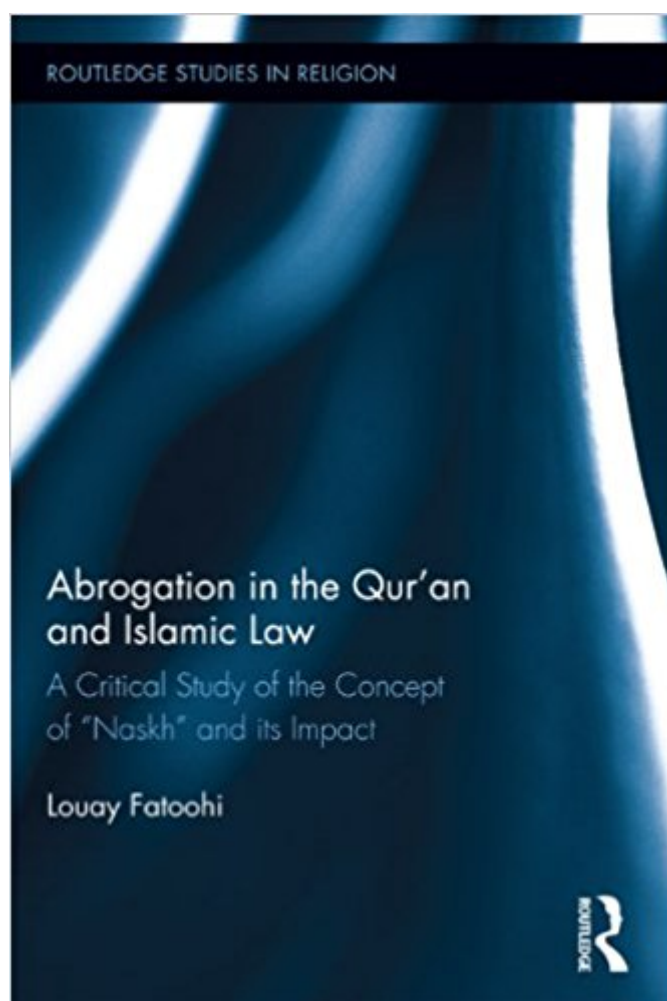


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Abrogation In The Qur'ân And Islamic Law (Routledge Studies In Religion)



Synopsis

This book examines in detail the concept of "abrogation" in the Qur'ān, which has played a major role in the development of Islamic law and has implications for understanding the history and integrity of the Qur'ānic text. The term has gained popularity in recent years, as Muslim groups and individuals claim that many passages about tolerance in the Qur'ān have been abrogated by others that call on Muslims to fight their enemies. Author Louay Fatoohi argues that this could not have been derived from the Qur'ān, and that its implications contradict Qur'ānic principles. He also reveals conceptual flaws in the principle of abrogation as well as serious problems with the way it was applied by different scholars. Abrogation in the Qur'ān and Islamic Law traces the development of the concept from its most basic form to the complex and multi-faceted doctrine it has become. The book shows what specific problems the three modes of abrogation were introduced to solve, and how this concept has shaped Islamic law. The book also critiques the role of abrogation in rationalizing the view that not all of the Qur'ānic revelation has survived in the "mushaf", or the written record of the Qur'ān. This role makes understanding abrogation an essential prerequisite for studying the history of the Qur'ānic text.

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Customer Reviews

Despite being the most technical of all the books I have had the pleasure of reading by Louay Fatoohi, this book has successfully met the objectives of the author:1. It is perfectly readable to someone with a limited background on this topic.2. Its structure and presentation are logical and consistent from the beginning to the very end.3. Its analytical and supporting documentation is pure scholarship.4. It addresses the shortcomings of the earlier work by John Burton in such details and clarity that leave little need to read it. This book is packed with a very rich amount of information on every page, but my favorite part was the chapter on the so-called *Verse of the Sword*: "... kill the polytheists wherever you find them" (Qur'an, 9:5). This verse is systematically used to distort Islam and misrepresent it as being violent and intolerant toward non-Muslims. Fatoohi brilliantly puts this often misquoted verse in its proper context: A) The particular group of polytheists that the verse mentions had broken a treaty they had with the Muslims. B) They were also trying to force the Muslims out of the city of Medina. C) They attacked the Muslims first (page 117). Contrary to popular media depictions, Muslims are forbidden to initiate violence or force against non-Muslims. Violence by Muslims was commanded only as a means of self-defense. It did not have any element of forced conversion. (Page 118). The chapter on the so-called *Stoning Verse* was also very interesting. Confirming his conclusions in the discussion of the *Verse of the Sword*, Fatoohi succinctly notes: "The Qur'an permits ending the life of a person only for a just cause (i.e. the first is the killing of a violent enemy in self-defense). The second situation is having a person killed for committing murder." (Page 187-188). This extremely significant observation should settle the debate on the role of violence in the Qur'an. This chapter did not mention Jesus and the Injil story of him intervening in the stoning of the woman accused of adultery, but this may be due to the absence of authentic records of those events.

