يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ كُونُواْ قَوَّامِينَ للهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلاَ يَجْرِمَنَّكُم شَنَئَانُ قَومٍ عَلَى أَلاَّ تَعْدِلُواْ اعْدِلُواْ هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَى وَاتَّقُواْ اللهَ إنَّ اللهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allāh, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to make you swerve towards inequity and depart from justice. Be just: that is closer to Piety: and fear Allāh, for Allāh is well-aquinted with all that you do.”[1]

Guidance, comfort and beauty. For the believing Muslim the Holy Qur’ān is all this and much more: the heartbeat of faith, a remembrance in times of joy and anguish, a fountain of precise scientific reality and the most exquisite lyricism, a treasury of wisdom and supplications. Its verses hang from the walls of shops and living rooms, lie etched in the minds of young and old, and reverberate through the night from minarets across the globe. Even so, Sir William Muir (1819-1905) adamantly declared it one of the “most stubborn enemies of Civilisation, Liberty, and the Truth which the World has yet known”.[2] Others have been no more charitable, seeing fit to heap abuse or cast suspicion upon it throughout the centuries and up to our present day, among them scholars, missionaries, and now even the occasional politician. Such a dichotomy is aggravating to Muslims and certainly perplexing to the non-Muslim, who would be well justified in supposing that each group was alluding to a different book altogether. What are the facts and what is the evidence? Faced with such an immense and sensitive topic brimming with ideas to consider, I could have begun my exploration anywhere; the starting point, as it finally turned out, was to be an article by someone I had never heard of before.

“What is the Koran?”, the lead article of the January 1999 issue of The Atlantic Monthly, raised many issues concerning the origins and integrity of the Qur’ān.[3] The author’s credentials, a certain Toby Lester, are given in the magazine and suggest that he does not have any knowledge of Islam aside from having lived in Yemen and Palestine for a few years, though this hardly seems to hinder him for he delves headlong into controversy. He mentions that:

Western Koranic scholarship has traditionally taken place in the context of an openly declared hostility between Christianity and Islam…. The Koran has seemed, for Christian and Jewish scholars particularly, to possess an aura of heresy….[4]

After citing William Muir’s denunciation of the Qur’ān he states that even early Soviet scholars subjected Islam to their ideological biases: N.A. Morozov for instance flamboyantly argued that “until the Crusades Islam was indistinguishable from Judaism and … only then did it receive its independent character, while Muhammad and the first Caliphs are mythical figures”.[5]

Such passages may suggest to some that Lester’s approach is purely academic: a curious reporter filing an objective report. In an interview with the ash-Sharq al-Awsat Daily[6] he denies any bad intentions, hard feelings, or wrongdoing towards Muslims, insisting that he sought only the truth. But there is no doubt that he has taken pains to collect his information strictly from the anti-traditionalist camp, heralding the arrival of secular reinterpretations of the Muslim Holy Book. He extensively quotes Dr. Gerd R. Joseph Puin, associated with the restoration of old Qur’ānic fragments in San’ā’, Yemen (which I have seen recently, and for which he and his team deserve great gratitude). Now a bookbinder who completes a magnificent binding of a complex mathematical text will not automatically ascend to the rank of mathematician, but because of his restoration of the pages of old manuscripts, Puin is fashioned into a world-authority on the Qur’ān’s entire history.

“So many Muslims have this belief that everything between the two covers of the Koran is God’s unaltered word,” [Dr. Puin] says. “They like to quote the textual work that shows that the Bible has a history and did not fall straight out of the sky, but until now the Koran has been out of this discussion. The only way to break through this wall is to prove that the Koran has a history too. The San’ā’ fragments will help us to do this.”[7]

Lester’s next point of reference is Andrew Rippin, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Calgary, who states that:

“Variant readings and verse orders are all very significant. Everybody agrees on that. These manuscripts say that the early history of the Koranic text is much more of an open question than many have suspected: the text was less stable, and therefore had less authority, than has always been claimed.”[8]

Personally I find Prof. Rippin’s comments baffling; on the one hand variant readings (or rather, multiple readings) have been recognised and commented on by Muslim scholars since the time of the Prophet. By no means are they a new discovery. On the other hand not even Puin (as far as I am aware) claims to have uncovered differences in the order of the verses in his manuscripts, though his views on the Qur’ān are in line with modern revisionism.

