

LECTURE 6: SUBVERTING AND FULFILLING TEXTS

1 The Qur'an

- What did you think of Hanane, “Qur'an Case Study”, in Accad and Andrews, eds., *The Religious Other*, p213-4, the questions on p214-5 and “Testimony 2” p215-7?
- How do you respond to your friend who asks “what do you think of the Qur'an”?
- Are you happy using the Qur'an?
 - How might you subvert and fulfil the Qur'an?
Enter the world (listen):

Explore (find grace and idols):

Expose (show idols' emptiness):

Evangelise (Jesus as subversive fulfilment)¹

Eg footballers: “How do you know when/how a verse revealed?”...tafsir, chronology not important cf Bible story, Arabic crucial, need to think/ponder, applicable everywhere...
- Having set the parameters of image, suppression and demonic, there's no set way...
 - Raise *practical* questions (cf Amal's 1st statement on p216 of Accad and Andrews) eg “What does it mean to you?”, “What do you like about it?”, “Why?”
 - Subvert and fulfil “pure and fulfilling book” via Psalm 119 and wise and foolish builders or Martha and Mary
 - Raise *gentle* questions eg “What does ‘Messiah’ mean?”, “If Mary is special then what about Jesus?” or “Why is Mary so special?”, “Have you read the Bible to understand the Qur'an better?”...
 - Subvert and fulfil “complete and in keeping with previous books” via Luke 1-2 to show Messiah, Mary and need to understand previous Scriptures
 - Point to different interpretations eg about Jesus' death, Son of God, Jesus being like Adam...

¹ See Daniel Strange, *Plugged In*, (London: The Good Book Company, 2019), especially pages 117-139.

- Subvert and fulfil “we’re right and you’re wrong, just look at our book” via Jesus fulfilling the previous Scriptures’ types and figures
- Raise *consistent* questions eg “How can it be eternal?”, “Why does God speak Arabic?”, “Why are there no eyewitnesses?”
- Subvert and fulfil “We’ve got God’s word for all people for all time” via story of gracious progressive revelation to Adam, Abraham, Moses, David and John about who God is and we can know him in our heart languages
- Raise *critical* questions eg “Why was there a need to destroy copies of the Qur’an?”, “Why are there no complete manuscripts closer to Muhammad?”, “Why is the qibla change mentioned in 2:143-4 if it didn’t change?”
- Subvert and fulfil “we’ve got God’s word for all people for all time” via story of gracious progressive revelation to little children which has stood the test of time
- Show there are a variety of opinions about the Bible eg [Islamicate Book Reviews 14: 'A History of Muslim Views of the Bible' by Martin Whittingham - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buWWiQdErao) / <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buWWiQdErao> (one hour)
- Did the early Christians understand more about the Islamic claims than Muslims did?

2 The Trinity Answers Everything

- Ultimately, can we subvert and fulfil the Qur’an and Hadith via our Triune God?
 - Clearest and fullest revelation is through the Word made flesh not a “divine book” (and a man), but the God-man
 - Clearest and fullest route-for-life is with the Holy Spirit not a law
 - Clearest and fullest relationship is with our Father in heaven not an absent Creator
 - Enabling us to live as assured and mature children of God

3 Some Final-ish Thoughts on the Book and the Man: Non-Authorized and Tentative Summary of Early “Islam”²

3a) From Tom Holland³ and Friends:

- Presupposition: it’s not divine, so, what is it?
- Various big questions that do not fit “the standard Islamic narrative”:

² See Jay Smith and Al Fadi on this too: [Dan Gibson's Latest Discoveries 4 - Origin of the Quran - YouTube](#)

³ In Tom Holland, , *In the Shadow of the Sword: the Battle for Global Empire and the End of the Ancient World* (London: Abacus 2013).

