

# Did al-Hajjaj Change The Qur'an? A Reply To Christian Polemic

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*Assalamu-alaikum wa rahamatullahi wa barakatuhu:*

To start with, my sincere thanks are to brother ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān Lomax for his useful comments and drawing my attention to certain points that I missed on the issue of al-Ḥajjāj. Thanks are also due to Mr. Nicholas, Asst. Librarian, Center for African Studies, University of Cambridge, for drawing my attention to modern scholarship on Islam.

For the sake of ease, the contents of this document are divided as follows:

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## Introduction

It has become a disgraceful practice amongst Christian missionaries to explore the most immoral possibilities in their quest to spread misinformation about the Qur'ān and Islam. The Internet captain of this juvenile movement, a one Jochen Katz, has offered an example of this type of foul ethics in an article posted on his [website](#). The missionary has fantasized the following about al-Ḥajjāj bin Yūsuf:

he gave himself the liberty to change several words of Caliph Uthman's Koran, which is an indication that he did not believe that the Koran was verbally inspired or was inscribed in a "tablet preserved".

Every missionary scandal is rooted in some source or another. The scandal surrounding al-Ḥajjāj is apparently based on two different traditions, one Christian and one Muslim. We would like to begin by examining the origins of the Christian tradition and then address the problems surrounding the missionary's interpretation of the Muslim tradition.

## The Christian Source

There is a persistent tradition in the eastern Christian churches, often referred to by oriental Christians even in the present day, to the effect that early during the 8th century, there had been an exchange of letters on the question of the respective merits of Christianity and Islam, between the Ummayyad Caliph ʿUmar II and the Byzantine Emperor Leo III. The details of the letter can be seen in an article that appeared in the [Harvard Theological Review](#) in 1944. In the letter to ʿUmar II, the Byzantine emperor Leo III writes:

In brief you admit that we say that it (i.e., the Qur'ân) was written by God, and brought down from the heavens, as you pretend for your furqan, although we know that it was ʿUmar, Abû Turâb and Salmân the Persian, who composed that, even though the rumour has got around among you that God sent it down from the heavens.<sup>[1]</sup>

This is a rather peculiar statement from Leo III, as Arthur Jeffery comments in the footnotes. By Abû Turâb, Leo III meant ʿAlî<sup>(R)</sup>, son-in-law of the Prophet<sup>(P)</sup>.

Continuing the letter to ʿUmar II, Leo III writes:

As for your (book), you have already given us examples of such falsifications, and one knows, among others, of a certain Hajjâj, named by you as the governor of Persia, who had men gathered up your ancient books, which he replaced by others composed by himself, according to his taste, and which he propagated everywhere in your nation, because it was easier by far to undertake such a task among the people speaking a single language. From this destruction, nevertheless, there escaped a few works of Abû Turâb, for Hajjâj could not make them disappear completely.<sup>[2]</sup>

Compare this with the boasting from the missionary's webpage:

he gave himself the liberty to change several words of Caliph Uthman's Koran, which is an indication that he did not believe that the Koran was verbally inspired or was inscribed in a "tablet preserved".

The similarities are only all too striking. Regarding Leo's letter, Jeffery comments:

This is a rather confused reference to the work of al-Hajjâj on the text of the Qur'ân. The orthodox Muslim theory assumes that the text as canonized by ʿUthmân was the final canonization, but there is a reason to believe that a recension of ʿUthmân's text was made by the direction of al-Hajjâj, so that we only know of the text of ʿUthmân in this later recension. This fact was

apparently well known to oriental Christian writers, for al-Kindî in his apology, speaks of al-Hajjâj not leaving a single codex that he did not gather up, and left out many things, and of which he sent out copies of his new recension, and directed his attention to destroying the older codices. **This statement of al-Kindî has always been looked at askance as a piece of Christian polemic.**<sup>[3]</sup>

Jeffery also discusses the addition of diacritical marks in the Qur'ânic text by al-Hajjâj to make the reading more certain, as mentioned in the work of Ibn Abî Dâwûd (to be discussed later, inshallah). Proceeding, Jeffery states:

It would thus **seem** that some revision of the text, as well as clarification by division and pointing, was undertaken by al-Hajjâj, and that this was known to the Christians of that day, and naturally exaggerated by them for polemical purposes.<sup>[4]</sup>

And further

As this work would have been done by al-Hajjâj during the period of office under Caliph ʿAbd al-Mâlik bin Marwan who died in 86AH = 705AD, there is no difficulty in supposing that Leo may have heard of it during his official life in Syria.<sup>[5]</sup>

It becomes quite obvious as to whether the document between ʿUmar II and Leo III is authentic. The author's opinion on this issue is as follows:

The question remains as to the genuineness of this correspondence, and that is a matter for the historians to argue on the basis of the material itself.<sup>[6]</sup>

Now that the authenticity of this document has fallen on the grounds of suspicion, we would like to push the question even further and consider the ramifications. Patricia Crone and Michael Cook in their book, [Hagarism: The Making Of The Islamic World](#), use the aforementioned Christian polemic to reconstruct, Islamic history before even verifying the facts.

Now both Christian and Muslim sources attribute some kind of role to Hajjâj in the history of Muslim scripture. In the account attributed to Leo by Levond, Hajjâj is said to have collected and destroyed the old Hagarene writings and replaced them with others composed according to his own tastes.<sup>[7]</sup>

John Wansbrough, reviewing [Hagarism: The Making Of The Islamic World](#), simply makes a mockery of the poor scholarship of Crone and Cook:

The material is upon occasion misleadingly presented, e.g., Ephrem certainly did not prophesy an exodus of Hagarenes from the desert, **nor did Levond report Leo's description of Hajjâj destroying old Hagarene writings.**<sup>[8]</sup>

In other words, the account attributed to Leo by Levond (or Ghevond) is a forgery that was constructed to scandalize the question of al-Hajjâj by some later Christian writer. This point is also echoed by Neal Robinson in his book, [Discovering The Qur'ân: A Contemporary Approach To a Veiled Text](#), where he states:

The letter ascribed to Pope Leo may simply be a convenient literary device used by a Christian polemicist living at a later date. Even if it is authentic, and the allegations which it contains have some substance, the activity of Hajjâj may have been limited to destroying the sectarian writings, and early codices of the Qur'ân which preserved the surahs in a different order.<sup>[9]</sup>

Now that the issue of Leo has been closed, let us now move over to the other Christian polemic associated with al-Hajjâj, the apology of 'Abd al-Maṣīh al-Kindī. We have already noted above that the work of al-Kindī was of a disputatious nature. Arthur Jeffery says:

The Christian writer al-Kindī in his polemical work known as the [Apology of al-Kindī](#), makes a controversial point out of the alterations he claimed that al-Hajjâj, as everyone knew, had made in the text of Qur'ân, but this was regarded by scholars as just a polemical exaggeration such as one might expect in a controversial writing.<sup>[10]</sup>

Jeffery seems to miss the point that is mentioned in the book [Kitâb al-Maṣâhif](#) of Ibn Abî Dâwûd which he quotes to say:

When we come to examine the accounts of the activity of al-Hajjâj in this matter, however, we discover to our own surprise that the evidence points strongly to the fact that his work was not confined to fixing more precisely the text of the Qur'ân by a set of points showing how it was to be read, but he **seems** to have made an entirely new recension of the Qur'ân, having copies of his new text sent to the great metropolitan centres and ordering the destruction of earlier copies in existence there, much as 'Uthmân had done earlier. Moreover, this new text promulgated by al-Hajjâj seems to have undergone more or less extensive alterations.<sup>[11]</sup>

It is quite surprising that the author Arthur Jeffery on one hand relies on [Kitâb al-Maṣâhif](#) of Ibn Abî Dâwûd and on the other hand always makes the

statements starting with "he seems" or "al-Hajjāj seems" to draw the attention towards uncertainty of the extent to which al-Hajjāj was responsible for the changes in the text. The nature of the changes which al-Hajjāj made can be seen [here](#).

