

INTERCEDE

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Bones, Stones, and the Hearts of Men: *Compiling the Quran*

by a CMM affiliate

His fame as a novelist came attached with a hefty price tag. More accurately, his fame came manacled to virulent strains of fundamental Islam. Until 1988 Salman Rushdie, with his heavy-lidded, pedestrian features, was an unlikely candidate for fame outside of literary circles. However, with the 1988 U.K. publication of *The Satanic Verses*, containing two controversial chapters relating to the Qur'an and Muhammad, Rushdie's name became a conduit of Islamic rage. The resulting tempest still resonates, and served as a precursor to deadly Islamic riots in 2005-2006: the *Newsweek* Qur'anic desecration furor, the Danish cartoon violence, and the Pope Benedict uproar.

The Rushdie affair began with a series of ominous tremors. Stirred on by ranting exhortations from the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar University, a succession of Muslim countries

banned *The Satanic Verses*. By January of 1989 the tremors gave way to torrents of violence that spilled across the globe. The descent was dizzying:

- In England, public book-burnings were held
- In Pakistan/India, dozens died in anti-Rushdie riots
- All Muslim nations (excluding Turkey) outlawed the novel
- Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini decreed the death penalty for all involved in the publication of *The Satanic Verses*
- Rushdie was forced into hiding
- In England/U.S., several bookstores were firebombed
- The Japanese translator was assassinated—stabbed to death
- The Italian translator and Norwegian publisher were both wounded in assassination attempts
- In Turkey, 37 people died after riots over translation
- In Iran, a \$2.8 million dollar bounty was issued for the death of Rushdie.



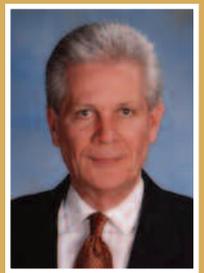
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Until All Have Heard

How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? —Romans 10:14

Jim Bennett, Director
Center for
Ministry to Muslims



Most people in the Christian community know the Qur'an is the Muslim holy book. Some know the Qur'an consists of 114 chapters. Others are aware that Muhammad claimed that the angel Gabriel communicated the Qur'an to him. What most Christians do not know about the Qur'an is how and when it was compiled and codified. The author of our lead article has done us a great favor in clarifying the "when and how" of Qur'anic codification. After reading this article I believe you will have a much better understanding of the Muslim view of their "revealed book"—the Qur'an, and a better understanding of its origins.

On another note, I hope it will encourage you to read the following highlights:

- Recently I was in a Middle Eastern country and met with 300 leaders from that part of the world. Suffice it to say that the Holy Spirit is doing a special work in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf region.
- Just three weeks ago I was in Thailand at a gathering of 500 missions leaders from around the world. The sole purpose for

the five days was to coordinate ministries and strategize on how we can best reach the Muslim world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- Last week in Argentina I joined some 2,000 persons at the Latin American World Missions Congress. How encouraging to have 600 people attend the Islam workshops! The number of Hispanic missionaries to the Muslim world is growing rapidly. They are determined to be a part of the outreach to the Islamic world.

- Some of you know that CMM has launched an initiative to plant 1,000 churches in the Muslim world. That initiative is called *Our Greatest Opportunity*. If you would like further information, please visit OurGreatestOpportunity.org—or contact our office.

Be encouraged. Keep praying. Join or start a *Jumaa* Prayer Fellowship! It's simple. Just pray an hour a week and fast one meal a week (preferably on Friday)—on behalf of untold Muslims. Thanks so much for joining us in this Great Commission effort. 