“My idea is that the Koran is a kind of cocktail of texts that were not all understood even at the time of Muhammad,” [Puin] says. “Many of them may even be a hundred years older than Islam itself. Even within the Islamic traditions there is a huge body of contradictory information, including a significant Christian substrate; one can derive a whole Islamic anti-history from them if one wants.” Patricia Crone defends the goals of this sort of thinking. “The Koran is a scripture with a history like any other – except that we don’t know this history and tend to provoke howls of protest when we study it.”[9]

Arabic speakers have long held the Qur’ān as a Book of unique beauty; even the idol-worshippers of Makkah were spellbound by its lyricism and failed to produce anything resembling it.[10] Such qualities do not deter Puin from speaking disdainfully about it.

“The Koran claims for itself that it is ‘mubeen’, or ‘clear’“ he says, “But if you look at it, you will notice that every fifth sentence or so simply doesn’t make sense. Many Muslims – and Orientalists – will tell you otherwise, of course, but the fact is that a fifth of the Koranic text is just incomprehensible.”[11]

G.R. Puin strings many words together but provides no examples, which is unfortunate because I have absolutely no idea where this incomprehensible fifth of the Qur’ān happens to be. Lester then states that the unwillingness to accept the conventional understanding of the Qur’ān only began in earnest in the 20th century;[12] he references Patricia Crone, quotes R.S. Humphreys,[13] and ends up at Wansbrough. The main thrust of Wansbrough’s work is to establish two major points: firstly, that the Qur’ān and hadīth were generated by various communities over the course of two centuries; and second, that Islamic doctrine was modelled on Rabbinical Jewish prototypes. Puin is apparently re-reading his works now, for his theories have been germinating slowly in certain circles even though “many Muslims understandably find them deeply offensive.”[14] Readers have known Cook, Crone and Wansbrough for a quarter of a century, but the new face to emerge from this piece is Dr. Puin, whose findings form the backbone of Lester’s lengthy article. Some of the Yemeni parchments, dating back to the first two centuries of Islam,

[reveal] small but intruiging aberrations from the standard Koranic text. Such aberrations, though not surprising to textual historians, are troublingly at odds with the orthodox Muslim belief that the Koran as it has reached us today is quite simply the perfect, timeless, and unchanging Word of God. The mainly secular effort to reinterpret the Koran – in part based on textual evidence such as that provided by the Yemeni fragments[15] – is disturbing and offensive to many Muslims, just as attempts to reinterpret the Bible and the life of Jesus are disturbing and offensive to many conservative Christians…. [Such secular reinterpretation] can be nonetheless very powerful and – as the histories of the Renaissance and the Reformation demonstrate – can lead to major social change. The Koran, after all, is currently the world’s most ideologically influential text.[16]

So the entire matter lies before us:

* The Qur’ān is currently the world’s most ideologically influential text.
* Many Muslims look to the Qur’ān as the Christians once did to the Bible, as God’s unaltered Word.
* The Yemeni fragments will help secular efforts to reinterpret the Qur’ān.
* Though offensive to countless Muslims, this reinterpretation can provide the impetus for major social changes that mirror what Christianity experienced centuries ago.
* These changes may be brought about by ‘showing’ that the Qur’ān was initially a text, one which the Muslim community contributed to and freely rearranged over several centuries, implying that the Qur’ān was not as sacred then as it has now misguidedly become.

The majority of Lester’s references, those quoted or mentioned in his piece, are non-Muslim: Gerd-R. Joseph Puin, Bothmer, Rippin, R. Stephen Humphreys, Gunter Luling, Yehuda D. Nevo, Patricia Crone, Michael Cook, James Bellamy, William Muir, Lambton, Tolstov, Morozov and Wansbrough. He also spreads the glad tiding that, within the Islamic world, revisionism is on the move. In this category he names Nasr Abū Zaid, Tāha Husain, ‘Alī Dushtī, Muhammad Abdu, Ahmad Amīn, Fazlur-Rahmān, and finally Muhammad Arkoun and his fervent advice to battle othodoxy from within.[17] Scholars from the traditional school of Islamic thought are largely cast aside and ignored, with only Muhammad Abdu’s contraversial name being included.

