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## Qur'anic Doublets and the Hypothesis of the Later Redaction of the Canonical Qur'an (A presentation and criticism of Gabriel Reynolds' hypothesis)

Zahra Akhavan Sarraf 

Department of Quranic Studies Division, Faculty of Quranic Studies, University of Religions and Denominations, Qom, Iran.  
Email: [akhavan\\_qom@yahoo.com](mailto:akhavan_qom@yahoo.com)

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### ABSTRACT

Qur'anic scholars who disbelieve the Qur'an have long studied its codification and canonization. In his recent hypothesis, Gabriel Said Reynolds generalizes New Testament's modern research methods and applies them to Qur'an. Thus he focuses on Qur'an's "doublets", and considers Qur'an's present codex as a result of the later redaction of a written text provided from two previous Meccan and Medinan written material. This article- which is the outcome of analyzing Reynolds' article, two of his speeches and a series of scientific correspondences with him - explains his hypothesis and research method, clarifies his methodological mistakes and violation of his own scientific criteria and falsifies the validity of his idea. This study questions Reynolds' presuppositions and foundations of his view, and discusses the incompatibility of Qur'an and New Testament and thus the invalidity of generalizing the research methods of New Testament and applying them to Qur'an, and the intentionality of repetition in the expressive style of Qur'an and considering repetition as one of Qur'an's features. This article also shows that Qur'an is oral and readable and transmitted from one heart to another heart through permitted recitations, discloses the scientific flaws of Reynolds' proposal resulted from neglecting Muslim Qur'anic scholars' views, and explains the inaccuracy of his evidences due to interpretational misunderstandings; and shows the necessity of inspecting the idea.

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## Introduction

Gabriel Said Reynolds' focus, in his researches, is on religions, the world's Church, history of Christianity, Qur'anic researches, roots of Islam and the relation between Muslims and Christians. He received his Ph.D. degree in Islamic studies at Yale University and is presently the director of IQSA. He has participated in various Qur'anic Studies (including the editorship of "*The Qur'an in Its Historical Context*", 2008) and his latest books are "*The Qur'an and the Bible: Text and Commentary*", 2018 and "*Allah: God in the Qur'an*", 2020. In the latest number of the IQSA journal he has published an article titled "*The Qur'anic Doublets: A Preliminary Inquiry*" which studies the repeating passages in the Qur'an (Reynolds, 2020).

He first presented this topic in his 2021 lecture titled "What might doublets in the Qur'an tell us about the origins of the Text?" and then at the 66th session of the Qur'anic Discussions Association, held at 21st of July 2021, at Mofid University<sup>1</sup>

This article first briefly introduces Reynolds' work, then shows that his research can be criticized from various aspects, both from an inner and outer perspectives. The hypothesis of this research is that Reynolds' researches cannot prove that Muslim's holy scripture is later collected from two pre-written writings – one of which is Meccan and the other Medinan – and later editors have changed the final product.

Therefore the main question is: does Reynolds' research prove, in academic terms, that the present Qur'an is the product of the latter redaction of a text based on two previously written Meccan and Median texts?

Paying attention to the West contemporary researchers' studies, prepares the ground for constructive scientific cooperation and use of their new methods – if any – for Muslim Qur'anic researchers on the one hand, and shows to what extent their oriental researches are scientific. In addition Reynolds claims that he falsifies the validity of the present Qur'an therefore it has a special importance.

The background of Reynolds' research is the widespread discussions of the Orientalists on the collection and codification and historiography of Qur'an. In his book "*The History of the Qur'an*", Theodor Noldeke (1836-1930) agrees with the standard position of Muslims on the collection and codification of Qur'an at the time of the Caliphs. In his book "*Mohammad and the End of the World*", Paul Casanova (1861-1930) claimed, for the first time, that Qur'an has not been officially collected and published before the Caliphate of Abdol-Malek Omavi. John Wansbrough (1928-2002), also claimed, in his work "*Qur'anic Studies*", that it is impossible to consider the official Qur'anic version related to the time before the third century Hijri. Yet John Burten (1929-1982), in his "*The Collection of the Qur'an*", believed that Prophet Mohammad left behind Qur'an in its present form (Graham, 1392: 220-221). In addition, Harald Motzki acknowledges, in his article "*The Collection of the Qur'an*", that the Muslim's reports are much older and closer to the time of the alleged events as compared to the time Western researchers have assumed so far (Motzky, 1392: 261-270). Going beyond Noldeke's pattern in the history of Qur'an, the book "*Qur'an of the Historians*" (Amir-Moezzi, Dye, 2019), supervised by Mohammad Ali Amir-Mo'ezzi and Guillaume Dye, has tried to show that the present codex has been composed and canonized at the time of Abdol-Malek Omavi and is compounded of three parts, each with a different origin and validity. Anne-Sylvie Boisliveau introduces Qur'an as a two-layered text, in her article "*The Qur'an as a 'Text and Commentary': A New Paradigm for Qur'anic Studies*" (Boisliveau, 2020,7). Contrary to other researches, Reynold's discussion is within the Qur'anic text while others researches rely on archaeological discoveries and material history.