Muslim World News



Nigeria

CHRISTIAN TEACHER CLUBBED TO DEATH

Christianah Oluwatoyin Oluwasesin, a teacher at Government Secondary School of Gandu, was in high spirits March 21, as she went to school. She was happy that after exams, she would be joining her husband in their hometown of Abeokuta, where he had taken a new position. But Muslim students along with outside Islamic extremists murdered Oluwasesin over claims that she desecrated the Quran. They beat, stoned, and clubbed her to death, then burned her corpse. Aluke Musa Yila, a fellow teacher at the Gandu school, told *Compass* that Oluwasesin had collected books and bags before the exam in accordance with school procedures to prevent cheating. “Soon after the bags collected by Oluwasesin were dropped in front of the class, one of the girls in the class began to cry,” Musa said. “She told her colleagues that she had a copy of the Quran in her bag, that Oluwasesin touched the bag, and that by doing so she had desecrated the Quran, since she was a Christian.”—*Compass*

Uzbekistan

PASTOR CONDEMNED TO FOUR YEARS IN UZBEK GULAG

An Uzbek criminal court has sentenced Christian pastor Dmitry

Shestakov to four years in a prison colony for alleged “illegal” religious activities. Judge M. Tulanov of the Andijan Criminal Court handed down the harsh verdict against Shestakov on March 9, nearly three weeks after his trial began in the Ferghana Valley region of eastern Uzbekistan. One of the nation’s leading evangelical pastors said Shestakov’s unexpected conviction could have “grave consequences” for Protestant Christians in Uzbekistan. “Perhaps it already has,” the pastor told *Compass*, saying that many more incidents had been initiated against Christians across the country.—*Compass*

Pakistan

EASTER TENSE FOLLOWING ANTI-CHRISTIAN ATTACK

Pakistani Muslim and Christian leaders are working to defuse tensions in a Punjab city after rumors of “blasphemy” sparked mob action against the Christian community. Celebrants of Eid-e-Millad-ul-Nabi (Muhammad’s Birthday) in Toba Tek Singh turned violent April 1, in response to false claims that Christians had attacked Muslims and desecrated a sticker bearing Muhammad’s name. The Muslim attack on a Christian neighborhood injured dozens. A handicapped Christian named Ratan Masih was unable to flee the mob and was badly beaten. Accused of committing “blas-

phemy” against Muhammad and triggering anti-Christian violence, four Christians have gone into hiding while a fifth, Salamat Masih, remains in police custody.—*Compass*

Jordan

FATHER KILLS DAUGHTER IN JORDANIAN “HONOR” CRIME

A prosecutor has charged a Jordanian man with murdering his daughter for “honor” after forcing her to undergo an abortion for a pregnancy out of wedlock. The prosecutor charged the 68-year-old suspect with premeditated murder after he shot dead his 26-year-old daughter “for reasons related to family honor.” The victim was shot six times in the head and the neck and when police arrived, the suspect “fired several rounds in the air, saying he was celebrating the killing of his daughter,” one official said. “I have cleared the family’s name and cleansed my honor,” the official quoted the suspect as saying. The victim was allegedly involved with a married man and her family discovered she was pregnant. “The family...arranged for her to undergo an abortion and an operation to restore her virginity,” and then locked her up at home before the suspect shot her dead. The victim was the seventh woman reportedly murdered in a so-called “honor crime” in conservative Muslim Jordan since January, the daily said.—*AFP*

Bones, Stones, and the Hearts

continued on

The response was staggering in its scope. *The Satanic Verses* had been the catalyst to a conflagration that could scarcely be comprehended. The affair was almost farcical, too preposterous for fiction. Rushdie had defiled the Qur'an, stumbling onto a stage from which there was no exit. The Muslim response was clear; the Qur'an would not be mocked or questioned. With two satirical chapters, Rushdie had ripped open a view into the brittle world of Qur'anic blasphemy.

Yet, for a book which elicits such passions, the origins of the Qur'an are often overlooked. The Qur'an has traditionally been free from genuine scholarly analysis, and remained remote from the unfettered flow of higher criticism aimed at the Bible. Critical examination of the Qur'an is usually done by lone scholars, and published in obscure journals, far from the gaze of mainstream academia. Even in the halls of Western universities, where religion is fodder for derision of all stripes, higher criticism of the Qur'an is rare.

