Twenty-three years after its first publication in 1983, *Muhammad*: his life based on the earliest sources by the late Abu Bakr Siraj al-Din (Martin Lings, d. 2004) continues its lead as the best-written work of Prophetic biography in English and has now been translated into a dozen languages. The readers’ blurbs from distinguished writers on the back cover call it “superb... scrupulous... exhaustive... mesmerising... easy and absorbing... enthralling... engrossing... majestic... gripping... fascinating.” Indeed, Lings’ lofty English, his knowledge of genealogy, his reflexive and worshipful narrative style, and his excellent *adab* with the Prophet ﷺ all deserve such glowing praise.

**Knowledge of Genealogy**

Lings’ keen sense of the family tree and tribal kinships of the Prophet, upon him and them blessings and peace, makes for a rich intertext of Prophetic Shamail and Khasiis, Ahl al-Bayt and Companion lore, and general Sira historiography inside his Sira itself. Note how much of those arts he packs into this brief paragraph in Chapter XIII (“The Household”):

Muhammad’s eldest uncle, Harith [ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib], who was now dead, had left many children, and one of the sons, his cousin Abu Sufyan, was also his foster-brother, having been nursed by Halimah amongst the Banu Sa’d a few years after himself. People would say that Abu Sufyan was of those who bore the closest family likeness to Muhammad; and amongst the characteristics they had in common was eloquence. But Abu Sufyan was a gifted poet – perhaps more gifted than his uncles Zubayr and Abû Talib – whereas Muhammad had never shown any inclination to compose a poem, though he was unsurpassed in his mastery of Arabic, and in the beauty of his speech.

**High English**

Lings’ lofty style evokes the beauty of the language of the Quran and Hadith, as in these renditions of the meanings of the Blessed Quran:

(Chapter XVI, page 45, paragraph 5) *By the morning brightness, and by the night when it is still, thy Lord hath not forsaken thee nor doth He hate thee, and the last shall be better for thee than the first, and thy Lord shall give and give unto thee, and thou shalt be satisfied...*

(XVI, 48, 3) *Verily We shall load thee with a word of heavy weight.*

(XXIII, 67, 3) *Verily those who say: “Our Lord is God”, and who then follow straight His path, on them descend the Angels saying: “Fear not nor grieve, but hearken to good tidings of the Paradise which ye are promised. We are your protecting friends in this lower life, and in the Hereafter wherein ye shall be given that which your souls long for, that which ye pray for, in bounty from Him who is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful.”*

And the meanings of the Noble Hadith:

(XXXI, 99, 1) *“I take refuge in the Light of Thy Countenance whereby all darknesses are illuminated and the things of this world and the next are rightly ordered, lest Thou make descend Thine anger upon me, or lest Thy wrath beset me. Yet it is Thine to reproach until Thou art well pleased. There is no power and no might except through Thee.”*

(LIV, 193, 4) *Unlike most of the dead [of Uhud], the man of Muzaynah who had fought so valiantly had none of his people present, for his nephew had also fought to the death. So the Prophet went to him and stood beside him saying: “May God be pleased with thee, even as I am pleased with thee.”*
Islamic Manner of Mentioning the Prophet

Lings does not mention the Holy Prophet by name from the time he became Prophet but only by his Prophetic titles – except when citing the disbelievers through free indirect speech. This courtesy reflects the ethics of the Quran and those of his Companions, upon him and them blessings and peace.

Rare Reports

Lings relies much on al-Wāqidi’s *Maghāzī* and mentions a couple of rare, moving reports exclusively found in this book:

1. The pilgrims, stopping to camp at Ḥudaybiya, find themselves short of water, whereupon the Holy Prophet (as he did on many other occasions related in the two Sahīḥs) turned the dregs of a dried-up hollow into a gushing spring. This miracle was soon followed by another one, namely, the Prophet’s disclosure of his knowledge of what the ever-obdurate ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ubay ybn Salāl had commented in denial of the first miracle without being informed of it by a human witness:

   (LXVI, 249, 2) One or two of the hypocrites were amongst the pilgrims, including Ibn Ubayy; and, as he sat drinking his fill, one of his fellow clansmen addressed him saying: “Out upon thee, O father of Ḥubāb, hath not the time now come for thee to see how thou art placed? What more than this can there be?” “I have seen the like of this before,” said Ibn Ubayy, whereupon the other man remonstrated with him so threateningly that Ibn Ubayy went with his son to the Prophet to forestall trouble and to say that he had been misunderstood. But before he had time to speak the Prophet said to him: “Where hast thou seen the like of that which thou hast seen this day?” He answered: “I have never seen the like of it.” “Then why,” said the Prophet, “didst say what thou saidst?” “I ask forgiveness of God,” said Ibn Ubayy. “O Messenger of God,” said his son, “ask forgiveness for him,” and the Prophet did so. [Wāqidi 2:589]

2. (LXXIV, 296, 2) During the march on one of these days the Prophet saw a bitch lying by the side of the road with a litter of recently born pups which she was feeding, and he was afraid that she might be molested by one or another of the men. So he told Ju‘ayl [ibn Surāqah] of ™āmrah to stand on guard beside her until every contingent had passed. [Wāqidi 2:804]

Imām Aḥmad said that Muhammad ibn ʿUmar ibn Wāq id al-Aslamī al-Wāq idī (d. 207) was an “expert in the battles and campaigns” but “lhapazard in assigning his chains of transmission.” His rank as a hadith narrator varies from “very weak” (daʿīf jiddan) and “discarded (mutrāk) to “fair” (ḥasan). Ibn Taymiyya asserts, “No two people differ over the fact that al-Wāq idī is among the most knowledgeable of authorities in the details of military campaigns and among the best experts in all that pertains to them” while al-Dhahabī said, “There is no disagreement over the fact that he is weak, but he is honest and very valuable” and he is declared reliable by Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, al-ʿAynī, Ibn al-ʿArabī, Ibn Daqīq al-Īd, Ibn al-Humām, and others as documented by Abū Ghudda in his *Thalāth Rasū‘il ʿIlm Muḥaddith al-Ḥadīth* (p. 124-125 n.) and Ibn Taymiyya in *al-Ṣārim al-Mastūl al-Shātim al-Rasāl* (p. 97). A junior contemporary of Ibn Islāq, al-Wāq idī is the principal source of Imām al-Ṭabarī (d. 310) in the latter’s *Ṭārīkh* and his student and scribe Muḥammad ibn Saʿd (d. 230) relied heavily on him in his *Ṭabaqāt*.