- Why is there no single Arab account Muhammad's life, conquests nor progress of religion from whole two centuries which followed his death? (While "savage Northumbrians were capable of preserving Bede")⁴
- Why did Islamic jurists ignore the Qur'an's punishment for adultery of 100 lashes (s37:133-138) and always quote the Torah's stoning? Why are there no commentaries on the Qur'an from before 9th Century AD?⁵
- Did they come from the area Lot settled in? Desert shrines there were known to have been worshipped by "Saracens",⁶ and may be closer to where Abraham et al lived and travelled.
- Are the Qur'an's polemics against Jews and Christians there because the Qur'an came from a region where there were plentiful Jews and Christians (the "sectarian milieu"), ie not Arabia but in/close to Palestine, eg Petra?
- The Qur'an was made up by Caliph Abd al-Malik (Uthman's half-brother's son, ruled 685-705) to hold Arab empire together and his successors
 - Functional approach to religion – Abd Al-Malik as "Arab empire's equivalent of Constantine"⁷
 - Based on Crone and Wansbrough – no reference to "Muslim" (but Arabs, Saracens, Hagarenes, Ishmaelites, Emigrants, Believers) or "Mecca" (but to area around Dead Sea, Petra etc) or Qur'an/Hadith until after Malik⁸
 - "Rather than a tale of epic conquest followed by the diffusion of an Arab religion throughout the Near East, we instead have a new religion and scripture distilled from a world of sectarian monotheist polemic in Iraq and put to use to legitimate an Arab political domination throughout the area."⁹
- Also, look at Petra: [The Sacred City | Kaaba in Mecca | Absolute History - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGLWh5Cd-xo) / <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGLWh5Cd-xo> (1 hrs 25 mins)
- And coins – both in west and east shahada appears around AD690ish¹⁰
 - "Early Islamic coin iconography reveals the search for an identity of the Arab-Islamic state that finally lead to a suitable formula to represent the new, all embracing universal empire in its own right"¹¹

⁴ Tom Holland, 42.

⁵ Tom Holland, 335.

⁶ Tom Holland, 365.

⁷ Tom Holland, 483.

⁸ Keith Lewinstein, "Critical Scholarship and the Teaching of Islam", in Brannon Wheeler ed *Teaching Islam* (New York: OUP, 2003), 50.

⁹ Lewinstein, "Critical Scholarship", 50.

¹⁰ See Stefan Heidmann, 'The Evolving Representation of the Early Islamic Empire and its Religion on Coin Imagery' in in Angelika Neuwirth et al *The Qur'an in Context, 149-195*.

¹¹ Stefan Heidmann, 186.

3b) A More Christian Approach

- Presupposition: it's not divine, so, what is it?
 - Remember Genesis 1-3 and Romans 1-3
 - It is a conscious and unconscious twisting and suppressing of divine revelation by Muhammad and those who came after him, within the context of intra-Christian debates about Christology and inter-religious debates about Abraham, Moses and the Law, as power was sought, identities needed to be formed and an empire needed to be ruled
 - So that, sometimes it looks like a bit right, sometimes it looks a bit like a Christian heresy, sometimes it looks a bit like Arab-ised Judaism, and sometimes it looks a bit like paganism – not least because there are multiple sources and competing ideas over time
- 610s-30s: Muhammad existed and preached one God and last day
- 620s-640s: Arabs mobilised and took countryside in battles, cities won without a fight – Byzantine-persecuted-Christians (eg Jacobites and non-Greek-speaking Christians) happy-ish
- 640s-90s: Arabs wanted to include Jews and Christians, but second class because not Arabs
- 650s-690s: Internal Arab conflicts, resolved through force, anti-Christian theology, coins and construction eg Abd al Malik (5th Umayyad Caliph) and Dome of the Rock¹²
- Christians wrote apocalyptic (from mid 600s) and polemic responses (from mid 700s)
- Qur'ans proliferate from mid-700s:
 - Based on some earlier teachings before, from, and after Muhammad – both Biblical and non-biblical
 - But at a distance from some of those sources because Muslim interpreters in hadith and tafsir have trouble understanding them¹³

¹² Yet no coins from earliest 4 caliphs. Why, when rulers always bring in new coins? And, shahada first appears on a coin 685-92. Images until 695. See Jay Smith's PPT "Coins Tell a Story", with Slide 32-34 as a summary.

¹³ Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Emergence of Islam* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), p167-8.

- In Arabic, in response to a lack of a Bible in Arabic, identifying Arabs as descendants of Abraham, following a majestic and transcendent god contra Jews and Christians
- Sira 833, Hadith 870, Tafsir 923¹⁴
 - Based on some earlier Muhammad oral traditions and after him, beginning with Umayyads of Damascus, 661-750AD, whose mosques face Petra, ([Umayyad Caliphate - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umayyad_Caliphate) / https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umayyad_Caliphate), and including the “construction” of Mecca by Ibn al-Zubayr in 680s and Abbasids of Baghdad, 750-1258/1517AD, whose mosques face Mecca from 720s [Abbasid Caliphate - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbasid_Caliphate) / https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbasid_Caliphate)¹⁵
- Over time more stories and a theological framework emerge, and it’s hard not to convert...

¹⁴ Slide 33 Jay Smith’s PPT “Coins Tell a Story”.

¹⁵ See Jay Smith, [When did Mecca become the holy city of Islam? - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06oBQSS4XC4&t=3s) / <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06oBQSS4XC4&t=3s> and slides 54-56, 62, 68-69, 72-72, 77-87, 92-100 of Jay Smith’s PPT “Qibla-Gibson Discoveries & Gibson vs King”. BUT, recognising that there are problems with these dates too, as we do not have MS from those times.