The Historical Qur'an

The basic tenets of Islam profess that Muhammad received the Qur'an in increments from the angel Gabriel over a 22 year period, AD 610-632. These revelations were purported to be the literal Word of God—absolute perfection. For Muslims, the Qur'an of today is the precise and exact transmission that Muhammad received through Gabriel, a facsimile of the uncreated, eternal, and heavenly original. In Islam, the Qur'an is a book for reverence and adoration—but not academic assessment.

But a question looms for the “lone scholar” and layman alike. Does the Qur'an have a history? This is not a disparaging question, but a genuine inquiry into how the written Qur'an was compiled, or codified, and how the oral transmissions of Gabriel were stamped onto the written page that Muslims read today.

Abu Bakr

In 632, at age 62, Muhammad died in Medina. His successor, the first caliph, Abu Bakr, quickly found himself in a precarious position; Muhammad had never compiled the recitations of the Qur'an or left instructions on how to do so. Over the wide expanse of 22 years, Muhammad had not been uniform in recording the Qur'anic revelations. Sometimes his companions memorized Muhammad's recitations by heart and other times wrote them down on whatever physical objects were at hand. He left behind a fragment-

ed Qur'an. It must be emphasized that these fragments, taken to be the unblemished, immutable, exact words of God, were literally written on flat stones, pieces of animal bone, sections of palm leaf—and the memories of men.

Oddly enough, the impetus for codification came through warfare. In the chaos following Muhammad's death, several tribes had apostacized and renounced Islam in open rebellion, resulting in the Battle of Yamama in 632. During the fighting, hundreds of Muhammad's contemporaries were killed. Many of the fallen were men who had committed sec-



tions of Qur'anic verse to memory and their loss was immense. Beyond the fog of battle, Abu Bakr recognized the dilemma: the Qur'an could not find permanent shelter in the breasts of men.

Compelled by the necessity of the moment, Abu Bakr ordered Zaid Ibn Thabit, a renowned scholar and companion of Muhammad, to begin codification of the Qur'an into a single text. Zaid's task was monumental. The compilation was not a matter of sifting through the sources; there was no mother lode of sources in existence. With no well of material to draw from, Zaid conducted a widespread search for

Pious yearnings cannot change a simple truth

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primary sources. He gleaned verses of memorization from men deemed credible, and collected physical scraps of verse from parchment, bits of leather, and camel bones. There should be no doubt that Zaid attempted to be diligent and thorough. There should also be no doubt that Zaid was laboring under the burden of an awkward predicament—he was vulnerable to subjectivity and intuition. By dire necessity, Zaid was forced into the role of Qur'anic arbiter and compelled to make decisions regarding inclusion. *Ultimately there could be no absolute voice of affirmation or negation of Zaid's compilation—Muhammad was dead.*



Furthermore, Abu Bakr was aware that Zaid's completed manuscript or codex was not unique in existence. Other codices were being compiled in the burgeoning Muslim territories; different provinces were gathering different Qur'ans. Both he and Zaid were not positive their codex contained all of Muhammad's recitations. The finished version remained privately held, never published by Abu Bakr.

Uthman

In 644, 12 years after Muhammad's death, Uthman became the third caliph of Islam. The provinces had since grown even more ardent in venerating their own versions of the

Qur'an. Provincial murmurings undermining the caliphate's authority were filtering to Uthman's ear.

Uthman responded with a masterstroke of religious and political action. His response was draconian—but highly effective. He ordered Zaid and a body of additional scholars to revise Abu Bakr's codex, making any necessary omissions or additions. Uthman chose the Abu Bakr codex with purpose and forethought; it had remained out of the public eye and carried no provincial bias. For a second time, Zaid was tasked with the gravity of transmitting perfection to paper.

