

## WHY DO THE BIBLE AND THE QURAN NOT AGREE?

Despite similarities, stemming from the same subject matter, history and persons mentioned, the Bible and the Quran differ widely on fundamental concepts of faith and practice in religion.

There are at least two possible reasons:

1. The Bible and the Quran do not stem from the same source, i.e. one of the two, or both, are of human or spiritist origin.
2. The Bible or the Quran, or both, have undergone editing and consequently the original nature and message has become lost.

In that case one of the two books, or both, contain error and cannot be termed reliable and trustworthy. Both Muslims and Christians are absolutely convinced of the divine origin, reliability and total trustworthiness of their respective book. One (or both) must be false. In that case very many millions of followers of the respective faiths base their hopes for eternity on error or even deception.

Representatives of both faiths have set out to prove their point, but since everyone is already committed to a definite conviction, objectivity is hardly possible. I, as a Christian, most probably am not as objective towards Islam as I should be - and neither will the Muslim reader be unbiased towards the Bible.

Within the framework of these studies we shall look only at scriptural and historical facts that are established, and will not engage in philosophical polemics. We do not want to argue about theological concepts either, but desire rather to discuss those that can be checked tested and verified by anyone, anywhere - provided one is able to turn to the sources mentioned. For that reason an attempt has been made to document all assertions as thoroughly as possible.

In recent years the Quran has undergone a process of spiritualisation. Some Muslims actually use Christian concepts, foreign to Quranic and traditional thinking, and explain that this is the spirit of Islam. These sentiments are difficult to accept unless they can be substantiated in the Islamic literature of old.

Since the Bible existed before the Quran, the difference between the two may be solved by providing:

1. Evidence that proves that the Quran is based on a false or poor understanding and knowledge of the earlier revelation (God cannot change, and will not give contradictory statements to different prophets!);
2. Evidence that proves a change was made in the message of the Bible by Jews and/or Christians, with acceptable reasons for doing so.

The Quran repeatedly and emphatically states that the Torah and Gospel - we take this to stand for the Old and New Testaments - are revelations by the same God as the God of the Quran.

### What the Quran teaches about the Bible

"Say ye: 'We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses, and Jesus, and that given to all prophets from their Lord: WE MAKE NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ONE AND ANOTHER OF THEM.'" (S. Baqara 2:136).

"Allah! There is no God but He, - the Living, the Selfsubsisting, Eternal ... He sent down Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) ... as a guide to mankind." (S. Al-i-Imran 3:2-3).

"O ye who believe! Believe in Allah, and His Apostle - and the scripture which He sent before them". (S. Nisaa 4:136).

"It was We who revealed the Law (to Moses); therein was guidance and light ... if any do fail to judge by the light of what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) unbelievers ... We sent Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: Therein was guidance and light ... a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah. LET THE PEOPLE OF THE GOSPEL JUDGE BY WHAT ALLAH HATH REVEALED THEREIN. IF ANY DO FAIL TO JUDGE BY THE LIGHT OF WHAT ALLAH HATH REVEALED, THEY ARE (no better than) THOSE WHO REBEL. Judge. . . what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires ... "(S. Ma-ida 5:44,46,47,49).

"People of the Book! ... Stand fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that hath come to you from YOUR LORD. It is the revelation that has come to thee from THY LORD." (ibid. vs. 68).

"The Quran is ... a confirmation of (revelations) that went before it". (S. Yi'inus 10:37).

"If thou wert in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee. The truth had indeed come to thee from thy Lord." (ibid. vs. 94).

"AND DISPUTE YE NOT WITH THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK ... BUT SAY: WE BELIEVE IN THE REVELATION WHICH HAS COME DOWN TO US AND THAT WHICH CAME DOWN TO YOU". (S. Ankabut 29:46).

"This is a book which We have revealed, bringing blessings, and confirming (the revelations) which came before it: that thou mayest warn the Mother of Cities and all around her." (Sura 6:92).

What else does this mean, than that Mohammed claims to bring revelation to Mecca and the Arabs, confirming and establishing what was sent before him?

"Before thee, also, the apostles We sent were but men, to whom We granted inspiration: If ye realize this not, ASK OF THOSE WHO POSSESS THE MESSAGE (Sura 21:7).

We can clearly see that the Quran presupposes the divine revelation of "the Book" and its unpolluted content at the time of the prophet Mohammed. The Quran criticises, however, the twisting and misinterpretation of "the Book":

"Ye People of the Book! Why do ye clothe truth with falsehood and conceal the truth, while ye have knowledge? (S. Al-i-Imran 3:71).

