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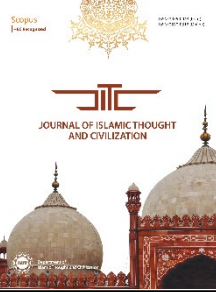
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Assumed Contradictions in the Qur'ān: An Analysis on Al-Alūsī's Disputation of Al-Kindī in "The Apology of Al-Kindī"

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Abstract

The priest, 'Abd al-Masīh al-Kindī wrote an apology in response to Hashimi's invitation to convert to Islam. The apology included various criticisms he had made against Islam, including regarding the Qur'ān, the Prophet Muḥammad, *Sharī'ah* and so on. A decade later, in the 19th century, Nu'mān Khayr al-Dīn, the son of Abū Thanā' al-Alūsī penned his book entitled *al-Jawāb al-Fasīh li Mā Laffaqahu 'Abd al-Masīh* as a response to the criticisms made by 'Abd al-Masīh Kindī who claimed that the Qur'ān contained contradictory verses. This study aims to evaluate al-Alūsī's arguments on the claims of al-Kindī. Two literatures, namely "The Apology of al-Kindī" and *Al-Jawāb al-Fasīh li-mā Laffaqahu 'Abd al-Masīh*, serve as the primary references for this study. The current research concludes that Alūsī's reconciliation of the assumed contradictory verses takes four forms: (1) to refer to occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*); (2) to consider the context of the verse (*siyāq*); (3) to provide the correct interpretation of the verse; and (4) to resort to abrogation (*naskh*).

Keywords: contradictions, criticism, Qur'ān, Qur'ānic interpretation

Introduction

The profound dissemination of Islam across the Arabian Peninsula has bestowed upon the masses an enlightening encounter with the theological principles of Islamic doctrine. Consequently, the study of the Qur'ān has engendered a diverse array of outcomes as it has been contemplated by an assortment of individuals and collectives. The imposition of authority by the Qur'ān upon other religious scriptures has evoked a sense of discontent among devotees of those religions who question the dominant position asserted by the Qur'ān. The concept of the Qur'ān as being the exclusive and untainted revelation bestowed by Allāh has undoubtedly evoked diverse receptions, thereby giving rise to critiques directed towards the Qur'ān itself. The contemplation and discourse surrounding faith and spirituality have been meticulously chronicled within numerous bodies of written work.¹ Throughout history, it is evident that even the Prophet Muḥammad found himself engaged in immersed encounters with the Meccan *Quraysh* and the people of the book. The Qur'ān, in its persistent manner, refutes these allegations or critiques of untainted revelation and provides fitting responses to this objection without fail.² Christian-Muslim Relations, a renowned Bibliographical History Online published by Brill, focuses on the period between 600 to 1500, during which time

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¹Adnan Yusoff, Muhammad Arif Musa, and Ahmad Sanusi Azmi, "Khawas Al-Quraan Sebagai Elemen Pelengkap Dalam Pengkaryaan Terjemahan al-Quran: Kajian Terhadap Kearifan 'Tafsir al-Rawi [*Khawas al-Quran* as a Complementary Element in Quranic Translation: A Study on the Wisdom of 'Tafsir Al-Rawi']," *Ma 'ālim al-Qur'ān wa al-Sunnah* 18, no. 1 (June 1, 2022): 133–53. <https://doi.org/10.33102/jmq.v18i1.354>

²And if ye are in doubt concerning that which We reveal unto Our slave (Muhammad), then produce a surah of the like thereof, and call your witness beside Allah if ye are truthful. Al-Baqarah 2:23.

interactions occurred across the vast Mediterranean region and the details of which were documented in various languages such as Syriac, Arabic, Greek, Latin, and others.³

In the pursuit of unravelling the enigmatic origins of the Qur'ān, modern scholars find themselves traversing a vast landscape of knowledge where myriad elements, characteristics, and domains converge, forming intricate constellations of interconnected themes. Mohar Ali in the year 2004 authored a work, titled "The Qur'ān and the Orientalist: An Examination of their Theories and Assumptions" aiming to understand and discern the Qur'ān as the sole uncorrupted revelation by Allāh. In general, the Qur'ān's response to this allegation takes at least seven principal forms: (i) declarations that the Qur'ān is not composed by humans, nor did the Prophet turn a poet;⁴ (ii) proclamations that the Qur'ān is a true revelation by Allāh in Arabic language;⁵ (iii) Allāh ensures that the Qur'ān will be completely revealed as intended without any shortcoming;⁶ (iv) the stories of previous prophets; their challenges and objections attest to Muḥammad's veracity as the true prophet of Allāh;⁷ (v) Allāh commands the Prophet to declare that if he fabricates anything and then distributes it in Allāh's name, he would be severely chastised;⁸ (vi) Allāh declares Himself to be the Witness between the prophet and his people which is crucial because Allāh's conversation with His Messengers is essentially an intimate affair that no outsider can witness or vouchsafe for;⁹ and (vii) Allāh dares all Qur'ān listeners to compose a text that is similar to a single surah of the Qur'ān and that has not been fulfilled in any time period.¹⁰

Apart from the accusations recounted in the Qur'ān, the prophetic traditions also show attempts by others to undermine Islamic foundation through criticism. The Christians of Najrān attempted to raise a supposed fault in the Qur'ān, according to a narration by the Muslim.¹¹ They drew attention to a verse in *Surah Maryam* in which the Qur'ān says, "O sister of Hārūn," in reference to the occurrence of the birth of Prophet 'Īsā. They maintained that the scripture was historically incorrect because Prophet Mūsā was born considerably before the time of Prophet 'Īsā. The Prophet Muḥammad answered the criticism by explaining that the people of the book used to name their children after apostles and pious persons who had gone before them.