The issue of repetition has attracted the attention of researchers other than Reynolds as well. Guillaume Dye in his 2020 speech titled "*Le Coran et le Problem Synoptique*" has dealt with this topic. Majid Soleimani refers to this speech in his writing "*The Repetitions and Redactions of the Story of Creation in the Qur'an*" and compares the story of Adam's creation and the prostration of the angels before him from the two surahs of Sad and Hejr (<https://t.me/anqanotes/352>).

1. After the presentation, critics from inside and outside Iran seriously criticized his idea and he answered some of them. Some correspondences regarding the mistakes of his table – which seriously affects his research - were done and he replied that he should think more on his proposal.

Muslim Qur'anic scholars, on the other hand, have prepared some academic researches on the criticism and investigation of the previously mentioned studies. My article titled "*The Pathology of the Orientalist's Qur'anic Researches*" (2009) may be one of the first articles in this regard, in which I have discussed some flaws of the mentioned research. Some other examples of Persian works on this topic are Nasibe Bahjat's M.A. thesis on "*The Criticism and Investigation of Orientalist's Views on the Collection and Codification of Qur'an*" (2011), Noruz Amini's article "*A Criticism of Wansbrough's View on the Codification of Qur'an in the Third Century*" (2020), and "*An Investigation of Orientalist's Views on the Sources of Qur'an*" by Ali-Akbar Rabi'-Nataj (2012).

The privilege of this investigation, besides the novelty of Reynolds' view, is that it is based on a direct and bilateral scientific exchange with him. Although the complications of this research, which made it difficult and longer, was the ambiguity of Reynolds' conditions for the doublets, even in his own opinion, and not having a clear written and oral presentation, and his frequent redactions on his writing.

This article explains Reynolds' research in the first part, evaluates his proposal in terms of methodology, in the second part; then studies the validity of the presuppositions, bases and the content of his research and finally reports the conclusions and results of his research.

### **1. A Report of Reynolds' Research**

Reynolds focuses on the phrases repeated in the Qur'an, with some special conditions, and proposes a hypothesis on the process of "codification and canonization of the Holy Qur'an" which tries to prove the existence of discrete written Meccan and Medinan subcorpora before the canonical codification of the Qur'an and that the present Qur'an is written from those texts.

This research is based on the methods developed for studying the doublets of Synoptic Gospels (Mathew, Mark and Luke) for more than two centuries. Using "source criticism" methods, these examinations of the Gospels have led researchers to the "two-source hypothesis" in which it is claimed that the Gospels of Matthew and Luke are written based on the material from two other earlier sources, i.e. the Gospel of Mark and another source labelled "Q". In short, the undeniable repetitions and similarities of the phrases in the Bible are not really the result of Jesus' words in different situations; rather, the result of later redactions, indicating the transcription and redaction of earlier sources. He claims that Qur'an's doublets are much more than Bible's doublets and have not been systematically analyzed.

Reynolds has studied the passages of Qur'an that confirm the same 'two-source hypothesis' propounded for the Bible. Thus the text of the Qur'an would be the later redaction of two earlier discrete Meccan and Medinan sources, which emerged in the process of Qur'an's compilation and canonization after the Prophet. In his view, this hypothesis is evidenced by long repetitive passages, which are either both Meccan or both Medinan in most cases (Reynolds, 2020: 31).