"There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues: (as they read) you would think it is part of the Book, but it is no part of the Book." (S. ibid. vs. 78). (All emphasis in the quotations is my own).

If there is anything that comes out very clearly, it is that the Quran is emphatic that the Torah and the Gospel are revelation from God. This is what Christians believe too. The Quran says in this regard:

"No change can there be in the words of Allah" (Sura 10:64)

"There is none that can alter the words of Allah" (Sura 6:34).

Besides that, history and archaeology prevent one from arguing that the Bible has undergone any change since its official canonisation in A.D. 324. In fact almost all portions of the New Testament in their present form were in general circulation among the churches of the Second Century A.D. It was by general agreement at a Council of the bishops of 318 churches that all these were fully recognized and accepted as Apostolic and inspired. When Mohammed referred to "the Book" or "Taurat" or "Injil", he referred, no doubt, to what was in circulation in Arabia in his day and age. If words mean anything at all, then Mohammed referred to this "Book" (al-Kitab) as revelation. We take this as an established fact on the strength of the above evidence, unless it can be proved wrong.

Why should a Jew or Christian before or after the time of Mohammed be interested in changing God's revelation? Does he want to go to hell?

"I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book; if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." (Revelation 22:18-19).

These are virtually the last verses of the Bible. The only conceivable reason to bring about changes would be that the Quran differs from the "Book". Consequently there are two possibilities: either the Christians refusing to accept the Quran tried to change all similarities between the Bible and the Quran; or Muslims seeing that the "Book" was in contrast to the Quran, expediently claim that the Bible must have been corrupted. The first assumption is against all evidence and logic.

QUESTION: Why do Muslims keep on claiming that the Bible is corrupt? When was the Bible allegedly polluted? Why does the Quran not clearly state that it was polluted?

### **There are differences between the Bible and the Quran.**

The Quran states that both the Torah and Gospel are revealed. But in contrast, it also claims that Jesus was not crucified:

"They (the Jews) said (in boast), 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Apostle of Allah', - but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them ... " (Sura 4:157).

The crucifixion receives the widest attention in the Gospel and was unmistakably prophesied in the Old Testament some 700-1000 years before it happened. See "Christians Answer Muslims", pages [48 ff.](#), [97 ff.](#)

In Sura 19:35 we are informed that

"it beseemeth not God to beget a son"

and near the end of the Quran (Sura 112:3) it says:

"He begetteth not, nor is He begotten",

which is also part of the Rak'at.

This again, is in contrast to the Bible. The words "it is not befitting Allah that He should beget a son" (Sura 19:35 and 92) suggest a physical act, which is as outrageous to Christians as it is to Muslims.

Jesus was born of a virgin. She asked:

"How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?" He (an angel) said: 'So (it will be): Thy Lord saith, *That is easy for me:* and (We wish) to appoint him as a sign unto men and a mercy from Us.' "(Sura 19:2-21).

This, as in the Bible, does not indicate a begetting act. The whole concept of the "begotten" son is based on a misconception. In the original Greek the word "monogenes" is used, which means "only born". That God initiated fatherhood is apparent even in the Quran. As the act of begetting was misunderstood, so also was the "Trinity", which according to the Quran is understood to consist of Jesus and Mary besides God, God being the third of three (Sura 5:116). This is in no way in keeping with the Biblical texts either. Christians believe in what the Bible teaches. In both the Old Testament (B.C.) and the New Testament we know of ONE God only. ("Christians Answer Muslims, [pp. 92 ff.](#)). It is a tragedy that many Muslims think that Christians worship three gods. This is totally false. Only in one Christian group is Mary venerated as "Mother of God", and that is unbiblical.

There are, moreover, many other differences between the Quran and the Bible, which are more of an historical nature than doctrinal:

Noah escaped the flood, but his son drowned (Sura 11:42-46) according to the Quran narrative, but he (Noah) escaped with his wife, three sons and their wives (Genesis 6:7,18) in the Bible.

The angel, announcing the birth of John the Baptist (Yahya) to his father, says:

"We bring thee tidings of a son, whose name shall be John: we have not caused any to bear the same name before him" (Sura 19:7 according to George Sale's translation).

or

"No namesake have We given him aforetime" (according to A.J. Arberry's translation).

or

"that name we have given to none before him" (Palmer's and Rodwell's translation).