Criticisms on the Qur'ān continued to emerge in different eras and places under various types and subjects. In response to those criticisms, scholars have produced a number of literatures consisting of explanations and rebuttals to those allegations. Among those who have contributed to

³David Thomas, "Foreword". In D. Thomas (ed.), *Christian Muslim Relations Online I*, (Brill, 2010) https://doi.org/10.1163/1877-8054_cmri_COM_24334

⁴Yāsin 36:69; al-Ḥaqqah 69:40-41.

⁵Al-Nisā' 4:166; al-An'ām 6:96; Yūsuf 12:2; Ibrāhīm 14:1; Ṭaha 20:13; al-Ḥajj 22:16; al-Anbiyā' 21:5; al-Nūr 24:1; al-Furqān 25:6; Ṣad 38:29; al-Dukhān 44:3; al-Qadr 97:1.

⁶This matter lies in Allāh's prohibition of the prophet to move his tongue hastily to memorise the Qur'ān. Allāh ensures the prophet that He shall enable him to memorise the verses revealed. Mohar wrote: This clearly proves that what was being delivered to the Prophet was in the form of particular texts. Ṭaha 20:114; al-Qiyamah 75:16.

⁷Al 'Imrān 3:183-184; al-An'ām 6:34; al-Ra'd 13:23; al-Anbiyā' 21:41; Yāsin 36:30, among others.

⁸al-Ḥaqqah 69:44-46.

⁹al-An'ām 6:19; Al-Nisā' 4:76; Al-Nisā' 4:166; al-Ra'd 13:43; al-Isrā' 17:96; al-'Ankabūt 29:52.

¹⁰Mohar Ali, *The Qur'ān and the Orientalist: An Examination of their Theories and Assumptions*. (Ipswich: Jam'iyat il-Ihyaa Minhaaj al-Sunnah, 2004), 1-2.

¹¹*The Book of Manners and Etiquette. Chapter: The Prohibition of Taking the Kunyah Abu al-Qasim, And The Names Which Are Recommended*. Hādīth no: 2135. See Muslim al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, Cairo: Maṭba'at 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Sharikah, 1374H-1955, 3/582.

this field is Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muslim ibn Qutaybah al-Dīnawarī (d. 276H), the author of *Ta’wīl Mushkil al-Qur’ān*, who responded to faulty interpretations of the Qur’ān by the people who displayed hostility towards the sacred text during his time. Ibn Qutaybah’s noble endeavours was later carried on by other scholars in the likes of al-Qādī ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Mu’tazilī (d. 415H), Abū Ja’far, Ahmad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Zubayr al-Gharnāṭī (d. 708H), and Shaykh al-Islām ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728H).

Among the late scholars who have also contributed to this field is Abū al-Barakāt, Nu’mān ibn Maḥmūd al-Alūsī (d. 1317) who is the focus of this study.¹² Al-Alūsī wrote *al-Jawāb al-Fāsil li-mā laffaqaḥu ‘Abd al-Masīh* as a response towards ‘Abd al-Masīh al-Kindī’s letter to al-Hāshimī. This research aims to examine al-Alūsī’s rebuttal to al-Kindī’s claims on allegedly contradictory verses in the Qur’ān. The outcome of the investigation will outline Alūsī’s approach to the problem which can be applied to other allegedly contradictory passages in the Qur’ān.

2. Background of Al-Kindī

Scholarly discussions on the Nestorian ‘Abd al-Masīh al-Kindī’s background are unusual in that they cannot confirm the existence of al-Kindī in any significant way. Current researchers believe that al-Kindī was a real person who lived in the 9th century and this information was cited from Al-Bīrūnī’s reference of him in his work, "Vestiges of Ancient Nations" from the 10th century. While describing the customs of the Sabaeans, al-Bīrūnī cited the authority of Ibn Ishāq al-Kindī, a Christian as, "Likewise ‘Abd al-Masīh ibn Ishāq al-Kindī the Christian, in his reply to the Epistle of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ismā’īl the Hashimite, relates of them (the Sabaeans) that they are notorious for Human sacrifice, but that at present they are not able to practise openly the same."¹³ Despite the mention by al-Bīrūnī, however, the fact that there was no biographical data available on the two men to which the dispute in the apology is ascribed, viz. ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ismā’īl al-Hāshimī and ‘Abd al-Masīh al-Kindī, both are a major concern as suggested by al-Alūsī in his response to al-Kindī.

3. Al-Alūsī’s View on the Originality of the Apology

Al-Alūsī clearly did not view the apology to be written during the time of al-Ma’mūn, instead he claimed that it was written by a group of protestants much later than the date presumed. Al-Alūsī alleged them to fabricate the letter to two unknown individuals during al-Mamun’s time. He then further stressed that none of the Islamic libraries during his time possessed a copy of the literature until it was found in a library in London.¹⁴ Al-Alūsī’s proposition is supported by the fact that each

¹²Shaykh Abū al-Barakāt, Nu’mān ibn Maḥmūd ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Alūsī was a prominent scholar from Baghdad born in 1252H. He was the son of Abū al-Thaṣṣ al-Shihāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd bin ‘Abdillāh al-Alūsī, a famous Qur’ānic exegete, the author of *Rūḥ al-Ma’ānī fī Tafṣīr al-Qur’ān wa al-Sab’ al-Mathānī* also known as *Tafṣīr al-Alūsī*.

¹³William Muir, *The Apology of al-Kindī written at the court of al-Mamun (AH 215; AD 830) in defence of Christianity against Islam* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1887), 13.

