant', object are the house's contents), II Ch 36.19 ('goodly', object are the temple's vessels) and Is 64.10 ('holy', Muhammad becomes a wilderness).

Claims are also made to Mt 21.44, that Muhammad is the stone Jesus is prophesying will come. Jesus is clearly speaking of himself in the third person.

Any Biblical prophecy must be tortured out of the Bible.

¹In Arabic, 'praised one'.

²This also suggests Muhammad did not actually know what the Gospels contained, otherwise Surah 10.94 wouldn't have been written.

³From Ibn Kathir's Tafsir, 4.178 [see *A Compilation of the Abridged Tafsir Ibn Kathir Vol. I-X*, pp. 1847-1848]. Hadith 12380 in Musnad Ahmad's collation is also said to contain this account, but with no mention of the Torah?

⁴Hb. *achi*. This can also mean countrymen which is the Islamic eisegetical approach.

X) The Perfection of the Qur'an? Parallels and Sources (pp. 217-247)

The underlying premise of the Qur'an is its authorship by Allah, direct and unadulterated revelation to Muhammad via Jibreel¹ free from human intervention. As with KJBBs, VPI and VPP are believed by Muslims. From this position Muslim apologists rightly attack modern Critical Text Christian Textual Scholars, and their myriad biblical textual fruits.

The author's argument is not that what he believes the Bible to be has been perfectly preserved in a single written book, rather Muslim apologists must subject the Qur'an to the same critical approach they take with the New Testament.

While ultimately an empty argument (one ends up 'proving' *neither* book is immutable), when utilised by the KJBB it removes a powerful weapon Muslim apologists use. In the mind of the Muslim, once the Bible is accepted as as infallible as the Qur'an, the Qur'an can easily be found false.

A parallel account is explainable by understanding human authorship: his primary and secondary audiences; inclusion or not of certain events, varying levels of detail (e.g. 'telescoping'), etc. To reiterate, 'missing' or 'alternate' NT renderings are not corruptions, but different perspectives of the same account, each inspired by the Holy Ghost. Given the Islamic belief of Allah's exclusive authorship (not Muhammad) and dictation from a heavenly tablet, parallel accounts are intolerable.

One charge against the NT is the account of Jairus' daughter's resurrection by Jesus in both Matthew 9.16-26 and Mark 5.22-43. Matthew telescopes considerably, thus the charge. Under the Christian theology of inspiration this and all other Synoptic Gospel 'errors' are explainable.

The following Qur'anic parallel accounts are dissected:

*Lot talking to the people of Sodom: 7.80 26.165-166 27.54 29.28-29

*Sodomite's response: 7.82 26.173 27.28 29.31
(Surat 26 and 27 are incriminating as they reveal the author could if he wished render word-for-word accounts).

*Fall of Iblis

What did Allah say to the angels?: 7.11 38.71-72

Iblis' response and refusal to prostrate: 7.12 38.76.

These are identical again proving the above point).

Allah's subsequent rejoinder to Iblis: 7.13 38.77. Here Allah misquotes himself.

Iblis' promise: 7.16-17 (embellished?) 38.82-83
(telescoped?)

Allah's response: 7.18 (embellished?) 38.84-85
(telescoped?)

Historic sources of the Qur'an are then considered. Perhaps early exposed to this argument, Muhammad tries to neutralise accusations in many places (Surat 68.15-16 (early), 83.13-17, 16.24-25, 25.4-5,9, 8.30-31, 6.25-27).

*The suspension of Sinai (7.171). Source: Babylonian Talmud.

*Jesus' birth under a palm tree (19.23). Source: Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew².

*Jesus speaking as a baby (19.30-33). Source: Arabic Infancy Gospel of the Saviour³. This is significant as being in Arabic it would have achieved wide circulation where Muhammad worked (e.g. caravan trips to Syria in the employ of Kadijah).

*Jesus' transformation of a clay bird into a living one (3.50). Source: Infancy Gospel of Thomas⁴.

*Cain's murder of Abel and the unity of mankind [also a raven's burial scratchings] (5.30). Source: Jewish Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4.5⁵.

*Abraham's destruction of idols and deliverance from a fiery furnace (21.58;68). Source: Midrash Rabbah⁶.