Summarizing the Christian sources: We see that the Christian sources of Leo III and Abd al-Maṣīh al-Kindī have a purely polemical purpose and exaggerate the events that took place during al-Hajjāj's time. The sources lack factual bases and their historicity is doubtful. Furthermore, this view is solidified by modern scholarship.

## **The Muslim Tradition: Importance Of Oral Transmission Of The Qur'ân**

It is important to focus on two aspects when we examine the transmission of the Qur'ân. Till now the fundamental issue has only been with the written text. The oral transmission seems to have taken the backseat and been neglected by Arthur Jeffery. Were the changes made by al-Hajjāj confined to the text of the Qur'ân or did it also affect the oral transmission? Unless the latter possibility is proved by solid, historical evidence and not missionary patchwork, it is baseless to assert that al-Hajjāj changed the Qur'ân. A change should reflect in textual as well as oral transmission of the Qur'ân. Sadly, this point has been overlooked by Arthur Jeffery in his work.

In this section, we will deal with the Muslim sources as well as some of the non-Muslim sources. Let us first deal with the idea of [introducing vowel signs into the Qur'ân](#) and the need for it. The Qur'ân holds a unique status in the history of Arabic literature as being the first book ever in the Arabic language. However, the oral recitation of the Qur'ân was and is considered the primary mode of transmission, with the written form playing a secondary role. Producing a written form of the Qur'ân without diacritical marks would have been useful only to those who were masters of the language. The rapid number of foreign converts to Islam, whose native language was not Arabic, would have a very difficult time with an Arabic text that lacked these diacritical marks. The same is quite true today for students of Arabic who attempt to learn even modern, colloquial Arabic. These marks, called **tashkîl** in Arabic, help to determine the correct pronunciation of the word, and thus, avoid the mistakes. When the Islamic state expanded, more and more Muslims of non-Arab origin and also many ignorant Arabs began to study the Qur'ân, and faulty pronunciation became widespread. It is important for the missionaries to come to grips, as difficult as it may be, with the fact that faulty pronunciation does not magically result in a "different version". This foolish idea should be erased from the minds of the sincere. Abû 'Ubaydah narrated about Abû al-Aswad al-Du'alî:

Abû al-Aswad derived grammar from Alî Ibn Abî Tâlib, for whom may there be peace, but he did not disclose to

anyone what he had learned from ʿAlî, whose countenance may Allah honour, until Ziyad appointed him for the composition of something to serve as a guide to the people, so that they could understand the book of Allah. Abû al-Aswad asked to be excused from this task, until one time when he heard a reader recite, *Allah is quit of the idolators and of His Apostle* (Qur'ân 9:3 should have been read as *Allah is quit of the idolators and so is His Apostle*). Then he said, "I never supposed that the condition of the people would come to this!" So he returned to Ziyad and said, "I will do what the emir has ordered. Let there be sought for me a scribe who is intelligent and obedient to what I say". They brought, therefore, a scribe from the ʿAbd al-Kays Tribe, but he [Abû al-Aswad] was not satisfied with him. Then they came with another one, about whom Abû al-ʿAbbas al-Mubarrad said, "I regard him to be one of those [who are intelligent]." So Abû al-Aswad said [to the new scribe], "If you see that I open my mouth in pronouncing a letter, place a mark above, on top of it. If I close my mouth [making a u sound], place a mark in front of the letter, and if I split [my lips] double the mark." So this was the marking system of Abu al-Aswad.<sup>[12]</sup>

**Aḥmad von Denffer** quotes the above story and explains the mistake that occurred in the improper reading of the Qur'ân.