Uthman took the utmost measure to ensure uniformity of the new codex; *he decreed that all other codices and fragments be burned.* It must be emphasized that there is no historical indication that these manuscripts were heretical—they were variant. These were texts written by men who had known Muhammad, copies deemed authentic in their given provinces—*yet Uthman consigned the entire lot to the flames.* The harsh reality of Uthman's pyre remains closeted in the Islamic world, but its irony looms across time. If today, someone destroyed a physical object or a manuscript that had the mere possibility of a first-hand connection to Muhammad, the ensuing Islamic wrath would make the Rushdie affair seem tame.

Regardless of how Uthman's actions are viewed, he had succeeded in securing uniformity of text. Islam was no longer exposed to the frailties of memory. The new codex received official blessing, and between 650-656, copies were sent to the provinces. Abu Bakr's codex was the only manuscript to escape the flames (although it too was later burnt in 667). The Abu Bakr codex had evolved into Uthman's codex, which is today's Qur'an.

Conclusion

There is an impenetrable Qur'anic gulf between sentiment and fact. When highlighted, the stark details cast long shadows of doubt against the authenticity of Qur'anic codification. Pious yearnings cannot change a simple truth: the Qur'an does have a questionable history.

Please pray Muslims will discover that the key to salvation is not found in the words of the Qur'an, but in Jesus Christ. Pray Muslims might earnestly call upon the name of Jesus, for it is not the Qur'an, but He that remains unblemished and uncreated.



: *the Qur'an does have a questionable history.*

SUDAN



Population: 34,000,000

Religions: Muslim 65%, Christian 23%, Animist 11%

Official Language: Arabic

Peoples: Arab 45%, non-Arab 55%

Sudan is a land racked by persecution and suffering. The human tragedy continues with approximately two million deaths in the last twenty years, attributable to warfare and famine. The beleaguered Darfur region in southern Sudan has been witness to atrocities on a genocidal scale.

As with most conflicts involving religion and ethnicity, the story is complicated and long. Sudanese oil reserves have gone a long way in silencing international outcries. The Western media have refused to acknowledge a religious component to the Darfur crisis, despite it being one of the most lethal religious/racial conflicts of modern times.

The current Khartoum-based Sudanese government (an Islamic and Arab administration) came to power in 1989. Khartoum declared a jihad policy against the south in 1990, attempting to kill or drive out as many black Christian and Animist Sudanese from the south as possible. This was done under the facade of unity, despite being a blatant power-grab of the south and its oil wells.

The north has been active in arming numerous militias tasked with implementing what is tantamount to genocide. The most active and visible militia is the Janjaweed, an Arab force backed by Khartoum.

Since 2003, conservative estimates put the number of southern Sudanese deaths at 200,000; many estimates range higher. The number of displaced persons ranges in the millions. The atrocities have not occurred in seclusion, but directly under the eye of the United Nations. Compelled to respond by the accumulation of appalling statistics, the UN has placed 10,000 troops in the south, and a tentative peace accord has been proposed.

Darfur has been a shameful indictment of the international community. Sudan, as a full member of the UN, has actively pursued a policy of genocide. Astoundingly, the irony reaches even higher levels—as of 2007, Sudan remains a sitting member of the UN Human Rights Commission.



*Please
pray...*

...for millions of Sudanese driven from their homes.

...for Muslim and Christian families caught up in the persistent fighting.

...for neighboring countries surrounding Sudan. The conflict threatens to spill over the Sudanese borders.

...that despite the worst of circumstances, opportunities would arise in Sudan allowing Muslims to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ.





JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

*PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!*



Friday, July 6, 2007. Please pray

...for two Australian pastors convicted of “vilifying Muslims” under a religious tolerance statute. Their appeal has been upheld and their case will be retried before a new judge.

...for Ladi Muhammad of Nigeria. Eight months after escaping from a blasphemy judgement to stone her to death, she is still in hiding.

...for stability in Somalia. The Ethiopian army appears to have established temporary calm, but fundamentalist Muslims are threatening to regain control and implement sharia law.

Friday, July 13, 2007. Please pray

...for Muslims in Bangladesh. Pray that the Lord would continue to use Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) to reach Muslims with the love of Christ.

