

The Bible is changed - Really?

Many Muslims believe that Christians have corrupted the Holy Bible. Whereas their book, the Qur'an, upholds that same Bible, treating it as the word of God.

GOD CAUSED THEM TO DESCEND (He Revealed them)

The Qur'an uses the following terms to refer to parts of the Bible:-

- 1 Tawrat - Torah, the first five books of the Bible
- 2 Zabur - the Psalms
- 3 Sahaif - the books of the prophets
- 4 Injil - the Gospel

The Torah, the Psalms and the Sahaif are known as the Holy Scriptures of the Jews. Christians call them the Old Testament. The Injil, referred to as the Holy Scriptures of the Christians, is known to Christians as the New Testament. The Qur'an states that all these were revealed by God: "... confirming that which was (revealed) before it, even as He revealed the Torah and the Gospel."¹

A GUIDANCE FOR MANKIND

The Qur'an asserts that the Torah, the Zabur, the Sahaif and the Injil, are God's books, His word, light, and "*Furqan*" (that is, criterion).

- 1 The Torah
 - a. "... is the book of Allah"²
 - b. "... is a guidance and reminder for men of understanding."³
 - c. "... is light and guidance."⁴
 - d. is "... the Criterion."⁵
- 2 The Injil
 - a. "... has clear proofs."⁶
 - b. was, "... bestowed on him (Jesus)"
 - c. has "... guidance and light" and
 - d. "... confirming ... the Torah."⁷

The Qur'an emphasises that the Injil and the Torah are guidance for all mankind, "clear testimonies for mankind, and a guidance and a mercy."⁸

THE HOLY INJIL AS A STANDARD

The Qur'an instructs Christians to judge according to the Injil, "*Let the people of the Gospel judge by that which Allah hath revealed therein. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed such are evil-livers.*"⁹

Had Mohammed known of any reason to believe that the Injil was not totally authentic, would the Qur'an have commanded Christians to judge by it? Yet nowadays, many Muslims allege that the Holy Gospel has been grossly distorted. Either the Muslims who cast doubt on the veracity of the Bible are wrong or Mohammed was severely mistaken.

GOD'S WORD NEVER CHANGES

The Qur'an claims that no one can alter the word of God. It says, "*It is the law of Allah which hath taken course aforetime. Thou wilt not find for the law of Allah aught of power to change.*"¹⁰

In another place the Qur'an says, "*There is no changing the word of Allah - that is the Supreme Triumph.*"¹¹

THE QUR'AN AS A GUARDIAN

The Qur'an not only claims to confirm the previous Scriptures but also claims the responsibility of being, "*the watcher over it.*"¹² Al-Baidhawi explains that "*watcher over it*" means, "*The Qur'an is the protector of all the sacred books to preserve them from any kind of change.*"¹³

THE QUR'AN MAKES NO SUGGESTION OF "ALTERATION"

In the Qur'an, the word "*tahrif*" is never used to suggest that the biblical text had been altered or corrupted. "*Tahrif*" is occasionally used to accuse Jews (but not Christians), of concealing the truth, but in no way to imply that the text had been corrupted.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF "TAHRIF" IN THE QUR'AN

The word "*tahrif*" is used with the following meanings:-

1. To mispronounce words. For example, the Qur'an accuses certain Jews of deliberately distorting Mohammed's words to pervert their meaning: "*Some of those who are Jews change words from their context ... distorting (tahrif) with their tongues and slandering religion.*"¹⁴
2. To misinterpret verses. For example, some "... used to listen to the Word of Allah, then used to change it (tahrif), after they had understood it, knowingly."¹⁵

FACT

There is no evidence of any Muslim apologist alleging that either the text of the Injil or the Torah had been tampered with, until well over five hundred years after Mohammed's death.¹⁶

BEFORE MOHAMMED ?