As Muslims we have inherited a legacy of various sectarian and theological positions. As Muslims we are brought up to respect and revere the scholars of the past. Yet, what happens when we are troubled by a particular theological or sectarian position? What happens when after sincere research

we find ourselves questioning the legitimacy of certain sectarian, legal or theological positions held by our scholars? I went through a personal crisis in my life. A crisis in which I felt so called 'traditional' responses were either intellectually unsatisfying or completely inept. What is a person to do? This book gives a robust and sound answer to a question that deeply troubled me; and I know troubles many Muslims. I'm thankful to Allah, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate that there are narratives within the Islamic tradition such as Dr. Louay Fatoohi presents here. Many people, Muslim and Non Muslim equate certain positions in jurisprudence, theology and so forth as equating Islam. Rather, what is happening is that there is a growing consciousness among Muslims that, in fact these are the views and conclusions of human beings. Human beings who are susceptible to error and mistakes. Yet, the legacy has been that our scholastic tradition is often cloaked in an aura of unquestionable authority, without realizing that robust debate, and sharp differences of opinions of existed on a plethora of issues from the outset. All of the great scholars have given the Muslims a great legacy, but it need not define our future. Now with this preface aside, let me say that this was more than simply a book for me. It was more than an academic read. This book was a medicine for my heart, and a source of peace for my mind, of which I am immensely indebted to the author for. This is not simply a book, it is a weapon! It takes a long held theological/legal position held by a majority of Muslim scholarship and systematically takes it apart, piecemeal. The theory of abrogation is being used to cast doubt about Islam. It is being used in academic circles, and among right wing politicians with deadly force. They ridicule (and rightly so) statements that 'Islam is a religion of peace' and the Qur'an says, "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (Holy Qur'an 2:256) That Muslims can only fight against those who fight us, "Fight in the name of Allah, those who fight you" (Holy Qur'an 2:190). They then point out scholars like Ibn Hazm who say, well the infamous 'verse of the sword' has done away with all of that! In other words you can force your religion on others! You can also fight aggressive wars against others. Not realizing that Ibn Hazm said this in the context of what is now Southern Spain. Ibn Hazm was making such statements in light of the fact that, 400-500km due north was a war zone. He was trying to convince Muslim scholars of his position. He was not trying to convince Jewish or Christian scholars of his position. He could care less what they thought. So people need to ponder. What would be the political intention behind saying verses on war abrogate verses on peace and coexistence? Think about it. But the sad truth is that people like Dr. David Bukay in his article: "Peace or Jihad? Abrogation in Islam" use material from Ibn Hazm to devastating effect. In fact, as more academics research this issue, they will indeed question our sincerity. They will begin to wonder if we preach a peaceful Islam when we are the minority; but as our numbers grow, will we become more aggressive and demanding. They will cite the theory of

abrogation as examples of this allowance! Next, comes the very real and very damaging theological position that abrogation presents as regards the text of the Holy Qur'an. The position actually states (at least as it concerns Sunni Islam) that Muslims do not have the entire Qur'an in our possession, but only the Qur'an that Allah intended us to have! Though the statement is true, 'The Qur'an in our possession, is that which Allah intended us to have' it is couched in deceit. The truth is the doctrine of abrogation has it that many passages of the Qur'an, were forgotten, canceled outright or even eaten by goats! Through and through this book from beginning to end is a wake up call. It will no doubt shake up the Muslim academia from a deep slumber. This is needed for the benefit of the entire Muslim community! That is not an overstatement! The concept of abrogation is tenuous and indefensible for a number of reasons. If the following narration is indeed a statement of Ali, "Ali said to Abdul Rahman "can you differentiate between abrogating and abrogated verses" Abdul Rahman said, "no." Thereupon Ali said "Thou art damned and causeth others to be damned." Then the whole of the Sunni scholarship is in a crisis. This is because none of them could agree upon which verses could actually abrogate what! Dr. Louay Fatoohi shows the disparate reports from early scholars to the present that present a wide range of views in this regard. The issue of stoning for adultery. Dr. Louay Fatoohi does an excellent job of dissecting the various ahadith on the issue of stoning for adultery, and showing them to be patently absurd, when comparing them one to the other. We have hadith in which the 2nd Caliph of Islam (according to Sunni Islam) mentions that he should 'write the verse of the stoning in the hadith'. This report is flatly contradicted by another report attributed to Aisha (the wife of the Blessed Messenger) in which she claims the verse of the stoning and a verse on suckling were eaten by a domesticated animal! The full impact of this book I feel is yet to be appreciated or felt in the larger Muslim community. This book needs to reach as wide an audience as possible. It has the following implications. It challenges the dominant view that stoning is the punishment for adultery. This could end up saving lives. The Qur'an teaches us "If you save one life, its as if you saved the whole of humanity". It takes a powerful weapon out of the hands of our Christian brothers and sisters, as well as suspicious politicians and those intent of maligning Islam, by using the theory of abrogation. It will make Muslims reflect on why there was so much dependence on secondary sources; such as the ahadith that promoted such views. It will make the Muslims to reflect why such a doctrine is in reality a jumbled hodgepodge of views. As I said at the title: Why is this book not in your library! I believe in time this book will prove a turning point in shaping the debates of the Muslim scholastic tradition to come.

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