But what is the revisionist school? Lester fails to define it clearly, so I will allow Yehuda Nevo, one of the authorities he quotes, to supply the definition:

The ‘revisionist’ approach is by no means monolithic… [but they] are united in denying historical validity to accounts based purely on ‘facts’ derived from the Muslim literary sources… The information they provide must be corroborated by the ‘hard facts’ of material remains… [The written sources] should always be checked against external evidence, and where the two conflict, the latter should be preferred.[18]

Because external evidence must necessarily be found to verify every Muslim account, absence of such corroboration helps to negate the account and implies that the event never took place.

That there is no evidence for it outside of the ‘traditional account’ thus becomes positive evidence in support of the hypothesis that it did not happen. A striking example is the lack of evidence, outside the Muslim literature, for the view that the Arabs were Muslim at the time of the Conquest.[19]

The outcome of this revisionist approach is a complete erasure of Islamic history, and the fabrication of another in which such events as the pre-Islamic presence of paganism in Makkah, the Jewish settlements near Madinah, and the Muslim victory over the Byzantine Empire in Syria are absolutely denied. In fact, revisionism agrues that the paganism which afflicted Makkah prior to Islam is simply a fictitious back-projection of a pagan culture that thrived in southern Palestine.[20]

The central point, which must be made clear, is that there is a definite motive behind all these ‘discoveries’. Such findings do not exist in a vacuum or fall unexpectedly into the scholar’s lap; they are the brainchild of a particular ideological and political arena, served up in the guise of breakthrough academic research.[21]

Attempts to distort Islam and its sacred texts are in fact as old as the religion itself, though the strategy behind these efforts has fluctuated according to the intended goal. Beginning with the rise of Islam and up until the 13th century A.H. (7th-18th century C.E.), the first objective was to establish a protective fence around Christians to counteract the rapid advance of the new faith in Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Libya etc. Among the notables of this period were John of Damascus (35-133 A.H./675-750 C.E.), Peter the Venerable (1084-1156 C.E.), Robert of Ketton, Raymond Lull (1235-1316 C.E.), Martin Luther (1483-1546 C.E.) and Ludovico Marraci (1612-1700 C.E.), their pens dipped in unsophisticated yet wilful ignorance and falsehood. Spurred by the change in political fortunes and the start of colonialism from the 18th century onwards, the second phase of attack witnessed a shift in posture from defensive to offensive, aspiring to the mass conversion of Muslims or, at the least, of shattering any pride and resistance that emanated from their belief in Allāh.

Abraham Geiger (1810-1874) belongs squarely to this second period; his 1833 dissertation, Was hat Mohammed aus den Judentum aufgenommen? (“What did Mohammed take from Judaism?”), inaugurated the search for ulterior influences on the Qur’ān and lead to innumerable books and articles aimed at branding it a poor biblical counterfeit, replete with mistakes.

Future chapters will bring to light other names which have spearheaded this second phase, including Nöldeke (1836-1930), Goldziher (1850-1921), Hurgronje (1857-1936), Bergsträsser (1886-1933), Tisdall (1859-1928), Jeffery (d. 1952) and Schacht (1902-1969). A third phase, beginning in the mid 20th century on the heels of the founding of Israel, has actively sought to purge all verses that cast an unfavourable light on Jews. Among the followers of this school are Rippin, Crone, Power, Calder and not least of all Wansbrough, whose theory, that the Qur’ān and hadīth are a community product spanning two centuries which were then fictitiously attributed to an Arabian prophet based on Jewish prototypes, is doubtlessly the most radical approach to ousting the Qur’ān from its hallowed status.

The previous decades have witnessed a quickened maturation of these last two phases, swelling in multi-faceted ways; a fairly recent scheme for assailing the Qur’ān has been its reduction to a cultural text, one which is a by-product of a particular era and is therefore obsolete, rather than a Book that is meant for all nations at all times.