It is related that at the time of Du'alî someone from Basra read the ayah 9:3 from the Qur'ân in a faulty way, which changed the meaning completely:

from

that God and his Apostle dissolves obligations with the pagans

to

that God dissolves obligations with the pagans and the Apostle

This mistake occurred wrongly reading *rasulihi* in place of *rasuluhu* which could not be distinguished from written text, because they were no signs or accents indicating the correct pronunciation. Unless someone had memorized the correct version he could out of ignorance commit the mistake.<sup>[13]</sup>

**In the footnotes, we read that:**

Yaqut reports in his book that al-Hajjâj bin-Yûsuf himself once read *ahabba* in 9:24 wrongly as *ahabbu*.<sup>[14]</sup>

Hence, there arose a need to introduce **tashkîl** in order for the non-Arabs to read the Qur'ân in the correct manner. The oriental sources make use of this Muslim tradition as well as other traditions and expand the argument to draw supportive conclusions.

On this issue, Nadia Abbott writes:

When we come to consider the vowel signs, 1st century manuscripts are of no aid, since no such signs appear in any secular document of that date. However, Kur'ân manuscripts credited to the period show a consistent vowel system in which a single red dot above, below, or to the side of a letter stood for the vowels A, I, and U respectively, and two such dots indicated the *tanwin*. The text of early Kur'âns, however, is never completely voweled, the vowel sign for one or more of the letters of a given word being used only where it was essential for a correct reading. The Arabic traditions place the introduction of the system early in the Muslim era, in fact crediting ʿAlî with it. Whether ʿAlî deserves the credit or not makes little difference for the date in question, for the majority of the sources credit a contemporary of ʿAlî, Abû al-Aswad al-Du'alî, with the system. They tell how, having at first refused to introduce the system at the request of Ziyad Ibn Abihi, governor of Irak, he finally did so when he heard the Kur'ân being wrongly recited. **The system could not have been widely spread or generally used, for we find Hajjâj facing the same problem in Irak and ordering Nasr Ibn ʿAsim to safeguard the pronunciation of the Kur'ân;** Nasr, so the story goes, introduced the double dots for the *tanwin*. even this did not establish the general use of the system, for again we find Yahya Ibn Ya'mar given credit for it, which credit is likewise shared by Hasan al-Basri. Still these efforts and their results proved insufficient, for again Khalîl Ibn Ahmad is credited with introducing the hamzah and the *shaddah*, the *raum* and the *ishmam*, as he is also credited with the vowel signs that are still in use for A, I, and U. The last were originally miniatures of the letters alif, y and w, respectively.<sup>[15]</sup>

In the book [Arabic Literature To The End Of The Ummayyad Period](#), regarding the introduction of dots and strokes in the Qur'ân, we read that:

Dots and strokes were introduced to mark readings, a method apparently copied from the use in Syriac texts.

From the limited information we have, it seems that these marking were used at first simply to indicate the variants, with those parts of the texts that were not in dispute being left unmarked. This practice was frowned upon in many quarters as a dangerous innovation. **However, with the strong support of the governor of Iraq, the famous al-Ḥajjāj bin-Yūsuf, it was developed into a consistent system which could be applied to the whole text.** This allowed not only for letters of the same basic form to be distinguished from one another, but also for short vowels to be added. In addition the use of weak letters to mark long vowels became more systematic, and the marking of *hamz* was introduced.<sup>[16]</sup>

Going further:

**It is difficult to assess the role of al-Ḥajjāj. We may ignore the arguments of the Christian ʿAbd al-Maṣīh al-Kindī that al-Ḥajjāj was very much responsible for our text, as these have a polemical rather than factual basis. The account most widely found has him ordering Nasr bin ʿAsim to introduce the markings to safeguard the protection of the text. This is a plausible reason for the innovation, and the story is unchallenged, despite strong hostility of the sources towards al-Ḥajjāj.**<sup>[17]</sup>

If anything, the role of al-Hajjaj is therefore a supportive one that strove to maintain the authenticity of the Qur'ān in recitation. Now we have established following facts:

- The Christian polemics of ʿAbd al-Maṣīh al-Kindī and Leo III have no factual basis and even if they have any factual basis it is all exaggerated view of what al-Ḥajjāj did.
- The need for **tashkil** or vowel signs arose because of the wrong readings by non-Arabs and ignorant Arabs. Al-Ḥajjāj played an important role in introducing these signs.