This is incorrect. Johanan, the Hebrew form of John (Jahveh's Gift) was quite a common name, mentioned in the Old Testament. Yusuf Ali in his translation transliterates this statement therefore as "on none by that name have We conferred distinction before." His explanation:

"... for we read of a Johanan ... in II Kings 25:23."

Is a "translator" allowed to change a text like this to correct an error?

Abraham was the son of Azar in Sura 6:74 and the son of Terah in Genesis 11:27. Who would change a name from early history at random? What purpose would it serve? None. Only an error can be responsible. Does Azar stand for Eliezer? He is mentioned in Genesis 15:2 as a servant of Abraham.

Worse differences occur in the narrative about Moses. We are rightly told that Imran (Biblical Amram) was the father of Moses, Aaron and Miriam (by implication in Suras 19:28, 66:12, 20:25-30).

But that this Miriam (or Mary) is the mother of Jesus (who was actually born 1500 years later!) is rather unlikely.

The explanation offered by Yusuf Ali that she and her cousin Elizabeth were called "sisters of Aaron", because they were (in the case of Mary, "presumably": comm. 375) of a priestly family, is rather vague.

The phrase, it is suggested, was derived from Luke 1:5, where Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, being of priestly descent, was called "of the daughters of Aaron". What Yusuf Ali does not explain, is that the father of Aaron and Mary, the mother of Jesus, happens to be Imran according to the Quran. This, no doubt, shows human error which can hardly be regarded as a copying mistake. It is based on lack of knowledge of, or information about, the Bible.

That Moses was adopted by Pharaoh's wife (Sura 28:9) is contradicted by Exodus 2:10, where he was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter (otherwise he would also have been adopted by Pharaoh himself).

Moses' wife - we understand from the context (in Sura 28:22-28), that this must be Zipporah the daughter of Jethro - was given to Moses in exchange for 8-10 years' service. The Bible does not account for this (Exodus 2:16-22). We are, however, strongly reminded of Genesis 29:18 where Jacob pledges to serve Laban 7 years in exchange for Rachel. This was approximately 220 years prior to the time of Moses. Again we should like to inquire what possible purpose could any man have in changing the words of the Bible in historical narratives like these? Or could it have been Mohammed who confused some the stories he had heard?

The same applies to the statement that Haman was a servant of Pharaoh. According to the Quran, he is ordered by Pharaoh to light a kiln to bake bricks out of clay to "build me a lofty palace" (Sura 28:38, Yusuf Ali); or "high tower that I may ascend unto the God of Moses" (G. Sales); or "a tower, that I may reach the avenues of the heavens and ascend unto the God of Moses" (by Palmer and Rodwell); or "and make me a tower that I may mount up to Moses' god" (by Arberry).

We do recall the building of the tower of Babel in the Bible. But this event in Genesis 11 occurred 750 years before the time of Pharaoh in Exodus, and Haman (Book of Esther) lived 1100 years after Pharaoh. Yusuf Ali suggests (comm. 3331) that this refers to another Haman, but there is none other by that name in the Bible. We find it strange that Yusuf Ali in contrast to all other translators, speaks of a lofty palace, rather than a tower. Did he want to obscure the obvious similarities, which are embarrassing because they are historical misfits?

In the Bible (Judges 7) we read how God made Gideon select his small army of 300 from 32,000 men, for a special task. In Sura 2:249 we read of a very similar event, but this time under King Saul. Yusuf Ali in his commentary is aware of this, and remarks "as Gideon did before Saul" (comm. 284). This deed of Saul's is not found in the Bible and we take it to be another error.

Muslims believe that Ishmael was the son to be offered by Abraham on the altar. The Bible states that it was Isaac. This incidence highlights the whole concept of sacrifice, where a wide difference between the two Books can be detected.

Idu'l-Azha is based on Sura 22:34-37 where it says, inter alia:

"We have appointed for every nation a holy rite that they may mention Allah's name over such beasts of the flocks as He has provided them ... And the beasts of sacrifice - We have appointed them for you as among Allah's waymarks; therein is good for you ... The flesh of them shall not reach Allah, neither their blood (!). But godliness from you shall reach Him."

The Christian reader immediately notices in the above a total contradiction of the Biblical message.

"Where I see the blood, I will pass over you." (Exodus 12:13).

These are the words of God to Moses and the Jews after telling them that by applying the blood of a sacrifice to the lintels and doorposts of their homes, their families would escape the judgment of God that would strike Egypt.

"The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life."  
(Leviticus 17:11).