*Solomon's army of men, Jinns and birds. His conversation with ants. The missing Hoopoe (red cock) bird and its errand to the Queen of Sheba (!). Eventually reception of Sheba in his glass palace (27.44). Source: (Second) Targum of Esther.

All these apocryphal works contain clearly fabulous miracles meaning Muslim apologist is in a weak position advocating authenticity. The 'new revelation' and 'copying' defenses are also inconsistent with the style of these surat since they assume the reader possesses *familiarity*!

Finally, on the subject of tradition the chapter opens with an interesting Qur'anic anachronism of Egyptian crucifixion (Surah 12.42-further confirmed in Yusuf Ali's fn.).⁷

¹Though the full revelation was sent in a single night (*Laylat* [night] *al-Qadr* [of power]) it took Muhammad twenty-two years (610-632AD) for earthly delivery.

²Cf. chp. 20.

³Cf. v.1.

⁴Cf. 2.1-4. Jesus makes twelve clay birds on the Sabbath day. This has uncanny similarities to John 9.13 and the healing of the blind man.

⁵Cf. *The Mishna*, trans. Dr. Herbert Danby, NY, Oxford University Press, 1933, p. 388.

⁶Cf. *Genesis Rabbah*, p. 78,

<http://sacred-texts.com/jud/tmm/tmm07.htm>

⁷One of the earliest secular witnesses to this practice is found in Herodotus' history (*Herodotus Literally Translated*, trans. Henry Cary (1898), c425BC, pp. 591-592). Also, in 332BC Alexander the Great crucified 2 000 Phoenecians after taking the town of Tyre (http://www.livius.org/aj-al/alexander/alexander_t09.html). Crucifixion was a Judaic form of punishment as per Dt. 21.22-23 from at least the time of Moses (c1300BC), c700 years after Joseph's time.

XI) The Perfection of the Qur'an? Parallels and Sources (pp. 249-281)

Inspiration and preservation are blunt and dogmatic in Islam: The Qur'an is the literal word of God; it was delivered to Muhammad via Gabriel; memorised by Muhammad; memorised, written down and reviewed by his companions while Muhammad was living; reviewed once each year by Muhammad and Gabriel then twice in the year of his death.

Not one word, punctuation or diacritical mark has ever been changed. The hypocritical position of Muslims with regard to the Qur'an is obvious-Hebrew and Greek scriptures are charged

with corruption yet similar charges against the Qur'an are 'off limits'.

Textual transmission theories of controlled versus uncontrolled are discussed. The argument being the latter is likely to be less faithful to 'the original'¹.

Under controlled transmission textual variants are the enemy. A centralised political authority first collates and defines the original, then preoccupies itself with stamping out variant readings (either intentional or accidental) as they naturally arise over time (e.g. fourteen centuries in the case of the Qur'an, seven hundred more than the New Testament).

As uncontrolled dissemination, the New Testament experienced a process of 'multi-focality', localised where books/letters were first authored by the apostles and in recipient churches across the known world. A vast dispersion (in both area and languages), it is argued, acted as a kind of divine insurance against one reading becoming dominant, thereby potentially destroying parts of the original existing solely in minority readings.²

As the author notes it is surprising self-incriminating history of the Qur'an's textual transmission comes from Islamic tradition (*hadith* literature), particularly *Sahih*³ *Al-Bukhari*.

Contrary to Islamic teaching, there was no Qur'anic *mus'haf*⁴ when Muhammad died. His imprimatur was given to five persons: Abdullah bin Mas'ud, Salim (a freed-slave), Abu Hudhaifa, Ubai bin Ka'b. and Mu'adh bin Jabal.

The trigger to collation and codification was the death of many *Qurra* at the battle of Yamama⁴. The risk of losing parts of the Quran was too great. The first Caliph, Abu Bakr, entrusted a [young] man Zaid bin Thabit with the collation task from writings on flat-stones, camel shoulder bones, palm tree materials, and most importantly men's minds. This process is rightly described as 'tremendously haphazard'. Of note is the

origin of the final verse in the Qur'an, Sura 9.128. Supposedly only one man in the world knew it, Abi Khuzaima Al Ansari.