Analytical Dimension

At times Lings writes not only to narrate but to reflect – a *Fiqh al-Sīra* of sorts before al-Ghazālī and al-Būṭī – and makes keen observations, particularly in analysis of the attitude of the Jews toward the revelation: “[G]enerally speaking, whereas the Arabs were in favour of the man but against the message, the Jews were in favour of the message but against the man” (XIX, 57, 1) and the entire paragraph that begins “Many of the Jews welcomed at first what seemed to be the end of all danger of a further outbreak of civil war in the oasis” (XXXIX, 127, 2). Of the arch-hypocrite of Madīna, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ubay ybn Salāl, he says “it was his policy to be as non-committal as possible, but he sometimes betrayed his feelings despite himself” (XXXIX, 128, 5). Lings is at his most brilliant in the Banū Qurayza chapter (LXI) and in the last four chapters of the book, particularly his superb contextualization of the hadith of Ghadr Khumm (LXXXIII, 338, 2-3) which the sectarians have misused so much to wreak havoc on the *Ummā*’s unity. To Allāh is our return!

With the possible exception of Shaykh Muḥammad Saʿid al-Būṭī’s superior *Ṣīra* entitled *Jurisprudence of the Prophetic Biography* (now available in English translation at Dār al-Fikr), even among Arabic books, in all these respects I cannot think of a single contemporary work that gathers all those accomplishments under a single roof. Allah have mercy on Abū Bākr Sirāj al-Dīn Lings and reward him abundantly!

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With great pleasure and thanks to Allāh, therefore, I am honored to present the first Swedish translation of Lings’ Sīra to the public. Ann-Catrin Nilsson, the author of this translation, completed it in the lifetime of the author and with his authorization. Her translation was proofread by Muhammed Knut Bernström, the author of the standard Swedish interpretation of the Quran. I trust that those who read Swedish will judge her work to be of the highest standard.

Genesis of This Critical Reading

It is also true that there are many problems with Lings’ book. The subtle modifications inserted by Lings into the reprints of his Prophetic biography over the years, in the form of footnotes (possibly also in the text itself), show some acknowledgment of the need for amendments. This was not enough. Accordingly, Ms. Nilsson took the right approach in presenting Dr. Lings, two years ago, with five specific queries she thought “would need elucidation from an Islamic point of view.” She told me she wrote Lings the following:

”There are ... some topics that I, having consulted well-informed muslims, think would need elucidation from an Islamic point of view. I list them here:

"Chapter I:
Can I add a note explaining that Hagar and Sarah, according to Islamic tradition, were friends and wives on equal terms and that it was not, as in the biblical version, the anger of Sarah that drove Hagar out in the desert but the voice and will of God?

"Chapter VI:
Is there a note to be added about the source of the statement (on p. 17): “Moreover one Christian had been allowed and even encouraged to paint an icon of the Virgin Mary and the child Christ on an inside wall of the Ka´bah, where it sharply contrasted with all the other paintings.”?

"Chapter XI:
Would you mind a note about what is meant by "average height and average strength" when applied to the Prophet (SAS)?

"Chapter LI:
Here also a note seems appropriate since the interpretation: "...for God created Adam in His image” might lead the mind in the direction of trying to visualize God as having a face. I have been told that the Arabic language is equally open to the following interpretation, which should be the one more in conformity with the general Islamic view: God created man in Adam's (AS) image.

"Chapter LVIII:
Should a note be added to stress that the marriage of Zainab and the Prophet (SAS) first and foremost came about, as the Quran says: "so that it should not be difficult for true believers to wed the wives of their adopted sons if they divorced them.” (Q. 33: 37)?

"If you don't mind notes being added on the points given above I will insh'Allâh consult a qualified person to formulate them and this being done let you know the result as soon as possible.”

These queries are a representative sample of the honest questions any informed Muslim reader may ask herself about Lings’ Sīra. My own recent re-reading of the book, as the critical notes below show, conjured up the same issues, among other cruxes which definitely need to be addressed. Ms. Nilsson offered that any answers Dr. Lings might forward be inserted as footnotes to the Swedish text. When he turned down that offer in a subsequent telephone conversation he had with her and “forbade any notes whatsoever beyond his own,” she turned to me to provide what she considered a necessary commentary.

* *

* *
Run from Muslim Publishers!

Lings’ refusal that anyone but himself “clarify” his text is justified. One look at the cannibalizing of two classic texts in recent years by purportedly Islamic publishing houses, Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall’s The Meaning of the Glorious Koran and Abdullah Yusuf Ali’s The Holy Quran; English translation & commentary is deterrent enough from ever trusting a da’wa-toting publisher again. Malaysia’s Islamic Book Trust had the gall to preface their act with a protestation of “their sacred duty as Muslims” to alter Pickthall’s or original text because of the “285 mistakes” they and their friends decided, in their wisdom, stood in their way of what the text should read. No critical appendix or preface, no commentary, no footnotes, no list of those so-called mistakes; just tahrir in broad daylight. Others brazenly plagiarize the cover type, design, background color, and even the title, as London’s Ta-Ha Publishers did with their 1988 Life of Muhammad ﷺ: his life based on the earliest sources by a certain Tahia Al-Ismail, a copie conforme of Lings’ bestselling title!

Literary quality and trust, sadly, are no longer part of the moral landscape of Muslims involved in the publishing sector. It has become a heart-rending experience to browse in an Islamic bookstore. For every one Reliance of the Traveller you will see ninety-nine potboilers from the Khan-Hilali Ḥadîth Layl School of Defacement of the Quran and Sunna; Mawdûdî fare, bowdlerized (Renewal and Reform in Islam); a Harun Yahya cornucopia for those who favor pictures over text; lots of soulless, wordy books about sufism, jurisprudence, intellectual history, and politics which all shirk the standard set by the Reliance and do not rise higher than the paper they are written on; and the ubiquitous Pork: Reasons for Its Prohibition in Islam. More than ninety-nine percent of all those editions, translations, thoughts and philosophies are unfit for publication (although Pork: Reasons for Its Prohibition in Islam may be ideal for da’wa by porcuphobes to porcuphiles).

Whence the boom? As Lings noted in his Ancient Beliefs and Modern Superstitions there is nothing new to say. However, as the Holy Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, predicted: “Yathū al-qalam,” “The pen shall proliferate.” To make things worse, the natural logorrhea of “the modern mind” is exponentially boosted by the immoral sub-standards of our authors, publishers, and distributors. “This knowledge used to be a noble affair,” al-Awzâ’i said, “until book-writing brought into it those that have no share in it.” That was thirteen hundred years ago. Now, the Tower of Babel is complete. Everyone is a writer, including the businessbrothers who package bad, semi-bad, and almost not bad products with assembly-line diligence for consumption and propaganda and their accomplices on the distribution end. The day I saw fresh glossy prints of Albani’s The Prophet’s Prayer being promoted in a bookstore owned by a polyglot former student of Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Alawi al-Maliki I lost the remainder of my trust in Islam. When a graduate of the greatest Sunni educator of the last quarter-century loses his bearings on what is and what is not acceptable teaching of the first pillar of the Din after the Shahada, there is no more denying the reality of “Nothing shall remain of Islam except its name, nothing of Religion except its image.”

