

THE QUR'AN AND THE BIBLE

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A Christian evangelist has claimed that the Torah and Gospels (*Injeel*) which were available in Mecca during the life time of Muhammad^{saw} were identical to the Torah and the Gospel that the Christians read today. As the Qur'an attests to the truth of these Books, the Muslims should believe in them in the same way as the Jews and Christians do. Given that four verses in the Qur'an speak of "*Tahreef*" (alterations) having been done by the "People of the Book;" nevertheless, the alteration spoken of could only have been in the meaning and interpretation of their Books and not in the texts thereof.

All the above-noted questions have arisen because of the lack of knowledge of what Muslims believe about the previous Scriptures, Prophets of God and other holy personages, some of which are stated in the ensuing paragraphs.

God sent His Messengers to all the nations of the world

Allah created mankind and took it upon Himself to guide them, as He says in the Qur'an, "Surely, it is for Us to provide guidance." (92:12) Guidance and Law were given to every nation of the world through His Messengers, "And for every people there was a Messenger" (10:47). "And there is a Guide for every people." (13:7) "And We did raise among every people a Messenger." (16:36) Thus the Qur'an affirms the truth of all the previous Revelations, which include those given to Moses^{as} and Jesus^{as}.

The Scriptures revealed before the Holy Qur'an were not granted protection against interpolations:

However, the Qur'an also points out that all the previous Books were sent for specific nations and times. As those Books were not final and universal, they were not provided the special protection against interpolations, as was granted to the Holy Qur'an, which was revealed as the final Guidance for all peoples and times. The Qur'an points out that the previous Scriptures have suffered interpolations and perversions at the hands of their scribes. "Woe, therefore, to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say, 'This is from Allah.'" (2:79) "There are some among the Jews who pervert words from their proper places." (4:46)

The Qur'an contains the excellences and commandments of lasting nature of all the previous Scriptures:

The Qur'an claims to be the culmination of all the previous Revelations, and contains the fundamental teachings of all the previous Prophets and Scriptures. Referring to the previous Prophets and their Books, God says to the Muslims: "These are they whom Allah guided, so follow their guidance." (6:91) "A Messenger from Allah, who recites unto them the pure Scriptures, wherein are the lasting commandments." (98:2-3) Thus the Qur'an is a compendium of all that is good, lasting and imperishable in the teaching of all the previous Scriptures with a lot more, which was needed for perfection of the guidance. Thus the Qur'an stands as a Guardian over all the previous Books, affirming the truth contained in them and correcting the errors caused by interpolations. As guidance was provided by God to every people, Islam does not claim a monopoly on Truth.

The '*Tauraat*' and '*Injeel*' mentioned in the Qur'an do not refer to the current Old and New Testaments, but to the original Revelations sent to Moses and Jesus

It should also be noted that when the Qur'an refers to *Taurat* (Torah) or *Injeel* (Gospel), it does not mean the present Old Testament and the New Testament. According to the Qur'an, the '*Tauraat*' is the name given to the Revelations sent to Moses and *the 'Injeel'* the Revelations sent to Jesus. What the Qur'an says is that the Torah and the Gospel in their original form were revealed by God to Moses and Jesus respectively. (3:3-4) It may be noted that the current 'Old Testament' is a collection of the books of various Israeli Prophets, including the Pentateuch of Moses. (i.e. the Revelation originally contained in the Pentateuch (the five Books of Moses i.e., Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).