The *mus'haf* was stewarded by Caliph Abu Bakr, passed on to the next Caliph Umar, then his daughter Hafsa. As a result of the spreading religion into (Aramaic) Syria and Iraq confusion crept in regarding Qur'anic readings. This threatened the northerly campaign in Armenia and Azerbaijan. During this time [c653AD] the Caliphate had passed to Uthman so he decided simply to undertake a recension (the 'Uthmanic Recension'), to avoid Muslims differing about the book 'as Jews and Christians did'.

Once again Zaid was placed in charge, leading a team of three Quraishi men. They were ordered to get Hafsa's manuscripts⁵ and rewrite them in perfect copies. Any differences in dialect were to defer to Quraishi as that was the language of revelation. Afterwards all other copies (including Hafsa's?) and manuscripts were to be destroyed.

During this process Zaid found another verse *missed in the original collation twenty years prior*. Part of Surah 33.23 was found with one Khuzaima bin Thabit Al Ansari.

A [hostile] witness al-Kindi is then quoted as a second source outside *hadith* literature. He confirms the problematic history of the Qur'an and animosity between Abu Bakr, Ali, Umar and Uthman⁶. Kindi was a Christian apologist writing anonymously c830AD from the court of Caliph Al-Mamun in Baghdad⁷.

On pp. 72-78, Kindi mentions the first collation (by Ali, not Zaid as in Bukhari), Uthman's recension, then a later recension by Al-Hajjaj, also that Surah Nur (with sixty-four ayat) was originally longer than Surah Baqarah (over *two hundred* ayat), and surat that were missing from the original (as per Ubai bin Ka'ab): al-Kanut, al-Witr and al-mut'a⁸.

Back on *ahadith* A'isha records a verse about marriage annulment (due to *adult breastfeeding* of their wives!) was eaten by a *tame sheep*!

Also, Surah 4.95 was given a modification while *Muhammad heard it*-a condition upon Jihad excusing blind and disabled, after hearing protestation by one blind man Ibn Um Maktum.

The final section deals with hard textual variants known in Arabic as *rasms*:

*Islamic tradition claims the Qur'an was revealed in seven *ahruf*⁰. These seven forms are not extant.

*Printed additions of the Qur'an have provable variations.

*Surah 3.158 in the Topkapi and Paris manuscript differ. Also surat 17.93, 2.222 and 4.12. 2.222 has clear variations by comparing palimpsests¹¹ of Ibn Ma'sud versus Uthman.

¹On p. 273 is written, "Many Muslims make the mistake of joining simplicity and control with truthfulness and accuracy."

²Acceptance of such a theory begs the obvious question, "what was precisely in the original?" Enter the textual critic who through their 'science' can 'reconstruct' 'the original'. Muslims are rightly sceptical of claims of naturalistic preservation of the gospels-no two Greek Texts agree and many ancient witnesses (e.g. patristic quotations, papyri, uncials, lectionaries, etc.) have differences. The only solution is belief in *divine* preservation, but of which Bible today if any? Dr. White engages in handwaving ("we can have complete confidence", p. 252) and dishonesty saying the medieval text is the same as the primitive NT text (p. 253). The same page states copyist errors are *inevitable*!

³Ar. for sound, with reference to the historical accuracy of the account.

⁴Ar. for book/manuscript.

⁵The *Qurra* were those who had memorised the Quran and Yamama was a battle during the early war of religion caused by the rebellion on one Musailama.

⁶This word in the hadith is plural indicating her copy was not simply a codex.

⁷See

<http://www.answering-islam.org/Books/Al-Kindi/index.htm>

⁸This al-Kindy is not to be confused with the contemporaneous 'Philosopher of Islam' Abu Yūsuf Ya‘qūb ibn ‘Ishāq aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ **al-Kindī**.

⁹al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf ath-Thaqafī (born 661, at-Ṭā’if, Hejaz, Arabia [now in Saudi Arabia]—died June 714, Wāsiṭ, Iraq), one of the most able of provincial governors under the Umayyad caliphate (661–750). He played a critical role in consolidating the administrative structure of the Umayyad dynasty during its early years.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/252064/al-Hajjaj>

¹⁰Ar. 'forms'.

¹¹Washed animal skins overwritten to enable reuse due to their value.