5105 - Refutation of those who try to prove that the Qur’aan is not true

the question

Recently I became aware of some scholarly research done by German scholars into the inerrancy of the Quran. Some of their findings are discussed in an Atlantic Monthly article entitled "What Is the Koran?" written by Toby Lester, published in the January 1999 issue of that magazine. The gist of their research is that some very old fragments of the Quran found in a mosque in Yemen show small but significant aberrations from the standard Quranic texts. In some cases, the writing on the fragments found had been washed off and different writing substituted overtop. The article tries to cast doubt on the Muslim view of the Quran as being absolutely reliable, and tries to show instead that it is a literary text that has been subject to change just like any other.

I am not a Muslim, but I know that the Quran holds a position in Islam that is similar to that of Christ in Christianity. In view of this, sir, how would you respond to these attempts to dispute the absolute inerrancy of the Quran? In your view, do these scholars have false motives that render their findings untrustworthy? Or do you have another response to these attacks on the verity of the Quran?.

Detailed answer

1 – The proof that the copies of the Holy Qur’aan that we have before us is not just one or two pieces of evidence, rather it is proven by a vast amount of evidence that no fair-minded person can study without becoming convinced that it is exactly as Allaah revealed it to Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

2 – There have been generations coming one after another, reciting the Book of Allaah and studying it, memorizing it and writing it down. They have not omitted a single letter, and no one can change even the vowel point of a single letter. Writing is just one means of preserving it; basically it is preserved in their hearts.

3 – The Qur'aan has not come down to us on its own, such that the so-called alterations could be made. Rather the interpretation of its verses, the meanings of its words, the reasons for its revelation, the grammar of its words and the commentary on its rulings have all been transmitted. When such care has been given to this Book, how could sinful hands find a way to distort even one letter of it, or add a word, or take away a verse?

4 – The Qur'aan speaks of matters of the unseen, in the future, which Allaah revealed to His Messenger Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) to show him that they came from Allaah. If a human being wants to write a book, he can describe an event or express a point of view, but if any human being were to speak about matters of the unseen, in this field he can only base that on speculation and lies. But the Qur'aan told of the defeat of the Romans by the Persians, at the time when there was no means of communication to inform the Arabs of this event. The same verses also foretold that they (the Persians) would be defeated after a certain number of years. If what the Qur'aan said was not accurate, then the kaafirs would have had a great opportunity to criticize the Qur'aan.

5 – If you read any verse of the Qur'aan, then you go to America or Asia or the jungles of Africa, or to the deserts of Arabia or any place where there are Muslims, you will find that all of them have the exact same verse, memorized by heart or in their books; not a single letter of it will have been altered.

So what is the importance of this unknown manuscript in Yemen which we have not seen, and in which some ignorant may have altered, in recent times, one verse or one word?

Does this argument carry any weight when properly researched and discussed? Especially when the people claim to be fair-minded and objective in their research.

What would be their response if we went to one of their most trusted books by a well-known author, a book of which there are many copies in the world, all of them exactly the same, and we claimed that there was a copy of this book in some country or other in which there was extra material and alterations, and it was different from what is in their copies? Would they pay any attention?

Their answer would be the same as ours.

6 – The manuscript copies which are in the Muslims' possession cannot be proven to be authentic in this simplistic manner, for we have experts who know the history of calligraphy and we have principles and guidelines through which we may determine whether a manuscript is genuine, such as the names and signatures of the people who heard it and read it.

We do not think that these features are present in this so-called copy of the Qur'aan in Yemen or in others.

7 – We are happy to conclude our answer with this true story that happened in Baghdad during the 'Abbasid era, when a Jew wanted to find out how true are the books attributed by their followers to God, namely the Torah among the Jews, the Gospel among the Christians and the Qur'aan among the Muslims.

He went to the Torah and added and took away a few minor things that were not very obvious, then he gave it to a scribe from among the Jews and asked him to make copies of it. It did not take long before these copies were placed in the synagogues of the Jews and were in circulation among their major scholars.

Then he went to the Gospel and added and took away a few things as he had done with the Torah, and he gave it to their scribes and asked them to make copies of it. It was not long before it was being read in their churches and was in circulation among their scholars.

Then he went to the Qur'aan and added and took away a few things as he had done with the Torah and the Gospel. Then he gave it to a Muslim scribe to make copies of it.

When he went back to get his copy, the scribe threw it in his face and told him that this was not the Qur'aan of the Muslims!

From this experiment the man came to know that the Qur'aan is the true Book of Allaah and that all other books were the works of human beings.

If the scribes of the Muslims could tell that this copy had been tampered with, then how could it go into circulation among the Muslim scholars undetected?

If the questioner wants to repeat this ancient experiment nowadays, all she has to do is to do the same as that Jewish man did, who later became Muslim; she can add and take away things from these three books and see what happens as a result.

But we do not tell her to show her copy of the Qur'aan to a scribe, rather we tell her to show it to Muslim children, and they will tell her where the mistakes are in her copy!

Some Muslim states have printed Mus-hafs in which there were mistakes, and young children found them before the grown-ups did!

And Allaah is the Guide to the Straight Path.