According to Reynolds' research, applying his criterion, there are 29 doublets - or triplets - in the Qur'an, which are both (or all the three) found within Meccan or Medinan surahs except 3. Leaving aside these three cases, which is about 10 percent of the cases-and insignificant in his opinion - he concludes: the official Qur'an is provided from two versions – one Meccan and one Medinan - and the repetitions are the result of later redactions because the length of these cases are too long to be "formulas" or oral-formulaic language. In addition, since the cases of Meccan-Medinan doublets are so rare, the possibility of being repeated by Muhammad, himself, disappears, because his repetitions should not be limited to the Meccan or Medinan period (Reynolds, 2020: 30-31).

Reynolds has collected doublets according to his own criterion, putting aside repetitive phrases of "*fabi'ayyi ala'i rabbikuma tukazziban*" in surah *Al-Rahman*, or "*wailun yawma'izin lil-mukazzabin*" in Surah *Al-Mursalat*, which in his opinion are the product of the literary style of that part of the Qur'anic text, similar to the strophic repetitions in the Psalms. He has chosen his criterion such that he would confirm the written transmission of the Qur'an, in order to respond to the thoughts of scholars such as Bannister who believe in the oral transmission of the Qur'an (Reynolds, 2020: 14). Using the theory of Theodore Noldeke in the chronological order of surahs and their Meccan and Medinan types, he divides these 29 doublets into Meccan-Meccan(14cases), Medinan-Medinan(12cases), and Meccan-Medinan(3cases) (Reynolds, 2020: 14).

Reynolds introduces scholars' three different approaches to explain biblical doublets (Reynolds, 2020: 25):

In early New Testament scholarship, through the beginning of the nineteenth century, most scholars argued that an evangelist recorded doublets because he believed that Jesus had said (or done) essentially the same thing on two occasions, an approach that Frans Neiryck names a "harmonistic" reading. Eventually, scholarly opinions were shaped by the work of Christian Weisse, who argued that the evangelists often worked with two sources. When the evangelists encountered a saying reported in a particular context in source A, and essentially the same saying in a different context in source B, they included the relevant passages from both source A and source B, resulting in a doublet...

However, Weisse also considered the possibility that these are "redactional" doublets, whereby the evangelist, working with one source, chose to deploy the same saying or passage in two different narrative contexts (Reynolds, 2020: 28).

Reynolds seeks to apply these three perspectives to find the cause of Qur'an's repetitions, while stating that reality may be a combination of more than one of the three cases. A summary of his discussion in this application is as follows:

1. Muhammad has repeated one phrase on different occasions: referring to the traditional Christian view, he rejects this idea and says if Muhammad had repeated those phrases, the ratio of Meccan-Medinan doublets should not be so little compared to the other two categories. In his opinion, this cannot be explained by points such as: "migration" created a new character of Muhammad, or he preferred to show a completely different character in Medina, or perhaps he forgot the phrases of the Meccan surahs (Reynolds, 2020: 30).

2. It is the result of the redaction of later editors who have collected the Qur'an from two written Meccan and Medinan versions and have repeated some passages.

- He points a number of literary studies on Qur'an, such as those done by Angelika Neuwirth and Nicolai Sinai, to show the prominent role of "redaction" in the compilation of Qur'an's final text. For example, *Muzzammil:20* or *Muddaththir:31* have been added to the Meccan surahs during the time of the Prophet's presence in Medina. In addition, Neuwirth and Sinai's studies indicate the existence of layered and complex redactional structures in the long Medinan chapters (Reynolds, 2020: 28-30).
- He also tries to explain the redactor's motives of a verse repetition, in a second place. For example, he examines the Medinan-Medinan doublet (Qur'an 2:62 and 5:69) and says: *Al-Baqarah* is the first surah of Medina and *Ma'idah* is the last - with 10 years of difference in time - but the passage of *Ma'idah:69* does not correspond with the other stances of Muhammad and Qur'an in the same surah about Jews and Christians at all, because the 'People of the Book' have been attacked, taunted and threatened many times throughout this surah. Then he raises the possibility that the redactors of the Qur'an later repeated this verse in the passage of verse 69 to counterbalance the anti-Jewish/anti-Christian sentiment (Reynolds, 2020: 28-30).

