

I often get asked questions about the Qur'an, and I almost always do not answer them, most because I can't answer them. I'm not an expert on the Qur'an, and tend to talk only about things I have done serious and sustained research on. Otherwise I'm just spreading stuff I've heard, and I'm no more authoritative on that than anyone else. So what's the point of my talking about it?

But one question that I get frequently, especially from Muslim readers, is about the manuscript tradition of the Qur'an in relation to the New Testament. Even though I'm not an expert on the manuscript tradition of the Qur'an (oh boy am I not an expert), I know enough to answer with some authority this particular question.

The question is whether it simply isn't true that the Qur'an is more reliable than the New Testament. What the questioner almost always means by that is that the ancient manuscripts of the Qur'an tend to be amazingly similar to one another. Virtually identical up and down the line. Scribes kept it the way it was, without changing it. That's in contrast to the New Testament, where scribes changed it all the time, often in insignificant ways and sometimes in rather startling large ways, either by accident or on purpose,

So, by comparison, isn't the Qur'an more reliable?

In almost every instance when I get asked the question, if I pursue it with the person, what they really mean is...

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