“And We shall turn unto the work they did and make it scattered motes.” It is understandable that a conscious writer and bibliophile such as Lings would want no part in this corruption. Nevertheless, our directive is nahiya – to stand for truth – and our firm belief is that he would, no doubt, have taken well-founded advice to heart and acted upon it. Now that he is gone, his book has entered a new phase. We might see it slashed and hacked in one, ten, or seventy-five years by the kinglets of print. They may even employ these very notes to hone their editorial axes but Allah is our witness we are innocent of their crimes. Our intention is only to set the record straight on some facts of doctrine, Quran and Sunna commentary, Prophetic biography, and the Prophetic Attributes — not at the expense of Lings’ text, but only as this prefatory study, in a text separate from his. I believe he was a noble man who would have been pleased with this. Ibn Kathir relates that when the great Imam al-Hâkim al-Naysabûri was informed that the hadith master ‘Abd al-Ghani ibn Sa’d al-Misri had written a corrective critique entitled Al-Hâkim’s Mistakes, he took to reading from the latter in his public gatherings and would supplicate on behalf of ‘Abd al-Ghani and thank him. May Allah Most High instil this critical reading with the same spirit of justice and with the respect due to His truthful authors and their work.

* * *

This critique falls under various topical headings, some of which I address in the next six sections, leaving the rest for a systematic passage-by-passage review in column format. These six headings — poetic license, dubious Quran and Hadith commentary, misreferencing, urge for pulchritude, Catholic paraphernalia, and “Perennialism” — are not necessarily the more important ones but they came to mind first. The remaining material was arranged mostly in the order in which it appeared in the book.
Poetic License

Poetic license marks off Muhammad’s life based on the earliest sources from all other serious Prophetic biographies. It is fair to say Lings often has more imagination than knowledge of what he describes and never takes to heart the absolute prohibition of fiction in Islam with regard to the Prophet. Consequently, his constant embroidery detracts from the reliability of his book and, much as it is meant to enhance reading, brings it down to the romance level from which its title-page homage to “the earliest sources” had promised to exempt it.

It is also possible that Lings spent little time in Muslim lands (although he kept company with René Guénon in Cairo for a while), where he normally would have absorbed some of the sensibilities of Muslims and might have avoided or at least suppressed, after the fact, the two or three more momentous misinterpretations in Muhammad: his life based on the earliest sources. He defended them in reprint after reprint by beefing up his footnotes with references he thought provided enough justification. Instead, surely, he should have done away altogether with those passages. One of them is the “lightly clad” Zaynab scene—in his defense an error of taste that predates him; but an error, nevertheless, that “betokens ignorance of the immense rights and merits of the Prophet” according to Qadi Abü Muhammad al-Qushayri al-Maliki as cited by QadiIyâd in al-Ši‘l. (How greatly would Lings and many other biographers of the Prophet have profited from reading that book before they set to their task!) Another such misinterpretation is the “Ka‘ba icon” episode (more below).

Dubious Quran and Hadith Commentary

Lings is at his weakest in one of his final chapters entitled “The Degrees” (LXXXI), which is replete with incautious interpretations or misreporting of Quran and Hadith. Inherent in the reality of degrees and levels in the Religion is the notion of the elite of humankind, the Believers, and the elite of the Believers, the Friends of God. However, Lings turns this notion into a skewed elitism which characterizes the massive majority of people as blind (LXXXI, 329, 3): “Degrees of superiority are also implied by the Revelation in its mention of the heart. In speaking of the majority, it says: Not blind are the eyes, but blind are the hearts within the breasts.” The commentaries are clear that it is not “the majority” at all who are meant but the disbelievers in general, and the disbelievers of Mecca at the time of the Prophet in particular.

Lings’ thoroughly confused attempt at forcing those of the right, the righteous, the slaves of God and the foremost into his own special concept of a spiritual hierarchy (LXXXI, 329, 2) stems from a similar penchant for speculative originality in disregard of qualified sources. In the same chapter (LXXXI, 329, 3) Lings claims that al-†akîm al-Tirmidhî in Nawâdir al-Uslî reported “that of Abû Bakr the Prophet said: ‘He surpasseth you not through much fasting and prayer but he surpasseth you in virtue of something that is fixed in his heart.’” However, al-†akîm only narrated this statement (in Aṣl 220) as a saying of the great †ibi‘î Bakr ibn ‘Abd Allâh al-Muzani, not a Prophetic hadith.

Predictably, Lings also misinterprets (LXXXI, 330, 1) the famous saying of Abû Hurayra, “I have treasured in my memory two stores of knowledge which I had from the Messenger of God. One of them have I divulged; but if I divulged the other ye would cut [my] throat” along the same lines of special-hidden-knowledge-for-the-elite-only. It is simply “I have retained two stores” (hažirun) and the undissemintated knowledge is nothing more esoteric than the identities of strife-mongers, specifically Banû Umayya, which Abû Hurayra elaborates in other hadîths in which he decries the governor of Madîna Marwân ibn al-†akîm, warns of a disaster about to befall the Arabs, and prays for death before the year 60, the year Yazîd ibn Mu‘awya came to power. Some deny all this and cling to their uninformed misrepresentation of Abû Hurayra as referring to spiritual realities when it is not he but rather Abû Bakr and †Ali, Allâh be well-pleased with all of them, who are established as the conveyors of such realities in the hadith and famous as such in Sufi literature and chains of transmission as well.

Misreferencing

(XXXII, 102, 1) Lings references the narration “I was a Prophet when Adam was yet between water and clay” to “Tir. XLVI, 1; A.H. IV, 66.” This is false sourcings and the narration itself is a forgery which neither al-Tirmidhi nor Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal narrate. What they do narrate is: “I was a Prophet when Adam was yet between spirit and body.”

(LXVIII, 258, 2) Of the Sahâbi Abû Baṣîr, Lings states that “his companions prayed over him and buried him, and made a mosque at the place of his burial; then they went to join the Prophet in Medina.” He references this to “Wâqi‘î 624-9; Bukhârî LIV; Ibn Iṣâq 751-3.” This is nowhere to be found in al-Bukhârî but is found in the Sîra books. It is interesting that the “Safari” censor al-Mu‘allim overlooked it in his Inûrat al-Qubûr. If authentic it probably ante-dated the curse of those who build mosques over the graves of the pious unless what is meant in the Abû Baṣîr report is proximity, not super-position or using a grave for qibla.