Although Reynolds ultimately impels the results of his research to the view that Qur'an's repetition is the result of later redactors' intervention, but he also states: doublets indicate that they come from a written text and cannot be repetitions of oral-formulaic language because they are long. Therefore, the Qur'an's doublets are not simply repeated (or re-revealed) passages in different situations merely by chance or knowingly and purposely, but are the result of the redaction process. Some parts of the pre-canonical Qur'anic textual corpus probably existed in two discrete sources: a Meccan and a Medinan source. The very low frequency of the Meccan-Medinan doublets indicates the discreteness of the two textual subcorpora from each other. Therefore, he believes the stages, from the production to the canonization, of the Qur'an are as follows:

- A. Oral (or potentially written) composition of lectures and sermons;
- B. Formation of two discrete textual subcorpora, one Meccan and one Medinan;
- C. The redaction of these Meccan and Medinan textual sources - and other available sources - into the canonical Quran, having some additions and reductions.

The final result is: "the canonical Qur'an is the later redaction of two previous Meccan and Medinan texts and is not merely Muhammad's words, let alone being the Divine revelation." (Reynolds, 2020: 32)

## **2. Considerations on Reynolds' Proposal**

Reynolds's effort to prepare an academic proposal for Qur'an's repetitions is praiseworthy; perhaps most importantly for having an academic style - unlike many similar Qur'an-based studies - posing three possibilities, weakening two of them and strengthening the third with some evidences. But from an academic point of view, this proposal has many methodological and content flaws. In this section, I will first explain the methodological flaws within his research and then its invalid presuppositions, bases and contents.

### **3. Internal Flaws**

Reynolds has selected some examples of Qur'anic doublets to further his hypothesis. However a reflection on his selected cases shows that he did not adhere to his conditions and from this point of view, his research is weak.

#### **3.1 Lack of Adherence to His Criterion**

Reynolds' criterion for establishing doublets in the Qur'an is: "two corresponding passages of at least nine words or lemmata, allowing for variation of a single word, a difference in case, or the reverse order of two words within the passages". The problem is that, first, in some cases, the doublets differ in a phrase instead of a word. Second, sometimes doublets differ in more than one word. Consider these examples:

- regardless of the differences in case and pronouns, the two words "*qulna*" and "*raghada*" in his first doublet of Meccan-Medinan table-(2:35 and 7:19)- are only mentioned in *Al-Baqarah's* verse.
- the phrase "*Lamma Zaqa al-Shajara*" in number 12 of Meccan-Meccan table-(7:22 and 20:121)- is only mentioned in *Al-A'raf's* verse.

#### **3.2 Lack of Inclusion for all Eligible Doublets**

If Reynolds' table would cover all eligible doublets, the ratio of Meccan-Medinan doublets to the total number would be different and his hypothesis would face serious problems. According to Reynolds' examples, the ratio of Meccan-Medinan doublets to the total number is 3 to 29, which is about 10%, which he believes can be ignored. He based his hypothesis on 90% of the samples, while this ratio is actually much higher, between 28-32%. Such a percentage cannot be excluded from the doublets and the hypotheses cannot be made based on the remaining cases.

Reynolds' conditions for doublets are ambiguous in some aspects, including: the number of words or lemmata is with or without their differences, and the criterion for difference is word or a lemmata. However, there are at least 14 other doubles that meet his criteria in any case,. Among these cases, 9 are Meccan-Medinan, 2 are Meccan-Meccan and 3 doublets(triplets) are Medinan-Medinan. The Meccan-Medinan doublets are: Qur'an (2:5 and 31:5), (2:36 and 7:24), (2:58 and 7:161), (2:59 and 7:162), (2:120 and 13:37), (2:170 and 31:21), (3:40 and 19:8), (22:62 and 31:30), and (47:10 and 12:109). In this case, the ratio of Meccan-Medinan doublets to the total number will be 27.9%.

Also, if we consider 8 identical words or lemmata instead of 9 in the criterion of doublets, another 7 doublets will be added to the table, which include 4 Meccan-Medinan doublets (Qur'an (3:44 and 12:102), (40:22 and 64:6), (2:34 and 38:74) and (22:22 and 32:20)). In this case the ratio of Meccan-Medinan doublets to the total number will be 32%.