Our aim now is to establish the exact role of al-Ḥajjāj and what he did after the ʿUthmanic collection. Aḥmad von Denffer writes:

According to Ibn Abî Dâwûd eleven changes were made under al-Ḥajjāj. These are again according to Ibn Abî Dâwûd, **mistakes which were made in the preparation of ʿUthmân's copy.**<sup>[18]</sup>

A further explanation of the changes that al-Ḥajjāj made is dealt with in the book [Arabic Literature To The End Of The Ummayad Period](#).

However, this seems to be only a partial explanation of what happened. On the other hand we have the tradition in Ibn Abi-Da'ud that al-Hajjāj was responsible for eleven changes in the consonantal text. If this is so, he is responsible for a minor recension at least. Against this we must set the evidence of early copies of the Qur'ân that have survived. These show that for some considerable amount of time the new system was used sparingly and mainly in connection with the variants.<sup>[19]</sup>

There is definitely a problem with the sentence

If this is so, he is responsible for a minor recension at least.

The eleven changes which al-Hajjāj made was in the copy of ʿUthmân **not** in all the copies around the Muslim world. It is not clear whether these are the mistakes of the scribes or preference of one Qirâ'a over the other. It seems that the changes involved a combination of correction of the errors of the scribes as well as preference of one Qirâ'a over the other.

But then what happened to the oral transmission? Were there any changes in that part of the transmission when al-Hajjāj corrected the Qur'ânic texts of ʿUthmân? There is no such historical evidence to show if that sort of an event happened.

The tradition of oral transmission in Arabia is well know and does not need to be over-emphasized.<sup>[20]</sup> Professor Zwettler referring to the transmission of Arabic poetry, states:

**The poetry of Arabs, in the ages which preceded the rise of Islamism, was perpetuated by oral tradition; for in ancient times, when writing was not used or scarcely used, memory was exercised and strengthened to a degree now almost unknown. In those countries of Arabia where Arabian poetry may be justly considered to have had its origin or to have attained its earliest growth, there lived reciters, or Râwis, as the Arabs called them, who got by heart numerous songs of their poets, and recited them, occasionally, in public assemblies and private parties... This impression, in essence, has been shared by a great majority of medieval and modern scholars who have dealt to any degree with Arabic poetry.**<sup>[21]</sup>

This aspect of oral transmission is equally applicable to the Qur'ân. Adrian Brockett, in his article *The Value Of Hafṣ And Warsh Transmissions For The Textual History Of The Qur'ân*, deals with various issues of the orally transmitted traditions and the seven Qirâ'at in which the Qur'ân can be recited. His conclusions regarding the oral side of Qur'ân's transmission is:

The transmission of the Qur'ân after the death of Muhammad was essentially static, rather than organic. There was a single text, and nothing significant, not even allegedly abrogated material, could be taken out nor could anything be put in. <sup>[22]</sup>

If this is the case with oral transmission of the Hafṣ and Warsh Qirâ'at then can we not conclude that al-Hajjâj did not tamper with the text of the Qur'ân as alleged by the Christian polemics (and consequently the Christian missionaries)?

It should be mentioned what John Burton has argued in the [conclusions](#) of his book [The Collection Of The Qur'ân](#):

What we have today in our hands is the *mushaf* of Muhammad. <sup>[23]</sup>

This conclusion has been an Orientalist consensus for quite some time, not a recent phenomenon. The impassioned W Muir, in his book, [The Life Of Mohammad](#), states:

The recension of 'Uthman has been handed down to us unaltered. so carefully, indeed, has it been preserved, that there are no variations of importance, - we might almost say no variations at all, - amongst the innumerable copies of the Koran scattered throughout the vast bounds of empire of Islam. Contending and embittered factions, taking their rise in the murder of 'Uthman himself within a quarter of a century from the death of Muhammad have ever since rent the Muslim world. Yet but **ONE KORAN** has always been current amongst them.... There is probably in the world no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text. <sup>[24]</sup>

