

The Perfect Authority

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In a recent RE class we studied the authority of the Bible in Christianity. The Bible is undoubtedly a most interesting text; at 5 billion copies sold it is the bestselling book in the world¹ and holds a lot of fascinating information and wisdom as well as songs, poetry and historical accounts. Yet, it did come as a shock to me that the Bible has in fact been mistranslated and edited over the years; to the point where there are errors and contradictions found within the book.

Perhaps this surprise was naive of me. After all, I am used to the Holy Qur'an; a text which was revealed around 1400 years ago and remains as intact as if it had been revealed yesterday. A text which came to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) through the angel Gabriel, from God Himself. A text which states:

“Verily, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation, and most surely We will be its Guardian.” (Al-Hijr, 15:10).

The gradual corrosion of the Biblical text seems inevitable when we think of how long ago it was first written and the amount of translations required to provide copies in over 2,000 languages. This prompted me to wonder - what were the means by which the Qur'an has remained so perfect, and completely avoided corruption?

Well, as it turns out, through a number of interesting methods:²

- The revelation of the Holy Qur'an to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) took place over a period of 23 years, and was revealed in small segments by the Angel Gabriel. He then required the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to recite the revealed verses in his presence to assure they had been heard and memorised correctly.
- Upon receiving the revelation, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) appointed four teachers, who he personally instructed in the memorisation of these revelations, thus ensuring the message was preserved - right down to the accuracy of the pronunciation.
- Furthermore, the verses would promptly be read in Salat after their revelation. In this way, the main method of safeguarding the Qur'anic verses was via memorisation. By the time of the Holy Prophet's (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) demise, there were over 100,000 Muslims and the memorising of the Holy Qur'an had become easy. ^[i]
- On top of this, the verses were also recorded in written form; fifteen scribes were instructed by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) to preserve the revelations in writing, to serve as a backup.

- During the revelation of the Qur'an, each Ramadan, the Angel Gabriel would recite all of the verses which had been revealed up to that point to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him)- and after the revelations completion, the angel recited the entire Qur'an to the Prophet twice. This served to arrange the revelations in their present order.
- After the Holy Prophet's (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) passing away, Hazrat Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) – the first Caliph of Islam- appointed a commission (largely consisting of the scribes previously employed by the Prophet) with the assignment of compiling the Qur'anic revelations into a single volume. The accuracy was checked by those Companions who had committed the whole Qur'an to memory. This was

completed within two years of the Prophet's (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) passing.

- The third Caliph of Islam, Hazrat Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him), had the same group compile seven more copies which were checked for accuracy and distributed through the Muslim world. Those that were preserved have been used to check the accuracy of the current text.

And so, the authenticity, preciseness and preservation of the Holy Qur'an is something that has been greatly studied and accepted without a shadow of doubt. In a world of constant changes, shifts and development, there is something inherently comforting in always having an unchangeable constant to turn to for guidance; much like the One Whose Word it is.

REFERENCES

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_best-selling_books
 2. <https://www.alislam.org/library/articles/quran-history-of-text/>
- [i] <https://www.alislam.org/quran/tafseer/?page=-54®ion=E1>