## **4. External Flaws**

### **4.1 Incomparability of Qur'an and the New Testament in Their Codification**

Reynolds's research begins with a reference to the Bible, its history and research on its doublets, so his theoretical framework has been modeled on those researches. However, according to traditional and modern scholars, Qur'an's style is different from that of the Bible, and the history of Qur'an's compilation and codification is different from that of the Bible. Qur'an's text seems to be self-conscious of how it came into existence. However, this is not true about the Bible. So Reynolds must explain how those methods can be applied to Qur'an? Given Qur'an's different style and history, there is a serious question mark on using the same hypotheses for the Qur'an. In other words, like many other Western scholars' studies, this idea seeks to apply or impose the developments and models that

have occurred in the history of the West and Christianity, on Islam and Qur'an. For example, since there is a possibility that Gospels such as Luke and Matthew have used a common source called Q, then parts of the Qur'an must have been put together from several sources, and the doublets witness this later adaptation and composition. A mere resemblance, or a historical conjecture, based on a model that has been proved for or applied to the Bible, is not a good reason for this generalization. There are definite extra-religious evidences, regarding Quran, that the original text was codified at the time of Prophet Mohammad, and Qur'anic scholars' discussion was on the slight differences in how the text was read; and Muslims were very sensitive to those small differences. As for the Bible, it is obvious that the book is prepared from several earlier writings.

Therefore, considering Qur'an, there is an original text and there is a disagreement, according to very ancient histories, on how to read the codified text, not on the codification of this text from another text.

#### 4.2 Not Paying Attention to Repetition as One of the Features of Qur'an

The key to solve the problem of how Qur'an is codified, compiled and canonized, in Reynolds' proposal, is the phenomenon of repetition. It is as if the principle in all texts, including motivational and sacred texts, is uniqueness of the statements, and the cause of repetitions must be sought. This is contrary to the style of many texts, including Qur'an. A preliminary acquaintance with Quran reveals that repetition is one of its features and is not unwanted or incidental, to look for its cause. Therefore, the existence of doublets in Qur'an has nothing to do with its compilation or codification and is related to the point that this book is "repetition-based" in conveying its message. Overviewing this book, it becomes clear that motivation, induction, and emphasis are realized through repetition, especially in the case of its main purposes such as monotheism; and repetition is related to such things as the necessity of helping the addressee to understand the message, the context of the verse, better word processing for communicating the word, or other rhetorical analysis for a purpose that has been important to the revelatory speaker. Furthermore, what is problematic and traceable in a text is contradiction, not similarity and harmony. The following are some evidences of repetition as one of the features of Qur'an:

##### 4.2.1 The Clear Statement of the Holy Quran Itself

Qur'an clearly states that it is a book with repetition and duality (Qur'an 39:23):

God has sent down the finest report in a consistently (similar)duplicated Book (Ballantyne, 2001: 461).<sup>1</sup>

Therefore the existence of doublets is God's logic and on purpose.

It should be noted that a correct understanding of repetition requires considering all types of repetitions. If the style of this book is to be found, strophic repetitions such as repetitions of *Al-Mursalat*, *Qamar* and *Al-Rahman* cannot be excluded considering them as literary order, or cases with less than 9 words calling them oral formulation, and a hypothesis be put forward, discarding hundreds of other doublets which do not satisfy the narrow condition of Reynolds' doublets; rather, all these cases must be considered together.

##### 4.2.2 The Historical Evidences of Revelation's Repetition in Some Verses or Portions of a Verse

Knowledge of "occasions of revelation" (*asbab al-Nuzul*) and its related documentations links the revelation of a verse - or a package of verses- to the events after which the verses were revealed. For most of the repeated verses, the event that has lead to repetition is scientifically and authentically specified, and therefore it is clear that the passage in question has been revealed more than once on different occasions. For example, regarding the Meccan-Medinan doublet (Qur'an 2:171 and 31:21), it is narrated from Ibn Abbas, concerning verse 171 of *Al-Baqarah*, that the Prophet invited the Jews to Islam; they replied, "we follow our fathers, who were wiser than us, and we will never abandon the religion of our fathers", in the meantime this verse was revealed (Tabarsi, 1993, vol.1: 461). And it is narrated that verse 21 of *Luqman* has been narrated about Nadr Ibn-Harith -one of the stubborn polytheists-; the Prophet told him: follow what your Lord has revealed to you, he said: but I will

1. Irving's translation.

follow what I found my fathers on it (Feyz Kashani, 1997, vol.2: 971). These two different “occasions of revelation” is a clear example of revelation’s repetition.