The merit of this conclusion rests on the venomous nature of the author himself. Returning to the more recent scholarship and solidifying the issue:

Modern study of the Qur'ân has not in fact raised any serious questions of its authenticity. The style varies, but is almost unmistakable. **So clearly that the whole bear the stamp of uniformity that doubts of its genuineness hardly arise.** <sup>[25]</sup>

Bear in mind that these are not the pleas of Muslims but the testimonies of zealous Orientalists. The conclusion is virtually unanimous: the transmission of the Qur'ân has remained firm from the beginning. Historically speaking, there is no evidence for a sudden change in the **oral transmission** when al-Hajjâj corrected the 'Uthmanic copy either.

This leads us to the conclusion that al-Ḥajjāj did not tamper with the text of the Qur'ān in the manner that the Christian missionaries would like to fantasize. Rather he made corrections to the errors which the scribes made in the Ḥuthmanic text and introduced the diacritical marks to facilitate a correct reading of the text.

## **Al-Ḥajjāj & His Influence In The Umayyad Regime**

No attempt at modifying the Qur'ān is known to have occurred after the era of the four Caliphs, except for a report that al-Ḥajjāj had omitted many verses from the Qur'ān, dealing disparagingly with the rule of the Umayyads, and that he had also added to it some verses, that were not originally present. Then he was alleged to have prepared a new codex for distribution in Egypt, Syria, Mecca, Medina, Baṣra and Kufah. Thus, it is presumed that the present Qur'ān is the one prepared by al-Ḥajjāj, who methodically destroyed all the previous copies, allowing not a single one to remain. This briefly characterizes the pubescent fantasy adopted by Christian missionaries.

From a historical point of view, this claim is based upon conjecture and smacks of delirium. For al-Ḥajjāj was merely one of the generals in the Umayyad regime, with little influence and almost no ability to do the Qur'ān any harm. In fact, he was utterly incapable of effecting any change in the most elementary laws of Islam, not to speak of the Qur'ān, which is the foundation of Islamic faith, and pillar of Islamic laws. One wonders how he could influence any change in the Qur'ān after it had gained currency in the vast Muslim empire. Not a single historian or commentator has chronicled this change, the importance of which should not have escaped their notice. No contemporary Muslim ever objected to this, and even after his rule, the Muslims seem to have condoned this abominable fact. Moreover, if it is all believed that he managed to withdraw all the copies of the Qur'ān, and replacing it with his new codex, how could he eradicate it from the hearts of great numbers of Muslims who had committed it to memory? Had there been anything in the Qur'ān which was uncomplimentary to the Umayyads, Mu'āwiyah would have been the first to see it omitted because, compared to al-Ḥajjāj, he was more influential and powerful. Of course, if Mu'āwiyah had done this, the companions of ḤAlī would have argued with him, the way they did on many occasions, as recorded in the books of history, ḥadīth and theology. An example would be of the battle of Siffīn (AH 37), 27 years after the death of the Prophet<sup>ﷺ</sup>, and five years after ḤUthmān's copies were distributed.

Mu'āwiyah's troops fixed sheets from the Qur'ān on their spears to interrupt the battle. However, nobody accused anyone else of using a 'partisan' version of the text, which would have made a splendid accusation against the enemy. <sup>[26]</sup>

The pretence that the Qur'ân has been tampered with has no substance whatsoever.