In his “Key to References” (p. 352) at the end of the book Lings misattributes the Mishkât al-Masâbîh to Imâm †usayn ibn Mas’ûd al-Farrâ‘ al-Baghawî (d. 516) who actually compiled the work on which the Mishkât is based, Masâbîh al-Sunnah, while the Mishkât itself is its expansion and was compiled two centuries and a quarter later by Wâlî al-Dîn Muhammad ibn ‘Abd Allâh al-Khaṭîb al-Tibrîzi. Lings also incorrectly identifies al-Baghawî as “†usayn ibn Maḥmûd.”
Urge for Pulchritude

Among the least leitmotifs of the book are Lings’ preoccupation with and free dramatizing of physical beauty. Khadijah “knew that she herself was still beautiful” (XII, 35, 1); Zaynab bint Jahsh was “a girl of outstanding beauty” (XIII, 40, 1); “Ruqayyah was the most beautiful of their daughters and one of the most beautiful women of her generation” (XXIV, 70, 1); Hind bint `Abd al-Mu`taṣīlīh “was a woman of great beauty” (XXIV, 72, 1); on one and the same page: “most of them [the emigrants to Abyssinia] were young, and in many of them their piety of demeanour was enhanced by a great natural beauty”; “a Christian dignitary..., a man so exceptionally handsome as to arouse general admiration”; “the beautiful Umm Salamah” (XXVII, 82, 2); “She [’Aisha] was then only nine years old, a child of remarkable beauty, as might have been expected from her parentage” (XI, 132, 3); “Haṣāfah was both beautiful and accomplished” (XLVII, 164, 3); “the young and beautiful Saʿfīyyah” (LXX, 270, 2); Rayḥānāh “was a woman of great beauty” (LXI, 233, 2); “The girls were sisters, Māriyah and Sirīn, and both were beautiful, but Māriyah was exceptionally so”; and so on and so forth.

Catholic Paraphernalia

Certain readers grumbled about the masonic imagery they said they found in the book. If true, this surely pales next to its inept mentions of the doctrines of baptism (XXVII, 82, 2), the Eucharist (ibid), the bodily translation of the Virgin Mary (known as “Assumption”) to the heaven at her death (XXXII, 101, 4), its comparison to the Mi`rāj of the Prophet (ibid), the incarnation of the Deity in the flesh of Jesus (XXIII, 68, 4), and “the Holy Rood” i.e. the supposed wood of the cross of the Crucifixion (LXXIX, 319, 1). Note that the doctrine of the Assumption was unheard of in the early Christian Church but was formulated after Isḥām by John of Damascus in the eighth century after Christ and, in the West, became Catholic dogma only in 1950. As for the “Holy Rood” – also known to Catholics as the “True Cross” – its sole claim to authenticity is a fifth-century narration (by Socrates Scholasticus in his Ecclesiastical History) of its supposed discovery, a full century earlier, by Emperor Constantine’s (280-337) aged mother Helena (248-329) in Jerusalem. Eusebius of Caesarea (264-340) made no such mention in his Life of Constantine although he would have hardly omitted it if it had really taken place. The Persians captured the artifact in 614 then Heraclius seized it back from them and restored it to Jerusalem in 628 after the victory of Ḩiṣnīn in 1187, never to be found again although, by then, medieval relic manufacturers and merchants had already filled Europe with the pseudo-fragments of the pseudo-Cross.

“Perennialism”

Lings advocates applying the title of Furqān not only to the Qurān but to “every revealed Scripture” (XXV, 76, 1). This is arguable if he means the word tariqān in a metaphorical generic sense of separating truth from error. However, it is fair to say he means it literally so as to deny the exclusivity of the Quran as an universal Message among all revealed Scriptures and also the exclusivity of its abrogating status of all other Scriptures for all time, since he actually grants neither superiority nor abrogating-status to the Prophet Muhammad (ibid) over all other Prophets and Messengers (LVIII, 212, 1). These are well-known “Perennialist” deviations in flat contradiction of Qurān, Sunna, and Consensus.

Lings’ “Ka`ba icons” episode is a notorious element of the Catholico-perennialist persona of his book. First he writes: (VI, 17, 2) “One Christian had been allowed and even encouraged to paint an icon of the Virgin Mary and the child Christ on an inside wall of the Ka`bah, where it sharply contrasted with all the other paintings.” That the image was an “icon” in the ritual Christian Orthodox sense or, if not, that its painter was even a Christian; that he was actually “encouraged to paint” it; or that it “contrasted with all the other paintings” is all sourceless speculation and pure Lingsian poetic license. Then he writes in the chapter entitled “The Conquest of Mecca” (LXXV, 302, 4): “Apart from the icon of the Virgin Mary and the child Jesus, and a painting of an old man, said to be Abraham, the walls inside had been covered with pictures of pagan deities. Placing his hand protectively over the icon, the Prophet told ‘Uthmān to see that all the other paintings, except that of Abraham, were effaced.” The footnote continues: “Wāqīdī’s Maghāzī p. 834 and Azraqī’s Akhbār Makka I, 107. But other accounts say ‘all’ without mention of these two exceptions.” In reality all accounts say “all”:

- Even these versions do not except the image of the Virgin Mary but only that of Ibrāhīm (ibid). Lings adds the word “other” from his own head in the clause “to see that all the other paintings, except that of Abraham, were effaced.”
- Al-Wāqīdī does not mention “pictures of pagan deities” but rather “imagery of angels and others.”
- The Prophet (ibid) nowhere is said to be “placing his hand protectively over the icon” but rather: “Then he caught sight of the image of Maryam and immediately placed his hand over it (thumma ra` yaddah iswārata Maryam fa-waadha yaddah ‘alayhā). Then he said (thumma qul): ‘Erase every single image in it except the image of Ibrāhīm!” If authentic, the meaning is – and Allāh knows best – that out of his magnificent sense of modesty and adab the Prophet (ibid) would not have anyone even glance at the image of the most pure Virgin Maryam before it was washed away at once – by himself – and her chastity protected.
- As for his excepting the image of Ibrāhīm, it only meant – and Allāh knows best – he was leaving it for last since it was Qurānically the least offensive of all in comparison to Maryam and the angels, although its offensiveness is established from the fact he curses its painters: “Allāh destroy them! They made him an old man casting arrows for divination!”
- He does not address `Uthman but `Umar; and on the same page actually tells him to erase the image of Ibrāhīm at last.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter, page, ¶</th>
<th>Lings’ Text</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I, 2, 2</td>
<td>[Referring to Abraham’s two Temples, one in Jerusalem and one in Mecca:] Two spiritual streams, two religions, two worlds for God; two circles, therefore two centres.</td>
<td>The one Centre is the Ka’ba (Q 3:96); through it God upholds the universes (Q 5:97) and it is called “the navel of the earth” in Arab poetry cf. al-Asfahānī, ‘Arba’ī al-Dhahāb (Maqāla 99) as Lings himself acknowledges (VI, 15, 1). God calls “religion,” especially for followers of the Prophet Abraham Ἱ, only the submission taught by the Prophet Muhammad ᾳ (Q 7:156-157, 3:19, 3:85) abrogating all past Scriptures (Q 5:48).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI, 15, 1</td>
<td>They [Quraysh] knew that they lived at the centre of the world...</td>
<td>Anachronism. The cubic shape occurred later, in the jāhiliyya. The Prophet ᾳ stated that Abraham built it rectangular and thus did Ibn al-Zubayr rebuild it in his caliphate cf. Ṣaḥḥayn and Sunan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I, 3, 1</td>
<td>Its name, Ka’bah, is in virtue of its shape which is approximately cubic...</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV, 10, 1</td>
<td>Adjoining the north-west side of the Ka’bah there is a small precinct surrounded by a low semicircular wall... many pilgrims make wide their circle at this point and include the precinct within their orbit... The space within it is named Hijr Ismā’il because the tombs of Ishmael and Hagar lie beneath the stones which pave it.</td>
<td>False etiology and bad fiqh. Not “many” but all pilgrims must “make wide” their circumambulation which otherwise is invalid, as the semicircular precinct is part of the Ka’ba. The Hijr was thus named because Quraysh left stones (hajur) from the debris (ḥaṭīm, another name for it) of the original Ka’ba after rebuilding it, to mark off the spot. Beneath it is related to be the grave of Hagar alone cf. Yaqūt, Mu‘jam al-Buldān. The apellation “Hijr Ismā’il” is very late and not found in the early sources but Allāh knows best.</td>
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<td>IV, 11, 1</td>
<td>From there he [‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib] began the rite of the rounds, going past the door to the Iraqi Corner, across the Hijr to the west corner...</td>
<td>False reconstruction of the ritual. Not “across the Hijr” but around it; see previous comment.</td>
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<td>VII, 21, 2</td>
<td>After that day Quraysh were called by the Arabs “the people of God”, and they were held in even greater respect than before, because God had answered their prayers and saved the Ka’bah from destruction.</td>
<td>False etiology. As narrated by Zubayr ibn Bakkār the people did call Quraysh by that title after the Day of the Elephant, however, it had not emerged at that time but long before; Quraysh called themselves “the people of God” in justification of their refraining from going to Ἄrafa with non-Qurayshites during pilgrimage for fear of detracting from the prestige of their sanctuary; hence the Divine command directed at them in Q 2:199 and the Prophetic reminder that Pilgrimage is Ἄrafa” in the Sunan and Musnad – as Lings himself acknowledges (LXXXIII, 336, 4).</td>
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<tr>
<td>XI, 31, 1</td>
<td>Muḥammad was of average height...</td>
<td>Dubious translation of Anas’ ḥadīth in Muslim that he Ἰ was “neither too tall nor short” better Englished as “of proportionate height”; another states he was never seen with others but seemed taller. He Ἰ wrestled down Rukāna the strongman thrice and heaved a boulder over Ibn Ma‘ṣūn’s grave when others gave up (both in Abū Dāwūd).</td>
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</table>
According to Islamic tradition Muhammad is none other than the mysterious Shiloh, to whom would be transferred, “in the latter days”, the spiritual authority which until then had remained the prerogative of the Jews. Jesus himself having been the last Prophet of the line of Judah. The prophecy in question was made by Jacob immediately before his death: And Jacob called unto his sons and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall fall in the last days... The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gatherings of the people be. (Gen. 49: 1, 10).