The phenomenon of repeated revelation has some mysteries, in Qur'anic knowledge, which is not even limited to the written records. That is, some verses have been revealed more than once for reasons beyond the scope of this study, even though in the process of codification, on the basis of Prophet’s guidance, it is written once. The following phrases in ‘interpretation and Quranic sciences’ books indicate this phenomenon: “its revelation is repeated”, “revealed twice”, “revealed for the second time”.<sup>1</sup>

#### **4.2.3 Muslims’ Views and Works**

Ignorance of Muslim scholars' perceptions of repetition drastically diverts Reynold’s research from the real world and has led it to abstract and unrealistic ideas on the Qur'an. In his second and subsequent presentation, he eventually added one or two books, i.e. *Al-Itqan* and *Al-Burhan*, to his collection of research sources<sup>2</sup>. However, if he had referred to tens of works on “*mutashabih al-Qur'an*”, such as *mutashabih al-Qur'an al-Azim*, for Ahmad ibn-Abi-Dawud al-Monadi, *Darrah al-Tanzil* for Khatib Iscafi and “*Al-Burhan fi mutashabih al-Qur'an*”, written by Mahmud Ibn-Hamza Kermani, “*Aqşam al-Tikrar*”, “*Asrar al-Tikrar*”, etc. the details of the same repetitions would be revealed to him. Occasions of revelation have been studied in detail in the works of Muslim scholars such as: reminding God’s blessings, effective warning and threatening of wrongdoers, to build a culture, completion of argument, making it more institutionalized and accustomed, showing the unity of the prophets’ purpose and method.

Some detailed chapters on the mystery of Qur’an’s repetition have been written in Islamic works, and any hypothesis on ‘repetition is not Qur’an’s feature’ must be introduced considering all of them and presenting a good reason to neglect them. Mohammad-Hadi Ma’refat’s “*Shobahat va Rodud*” in the present period, the likes of *al-Itqan* by Suyuti and “*motashabih al-Qur'an*” texts in the past, are among the works that express the causes and mysteries of Qur’an’s repetitions. Therefore, repetition has long been accepted among Muslims - as Qur’an’s main feature in its expression-, and the reasons for its repetitions have been discussed in detail in the most primitive sources. For example, some say the verse “*waylon yawmayidhin lilmukadhibin*” has been repeated ten times in *Al-Mursalat*, but each one comes after a new verse and expression, and an encouragement or a threat will be more effective if it is expressed in more detail<sup>3</sup>. Regarding the 31 repetitions of “*fabi'aye al'a'i rabbikuma tukadhiban*” in *Al-Rahman*, some explain eight of them are after mentioning creation’s wonders, world’s beginning and ending, seven are after mentioning Hell’s fire and its hardships – same as the number of Hell’s doors -, eight cases are after describing Paradise and its people – same as the number of Paradise’s doors - and the last eight are after mentioning two other Paradises.<sup>4</sup>

#### **4.2.4 Existence of Repetition in Qur’an’s Old Versions**

The scientific efforts to date parts of the ancient Qur’ans, also some cases such as the collection of manuscripts discovered in the Great Mosque of Sanaa dating back to the early centuries of Islam, as well as some available valid information written down in the *Masahif al-Sahabih* in the first decades, contains instances of repetition in the early versions of Qur’an. These cases, in general, distorts the idea of the relevance of Qur’an’s repetitions to Qur’an’s later redaction.

#### **4.3 Ignoring the Context of Qur’an’s Oral Narration**

According to conclusive historical evidences, as well as the vast and reliable collection of Muslim’s *Ijazat* (recitation permissions), Qur'an was in the context of oral narration from the very beginning. Qur'an is a spoken message that has been flowing among the mass’s hearts -the reciters- from the very first heart. That is, Muslims have orally transmitted what they have heard from the Prophet, word for

1. The 66th meeting of the ‘Quranic Studies Association’, which was held on Tir 30, 1400. See: [https://t.me/Anjoman\\_Mobahesat\\_Archive/646](https://t.me/Anjoman_Mobahesat_Archive/646) Accessed on 23/6/1400.

2. The 66th meeting of the ‘Quranic Studies Association’, which was held on Tir 30, 1400. See: [https://t.me/Anjoman\\_Mobahesat\\_Archive/646](https://t.me/Anjoman_Mobahesat_Archive/646) Accessed on 23/6/1400.