Traditional Islam had not been resistant to the notion that the revelation reflected the milieu in which it was revealed… But traditional Islam could never have made the leap from the idea of a scripture which engages the society in which it was revealed to the notion of one which is a product of it. For most Muslims in the modern world any significant move in this direction is still hardly an option, and it is unlikely to become one in the near foreseeable future.[22]

This was the inspiration for Nasr Abū Zaid (declared an apostate by Egypt’s highest court and according to Cook, a ‘Muslim secularist’[23]), whose central belief about the Qur’ān was that,

If the text was a message sent to the Arabs of the seventh century, then of necessity it was formulated in a manner which took for granted historically specific aspects of their language and culture. The Koran thus took shape in a human setting. It was a ‘cultural product’ – a phrase Abu Zayd used seveal times, and which was highlighted by the Court of Cassation when it determined him to be an unbeliever.[24]

Approaching the Qur’ān from a textual view point appears benign enough to the uninitiated; how insiduous could concepts such as ‘semantics’ and ‘textual linguistics’ be? But the focus is not a study of the text itself so much as it is a study of the evolution of the text, of how forms and structures within the Qur’ān can be derived from 7th/8th century Arabic literature.[25] This essentially leads to a thorough secularisation and desanctification of the text. Speaking of the Biblical scholar Van Buren, Professor E.L. Mascall states that “[he] finds the guiding principle of the secularization of Christianity in the philosophical school which is commonly known as linguistic analysis.”[26] If such is the aim of linguistic analysis in Biblical studies, what other motive can there be in applying it to the Qur’ān?

This being outside the realm of what is tolerable to Muslims, an alternate strategy is to substitute the holy text with vernacular translations, then inflate their status such that they are held on par with the original Arabic. In this way Muslim societies, three-quarters of which are non-Arab, can be severed from the actual revelations of Allāh.

There is necessarily a mismatch between the Arabic of the Koran and the local language of primary education… The tension is exacerbated by the fact that modernity brings an enhanced concern for the intelligibility of scriptures among the believers at large. As the Turkish nationalist Ziya Gökalp (d. 1924) put it: “A country in whose schools the Koran is read in Turkish is one in which everyone, child and adult, knows God’s commands”.[27]

After describing the futile Turkish efforts to displace the actual Qur’ān with a Turkish translation, Michael Cook concludes,

To date, the non-Arab Muslim world shows little sign of adopting the idea of a vernacular scripture in the manner of sixteenth-century Protestantism or twentieth-century Catholicism.[28]

If all other strategems are left in tatters, one last resort remains. As described by Cook:

In a modern Western society it is more or less axiomatic that other people’s religious beliefs (though not, of course, all forms of religiously motivated behaviour) are to be tolerated, or perhaps even respected. Indeed it would be considered ill mannered and parochial to refer to the religious views of others as false and one’s own as true… the very notion of absolute truth in matters of religion sounds hopelessly out of date. It is, however, a notion that was central to traditional Islam, as it was to traditional Christianity; and in recent centuries it has survived better in Islam.[29]

Cook writes this under the heading “Tolerating the beliefs of others”, but what he expounds instead is universalism. Imbued with tolerance, Islam maintains clear and firm injunctions governing the rights of non-Muslims; this is well known. Cook’s thrust here is instead about doubt and relativism: the notion that all religions are equally valid because to think otherwise is to betray oneself as provincial and ignorant. This, sadly, is an easier pitfall for many contemporary, ill-educated Muslims. And as a corollary to this idea, “There [is] a nearly unanimous rejection of any attempt to distinguish between non-Muslim and a Muslim scholarship in present-day Qur’ānic studies.”[30]

A rising chorus of Western scholars now come forward to assail the traditional tafsīr literature,[31] demanding something altogether new. Arguing for the exclusive right to interpret the holy text, many Orientalists dismiss earlier Muslim writings on this topic “on the grounds that Muslims – being dupes, as it were, of the notion that [the Qur’ān] was Scripture – of course could not understand the text so well as could a Western scholar free from that limitation”.[32] Basetti-Sani and Youakim Moubarac both insist that tafsīr be made compatible with ‘Christian truth’, a sentiment endorsed by W.C. Smith and Kenneth Cragg.[33] This last, an Anglican bishop, urges Muslims to scrap the verses revealed in Madinah (with their emphasis on the political and legal aspects of Islam) in favour of their Makkan counterparts, which are generally more involved with basic issues of monotheism, leaving precious little of the religion intact aside from the verbal pronouncement that there is no god except Allāh.[34]

All these concepts are meant to shake the already-slender faith of wary Muslims, arming them with Orientalist barbs and setting them out to queistion and dismiss the very Book which they have inherited, in the process becoming more susceptable to Western ideology. Toby Lester’s article is just another card in this deck, and the tales behind the Yemeni fragments simply another bait. Dr. Puin himself has in fact denied all of the findings Lester ascribes to him, with the exception of occasionall differences in the spelling of some words. Here is a part of Puin’s original letter – which he wrote to al-Qādī Ismā’īl al-Akwa’ shortly after Lester’s article – with its translation.[35]

[Rasheed: Here al-A’zamî included a photocopy of the hand-written letter from Puin to al-Akwa’. I will just be presenting the Arabic text of that letter, rather than the image of the photocopy.]