¹⁴Van Koningsveld found no Arabic apology writings older than the 17th century. The majority of texts are from the late 19th or early 20th centuries. Koningsveld believes the text was written in the ninth century based on other evidence. Beaumont’s interpretation of al-Kindī’s writing is intriguing and warrants consideration. Beaumont noted that Al-Kindī’s prolonged attack on the Qur’ān’s legitimacy was the longest in the 8th and 9th centuries, highlighting his extensive knowledge of Islam. Beaumont claims that no other Christian writing from this era showed the same level of Qur’ān knowledge. Al-Kindī’s knowledge of early Islamic traditions surprised Beaumont as a Christian writer before the Hādīths were collected and documented in the second half of the 9th century. Beaumont’s portrayal of al-Kindī, while expressing appreciation for the scholar, may raise questions about the text’s validity due to its deviation from the contemporary discourse. See van

time a biblical verse is quoted, it is accompanied with reference numbers which are comparable to the protestant version of the bible.¹⁵

In addition, it is also peculiar to note that despite the heavy writings on Christianity by scholars such as al-Mawardī (d. 450H), al-Qarafī (d. 684h), Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728H), Ibn Kathīr (d. 774H), and Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751H), none of them ever mentioned the apology even though they had issued scathing criticism towards the foundation of Islam. Aḥmad Hijazi Saqa, the editor of al-Alūsī's work, claimed that the corresponding letters aim to achieve two objectives, namely to influence people into believing that Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Pagans are all the same and to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity over Islam. The former is seen through the manner in which the initial letter allegedly by al-Hashmi greeted al-Kindī with peace offering and blessings which he claimed to be in accordance with the prophetic traditions.

On this matter, al-Alūsī explained that based on the authentic narrations, the Prophet ﷺ used the phrase *wa al-salām 'alā man ittaba'a al-hudā* (peace upon whoever follows the truth) in his letters to the rulers of Rome and Egypt rather than *wa al-salām 'alayka wa al-rahmah* (peace and blessing upon you) as used in al-Hashimi's letter. Furthermore, the Prophet did not treat Muslims and non-Muslims equally. The Prophet imposed *jizyah* (levy) on the *the dhimmis*,¹⁶ demonstrating his distinction between Muslims and *dhimmis*. In the apology, it is also mentioned that al-Ma'mūn endorsed Christianity as the religion of the hereafter and this assertion clearly opposes the Islamic fundamentals as explained by Saqa.

4. Contradictory Verses in the Qur'ān According to al-Kindī

The notion of Qur'ān to be self-contradictory was borne from the idea that the Qur'ān was composed by the Prophet.¹⁷ The claim that it is composed by a human render it to be vulnerable to mistakes and inconsistency hence, the allegation. Al-Kindī toyed with the idea in his apology where he presented a number of contradictions in the Qur'ān which are based on his self-interpretation of the verses. It is claimed in the apology that 'Abd Allāh al-Hāshimī, a character presumed to live in the era of al-Ma'mūn, sent a letter to al-Kindī and invited him to embrace Islam which prompted al-Kindī to respond with an apology. In his response to al-Hashimi, al-Kindī presented scathing arguments to undermine Islam and its teachings. Among the propositions forwarded by al-Kindī, the most prominent is that the Qur'ān is self-contradictory. He stated that, "And in proof thereof, we have the Coran itself, which is a confused heap, with neither system nor order. The sense moreover consistent not with itself; but throughout one passage is contradicted by another."¹⁸

In general, al-Kindī's allegation on the contradictions in the Qur'ān revolve around three main subjects, namely foreign words in the Qur'ān, responsibility to invite others to Islam, and to engage in *jihad* against the unbelievers and the corruption of the Torah and Bible. Under each of the subjects,

Koningsveld, P. S. "The Apology of Al-Kindī," In *Religious Polemics in Context*, (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 69-92.

¹⁵Nu'mān ibn Maḥmūd Al-Alūsī, *Al-Jawāb al-Faṣīḥ li Man Baddala Dīn al-Masīḥ*, ed. Aḥmad Hijazi al-Saqa, (Cairo: Dār al-Bayān al-'Arabi, 1987), 5.

¹⁶*Dhimmis* were non-Muslims in the Islamic state who were provided protection by the state and did not serve in the military in exchange for particular taxes. These *dhimmis* were derived from Islamic legal notions of belonging to society.

¹⁷ Adnan Moh'd Abdullah Shalash. "Refutation of The Orientalists' Assumptions Related to Traditional School of Quranic Exegesis: Ignaz Goldziher as a Model." *Ma'ālim Al-Qur'ān Wa Al-Sunnah* 15 no. 2 (December 1, 2019): 215-40. <https://doi.org/10.33102/jmq.v15i2.209>.

¹⁸William Muir, *The Apology of Al Kindi*, 79.

al-Kindī listed the assumed contradictory verses. In the following discussions, the allegations forwarded by al-Kindī and followed by al-Alūsī's refutations are mentioned.

4.1. Foreign Words in the Qur'ān

The fact that the Qur'ān was revealed in Arabic language is emphasised in a number of Qur'ānic verses. The eloquence of the Qur'ān is adored by Muslims and non-Muslims during the Prophet's time. On this matter, al-Kindī alleged that the Qur'ān consisted of foreign words that stand in contrast with the former assertion hence, the contradiction. Al-Kindī wrote,

"If the claim be that (apart from all other tongues) the Coran is an unparalleled and miraculous model of Arabic (according to the text, Verily, we have sent down the Coran in the Arabic tongue, if perchance ye may comprehend); then, why do we find in it foreign words, as namāric from the Persian, and mishkāt from the Abyssinian, vocabulary?"¹⁹

<i>Yūsuf</i> 12:2	Alleged Contradicting Verses
Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'ān that you might understand.	And cushions lined up (Al-Ghāshiyah 88:15) 35. Allāh is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp... (al-Nur 24:35)