This is a concise statement, representing the very heart of the Law given to Moses. Although this ultimately points to the sacrifice of Jesus, who ratified all the offerings presented by the people under the Old Covenant, the demand of God still stands:

"Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22).

It is a misjudgment of God's holiness and man's sinful nature to assume that our good deeds will ever be able to compensate for the evil in our lives.

The origin of Idu'l-Azha can be traced back to the year when, a few months after the Hejira, Mohammed observed the Jews of Medina celebrating the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) and he saw the role that sacrifice played among the people of the Book, the Jews. A Tradition records that Mohammed asked them why they kept the fast. He was informed that it was a memorial to the deliverance of Israel under Moses from the hands of the Egyptians.

"We have a greater right in Moses than they" said Mohammed and fasted with the Jews, commanding his followers to do the same.

The following year the initially friendly atmosphere between the Muslims and Jews had deteriorated and with it the Qibla was changed from Jerusalem to Mecca. Mohammed and his followers did not participate in the "Yom Kippur" (Day of Atonement) celebrated then. Instead, he instituted the Idu'l-Azha. He killed two young goats, one for himself and his family and one for the people (See Leviticus 16), still remaining true to Biblical demands. Idolatrous Arabs had been performing the annual Hajj to Mecca at this time of the year. The sacrifice of animals was also part of their ceremonial, so the institution of Idu'l-Azha may be seen also as a well-timed token of goodwill towards the Arabs of Mecca.

Although there is no reference in the Quran to the fact, it is generally accepted by Muslims that this feast was instituted to commemorate Abraham's sacrifice of his son Ishmael on Mount Mina near Mecca.

The reason for the above assumption is as follows: if Abraham's "only son" (Genesis 22:2) was offered, Isaac could not have been born at that stage, for Ishmael could not have been the only son anymore. But Genesis 22:2 is quite clear on this point. It actually states the name Isaac. In Sura 37:100-111 the story of the sacrifice of Abraham's son is recorded without naming the son: "We gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear". Although this Sura deviates somewhat from the Biblical narrative, the event of the sacrifice is reported. As a parallel passage we should mention Sura 11:71, where, however, the chronology of the event has been somewhat mixed up.

The reference in Sura 37 culminates in the words:

"We *ransomed* him (the son) with (another) momentous (or noble) sacrifice." (My emphasis).

The Islamic concept that Ishmael was on the altar can be supported only by the Traditions (Yusuf Ali Commentary, note 4096, 4101) ("Dictionary of Islam", page 219). Bearing everything in mind we are

tempted to conclude that the Islamic view is motivated by expediency.

Regarding the meaning of the sacrifice (Qurban = "approaching near", to whom? How? Why?), Muslims deny any implication of Biblical concepts whatsoever; we hold that this is not legitimate, since we are dealing with Biblical narrative and content. To the Muslim the Qurban is merely a remembrance rite to make one think of Ishmael. But even in the Quran, although denied in other passages (Sura 22:37), the issue is clear: "Ransomed by sacrifice"! Liberated from death by someone else stepping in, a momentous, noble sacrifice to redeem Isaac (or Ishmael, if you wish).

Here is Biblical ground. Here is the pointer to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He became the momentous noble sacrifice to die in our stead! Today Idu'l-Azha is a feast of rejoicing. But the sacrifice is not interpreted as being a ransom! Muslims claim that Abraham took Hagar and Ishmael, as a baby yet unweaned, to Paran (believed by Muslims to be near Mecca). This clashes with the Genesis account in the following respects:

- a) Hagar and Ishmael were sent away, unaccompanied by Abraham, when
- b) Isaac had already been born, i.e. Ishmael was at least 14 years old (and not weaned!).
- c) Paran is not near Mecca but is south of Israel in the Sinai Peninsula.

We noted that in Genesis 22:2 Isaac is called Abraham's only son. This is biologically incorrect, but legally correct, for it obviously refers to:

- i) the covenant bearer (Genesis 21:12); and
- ii) Abraham's marriage to Sarah (Hagar was Abraham's concubine)

A Muslim may contend that the given Quranic text is "nazil", or has come as revelation from heaven: God knows about the matter and it need not have been reported in the Bible for Him to know. Of course God knows all things, past present and future. He revealed many events of the future comprehensively through the prophets in the Bible to demonstrate His authorship, and every reader is able to check and test if the facts reveal the divine imprint. But judging unemotionally, just guided by the evidence, Christians fail to see any divine imprint in the Quran. [See pp. 39 ff.](#)

QUESTION: How can one, in the light of the opening text of this chapter, account for these differences?

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