Similarly, when the Qur'an mentions the '*Injeel*,' it refers only to the Revelation or the Book that was originally granted to Jesus. These revelations were not preserved in the form of one book. If they were collected, in one collection that is not available today. However, some of those revelations have been preserved in the New Testament (the first four and other books), and many of Jesus' revelations may have been lost. The 'New Testament' comprises of three parts, (1) Four Gospels written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, between 60 and 95 AD. (2) Acts, which is the history of the Church, written by Luke in 65 AD. (3) Epistles, which comprise letters, which were mostly written by Paul; and (4) Revelation which was written by John in 95 AD. As there was no Prophet of God between Jesus and Muhammad^{saw}, the Qur'an does not recognize the Acts, the Epistles and the Book of 'Revelation,' as part of '*Injeel*.' According to the Qur'an, interpolations were made in the '*Tauraat*' (five Books of Moses) and the '*Injeel*' (four Gospels). (2:75 & 2:79) However, these Books still contained some fragments of the original Revelations and teachings, which were affirmed by the Qur'an, and referred to them as '*Hudan wa Noor*' that means, guidance and light. (5:44-46)

The word '*Kitab*' (Book) signifies teachings revealed to Prophets and not necessarily a new '*Shariah*' (Law)

In verses 83 to 87 of Chapter 6, Qur'an mentions many Prophets, their fathers, their children and their brethren and says about them: "It is these to whom We gave the Book and dominion and Prophethood." (6:89) The Prophets mentioned are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Zachariah, John, Jesus, Elias, Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot. Obviously, all of them were not given a new '*Shariah*' (Law), but each of them is mentioned here as being given the Book. When a Prophet of God is mentioned as having been given a Book, it would signify the Revelations granted to him, which contain, among other details, the sure news of the future and the unseen, as mentioned in the following verse: "He is the Knower of the unseen; and He reveals not His secrets to anyone, except to a Messenger of Him whom He chooses. And then He causes an escort of (guarding angels) to go before him and behind him, so that He may know that (His Messengers) have delivered the Messages of their Lord." (72: 26-29)

The Prophet Abraham^{as} and Moses^{as} were both given the Books, though Abraham did not bring any Law. "This, indeed, is in the former Scriptures (or Books) -- the Scriptures of Abraham and Moses." (87:18-19)

About Jesus^{as} God says, "And He will teach him the Book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel." (3:48) The word '*Kitaab*' used here cannot be the 'Gospel' as it is separately mentioned. It means that Jesus was given the deep insight, understanding and knowledge of the Book (Torah). It may also mean that Jesus inherited the Book or '*Shariah*' that was given to Moses. His own Revelations which fulfilled or affirmed the teachings of the Torah, as stated in 3:50, may also be called the '*Kitaab*' that was given to Jesus.

Significance of '*Tasdeeq*' (attestation or verification) of '*Torah*' or '*Injeel*' by the Quran

The attestation of revealed Scriptures by the Qur'an could be in the following three ways: (1) Verification of all the contents of the Books in the present form. It was not done; otherwise the Qur'an would have not strongly condemned the fundamental dogmas of Christianity such as Jesus being taken as son of God. (2) Verification of certain parts of the Books and (3) Verification of the truth of the original revelations and of the Prophets to whom they were vouchsafed. The Qur'an verified only certain parts of the '*Torah*' and '*Injeel*,' and attested them being the Books of Divine origin. (*Tafseer-e-Kabir* Vol I, P 385)

Moreover the verification, referred to in 2:41, is the fulfillment of the promise contained in Deuteronomy 18:15-18: "...I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words into his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."

This prophecy was fulfilled in the person of Holy Prophet Muhammadsaw, who was from Ishmaelites, the brethren of Israelites.

According to the Qur'an, the Holy Prophet^{saw} was the like of the prophet sent to Pharaoh (i.e., Moses (73:15) No other Israeli Prophet - not even Jesus - said that he came in fulfillment of this prophecy.

Interpolations and doubts in the Old and New Testaments are admitted by Jews and Christian scholars

For example, Rev. Dummelow writes in his Bible Commentary on page xxiv: "On close examination, however, it must be admitted that Pentateuch reveals many features inconsistent with the traditional view that in its present form it is the work of Moses. For instance, it may be safely granted that Moses did not write the account of his own death in Deut.:34... Other passages which can only with difficulty be ascribed to him are: Exodus 6:26,27; 11:3; 16:35, 36; Lev. 18:24-28; Numbers 12:3; Deut. 2:12." (Bible Commentary by Rev. Dummellow, p xxiv)

God did speak to the Prophets of Old Testament, but the external and internal evidence no longer supports the view, that the record of the Old Testament as we possess it today constitutes the word of God as was first revealed.

Hadhrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad^{ra} (1889-1965), the second successor of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community writes:

"From the history of Israel we learn that in the time of Nebuchadnezzar the books of Israel were burnt and destroyed. They were re-written by the Prophet Ezra, and of Ezra we read in the Jewish literature: 'It was forgotten but Ezra restored it.'" (Jewish Encyclopedia Vol 5, P 322)

And again:

"Ezra re-established the text of the Pentateuch, introducing therein the Assyrian or square characters." (Jew. Enc. Vol 5, p 322)

He showed his doubts concerning the correctness of some words of the text by placing points over them. Should Elijah, said he, approve the text, the points will be disregarded; should he disapprove, the doubtful words will be removed from the text. (Jew. Enc. Vol 5, P 322) There are numerous contradictions in the Old Testament, it contains savage and irrational teachings and Prophets are defamed by it, which cannot be attributed to God, and so must have been incorporated by the writers. For detail, please see 'Introduction to the Study of Holy Quran' by Hadhrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad, P xvii to xxx.

Interpolations in the New Testament

The New Testament has also suffered interpolations and changes in form as well as matter. The following points deserve to be reflected upon:

The books other than the four Gospels of New Testament were mostly written by Paul who was neither a disciple of Jesus, nor had ever met him physically. Even the four Gospels were neither written by Jesus himself, nor written by his principal disciples. The Gospels were written many decades after the event of Crucifixion and so were not authorized or approved by Jesus. The writers of the Gospels are obscure persons and their narrations pertained to only about three years of Jesus' life. Some Gospels written by Barnabas, Thomas and Hermas, who were disciples of Jesus, have been discovered. They contradict some of the basic teachings of the current Gospels.

No original manuscript of the current New Testament exists and hence its absolute authenticity cannot be established. Jesus^{as} spoke the Aramaic language, but no Gospels are available in that language. What we possess today is only the translations of the translations; and the translations cannot be believed as word of God. The Christian scholars themselves regard the Gospels as accounts of the life of Jesus narrated by others and not the words of God.

The Pocket Bible Handbook while introducing the Gospels (*Injeel*) writes: "The Gospels: The first section of the New Testament, called the Gospels, consists of four accounts of the life of Jesus. (The word 'gospel' means 'good news') The first three gospels have been given the title 'Synoptic' because they look at Jesus' life from a similar point of view." (Pocket Bible Handbook, Meridian Publications, P 103)

Contradictions in the New Testament

There are many contradictions in the New Testament, which are not possible in the words of God. A few examples are stated below:

(1) How man is justified, by works or faith? James 2: 14 & 2:26 says, "By works man is justified and not by faith alone." But according to Galatians, "A man is not justified by the works of law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." (Galatians 2:16)

(2) Can the Law of the Old Testament (Shariah) be changed or not? Luke says the Law cannot change, but Hebrew says that since now the priesthood has been changed, the change in Mosaic Law has also become necessary. "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to change (Luke 16:17) "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." (Hebrew 7:12)

(3) Should the law be followed in order to enter the kingdom of heaven or the law is a curse? Matthew says the law must be followed, but Galatian says the law is a curse. "Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of the least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:17-19) "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." (Galatians 3:13)

(4) There is contradiction in the name of Joseph's father (husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus). Matthew (1:16) states his name as Jacob and Luke (3:23) as Heli.

(5) Matthew 1:16 states that Jesus was the 40th descendant of Abraham, but Luke (3:23-31) says that he was the 55th descendant.

(6) Matthew (1:7-16) states that Joseph was the 26th descendant of David, but Luke (3:23-31) says that he was the 41st descendant of David.

As God is free from such weaknesses, the above quotations cannot be attributed to Him. These are human errors which were introduced in the Books by their writers. Obviously the Qur'an cannot attest to the contradictory statements.