 المهم والحمد لله لا تختلف المصاحف الصنعانية عن غيرها في متاحف العالم ودور كتبه إلا في تفاصيل لا تمسّ القرآن كنصّ مقروء وإنما الاختلاف في الكتابة فقط. هذه الظاهرة معروفة حتى من القرآن المطبوع في القاهرة حيث ورد كتابة  
ابرهيم على جانب ابرهم  
قران [على جانب] قرن  
سيماهم [على جانب] بسيمهم على جانب بسيمهما  
لخ  
اما في اقدم المصاحف الصنعانية فتكثر ظاهرة حذف الالفات مثلا.

The important thing, thank God, is that these Yemeni Qur’ānic fragments do not differ from those found in the museums and libraries elsewhere, with the exception of details that do not touch the Qur’ān itself, but are rather differences in the way words are spelled. This phenomenon is well-known, even in the Qur’ān published in Cairo in which is written:

Ibrhīm (ابرهيم) next to Ibrhm (ابرهم)

Qurān (قران) next to Qrn (قرن)

Sīmāhum (سيماهم) next to Sīmhum (سيمهم) etc.

In the oldest Yemeni Qur’ānic fragments, for example, the phenomenon of not writing the vowel alif is rather common.

This deflates the entire controversy, dusting away the webs of intrigue that were spun around Puin’s discoveries and making them a topic unworthy of further speculation.[36] But let us suppose for the sake of argument that the findings are indeed true; what then is our response? Here we face three questions:

1. What is the Qur’ān?
2. If any complete or partial manuscripts are uncovered at present or in the future, claiming to be Qur’ān but differing from what we now have in our hands, what impact would this have on the Qur’ānic text?
3. Finally, who is entitled to be an authority on the Qur’ān? Or in general terms, to write about Islam and all its religious and historical facets?

These will be pondered over the course of this work, to reveal not only the following answers but also the logic which stipulates them:

1. The Qur’ān is the very Word of Allāh, His final message to all humanity, revealed to His final messenger Muhammad and transcending all limitations of time and space. it is preserved in its original tongue without any amendments, additions or deletions.
2. There will never be a discovery of a Qur’ān, fragmental or whole, which differs from the consensus text circulating throughout the world. If it does differ then it cannot be regarded as Qur’ān, because one of the foremost conditions for accepting anything as such is that it conforms to the text used in ‘Uthmān’s Mushaf.[37]
3. Certainly anyone can write on Islam, but only a devout Muslim has the legitimate prerogative to write on Islamic and its related subjects. Some may consider this biased, but then who is not? Non-followers cannot claim neutrality, for writings swerve depending on whether Islam’s tenets agree or disagree with their personal beliefs, and so any attempts at interpretation from Christians, Jews, atheists, or non-practicing Muslims must be unequivocally discarded. I may add that if any proffered viewpoint clashes with the Prophet’s own guidelines, either explicitly or otherwise, it becomes objectionable; in this light even the writings of devout Muslims may be rejected if they lack merit. This selectivity lies at the very heart of Ibn Sīrīn’s golden rule (d. 110 A.H./728 C.E.):

إن هذا العلم دين فانظروا عمّن تأخذون دينكم

This knowledge constitutes your deen (religion), so be wary of whom you take your religion from.[38]

Some may argue that Muslims do not have any sound arguments with which to counteract non-Muslim scholarship, that for them the case is based entirely on faith and not on reason. I will therefore bring forward my arguments against their findings in future chapters, though I will first begin by recountering some passages from early Islamic history as a prelude to an in-depth look at the Qur’ān.

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Endnotes:  
[1] Qur’ān, 5:8.

[2] Quoted in M. Broomhall, Islam in China, New Impression, London, 19878, p. 2.

[3] Cited thereafter as Lester. Also, though this article spells the Qur’ān as ‘Koran’, this is technically incorrect and I will utilise the proper spelling wherever I am not directly quoting.

[4] Lester, p. 46.

[5] ibid, pp. 46-7.