Some claim that the Injil and the Torah were corrupted before the prophet of Islam came. If that were so, why does the Qur'an assert that the message revealed to Mohammed was confirmation of the previous Scriptures?¹²

According to the Qur'an, written more than five hundred years later, the Torah and the Injil were still flawless even in Mohammed's time. Evidently from the Qur'an's instruction to judge "*by what God had revealed*" in the Gospel⁹ Mohammed was totally satisfied with its genuineness and reliability.

OR AFTER MOHAMMED ?

Others claim that the Torah and the Injil were changed sometime after Mohammed began preaching. Thus they contradict the Qur'an's claim to be the guardian of earlier inspired books¹² and inevitably, accuse the Qur'an of having failed in its role as GUARDIAN!

THE DICHOTOMY

If the pre-Islamic Scriptures had been corrupted, why does the Qur'an order Muslims to believe them? For it bids them to:-

"Say (O Muslims): `We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac and Jacob, and the tribes and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered."¹⁷

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Numerous manuscript copies of all parts of the Bible written centuries before the time of Mohammed are available today. For example, The Dead Sea Scrolls, which were written before 68 A.D. contain significant portions of every book of the Old Testament except Esther.¹⁸

In the British Museum in London there are Greek manuscripts which date from the 4th century A.D..

Many great libraries possess manuscript portions of the New Testament dating back to the 2nd century and some small papyrus fragments to the 1st century, even from when the writers were still alive.

These documents help to verify the reliability of the Bible as we have it today. They also confirm that the Bible current in Mohammed's time did not differ in any item of doctrine which Muslims question.

God, who preserved his Word in the past, is able to preserve it in the future.

THE BIBLE IS CHANGED: REALLY?

If the Bible and the Qur'an do disagree, they cannot both be right. Has, then, the Qur'an made a mistake in vindicating the Bible? No! For reference has been made to the historical documents which confirm the Bible.

We urge Muslims to follow the Qur'an's clear advice to Mohammed and his followers:- "*If thou art in doubt concerning that We reveal unto thee, then question those who read Scripture (that was) before thee...*"¹⁹

WHY?

Because it is truly, "... a guidance to all mankind."²⁰

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REFERENCES:

- 1 Qur'an 3:3
- 2 Qur'an 2:101, 3:23, 5:44
- 3 Qur'an 40:53-54
- 4 Qur'an 5:44
- 5 Qur'an 2:53, 21:48
- 6 Qur'an 2:87
- 7 Qur'an 5:46
- 8 Qur'an 28:43, cf.3:3-4, 6:92
- 9 Qur'an 5:47
- 10 Qur'an 48:23
- 11 Qur'an 10:64, 6:34
- 12 Qur'an 5:48
- 13 Qazi Nasiruddin Abusaeed Abdullah bin Umar al-Baidhawi (1300 A.D.) wrote a well known commentary on the Qur'an, originally it was called "A nwar-al-tunzeel" but now it is known as "Tafsir-e-Baidhawi."
- 14 Qur'an 4:46, cf. 3:78. Imam Fakr al Din Al Razi (d. 1228) believed that the "tahreef" - alteration referred to in the Qur'an was in meaning, not in text. He wrote a voluminous commentary on the Qur'an which is properly known by many Muslims as "The Great Tafsir."
- 15 Qur'an 2:75. In his book "Alfouz al kabeer fi Osulal tafsir" Shah Waliullah states that in the Qur'an "tahrif" refers to the Jews misquoting or mistranslating the Torah and he asserts that the original was not and cannot be altered it being the word of God.
- 16 Colin Chapman, "You go and do the same", p. 53; (London:CMS 1983).
- 17 Qur'an 2:136
- 18 F.F.Bruce, "Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls." (London:The Paternoster Press, 1956), p.31.
- 19 Qur'an 10:94
- 20 Qur'an 3:4

NOTE: Qur'anic quotations are taken from The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an, trans. Mohammad Marmaduke Pickthall (Karachi:Taj Company).

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