In response to al-Kindī's accusation, Al-Alūsī brought together the views of several scholars in analysing the issue highlighted by al-Kindī. In general, scholars were divided into two camps such as, those who completely reject the existence of language in the Qur'ān other than Arabic and those who recognise the existence of such words. Those who persisted on ignoring the existence of terms other than Arabic in the Qur'ān were al-Shāfi'ī and Abū Ubaydah. They claimed through the verses such as, *Yūsuf* 12:2 and *Ṭahā* 20:113 as proof that the Qur'ān was revealed in Arabic. Words that were commonly mistaken for non-Arabic words had actually been derived from Arabic but are unfamiliar to some people. This group claimed that Arabic is a widely spoken language and that no one can completely master it. However, Ibn 'Abbās's interpretation mentioned certain words as being in Persian, Abyssinian, or other languages. Some academics say that it alludes to the employment of the same pronunciation in Arabic and other languages in this circumstance.²⁰

Another opinion that also falls under this category is that those who assert that terms considered non-Arabic are actually imported words from another. Nonetheless, these terms have been commonly employed by Arabs in everyday dialogue as well as in their poetry. However, these terms have likewise gone through a transformation which rendered them to become Arabic. The Arabic language had integrated these words by the time the Qur'ān was revealed, therefore, it was regarded as an Arabic word. Whereas, the second group of scholars acknowledged that the Qur'ān includes phrases that are not in Arabic.²¹

Such non-Arabic phrases, according to this perspective, do not negate the fact that the Qur'ān was revealed in Arabic. Similarly, the existence of Persian phrases in Arabic poetry, for example, does not negate the fact that the poetry was written in Arabic. Some scholars argued that the existence of such imported terms is justified. They emphasised that the Qur'ān was revealed in several different languages and the Qur'ān choose the best imported terms which is also the most popular among

¹⁹Ibid., 79.

²⁰Muhammad Fawwaz Bin Muhammad Yusoff, "Travels and Cities of the Ḥadīth Studies: An Analysis of Buldān in the Islamic Intellectual History," *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 21, no. 3 (2023): 315-334, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22321969-20230137>

²¹Al-Alūsī, *al-Jawāb al-Fasīḥ*, 2/262-263.

Arabs. In addition, the Prophet was sent to the entire human race. As a result, the fact that the Qur'ān contains words from other languages, despite being initially written in Arabic, is not surprising.²²

4.2. Responsibility to Invite Others to Islam and to Engage in *Jihad* Against the Unbelievers

Al-Kindī questioned the necessity of waging *jihād* against the unbelievers. He stated that there is a contradiction between some passages that tell Muslims and *dhimmi*s to share their faith in peace and to wage war against unbelievers until they succumb to their defeat, accept Islam, or pay taxes to Muslims. Furthermore, it appears that al-Kindī even questioned the obligation to invite others to accept Islam as he firstly quoted *āl-Imrān* 3:104, which states: “And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful.”²³

Al-Kindī subsequently quoted several verses²⁴ which he believed to be in contrast with the above quoted verse. In response, Al-Alūsī clarified that the verse from al-Imrān 3:104, *waltakun minkum* (and let there be [arising] from you a nation) requires a group of people to be responsible for calling others to everything that is beneficial. The passage next instructs them to encourage others to do what is *ma'rūf* (right) and to forbid them from doing what is *munkar* (wrong). Linguistically *khayr* means something that is desired by all. By context of the verse, it implies that following the Qur'ān and the prophetic tradition along with believing in Allāh (*īmān*) and staying *ma'rūf* are various forms of *tā'at* (devotion).²⁵ Some scholars believe that *khayr* means Islam and *ma'rūf* means to follow Allāh's instructions or commands.²⁶ This obligation does not in any way contradict with what has been stated in *al-Baqarah*: 272. On al-Baqarah 2:272, *laysa 'alayka hudāhum* (not upon you, [O Muhammad], is responsibility for their guidance).²⁷ Al-Alūsī simply emphasised that Prophet Muḥammad is not obligated to force the unbelievers to accept what is decreed for them as Allāh is capable of guiding anyone He desires. The verse proceeds to note that whatever donations given by the believers will be rewarded by Allāh in full. Al-Alūsī then cited the *sabab nuzul* (occasion of revelation) of the verse which explains that the verse was revealed in response to a group of Muslims' refusal to offer alms to the destitute among the unbelievers only because they were not Muslims, even though they had family tied with them.²⁸ Al-Ṭanṭawī also mentioned that al-Baqarah 2:272 implies that the Prophet Muḥammad is not obliged to make the unbelievers accept what has been ordained upon them. However, despite their rejection, the Muslims are still required to practise the highest standard of behaviour towards them which includes providing assistance to those in need among them.²⁹

Al-Alūsī quoted al-Rāzī's interpretation where he explained that the verse in surah *Yūnus*, *walaw shā'a rabbuka la-āmana man fī al-arḍ* (and had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed), concerns the suspicions raised by the unbelievers in regards of prophethood of Muḥammad

²²Ibid, 2/262-263.

²³Āl-Imrān 3:104.

²⁴al-Baqarah 2:272; Yūnus 10:99; Yūnus 10:108-109; Hūd 11:118-119; al-Baqarah 2:256; āl-Imrān 3:20; al-Baqarah 2:253; al-Ankabūt 29:46.

²⁵al-Husayn ibn Muḥammad Rāghib al-Asfahāni, *al-Mufradāt fī Ghārib al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalām Dār al-Shāmiyah, 1412H), 300.

²⁶Syed Abdul Majid Ghouri. “The Excellence of Surah Al-Kahf and Its Characteristics in Light of the Authentic Ahadith: An Analytical Study.” *Ma'ālim Al-Qur'ān Wa Al-Sunnah* 19, no. 2 (December 1, 2023):342-65. <https://doi.org/10.33102/jmq.v19i2.443>.