## **Al-Hajjâj & The State of Arabic Language**

Interestingly enough the line of attack against the Qur'ân is not yet exhausted. We have browsed through various references concerning the use of these Christian polemics by modern Orientalists. One such reference is from the [Journal of The Manchester Egyptian and Oriental Society](#), regarding **The Transmission Of The Qur'ân**. Due to the substantial length of the article, we will simply quote the conclusions of the author, Alphonse Mingana, whose focus is the "rudimentary" state of the Arabic language during the time of the Prophet<sup>(p)</sup>. He says:

If all the signs do not mislead us, very few oracular sentences, if any, were written in the time of the Prophet. The kind of life he led, and the rudimentary character of reading and writing in that part of the world in which he appeared, are sufficient witnesses in favour of this view. Our ignorance of the Arabic language in that early period of its evolution is such that we can not even know with certainty whether it had any writings of its own in Maccah or Madinah. If any writing existed in these two localities, it must have been something very similar to the Estrangelo or the Hebraic characters.<sup>[27]</sup>

The author also claims that Arabs learnt the art of writing from Jews and Christians.<sup>[28]</sup> He also claims that only during the time of ʿAbd al-Mâlik and al-Hajjâj (using the al-Kindî polemic) the Qur'ân was brought into the shape that we have today.

As we are naturally inclined to examine the genuine condition of the Arabic language during the advent of the Qur'ân, we will investigate the sources themselves. Nabia Abbott answers the above allegations of Mingana in her book:

The condition of Arabic writing in Muḥammad's time is indicated by perf no. 558 (our plates iv-v), an Arabic papyrus of the reign of ʿUmar dated AH 22 and written in a fairly well developed manuscript hand in the distant province of Egypt, where Greek and Coptic were the written languages in general use. **If written Arabic was so primitive and rare in its own homeland at the time of Muḥammad's death, how do we account for its practical use in Egypt only a short dozen years after that event? Again to grant the incomplete development of orthography would give us reason to suspect only the orthographic accuracy of early Qur'ânic editions but not the possibility of their existence. In this connection it is interesting to**

note that nowhere in the traditions of the earliest transmission of the Qur'ân is there any hint of serious orthographic or vowel difficulties; rather it is the differences in the Arabic tribal dialects and differences arising out of foreigner's use of Arabic that seem to demand attention. the foregoing considerations lead one to believe that, if we allow for such common mistakes as writers and copyists are liable to make, the Arabic writers of Muḥammad's time and of the time of early Caliphs were able scribes capable of producing an acceptable edition of a written Qur'ân despite the lack of all the improvements of modern written Arabic.<sup>[29]</sup>

Thus, our point has been proven. Considering the possibility that missionary zealots might insidiously attempt to transform this point into another piece of sensationalist controversy, we would rather meet them ahead of time with the answer.

Another interesting point raised by Nadia Abbott is that there was no mention of the Qur'ân in the writings of the contemporary Christian writers. About the ignorance of Christian writers in early Islam she says:

Why should we expect writers whom their own testimony proves to have been so incapable of keeping up with the march of events all around them that they even failed to realize that a new religious idea, monotheism, was taking hold of their Arab neighbours and masters - why should we expect such men to be so wide awake and so well informed as positively to know of a Muslim book of which, at the best, but a few copies were in existence and those few carefully guarded from "Unbelievers"? even if we suppose that some of them did know what was going on, their interests were largely limited to their congregations and to Christian heresy that the chances are as good, particularly in early Islamic times, for their not mentioning the Qur'ân as for their mentioning it; therefore their failure to mention the Qur'ân in their writings must be in general viewed as inconclusive, circumstantial evidence.<sup>[30]</sup>

Even the most elementary study of this period of history will attest to the powerful veracity behind this fact.

## **Conclusions**

In this study we have dealt with the issues surrounding al-Ḥajjāj and Christian polemics. It has been demonstrated that the letter of the Christian Emperor Leo III are, in all likelihood, latter day forgeries by Christian zealots. As far as al-Kindī's writings are concerned, one can safely say that they lack

factual evidence and follow the Christian missionary tradition of attacking the Qur'ân.

The Islamic sources, on the other hand, are pretty clear about the role of al-Hajjâj. He was responsible for eleven changes in the copy of ʿUthmân and introducing diacritical marks in the Qur'ân. Finally, let it be understood that modifying the written script is not the same as modifying the oral recitation, which is the true form of the Qur'ân. This does not amount to a tampering of the Qur'ân, to the dismay of Christian missionaries.

And Allah knows the best!

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