In most of the earliest descriptions his eyes are said to have been black, but according to one or two of these they were brown, or even light brown.

Muhammad preferred to ask for the help of 'Abbâs, who could well afford it, being a successful merchant, and who was close to him because they had been brought up together. Equally close, or even closer, was 'Abbâs’s wife, Umm al-Fâl, who loved him dearly and who always made him welcome at their house.

It was about this time that Umm Ayman became once more a member of the household. It is not recorded whether she returned as a widow, or whether her husband had divorced her. But she had no doubt that her place was there, and for his part Muhammad would sometimes address her as “mother”, and would say to others: “She is all that is left me of the people of my house.” Ibn Sa‘d VIII, 162.

Then he leaned towards him and kissed his forehead... The word rahûm, an intensive form of râhûm, merciful, was current in the sense of very merciful or boundlessly merciful. The still more intense rahûmûn, for lack of any concept to fit it, had fallen into disuse. The Revelation revived it in accordance with the new religion’s basic need to dwell on the heights of Transcendence.

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<td>XVI, 49, 3</td>
<td>... to which the answer is “And on you be Peace!”, the plural being used to include the <strong>two guardian Angels</strong> of the person greeted. Doctrinally misleading. The “two guardian angels” is a Christian notion while the Quran and Sunna teach that for each person there are up to twenty angels recording deeds, implementing destiny, mentoring, etc. cf. al-Suyûti, <em>al-Ḥabîbî al-Malî’ik</em>.</td>
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<td>XVII, 50, 1</td>
<td>Abû Lahab showed plainly his conviction that his nephew was <strong>self-deceived</strong>, if not a deceiver. Excessive poetic license. They said “seer,” “poet,” “sorcerer.” Where did they say “self-deceived”?</td>
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<td>XVII, 51, 1</td>
<td>The Prophet laid his hand on the back of [the thirteen-year old] ¢AlÏ’s neck and said: “This is my brother, mine executor and my successor among you. Hearken unto him and obey him.” This report comes only through the Kûfân Râfi‘i Abû Maryam ‘Abd al-Ghaffîr ibn al-Qâsim ibn Qays al-Najjârî whom Ibn al-Madînî accused of forgery cf. al-Burhân al-Ḥalabî, <em>al-Kashîf al-Ḡathîth</em>.</td>
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<td>XVIII, 54, 2</td>
<td>Another encounter with the Prophet had the result of bringing Islam to the Bani Daws, who were also, like Ghifîr, an outlying Western tribe. Wrong geography. Daws were a tribe of the ¢Udthân clan centered at Tharîq south of the peninsula while Ghifîr were centered between Mecca and Medina by the wells of Badr cf. Shurrâb, <em>al-Maʃîlim al-ʿAthîra fîl-Sunnati wal-Sîra</em>.</td>
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<td>XXII, 65, 1</td>
<td>“... And as for thee, Abû Jahl, a calamity shall come upon thee. Little shalt thou laugh, and much shalt thou weep.” &gt;abarÏ 1203, 3. Mistranslation. Al-Tabari has “And as for thee, Abû Jahl, by God, before very long, little shalt thou laugh, and much shalt thou weep.”</td>
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<td>XXII, 68, 4</td>
<td>According to the Koran, Jesus is both <strong>Messenger of God</strong> and also <strong>His Word which He cast unto Mary</strong> and a <strong>Spirit from Him</strong> (Q 4:171); and as it had been with the <strong>Word-made-flesh</strong>, so now analogously, it was through the Divine Presence in this world of the <strong>Word-made-book</strong> that Islam was a religion in the true sense... Doctrinally heretical. The verse has innamâ, stating that Jesus was only <strong>A Messenger</strong>, not <strong>The Message also</strong>. The word cast on Mary was “Be” (3:47, 3:59). “Be” never becomes flesh but is the Divine Speech by which creation is created, including Jesus. The spirit is the (created) soul of Jesus himself or the (created) angel who brought it (19:17), not a Divine element. There is no “Be” with the Book because the Quran is not created, hence it is never a “Word-made-book” and the analogy is an enormity. Lings’ errors come straight from Frithjof Schuon’s 1961 book <em>Understanding Islam</em>.</td>
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<td>XXIV, 70, 2</td>
<td>“I [Tulayb] beg thee [Arwâ] to go and greet him and say thou believest in him and <strong>testify that There is no god but God</strong>” She did what he had said... Incomplete translation. Ibn Sa’d’s two versions both add, “and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.”</td>
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<td>XXVI, 78, 3</td>
<td>Dhu l-Qarnayn, <strong>he of the two horns</strong>... to make a barrier that would protect them from Gog and Magog and other jinn... Mistranslation of <strong>he of the two horizons</strong> and mis-identification of Gog and Magog as jinn when all the commentaries relate they are human beings.</td>
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<td>XXVII, 82, 2</td>
<td>[The Abyssinians] looked down on them [the Meccans] as heathens... They themselves were Christians, many of them devout; they had been baptised, they worshipped the One God, and they carried in their flesh the sacrament of the Eucharist. As such they were sensitive to the difference between the sacred and the profane. Doctrinally abhorrent and rhetorically tasteless. They say they worship the One God then say “three” (Q 4:171). While reveling in free indirect speech Lings misses the irony that in the Muslim context such sacrament as eating the flesh and drinking the blood of a slain-then-resurrected god incarnate is the profanest Bacchic mystery paganism imaginable.</td>
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<td>XXIX, 89, 4</td>
<td>The eye of the heart, though closed in fallen man, is able to take in a glimmering of light and this is faith. A doctrinally false mix of post-lapsarianism and T. Lobsang Rampa. A Muslim might say: The heart, unless blinded by sin, is able to discern the light of faith and this is remembrance of God.</td>
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XXX, 93-94