²⁷Al-Alūsī, *al-Jawāb al-Fasīh*, 2/262-263.

²⁸Ibid, 2/405.

²⁹Muḥammad Sayyid Al-Ṭanṭawī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Wasīṭ li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Nahdhah, 1997), 1/623.

as well as to provide counter arguments.³⁰ Among the raised suspicions, is the delay of punishments promised by the Prophet to the unbelievers which led to mockery and denial. Allāh then asserts that the delay does not suggest fallacy as implied in the story of Prophet Nūh and Prophet Mūsā which were mentioned earlier in the surah. Allāh then mentions in *Yūnus* 10:99 that the Prophet's excessive eagerness to establish evidence to the veracity of his calling and his response to the unbelievers' suspicion will not alter their stance unless Allāh wishes so.³¹ The understanding here shows that *Yūnus* 10:99 does not pose any contradiction with the obligation to invite others to Islam or to participate in *jihad* against the unbelievers.

On *Yūnus* 10:108-109, (say, "O mankind, the truth has come to you..."), al-Alūsī explained that Prophet Muḥammad in the initial stages of *da'wah* was not instructed to engage in battle with the unbelievers rather he was ordered to offer warnings and kind advice. It was in the later stages where the Prophet was required to fight in battle with the unbelievers. Al-Alūsī went on to claim that the verse's instructions are nullified by passages pertaining to warfare and that Allāh's wisdom is the sole basis for the revision of the verse's directives. Al-Alūsī emphasised that it is common for prophets to have different teachings from one another. Prophet Mūsā and Prophet Yūsha' were ordered to engage in battle whereby Prophet 'Īsā was not. It has been observed that several commandments that were followed during the time of Prophet Mūsā AS were also abrogated by Prophet 'Īsā. All of the commandment changes are based on Allāh's unsurpassed wisdom. Additionally, the prophets adapted to the changing conditions and also serve as a test for humanity. Al-Alūsī even emphasised that the Torah and the Injil also include similar command variations.³²

Regarding Hud 118-119, (and if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community), Al-Alūsī pointed out that the verse reveals that, had Allāh so desired, He would have made everyone on Earth adhere to the correct path or faith. However, mankind was allowed to have its own differences which would ultimately have a varied impact on each individual. Al-Alūsī went on to say that according to al-Dhāriyāt 51:56, Allāh created people in order for them to worship Him, not because of the disagreements that have arisen between them. The vowel *lam* in *lidhālīka* is *lām al-'āqibah* (consequence) and *al-ṣayrūrah* (becoming).³³

On al-Baqarah 2:256, *lā ikrāh fī al-dīn* (there shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion), Al-Alūsī asserted that this verse and all other comparable verses that do not command the Prophet to engage in combat with the *kuffar* were abrogated by other passages that do. In this regard, Al-Alūsī cited al-Tawbah 9:123, al-Fath 48:16, and al-Baqarah 2: 190 in order to substantiate his argument. Likewise, al-Alūsī also cited a prophetic tradition indicating that *jihad* is still relevant today and will be till the Day of Judgement. Al-Alūsī believed that it is incomprehensible to suggest that the Prophet disobeyed the Qur'ān and gave companions the order to keep fighting the *kuffār* notwithstanding the revelation of the pacifist verses.

Al-Alūsī went on to say that Sūrah *al-Kāfirūn*, whether it is abrogated or not, does not conflict in any way with the passages about *jihad*. Al-Alūsī referred to the sūrah's cause of revelation in this regard which states that the sūrah was revealed in response to the Meccan *Quraysh*'s demand that the Prophet should demonstrate religious compromise. The Meccan *Quraysh* initially offered the Prophet money and women in exchange for him to stop demeaning their gods but the Prophet rejected them. They then went on to propose a different arrangement that calls for the Prophet to worship the idols for a year before they may worship Allāh for the same length of time.

³⁰ Al-Alūsī, *al-Jawāb al-Fasīh*, 2/407.

³¹ Ibid, 2/407.

³² Ibid, 2/407-408.

³³ Al-Alūsī, *al-Jawāb al-Fasīh*, 2/409.

Then, Sūrah al-Kāfirūn was revealed to emphasise the Islamic tenet that there can be no compromise when it comes to one's beliefs. Al-Kāfirūn has drawn a distinct line between Islam and *Kufr* and a Muslim is expected to abstain from all *Kufr* related practices and beliefs and to worship Allāh only ever. Such a declaration is not at odds with the instruction of *jihād* in any way.³⁴ In contrast to the verses on *jihād* against the unbelievers, it appears that Sūrah al-Kāfirūn is more focused on inner issues and acts of devotion whereas the verses on *jihad* against the unbelievers are more focused on physical conflicts with the rival unbelievers.

Concerning al-'Ankabūt, 29:46, (and do not argue with the People of the Scripture unless it be with that, bettering the most virtuous way, except [in the case of] those of them who have done wrong), the scripture commanded the Prophet and the Muslims to debate with people of the book in the most effective manner possible. According to Qur'ānic exegetes, the phrase "the best method" refers to any action that yields the greatest rewards.³⁵ It pertains to both the substance of the argument and the method in which it is conducted. Ibn 'Abbās defined "the best path" as the phrase *lā ilāha illā Allāh* (there is no god other than Allāh) and this might be regarded as the debate's topic. The "best way" also entails intricate word selection, proper arguments, and avoiding harsh or disrespectful comments.³⁶ However, al-'Ankabūt, 29:46 notes that those who do injustice among the people of the book necessitate a different reaction which includes a harsher approach that may include battle. Based on this interpretation, it is clear that al-'Ankabūt, 29:46 does not contradict the verses of *jihad*.