...for the Lord to continue to strengthen the burgeoning Church in Iran.

...for the thousands of forlorn individuals confined in slavery throughout several countries in the Muslim world. Modern-day slavery continues to exist with tacit government approval in Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan.

Friday, July 20, 2007. Please pray

...for an estimated 1.5 million Muslim widows living in Afghanistan, with an average of five to eight children each.

...for preparations for the International Book Fair in Damascus, Syria. Held at summer's end, it will be the second largest book fair in the Middle East and will draw over one million people. Pray for 10 Christian publishers that will be in attendance.

...for expatriate workers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). 80% of the UAE population is made up of foreign workers. Pray that through this diverse mix, the Gospel of Jesus Christ will reach Muslims in the UAE.

Friday, July 27, 2007. Please pray

...pray for Reverend Dmitry Shestakov of Uzbekistan. An Uzbek criminal court has sentenced him to four years in a prison colony for alleged “illegal” religious activities. Pray for his wife and three daughters as they wait on the result of his appeal.

...for MBBs in Azerbaijan. Authorities have cracked down on the MBB movement which has grown to over 10,000 converts in the last twenty years. Many new Azerbaijani Christians are harassed and placed under government surveillance.

...for the Alawite Muslims of Syria. Pray that through their unique belief system, they might be more open to the Gospel.

***I URGE, THEN, FIRST OF ALL THAT REQUESTS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND
THANKSGIVING BE MADE FOR EVERYONE. –1 TIMOTHY 2:1, NIV***



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

*PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!*



Friday, August 3, 2007. Please pray

...for the country of **Bosnia**. Saudi Arabian funds have helped build or renovate several hundred mosques in or around Sarajevo.
...for the future of **Lebanon**. Hezbollah has become a state inside Lebanon, with its own militia, television and radio stations, and social programs. Radical regimes in Iran and Syria provide financial and military support for Hezbollah.
...for **religious minorities in Indonesia**. One Indonesian province is mandating that all students and all couples seeking marriage must take written and oral Qur'anic tests, regardless of religious affiliation.

Friday, August 10, 2007. Please pray

...that mature and vibrant churches will be planted across the Muslim world.
...for the husband and two children of **Christianah Oluwasesin**, a Christian murdered in Nigeria. Christianah, a schoolteacher, was stoned, beaten to death, and then burned by her students after being accused of Qur'anic "desecration."
...for the continuing unrest in **Thailand**. Three years of Islamic insurgency against the government have caused nearly 2,000 deaths in the three chiefly Muslim southern provinces bordering Malaysia.

Friday, August 17, 2007. Please pray

...for **Christian teachers working in secondary schools in Muslim countries**. Pray that doors will open for them to share the love of Jesus Christ.
...for **Arabic language Christian programs** being prepared and then beamed to satellites for hearing and viewing in the Arab world. Pray they will be a source of strength and inspiration.
...for **house churches created since the Taliban's removal in Afghanistan**. Pray that God's protection would be on many secret believers that risk danger to attend these meetings.

Friday, August 24, 2007. Please pray

...for **young believers in Tunisia** to be filled with wisdom and the vision to share the Gospel with friends and neighbors.
...that the day will come when **spiritual walls will fall across the Islamic world and Christian witness is unfettered**.
...for **200 MBBs in Germany**. Pray that these new Christians will have zeal and vision to reach Muslims in their community.

Friday, August 31, 2007. Please pray

...that the **130 million Muslims in Bangladesh will hear the true Gospel**. The majority follow folk Islam—a blend of indigenous culture and Hinduism, overlaid by a veneer of Islam. May Christians be faithful in reaching out to them.
...for the **Uighur Muslims in Northwest China**. Pray for the few Christian workers reaching out to an often neglected minority.
...for **indigenous Christian pastors across the Muslim world**. Many toil under a heavy burden of physical danger, minimal conversions, and meager pay. Pray that God would encourage and embolden these precious and invaluable laborers.