“Lo, everything save God is naught.” “Thou hast spoken true,” said 'Uthmān. Labīd went on: “And all delights away shall vanish.” “Thou liest,” exclaimed 'Uthmān. “The delight of Paradise shall never vanish.” ... [The Prophet’s only recorded comment was: “The truest word that poet ever spake is: ‘Lo, everything save God is naught.’” He did not blame Labīd for the words which immediately followed. The poet could be credited with meaning that “all earthly delights away shall vanish”; and on the other hand, all Paradises and Delights which are eternal can be thought of as included in God....

XXXII, 102, 1

[He] again mounted Burāq, who moved his wings in upward flight.... as they passed through the seven heavens....

XXXIII, 106, 1

Abū Bakr had promised her [‘Ā’isha] to Mu‘āmin for his son Jubayr.

XXXVI, 116, 2

After a long discussion, when various suggestions had been made and rejected, they agreed – some of them with reluctance – to the plan put forward by Abū Jahl as being the only effective solution to their problem. Every clan was to nominate a strong, reliable and well-connected young man, and at a given moment all these chosen men together should fall upon Muhammad, each striking him a mortal blow...

XXXVII, 119, 1-3

[There were still some hours to go before sunset, although in fact there was strangely little light in the cave for the time of day they supposed it to be.... There, in front of it, almost covering the entrance, was an acacia tree, about the height of a man, which had not been there that morning.... [T]hey gently drew aside the web that had been their safeguard, and taking care not to disturb the dove, they went...

False speculation and misreading. Labīd undoubtedly meant the words in the usual pagan Arab sense of “There is nothing but our life of the world” (Q 45:24). Together with affirming the existence of God they denied the hereafter. ‘Uthmān understood this on the spot as did the Prophet and everyone else. Hence, the Prophet’s statement in praise of Labīd’s first line was an implicit dispraise of the second in confirmation of both ‘Uthmān’s reactions.

Inauthentic. Ibn Ishāq and the sources are clear that the Burāq remained in Jerusalem while the Prophet ascended on the literal mi‘rāj or ladder. The only source that mentions its wings is Ibn Sa‘d from his teacher al-Wāqidī cf. Ibn Ḥajar, Fath al-Bārî.

Doctrinally false. There is Consensus the mi‘rāj was body and soul and the Quran mentions sight literally.

Flimsy. Ibn Sa‘d’s report of this has an extremely weak chain through Hishām ibn Muhammad ibn al-Sā‘ib, from his father Abū al-Nadr al-Kufi from Abū Sāliḥ, from Ibn ‘Abbās. Hishām and his father are both “discarded” (matrāk) and considered liars while the latter actually admitted to Sufyān al-Thawrī, “All I have narrated to you from Abū Sāliḥ is a lie” cf. Ibn Dhahābī, Mizān, Ibn al-Jawzī, Du‘a’ā wal-Matrākīn.

Inexplicable omission. The sources concur that the assassination plot was moderated by Iblīs in disguise. Asked who he was, he answered “An old man from Najd.” The reports go on to refer to him as “The Old Man from Najd” (al-shaykh al-najdī). Ibn Hishām (3:6-8); Ṭabarî, Taṣfîr (9:227-228), Tārikh (1:566-567); Baghwānī, Taṣfîr (2:244); Jaṣṣās, Abkām al-Qur‘ān (5:84), Abū Nu‘aym, Dīlā‘ al-Nubuwwa (p. 202); Ibn al-Jawzī, Muntazam (3:46-47); Kīlā‘ī, Ikhtifā’ (1:334-335); Suhaylī, Rawd al-Unūf (2:307); Sīra Ḥalabīyya (2:190); Ibn Kathīr, Taṣfîr (“ṣaḥīḥ” 2:302-303 on v. 8:30) and Bidāya (3:176); Lubāb al-Nuqūl (1:109); Suyūṭī, Durr al-Manthūr (4:51-52 v. 8:30), Shawkānī, Fath al-Qadīr (2:304), etc.

Poetic license overkill. There is no mention of “little light,” the fact that the tree was acacia, its height, or solicitude for the cobweb and dove nest in the sources. Allāh knows best.
The Prophet now made a covenant of mutual obligation between his followers and the Jews of the oasis, forming them into a single community of believers...

The Prophet now decided that in addition to Umm Ayman Zayd should have a second wife, one nearer his own age, and he asked his cousin 'Abd Allâh, the son of Ja^sh, for the hand of his beautiful sister Zaynab.

At first Zaynab was unwilling, and she had reason to be so, as events were to disclose. The reason she gave, namely that she was a woman of Quraysh, was not convincing. Her mother, Umaymah, of pure Quraysh stock on both sides, had married a man of Asad; and quite apart from Zayd's adoption into Quraysh, it could not be said that the tribes of his parents, the Bani Kalb and the Bani Tayy, were inferior to the Bani Asad.

He seemed, moreover, ageless, like an immortal.

I [‘A’isha] was playing on a see-saw and my long streaming hair was dishevelled.

From that day Muslims have turned in the direction of the Ka‘bah for the performance of the ritual prayer, and by extension for other rites.

Sawdah... was astonished on her return to see her cousin and brother-in-law Suhayl, the chief of her clan, sitting in a corner of the room with his hands tied to his neck. The sight aroused long-forgotten sentiments and made her forget for the moment all that had replaced them. "O Ab‰ YazÏd," she expostulated, "all too readily didst thou surrender. Thou shouldst have died a noble death." "Sawdah!" exclaimed the Prophet, whose presence she had not noticed. The reproof in his voice immediately brought her back, not without a sense of shame, from her pre-Islamic past to her Islamic present.

The Prophet’s face grew dark with anger.