3. See: Kermani, 1418, 320.

4. Translation of Qur’an, Qara’ei, so are other Qur’an’s translations in this article

word, from one generation to another to this day which is the source of the written Qur'anic codices—and the existing *Ijzat* which goes up to Mohammad is an evidence for this-. Thus, codicologic studies that are useful for the Bible - because they were written by evangelists from older manuscripts-, cannot be applied to the Qur'an, which is not a second copy of earlier written manuscripts. Some evidences for this claim are:

#### 4.3.1 Quranic and Traditional Texts (*hadith*)

- In some verses of the Qur'an, it is specified that Qur'an is phonetic, it is to be read and listened. For example, "Say, it has been revealed to me that a team of the jinn listened [to the Qur'an], and they said, Indeed we heard a wonderful Qur'an<sup>1</sup>" (Qur'an 72:1). Considering that this verse is talking about "*istima*" (listening), it seems that the "wonderful Qur'an" has been a text to be read, listened and is a phonetic text.
- In some other verses, it is stated that Mohammad should read Qur'an to people. For example, "and recite the Qur'an in a measured tone (*tartil*)" (Qur'an 73:4) or "to recite Our Words of Revelation to them<sup>2</sup>" (Qur'an 28:45).
- The command to read Qur'an is not specific to Mohammad. The audience of this book should read it as well, based on some Qur'an's verses and the advice given in Prophet's tradition (*sunnah*), such as: "So recite as much of the Qur'an as is feasible" (Qur'an 73:20).

#### 4.3.2 Statements of Islamic Scholars

Quranic scholars, commentators and Islamic jurists have emphasized that this text is to be read:

- Allameh Balaghi (1352 LAH) says, on the basis of *tawatur*<sup>3</sup>, Quran has continued to be the same among Muslim public in every period, in terms of its substance, form and recitation, and nothing has ever affected its substance and form, and Qur'an's initial *tawatur*<sup>4</sup> is through oral narration. (Balaqi, n.d., vol.1: 30)
- Allameh Helli considers the distinguishing feature of the Book from sunnah that the Book is to be read. (Helli, 2004, vol.1: 332)
- Some have defined Qur'an as a read book revealed by God (Al-Khudair, n.d., vol.5: 15).

#### 4.3.3 The Importance of Receiving Qur'an from a Master in the Islamic *Sirah*

According to historical evidences, Muslims have paid a special attention to Qur'an's preservation and validity in comparison with the writings on Qur'an. This validity has been preserved throughout all Islamic historical periods, and a historical memory has been formed among Muslims regarding Qur'an. Receiving from a master is imperceptibly and informally common in learning Qur'an's recitation until this day. The common Arabic texts do not have diacritics, so the type of Qur'an's writing shows that its postulate is to be read and it is oral; and this book was secondly formed to convert it into a written text.

#### 4.4 Interpretive Misunderstandings

Some of Reynolds' evidences to advance his idea are based on his understanding of some verses and chapters. Any flaw in these understandings weakens the proposal and hypothesis. For example, Reynolds believes that in the doublet (Qur'an 2:62 and 5:69), which is perhaps the main evidence to confirm his idea - i.e. interventions of the late redactors - *Al-Baqarah:62*, promises paradise to *ahl al-kitab* (people of the Book) while *Al-Ma'idah:69* talks of them going to hell; and he believes this is a contradiction. He then says the fact that *Al-Ma'idah* has a negative attitude towards *ahl al-kitab* and the tone of the verses of this Surah is harsh towards the Jews, has caused the next redactors to include some comforting and hopeful content – previously mentioned in *Al-Baqarah:62*- in verse 69, to reduce

1. Translation of Qur'an, Qara'ei, so are other Qur'an's translations in this article.

2. Translation of Qur'an, Saffarzadeh.

3. Tawatur: a successive narration is one conveyed by narrators so numerous that it is not conceivable that they have agreed upon an untruth narration, thus is unquestionable in its veracity.

4. Tawatur: a successive narration is one conveyed by narrators so numerous that it is not conceivable that they have agreed upon an untruth narration, thus is unquestionable in its veracity.



the surah's displeasure and intensity by promising them salvation.<sup>1</sup> This conclusion is based on a misinterpretation because:

- First - God has not even promised Muslims a definite salvation. Even the believers of this book are always between a kind of fear and hope and, in other words, they have salvation in the fog; that is, for Muslims, Jews and Christians, salvation and the promise of paradise are always conditional.