[6] London, 18 February 1999.

[7] Lester, p. 44. Italics added.

[8] ibid, p. 45. Italics added. It must be noted that all these damaging judgements have been passed even before anyone has thoroughly studied these manuscripts. Such is often the nature of Orientalist scholarship.

[9] ibid, p. 46.

[10] See this work pp. 48-50.

[11] Lester, p. 54.

[12] ibid, p. 54.

[13] ibid, p. 55.

[14] ibid, p. 55.

[15] Just for the record: in my assessment Türk ve Islam Eserleri Müzesi (Museum of Islamic Art) in Istanbul may house an even greater collection than that in Yemen. Unfortunately I was denied access to this collection, so this notion must remain speculative, though according to F. Déroche it houses about 210,000 folios [“The Qur’ān of Amāgūr”, Mansuscripts of the Middle East, Leiden, 1990-91, vol. 5, p. 59].

[16] Lester, p. 44. Italics added.

[17] ibid, p. 56.

[18] J. Koren and Y.D. Nevo, “Methodological Approaches to islamic Studies”, Des Islam, Band 68, Heft 1, 1991, pp. 89-90.

[19] ibid, pp. 92.

[20] ibid, pp. 100-102. See also this work pp. 337-8.

[21] For more on this essential topic, refer to Chapter 19.

[22] Michael Cook, The Koran: A Very Short Introduction, Oxford Univ. Press, 2000, p. 44.

[23] ibid, p. 46.

[24] ibid, p. 46. Italics added.

[25] For details, refer to Stefan Wild’s (ed.) Preface to The Qur’an as Text, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1996, p. vii-xi.

[26] E.L. Mascall, The Secularization of Christianity, Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., London, 1965, p. 41.Dr. Paul M. Van Buren is the author of “The Secular Meaning of the Gospel”, which is based on the analysis of Biblical language [ibid, p.41.]

[27] M. Cook, The Koran: A Very Short Introduction, p. 26. Interestingly Ziya Gökalp was a Donma Jew who converted to islam [M. Qutb, al-Mustashriqūn wa al-Islam, p. 198].

[28] M. Cook, The Koran: A Very Short Introduction, p. 27.

[29] ibid, p. 33, emphasis added. Cook’s words ‘that was central to traditional Islam’, seem to imply that it is no longer appropriate for modern Islam.

[30] Stefan Wild (ed.), The Qur’an as Text, p. x. The original contains ‘was’ instead of ‘is’, but changing the tense seems valid given that nothing else has changed. In fact, Muslim scholarship concerning the Qur’ān is generally relegated to second-class status in Western circles, since the former espouses tranditionalism while the latter seeks revisionism.

[31] Exegesis of the Qur’ān.

[32] W.C. Smith, “The True Meaning of Scripture”, IJMES, vol. 11 (1980), p. 498.

[33] Peter Ford, “The Qur’ān as Sacred Scripture”, Muslim World, vol. lxxxiii, no. 2, April 1993, pp. 151-53.

[34] A. Saeed, “Rethinking ‘Revelation’ as a Precondition for Reinterpreting the Qur’an: A Qur’anic Perspective”, JQS, i:93-114.

[35] For the Arabic text of his complete letter, see the Yemeni newspaper, ath-Thawra, issue 24.11.1419 A.H./11.3.1999.

[36] I will cover Puin’s discoveries and claims in pp. 314-8.

[37] i.e., the skeleton of the text which may show some variations in vowel writing, see further Chapters 9, 10 and 11. We must nevertheless take into consideration that there are over 250,000 manuscripts of the Qur’ān scattered all over the globe [see p. 316 note 38]. When comparing them it is always possible to find copying mistakes here and there; this is an example of the human fallibility, and has been recognised as such by authors who have written extensively on the subject of “unintentional errors.” Such occurrences cannot be used to prove any corruption (تحريف) within the Qur’ān.

[38] In fact Ibn Hibbān has credited this saying to other scholars as well, e.g. Abū Huraira (d. 58 A.H.), Ibrāhīm an-Nakha’ī (d. 96 A.H.), ad-Dahhāk b. al-Muzāhim (d. circa 100 A.H.), al-Hasan al-Basrī (d. 110 A.H.) and Zaid b. Aslam (d. 136 A.H.). [Ibn Hibbān, al-Majrūhūn, i.21-23].