He hath given you hearing and sight and heart-knowledge that ye may be thankful (Q XVI, 78).

The People of the Bench. [Ahl al-ßuffa]

He none the less discouraged them in general from eating food that was overflavoured with garlic or onions, especially before going to the Mosque.

Historically and doctrinally false. Article 10 of the covenant states, “The Jews of the tribe of Ban‰ `Awf shall be considered a separate nation alongside that of the believers.” Bûtu, Jurisprudence of the Prophetic Biography (p. 302) from Ibn Ishâq and Ahmad.

Misinterpretation. Both Umm Ayman and Zayd were former slaves; rather than matching age the second marriage showed that, contrary to the prevalent pre-Islamic custom, the Sunna allowed a free Qurayshî woman to marry a pious former slave.

Wrong teleology and gainsaying of Zaynab’s motivations. She was unwilling because of a sense of self-pride she truthfully disclosed and of which Zayd, her “mere mawl¥” husband, was later to complain repeatedly, asking permission to divorce her not once but several times cf. al-Bûtu, Kubbâ al-Yaqsûûyat al-Kawniyaya (p. 210-212). She in fact gave the most predictable – and convincing – reason imaginable so that the didactic purpose of the Prophet became more probative.

Inappropriate conceit, more dithyramb than SÏra.

Mistranslation of “and I had shoulder-length hair” (wa-lÏ jumayma / wa-an¥ mujammama).

What other rites?

Inappropriate interpretation and surmising of Sawda’s mind. Ibn Ishâq simply has: “I could not, by Allâh, contain myself when I saw Ab‰ YazÏd in that state.... Suddenly I heard the Prophet say from inside the house, 'Sawda! Are you rousing up aggression against Allâh and His Prophet?? I said, 'Messenger of Allâh, by Him Who sent you with the truth, I could not contain myself when I saw Ab‰ YazÏd with his hands tied to his neck.'”

Inappropriate mistranslation of “he was angered to the point they saw an awning (·ulalan) over his face” or “until they saw his face overshadowed.”

Over-interpretive translation of “hearts” as “heart-knowledge.”

Mistranslation of the “People of the Shelter” (|uffa).

Mistranslation on three counts: He did not “discourage” them but actually prohibited them from eating garlic and onion themselves, and so not “especially,” but only before going to the Mosque.
As regards the fighting itself, he told them to respect the human face as being the most godlike part of the body: "When one of you striketh a blow, let him avoid striking the face... for God created Adam in His image."

Doctrinally false misinterpretation. There are three possible meanings, none of them what Lings claims.
(1) Alläh created Adam directly in Adam's final form without growth. (2) "Alläh created Adam in the image of the Merciful" in that He shared with him aspects of His Attributes such as life, hearing, sight, and knowledge. The predication of image to the Merciful therefore signifies possession, dignity, and bestowal as in the attribute of possession in the verse (the she-camel of Alläh) (90:13), not body part or appearance.
(3) When one of you fights, let him avoid [striking] the face [of the enemy], for Alläh created Adam in his [that man's] likeness.

Mispelling of Usayrim (with a šâd nor sîn).

Doctrinally dubious grammar. Our liege-lord 'Umar said the hajj al-aswad is a stone. None of the early Muslims, Ulema, and pious Friends of Alläh person-alized it. It should be called the Black Stone.

Some English dictionaries do not have "blood-wite" but do have "wergeld." (Both mean blood-money.)

Inappropriate translation. The Prophet became angry until anger was visible on his face, no more and no less.

Wrong doctrine. There is Consensus the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the Best of Messengers (Q 2:253). The "Do not say" reports addressed the nationalistic sense some tribal-minded followers indulge or are abrogated. Verse 2:285 excoriates the Christians who accept Moses and Jesus yet reject Muḥammad, and the Jews who reject the latter two.

Mistranslation and tendentious exaggerations. The original states, "He came to his house asking for him but did not find him so Zaynab bint Ja'fsh, his wife, welcomed him instead. The Messenger of God turned away from her. She said, 'He is not here, Messenger of God, but do come in, may my father and mother be ransomed for you!' But he refused to come in. Zaynab had not covered herself in her haste upon being told the Messenger of God was at the door, so she had jumped to it in a rush. She caused the wonderment of the Messenger of God and he went away murmuring something she could not grasp, etc." So the Prophet – who had known his cousin from childhood and had seen her again and again before the hijab became law – shows full reserve and the scene is muted. The original (broken-chained) report shows decorum but Lings primps it into a bodice-ripper.

Inappropriate mistranslation. "Visibly troubled" usually means physically or mentally disturbed or agitated in a conspicuous way while the original (in al-Waqīdī exclusively) simply states: “Fa-ṣītadda dhaliqā ‘alī Rasūllillah – this bore heavily upon him.” And there is no mention of its being conspicuous; the narrator might know this without it being visible to anyone but the like of Abū Bakr and 'Umar.
She [Rayhāna] was a woman of great beauty and she remained the Prophet’s slave until she died some five years later.

It was generally thought that but for ʿA’ishah Zaynab would have been the Prophet’s favourite wife...

It was not enough that he [the Prophet] should himself believe ʿA’ishah and Safwān to be innocent. The situation was a grave one, and it was imperative to have evidence which would convince the whole community. To this end ʿA’ishah herself had proved the least helpful of all concerned. It was now time that her silence should be broken. Not that anything that she said could be enough to resolve the crisis. But the Koran promised that questions asked during the period of its revelation would be answered. In the present case the Prophet had filled the air with questions – the same question, reiterated to different persons – but for the promised answer to be given by Heaven, it was perhaps necessary that the question should already have been put to the person most closely involved.

The Prophet was bareheaded and had already donned the age-old traditional pilgrim’s dress of two pieces of unstitched cloth...

[Of the Companion Abū Başir] “Alas for his mother!”* said the Prophet. “What a fine fire-brand for war, had he but other men with him!” *Footnote: An often used ellipsis meaning: “The man is such a hothead that his mother will soon have to mourn his death.”

In every generation of the Jews in Arabia there could be found one or two adepts in the science of magic; and one of these was amongst the Jews still living in Medina, Labīd by name, an expert sorcerer who had also instructed his daughters in the subtle art lest his own knowledge should die with him.

When the Prophet took a mouthful of lamb, Bishr did the same and swallowed it, but the Prophet spat out what was in his mouth, saying to the others: “Hold off your hands! This shoulder proclaimeth unto me that it is poisoned.” He sent for the woman... [Bishr] died shortly afterwards. But the Prophet nonetheless pardoned the woman.

Ibn al-Akwa’, the Aslamite who had sung to them on their northward march, had been killed at Khaybar during the attack upon the Citadel. His own sword had somehow turned against him and given him a mortal wound...

False. Ibn Sa’d (8:220) relates from al-Waqqādī that there is consensus the Prophet freed and married Rayhāna cf. al-Dimyṭī, Nīsā’ Rasūl Allāh Ā. Inappropriate generalization and interpretation of ʿA’ishah’s observation that Zaynab “was the one among the wives who vied to surpass me (tusāmīnī).”