In addition, one should differentiate between Qur'an's speaking to the former Jews and Christians and the addressing of this book to the contemporaries, and therefore the intensity of some verses should not be extended to today's inter-religious relations, which would then need some kind of modification and mitigation. If this was considered, Reynolds' perspective on Qur'an's views towards *ahl al-kitab* would be modified.

- According to Muslim commentators, it is not correct that the atmosphere of *Al-Ma'idah* is negative towards *ahl al-kitab* because some of its verses are positive towards them, and the two verses in question are related to the beginning of Prophet's migration and express a principle that Jews and Christians will be saved if they do righteous deeds.
- In order to avoid what he properly calls "exegetic atomism", one should first consider the verses that mention the different levels and exceptions of Judaism and Christianity – using terms such as "*Laysu Sawa'a*" in *Al-Imran:113* –; then should distinguish the verses which speaks directly to the Jews and Christians of Prophet's time and those which are related to the ones before him.

It can be concluded that one cannot expect accurate results from a research based on such understanding of Qur'an.

## **Conclusion**

1. Contrary to the researchers who believe in Qur'an and attribute its writing and compilation to the time of the Prophet himself and consider Qur'an's present text to be valid, Western scholars have challenged their ideas in various ways. Reynolds's hypothesis is one of the newest ideas on the mentioned subject.

2. There are three ideas on the compilation of the New Testament in modern researches: harmonistic, multi-source and redactional approaches, each of which has its supporters; and Reynolds pays a special attention to the second approach.

3. In order to trace the origins of Qur'an's present text, Reynolds compares it to Bible's new studies, focuses on Qur'an's doublets with some special conditions, and considers the existing Qur'an to be the product of later redaction of a written text provided from two previous Meccan and Medinan written material. That is, in explaining the origin of the current text, he somehow combines two of the above three ideas.

4. Showing Reynolds's methodological errors and deviation from his own scientific criteria, the present study questions the scientific validity of his research in several aspects:

- Reynolds' examples do not have his own condition of doublets;
- There are many more examples in Qur'an that have Reynolds's condition of doublets and he has neglected them;
- Modifying and correcting the samples distorts Reynolds's theory by changing the ratio of compound repetitions –Meccan- Medinan - to homogeneous repetitions – either both Meccan or both Medinan-. The reason is that he believes rejecting the possibility of a second revelation is based on the insignificance of the number of compound repetitions, but changing the ratio and negating the insignificance, the result will not be in favor of his idea.
- Reynolds' conditions for the doublets are not based on a specific logic; for example, if he adds 8-word passages to his doublets, the results will change.

5. The present research mainly shows some doubtful bases of this proposal:

- The incomparability of Qur'an and the New Testament in many ways, concluding that generalizing New Testament's research methods to Qur'an is in vain;

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1. Free understanding from: Reynolds, 2020:29 .

- repetition is one of the features of Qur'an, and it is not an incidental and unwanted matter to be used to find its origin. Rather, Qur'an is based on repetition on purpose, due to some reasons;
- according to convincing evidences, including recitation's permissions -as I have an oral permission which goes up to Prophet Mohammad from Dar al-Qurra' al-Azhar in Egypt-, Qur'an's present codex has been orally narrated from one heart to another, flowing among the masses through permitted recitations; and its emphasized feature is recitation not writing. Therefore, any idea that examines Qur'an's compilation through a text-centered research, must first have dealt with this documented idea, rejected it, and then moved on;
- a very important flaw of this research is the neglect of the views of Muslim Quranologists, which has sometimes completely misled the research ;
- interpretational misunderstandings of the verses used as evidence shows the non-scientific nature of this proposal, and the necessity of its revision.

6. Reynolds, a hard-working and affable Qur'an researcher of our time, trying to answer many of these problems, in his last correspondence with me, stated that due to some of the above problems and especially that many Meccan-Medinan doublets are of Qur'anic stories, he doubts that perhaps he should have looked at Qur'an's 'dualities' instead of inventing a formula for Qur'an's 'doublets'. He writes that he has chosen the 9-word criterion to get to the written - and not the oral - transmission of Qur'an, which is also a response to Bannister's work; and summarizes that he must think more, and perhaps change his research's focus from repeating passages to the distribution of Meccan, Medinan, and Meccan-Medinan words.

7. All these points show that Reynolds' proposal has not yet yielded a reliable finding on Qur'an's compilation, a conclusion that may be the result of examining most of such researches.

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