4.3. The Corruption of the Torah and Injil

Al-Kindī contested the Muslim view that the Torah and the Injil had been corrupted. He asserted that this belief was against the teachings of the Qur'ān itself and to support his assertion he quoted *Yūnus* 10:94 and *al-Baqarah* 2:123.³⁷ Prior to addressing the Qur'ānic verses cited by al-Kindī on the subject, al-Alūsī went on to elaborate in length the subject of the corruption in the Bible. He then presented abundant evidences from the scripture attesting to the fact that there have been alterations and changes to the text of Bible.³⁸ Al-Alūsī then explained that the Qur'ān asserts repeatedly that both the Torah and the Injil have been corrupted. The subject is referenced in *al-Baqarah*: 75 as: "Do you covet [the hope, O believers], that they would believe for you while a party of them used to hear the words of Allah and then distort the Torah after they had understood it while they were knowing?"³⁹ And in *al-Maidah* 5:13 it is stated as: "So, for their breaking of the covenant, We cursed them and made their hearts hard. They distort words from their [proper] usages and have forgotten a portion of that of which they were reminded. And you will still observe deceit among them, except a few of them. But pardon them and overlook [their misdeeds]. Indeed, Allah loves the doers of good."⁴⁰

In addition to the numerous passages that allude to it. In regards of *Yūnus*: 94, *fa' in kunta fi shakk* (so if you are in doubt), Al-Alūsī quoted Al-Baghāwī's interpretation, in which he expounded the phrase, "Ask those who have read the Scripture before you," to refer to those people of the book who have embraced Islam. They will be able to testify the veracity of Muḥammad's Prophethood as

³⁴Ibid, 2/412-413.

³⁵Muḥammad Abū Ja'far Ibn Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān Fī Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*. ed. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Cairo: Hajar li al-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī, 2001), 18:417.

³⁶Ibid, 18:417-423.

³⁷William Muir, *The Apology of Al Kindy*, 114-115.

³⁸Al-Alūsī, *al-Jawāb al-Fasīh*, 2/593-670.

³⁹Al-Baqarah 2/75.

⁴⁰Al-Mā'idah 5/13.

attested to in the earlier scriptures.⁴¹ The same approach was applied to *al-Baqarah*: 121, *alladhīna 'ātaynāhum al-kitāb* (Those to whom We have given the Book), where it also refers to those people of the book who have believed in the Prophethood of Muḥammad.⁴² Ibn 'Abbās interpreted the verse to refer to the forty people who have come from *Habshah* (Abyssinia) with Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib, however it may really be much more inclusive of other groups who have similar characteristics. Al-Kalbī interpreted the verse “recite it with its true recital” as referring to the attributes of Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) as mentioned in the scriptures. It may also relate to the text itself, in which case, in accordance with Ibn Mas'ūd, they recite it in its original, unaltered form.⁴³

5. Analysis on Al-Alūsī's Method in Reconciling between Verses

Before responding to al-Kindī's criticism of the Qur'ān, Al-Alūsī contested the Bible and addressed the contradictions and absurdities in the scripture. Among the absurdities raised by al-Alūsī is Matthew 24: 34-35, “I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass from the scene until all these things take place.” The word ‘things’ refers to the darkened sun, the lightless moon, the falling stars, and the shaken power mentioned earlier in the Bible. The phrase appears to imply that those who lived during Jesus' lifetime will not die until they see the signs of Judgement Day. This is also implied in Matthew 16: 27-28, “27. For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father and will judge all people according to their deeds. 28. And I tell you the truth, some standing here right now will not die before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.”

Al-Alūsī rejected the notion by stating that despite the passage of those centuries, none of the signs stated above had yet manifested. Furthermore, Al-Alūsī reasoned from the Bible about whether one should pray for life necessities. It appears that Matthew 6: 7-12 prohibits a person from praying for necessities,⁴⁴ and Mathew 6:25 even imply that that one should not even worry about them,⁴⁵ yet Matthew 7: 7-12 seems to imply the opposite.⁴⁶

Al-Alūsī then suggested that the universal concept of Jesus' calling is erroneous. He substantiated his claim by citing a verse from the Bible itself, “Then Jesus said to the woman, “I was

⁴¹Ibid., 2/670.

⁴²Al-Alūsī, *al-Jawāb al-Fasīh*, 2/672.

⁴³Muḥammad al-Husayn al-Baghāwī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Riyadh: Dar Tayyibah, 1997), 1:144.

⁴⁴“When you pray, don't babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. 8. Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! 9 Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. 10 May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. 11. Give us today the food we need, 12 and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. (Matthew 6: 7-12),

⁴⁵“That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? 27 Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?. (Matthew 6:25)

⁴⁶“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. 8. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. 9““You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? 10. Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! 11. So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him. (Matther 7:7)

only sent to help God's lost sheep—the people of Israel.” Then, based on Matthew 19:17, “Why ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. But to answer your question—if you want to receive eternal life, keep the commandments” Al-Alūsī discredited the core of Christianity which is centred on the divinity of Jesus. On al-Alūsī's method of reconciling supposedly contradictory Qur'ānic texts which has been elaborated upon previously, it is possible to say that it takes five forms.⁴⁷

5.1 Reference to *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (Occasions of Revelation)

The verses of the Qur'ān came in two categories, namely verses that were revealed without any specific cause and verses that were revealed succeeding an occasion or a question.⁴⁸ Al-Hilālī and al-Naṣr (1425H) defined *asbab nuzūl* as an event or an inquiry that led to a revelation of a verse.⁴⁹ The most important aspect of *asbāb al-nuzūl* is that they facilitate comprehension of the direct and immediate meaning and implication of a verse as it can be seen within its original context. They also help in identifying the original intent of a verse.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the knowledge of *asbāb al-nuzūl* clarifies any ambiguous or problematic understanding of a verse.