Dismally inappropriate in substance and wording. There are some incisive observations, however, it is one thing to evaluate and psychologically conjecture the situation as a whole and another to train one’s laboratory lens on the behavior of the Mother of the Believers and the Holy Prophet, upon him and her blessings and peace! These typically modernist gaffes could easily have been avoided with basic Muslim sensibility. There is no power nor might except in Allāh the Most High and Almighty!

False etiology. Pre-Islamic pilgrims would either wear new clothes or, if they could not afford them, circumambulate the Ka’ba naked.

Misinterpretation of idiomatic Arabic expletives and curses which, in certain contexts, are metaphorical expressions of wonder, approval, endearment, or encouragement such as “May your hands cleave to dust,” “May your age not grow,” “May your stomach not be sated,” “May your mother lose you,” etc.

Inappropriate glamorization of what is considered, in Islām, a filthy skill. Even Aristotle in his Ethics mentioned as a truism that an evil knowledge is not considered knowledge at all. Such language is not from the earliest sources but from Lings’ own dhawq.

Incorrect. The Prophet pardoned the women for trying to kill him then Bishr died and she was executed for his murder.

Needlessly mysterious. All the reports are clear it was an accidentally self-inflicted mortal wound.
A'shah was at that time in her sixteenth year, old for her age in some respects but not in others. Her feelings were always clear from her face, and nearly always from her tongue.

The Revelation had said of him: Verily of an immense magnitude is thy nature. It was as if he were a whole world in himself, comparable to the outer world and in some ways mysteriously one with it.

When 'Umar's voice was heard asking permission to enter there was a sudden total silence and the women hid themselves behind the curtain with such speed that he entered to find the Prophet speechless with laughter.

There could be no doubt that all was not well in the Prophet's household.

The ruler of Egypt sent... as the crown of the gift, two Coptic Christian slave girls escorted by an elderly eunuch. “The girls were sisters, Mariyah and Sirin, and both were beautiful, but Mariyah was exceptionally so,” and the Prophet marveled at her beauty.

The Koran itself expressly allowed a master to take his bondmaid as concubine on condition of her free consent.

The Prophet took off an undergarment he was wearing, and told them to wrap her [his daughter Zaynab] in it before they shrouded her.

After Zayd's death at Mu'ta] Zayd's little daughter came out into the street in tears, and seeing him [the Prophet] she ran into his arms. He now wept unrestrainedly, and as he clasped the child to him his body shook with sobs.

As the child [Ibrahim] breathed his last... The Prophet continued to weep, and when he could find his voice he said....

The sound reports mention not Thawbân here but only 'Ali, his cousin al-Fadl, and the latter's father al-Abbas, Allâh be well-pleased with them, as helping the Holy Prophet in his last walk to the Mosque – and Allâh knows best.
The traditional accounts differ as to the state of soul in which he [Abd Allāh ibn Ubay ibn Salāl] died, but all are unanimous that the Prophet led the funeral prayer for him.

According to one tradition, when the Prophet had already taken his stance for the prayer, 'Umar went to him and protested against the bestowal of such grace upon a hypocrite, but the Prophet answered him, saying with a smile: “Stand thou behind me, 'Umar. I have been given the choice, and I have chosen. It hath been said unto me: Ask forgiveness of them, or ask it not, though thou ask forgiveness for them seventy times, yet will not God forgive them (Q 9:80). And did I know that God would forgive him if I prayed more than seventy times, I would increase the number of my supplications.”

Not long afterwards the verse was revealed, with reference to the hypocrites: And never pray the funeral prayer over one of them who dieth, nor stand beside his grave, for verily they disbelieved in God and His Messenger, and died in their iniquity (Q 9:84). But according to other traditions* this verse had been already revealed as part of the Revelation which came immediately after the return from Tabāk.

*Footnote: Mirkhond, Rawdat al-Sulṭ, II, vol. 2, pp. 671-2, citing earlier sources. See also Bukhārī XXIII, 76.

Nor was it any longer applicable to Ibn Ubayy, for the Prophet visited him in his illness and found that the imminence of death had changed him. He asked the Prophet to give him a garment of his own in which he could be shrouded, and to accompany his body to the grave, which the Prophet agreed to do. Then again he spoke, saying: “O Messenger of God, I hope that thou wilt pray beside my bier, and ask forgiveness of God for my sins.” Again the Prophet assented, and after his death he did as he had promised.

There is consensus in all the accounts that he died in the same state of diplomatic rejection as he had lived. One should seek refuge in Allāh from the perils and foolishness of misguided interpretation.

Not only “one tradition” but all the traditions in the books of Sīra on which Lings based his work as well as al-Bukhrā, Muslim, the Sunan, Ahmad, and the early books of Qurān commentary including al-Tabari as well as his history cf. Abū Nuʿaym’s Tūnq Ḥadīth Sulṭ al-Nabī & ala Ibn Ubay. This does not mean the Prophet-lightly thought Ibn Ubay was other than a hypocrite but only that he wished to preserve the honor of Ibn Ubay’s Muslim son as well as win over Ibn Ubay’s Khazraj tribesmen if they saw his kind treatment of him, since there was no explicit Divine prohibition yet against showing such good will in the first place.

This is false both historically and hermeneutically. In addition, it is not “other traditions” but a single tradition in al-Tabari that states that after the verse was revealed, some of those who had stayed behind during the campaign of Tabāk repented upon hearing the verse and confessed to their hypocrisy, whereas upon the verses of repentence were revealed (9:101-104) and the Prophet accepted their alms.

There is nothing in al-Bukhrā but the opposite of what Lings forwards. As for his main source, it is a 9th-century AH book of history written in Persian by the Afghan Muḥammad ibn Kwāndshāh Mirkhwānd (836-903)! It would be unthinkable that a serious biographer of Jesus and the Disciples who bases himself on “the earliest sources” suddenly jump down several centuries and into a completely different linguistic and geographical region, using a quotation from, say, Einhard’s 9th-century CE biography of Charlemagne in order to contradict something agreed upon in the Four Gospels and the Epistles!

Everything Ibn Ubayy did and said on his deathbed in this (broken-chained) report was orchestrated for his son to save face after him while everything the Prophet said and did with Ibn Ubayy was meant as a summons of goodwill to those the latter left behind as is clear from Ibn Ubayy’s gibe which is studiously omitted: “I did not call for you to come and admonish me but to ask forgiveness for me” and as elaborated by Ibn Ḥajar in Fath al-Bāri and others. That the imminence of death had changed him is not found in the original and is therefore Lingsian license and speculation.

More of the same. And Allāh Most High knows best and to Him is our return. Blessings and peace on the Prophet, his Family, and all his Companions.

Glorified be thy Lord, the Lord of majesty, from what they attribute unto Him, and peace be unto those sent to warn, and praise be to Allāh, Lord of the Worlds!

Mount Qasyoun, Damascus
Night of 29 Ramaḍān 1426 / 31 October 2005