

Research Paper

Review of Robert Wisnovsky's Article on "Maknun, Mass, and Mutahharun"

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Verses 77-79 of Surah Al-Waqi'ah: "Indeed, it is a noble Qur'an (77) in a hidden Book (78) none can touch it except the purified" (translation based on the context). This surah, which is Meccan and the 44th revealed to the Prophet (PBUH), has engaged Muslim Quranic scholars in three fundamental areas: 1. What is meant by the "hidden book" (Kitab Maknun)? 2. What is meant by "touch" (Mass)? 3. Who are the "purified ones" (Mutahharun)? Similar to Muslim Quranic scholars, Orientalist Quran researchers have also sought to understand these three aspects. One such researcher is Robert Wisnovsky, who, in his article "Heavenly Book" published in

Volume 2, pp. 412-414 of the 'Encyclopedia of the Quran' (Leiden), provides a report based on the views of Muslim and non-Muslim Quranic scholars. He describes the "hidden book" as a comprehensive record of past, present, and future events and the source of revelation, referred to in the Quran as "Umm al-Kitab," "hidden book," and "Preserved Tablet." He then interprets "touch" as preservation and identifies angels as the "purified ones." The present research aims to prove that Robert Wisnovsky's report on the "hidden book," "touch," and "purified ones" is incorrect. The author, by referring to interpretive sources, seeks to demonstrate the flaws in Wisnovsky's report on these three aspects.

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2. Methods

Documentary and library research methods, utilizing note-taking techniques, are highly practical for such studies. Thus, the documentary method was used to gather information on the discussed topics. The research method is descriptive-analytical.

3. Results

The findings of this research, using a critical-analytical approach, highlight the fact that Wisnovsky's article is deficient in presenting the views of Muslim commentators on the "hidden book," "touch," and "purified ones." Contrary to his view, the current study concludes that, according to the majority of Shia commentators, these three terms refer to the Quran, understanding, and pure, perfect humans. Sunni commentators, however, do not have a unanimous opinion on each of these terms, and there are differing views among them.

4. Conclusion

The above discussion concludes that Mr. Robert Wisnovsky, in his article "Heavenly Book" in the 'Encyclopedia of the Quran' (Leiden), has provided an incomplete and flawed report on the views of Muslim religious scholars regarding the "hidden book," "touch," and "purified ones" in verses 77-79 of Surah Al-Waqi'ah. His first interpretation of the "hidden book" is flawed because, according to both Sunni and Shia commentators, the "hidden book" refers to the Quran, or at least there is no consensus on the identity of the "hidden book" with the comprehensive heavenly

book as claimed by Robert. Moreover, contrary to Robert's view, the "hidden book" was not revealed in written form to the people by the Prophet. The attribute "Umm al-Kitab" also refers to the Quran, not the comprehensive book as Robert claims. Robert's second interpretation of "touch" is problematic because his claimed meaning only aligns with the word "purified ones" and is inconsistent with the context of the verses in question. Additionally, his interpretation does not align with the exalted status of the Quran, which these verses aim to describe, and it contradicts the meaning of the word "purified ones." Robert's third view on the "purified ones" is also deficient because the identification of angels as the "purified ones" is not the view of all Sunni commentators, and according to Shia commentators, the term is more general, including both angels and non-angels. Furthermore, Robert's identification of angels contradicts some other Quranic verses.

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Authors' Contribution

The article is single-authored, and the entire research is the responsibility of the author.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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