When al-Alūsī addressed the supposed discrepancy between the *jihad* verses and *sūrah al-Kāfirūn*, he resorted to *asbāb al-nuzūl*. The ambiguity arises when al-Kindī claimed that *al-Kāfirūn* contradicts the instruction on *jihad*. However, the context in which the verse was revealed, as provided by the *asbab nuzūl*, clarified the presumption. Al-Alūsī also resorted to *asbab nuzūl* in clarifying the assumed contradiction between the obligation to call people to Islam as stated in *Al-Imrān*: 104, *waltakun minkum*, with *al-Baqarah*: 272, *laysa 'alayka hudāhum*. According to the quoted *asbab nuzūl*, the phrase obviously refers to a group of Muslims who despite their familial ties, refused to provide aid to the needy nonbelievers.

5.2. The Capacity of *Siyāq* (Context)

Scholars have emphasised upon the importance of theme or context (*siyāq*) in Qur'ānic interpretation. Al-Shāṭibī asserts that the theme or context of a verse must be considered thoroughly when interpreting the Qur'ān. The process of isolating parts of the verse from the rest will not generate an accurate understanding of the verse.⁵¹ 'Abd Allāh stated that the context of a verse may determine the actual interpretation of a it and may also clear up any assumed contradiction.⁵² The impact of *siyāq* extends beyond the determination of word meanings and also encompasses factors such as the presence or absence of statements, the arrangement of content, and the quantity of information provided. Similarly, the order and extent of material employed in in the Qur'ān can be determined by its context.

⁴⁷Al-Alūsī, *al-Jawāb al-Fasīh*, 2:405.

⁴⁸Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān bin Abī Bakr Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Egypt: al-Hay'ah al-Āmmah al-Miṣriyyah li al-Kitāb, 1974), 107.

⁴⁹Sulaym ibn 'Īd al-Hilālī, Mūsā ibn Naṣr al-Naṣr, 1425H, 1:6.

⁵⁰Aḥmad Von Denffer, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'ān* (United Kingdom: The Islamic Foundation, 2011), 116. See also Bin Muhammad Yusoff, Muhammad Fawwaz. 2023. "Tracing the Tracts of *Qaṣa*s: Towards a Theory of Narrative Pedagogy in Islamic Education" *Religions* 14, no. 10: 1299.

⁵¹Ibrāhīm bin Musa al-Shāṭibī, *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Usūl al-Syarī'ah* (Cairo: Dār Ibn 'Affān, 1997), 4:266).

⁵²Zayd 'Umar 'Abd Allāh, “al-Siyāq al-Qur'ānī wa Atharuhu fī al-Kashf 'an al-Ma'ānī.” *Majallah Jāmi'ah al-Malik Sa'ūd, al-'Ulūm al-Tarbawīyyah wa al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyyah* (2003), 837-877.

Al-Alūsī resorted to al-Razī's interpretation which mainly focused on the verse's context when addressing the supposed discrepancy between Yūnus 10:99 and the *jihad* passages. According to the context provided by al-Razī, Yūnus 10:99 does not condemn *jihad* rather, it only cautions the Prophet not to be overzealous in his efforts to convince unbelievers of the truth of Islam. It is only by Allāh's will that unbelievers will accept the Prophet's summons.

5.3. Coherence Interpretation

Among the verses that al-Kindī claimed to be in contrast with the *jihad* verses is al-'Ankabūt 29:46. However, al-Kindī only partially quoted it. He left out an important part of the verse which determines the actual understanding of the verse. Al-Kindī's quotation of the verse ends at the phrase "except in a way that is best" thus resulting in an incomplete understanding of the verse. When addressing the presupposed conflict, al-Alūsī provided the verse in full where he explained that the later part of the verse "except for those who commit injustice among them" indicates that a harsher method is required when dealing with the people of the book who commit injustice and that includes *jihad*.

Concerning corruption in the Torah and Injil, al-Alūsī said that the two verses cited by al-Kindī do not support his argument on the Torah's authenticity. According to Ibn 'Abbās' interpretation, both Yūnus 10:94, *fa'in kunta fī shakk* (so if you are in doubt) and *al-Baqarah* 2:121, *alladhīna 'ātaynāhum al-kitāb* (those to whom We have given the Book), refer to the people of the book who acknowledged Muḥammad's Prophethood. They provided no evidence whatsoever that the Torah and Bible were spared from the corruption. For al-Ṭabarī, obedience to the teachings of the Torah eventually entails following the guidance of Prophet Muḥammad as the Torah itself is believed to require such adherence. Therefore, to refuse acceptance of the Prophet (PBUH) would mean refusing acceptance of the Torah.⁵³

5.4. The Utilisation of Abrogation

Linguistically *al-naskh* (abrogation) can be defined as *izālah* (cancellation, removal, or abolishment), *tabdīl* (replacement), or *taḥwīl* (to move from one place to another). While in *Sharia's* term, *al-naskh* is to declare an expiration of a *Sharia* ruling with another of the *Sharia* ruling. *Al-naskh* does not in any way implies ignorance rather it demonstrates an absolute and comprehensive knowledge of Allāh SWT. *Al-naskh* was implemented to accommodate the ever-changing circumstances of human existence as a particular ruling may be appropriate at one moment but destructive at another. Furthermore, *naskh* is also a crucial concept in the advanced versions of Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and Qur'ānic exegesis. It serves as a significant tool for comprehending the connection between various mandates and prohibitions in the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*.⁵⁴ Such type of verse receives significant attention from the classical exegetes since it plays a critical role in understanding how the Qur'ān is utilised as a source of Islamic law and practice. Due to the enormous impact of abrogation on Islamic law, scholars have outlined several important requirements before an abrogation can be carried out. These include: 1) there must be an explicit narration from the Prophet, or the companions must attest to the abrogation claim; 2) both the abrogating and abrogated verses must be contradictory; and 3) the abrogating verse must have been revealed after the abrogated verses; 4) abrogation applies just to practical *Sharia* rulings and not to tales, reminders, or future events.

⁵³Muḥammad Abū Ja'far Ibn Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān Fī Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, 2:496.

⁵⁴Muhammad Fawwaz Bin Muhammad Yusoff, "Tracing the Tracts of *Qaṣaṣ*: Towards a Theory of Narrative Pedagogy in Islamic Education," *Religions* 14, no. 10: e1299, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14101299>

Al-Alūsī resorted to abrogation when addressing the contradiction between *al-Baqarah* 2:256, *la ikrāh fī al-dīn*, and all other comparable verses that do not command the Prophet ﷺ to engage in combat with the *kuffar*. He viewed these verses as abrogated with other verses on the topic of jihad. Regarding al-Alūsī's interpretation of *al-Baqarah* 2:256, it must be noted that various interpretations do exist. According to scholars, any passage that commands Muslims to wage war against non-Muslims must be interpreted within its proper context. For instance, the verse *al-Tawbah* 9:5 reads:

“And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give *zakah*, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”⁵⁵

The above verse commands Muslims to slaughter polytheists on every occasion and particularly refers to a specific group of *Quraysh* non-believers who have violated the peace treaty with the Muslims. Therefore, there is no contradiction with passages that advocate peace and liberty. Zayd emphasised that this interpretation is evident when the context of the passage in the Qur'ān is considered.⁵⁶ It is followed by verses that identify those who breached the agreement between Muslims and non-Muslims. In addition, following the *al-Tawbah* 9:5, Allāh commanded Muslims to provide protection to those who seek it among non-believers and deliver them to safety notwithstanding their refusal to adopt Islam. Another verse *al-Tawbah* 9:29 states: “Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture - [fight] until they give the *jizyah* willingly while they are humbled.”⁵⁷

There is no element of coercion in the passage rather, it discusses *jizyah*⁵⁸ which is a tax or compensation placed on non-Muslims in exchange for the security and help they get. Non-Muslims may live in a country ruled by Muslims under specific conditions, but they are not compelled to convert to Islam. According to his *jihad* account, ‘Ulwān claimed that Islam permits conflict with non-Muslims to achieve the following goals: 1) to erase injustice and transgression from Muslim territory; 2) to uphold treaties established with any party; and 3) to eliminate any hurdles in the spreading the Islamic message. Similarly, ‘Ulwān emphasised further that Islam prohibits any form of coercion in converting people to Islam.⁵⁹ In accordance with *al-Baqarah* 2:256, “There must be no compulsion in [adoption of] the religion,” which means the freedom of religion is extensively emphasised in Islamic teachings, Muslim scholars also pointed out that there are Islamic nations that have never participated in any kind of conflict with Arab Muslims.⁶⁰

6. Conclusion

Regardless of the various possibilities about rejection, criticism, and so on, al-Alūsī did not believe that the apology was composed during the reign of al-Ma'mūn. Instead, he asserted that it was written by a group of protestants considerably later than the assumed historical period. Al-Alūsī

⁵⁵*Al-Tawbah* 9:5.

⁵⁶Muṣṭafā Zayd, *Al-Naskh fī al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dar al-Wafa, 1987).

⁵⁷*Al-Tawbah* 9:29.

⁵⁸Historically, non-Muslim communities paid *jizyah*, a tax, to their Muslim rulers. The phrase is sometimes translated inaccurately as “head tax” or “poll tax.” The Qur'ān describes the *jizyah* as a tax levied on a certain fault-finding group within the *ahl al-Kitāb* (People of the Book) that transgresses their own moral and religious beliefs (*Al-Tawbah* 9:29).

⁵⁹‘Ulwān, ‘Abd Allāh Nāṣiḥ. *Ḥurriyyah al-I'tiqād fī al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmiyyah* (Egypt: Dar al-Salam, 2004).

⁶⁰*Mawsu'ah Bayān al-Islām fī al-Radd 'alā al-Iftira'āt wa al-Shubahāt* (Egypt: Dar al-Nahḍah, 2012), 56-60.

has offered sufficient clarity on the concerns highlighted by al-Kindī about the supposedly contradicting verses. Al-Alūsī quoted *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation) to offer the correct interpretation of the verses cited by al-Kindī. Al-Alūsī even resorted to *naskh* when addressing the assumed contradictory verses. However, his view on the subject is contested by other scholars who believed that *al-Baqarah* 2:256 and other pacifist verses are not abrogated. However, they offered a different understanding yet compatible with the verses on *jihad*.

As mentioned earlier, al-Kindī also erroneously interpreted *al-Ankabūt* 29:46 when he omitted the verse's conclusion, necessitating that al-Alūsī quoted the entire verse to convey the proper meaning. In short, al-Alūsī's method for reconciling the presumed contradictory passages in these verses can also be applied to other allegedly conflicting verses. In response to al-Kindī's accusations of contradictions in the Qur'ān, al-Alūsī enumerated biblical passages that he deemed contradictory or nonsensical. This indicates that al-Alūsī had a thorough understanding of the Bible. Al-Alūsī also presented plenty of proofs to uncover corruption in the Bible when addressing the subject. In a broader context, al-Kindī has addressed numerous aspects of the Qur'ān in his apology which Alūsī has disputed in detail. However, from the outset, this study could only focus on one aspect among numerous others. Therefore, additional research could be conducted on al-Alūsī's texts, his technique in general, and his biblical critique.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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