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# THE CONCEPT OF THE INJIL IN ISLAMIC TRADITION

A DESCRIPTIVE AND ANALYTICAL STUDY

A PARTIAL REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF M. PHIL ISLAMIC STUDIES  
DEGREE

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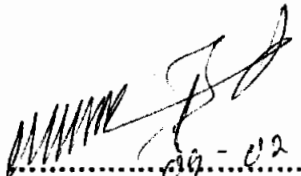
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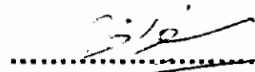
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## ABSTRACT

This research work comprises an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction discusses the history of Christianity among the Arabs before the advent of Islam. It shows that Christianity penetrated into Arabia by the missionary efforts at the first place. It is noted that the Byzantine Empire and the Church used to assist these missionaries for political and economic purposes, despite the ecclesiastical disputations with them. The acceptance of Christianity by the royal families of Byzantium, Abyssinia, and Banū Ghassān might have impact to some extent on the attitudes of Arabs towards Christianity. Trade and Christian slaves also played a role in the spread of Christianity among the Arabs.

The Syrian Arabs were mostly Monophysite, also called Jacobites; on the other hand, most of the Mesopotamian Arabs adhered to the Nestorian Church, although the existence of Monophysitism cannot be denied there. Since Christianity was introduced to south Arabia from Monophysite Abyssinia and Nestorian Ḥirah, both kinds of Christianity coexisted there, although, with an upper hand of Monophysitism. Besides these major ecclesiastical trends some other Christian denominations also existed in Arabia in the course of history, but the sources provide too meager information about them to assess their influence among the Arabs.

In the first chapter, I discussed the Qur'ānic concept of the *kitāb*, the three-fold typology of the Injil-related verses, characteristics of the Injil as mentioned in the Qur'ān, and the Question of Corruption of the previous scriptures.

The Qur'ān describes the Injil as a *kitāb*. The term *kitāb* has been used in the Qur'ān to refer to several meanings. Nevertheless, in spite of the diversity of its usages, the meaning can easily be identified by the help of context and the occasions of the revelation. One of its important meanings is the previously revealed scriptures especially the Tawrah and the Injil. However, the specific usage of the *kitāb* for the Injil is considerably less than that of it for the Tawrah or the Qur'ān.

The Qur'ān characterizes the Injil as guidance, light, confirmation of the Tawrah that had come before it, admonition to those who fear Allah and a revelation to the Prophet 'Īsā (pbuh). But it neither describes what kind of Injil or Anājil existed during the life of the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) in the beginning of the seventh century AD in Arabian Peninsula

nor does it tell about its language.

Many Qur'ānic verses indicate that the People of the Book especially the Jews of Madīnah have been tampering with their scriptures. Majority of such actions may be interpreted as referring to the distortion of meaning; rather than of the text, even the taḥrīf-based verses seem to refer to the distortions committed by the Jews during the conversations and in the commandments of the Tawrāh rather than in its text. Perhaps the only clear reference to the textual falsification is in 2:79.

It should be noted, however, that the context or the occasions of the revelation of all the tampering verses clearly indicate that these verses speak about the corruption of the Jews — regardless of corruption of text or meaning — not that of the Christians. Perhaps the only exceptions in this regard are 5:13-14 which accuse the Christians along with the Jews of having forgotten the part of that whereof they were admonished. But forgetting itself is not crystal clear in referring to the textual distortion, for it can be interpreted either as forgetting or as abandoning a part of that whereof they were admonished.

It would be argued that the Tawrāh and the Injīl should separately be treated in regard to the distortion. It is evident by many verses and prophetic traditions that the Tawrāh had been possessed in its original language by the Jews of the Madīnah during the life of the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) regardless of its being textually intact or not. Moreover, the Qur'ān and the Jews were principally agreed on that the Tawrāh was revealed to the Prophet Mūsā (pbuh). Consequently, it is quite reasonable to hold that the Qur'ān, while addressing the Jews of Madīnah, definitely refers to the Tawrāh possessed by them.

In contrast to this, not a single substantial evidence is found to support that the Qur'ānic Injīl was preserved in its original language in Arabia during the life of the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh); rather historical evidences have proved that the Christian canonical scriptures or their Arabic fragments were available to the Syrian-Arab Christians in that time. In addition, the Islamic and the Trinitarian Christian concepts of revelation are quite different. So it seems to be paradoxical to hold that the Qur'ān characterizes the Injīl as a book revealed to the Prophet 'Īsā (pbuh) on one hand, and refers to the Christian scriptures of its era as the same Injīl, on the other hand.

In the second chapter, I discussed the Injil of Warqah b. Nawfal, prophecies about the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh), the question of corruption of the previous scriptures, and how and when the Injil was revealed. It may be noted that although, the ḥadīth literature contains a number of useful references to the Injil which was revealed to the Prophet ʿĪsā (pbuh), some aspects are still in darkness. References to the Injil possessed by Waraqah b. Nawfal are found, but information in this regard is both meager and confusing. Even the knowledge about the personality of Waraqah is obscure.

Those ḥadīth traditions, which explain how and when the Injil was revealed and inform about the number of previous revealed scriptures help to conceptualize the nature of the Injil's revelation. However, it should be noted that comparatively less authentication and consistency characterize such traditions. It appears that the ḥadīth literature's perception of the Injil is an expansion of that of the Qur'ān. It may imply that the original Injil has been considered, in the ḥadīth literature, as the verbal word of God and not as the historical or biographical account compiled by someone else after the Prophet ʿĪsā (pbuh).

Ḥadīth literature points out the start of the corruption of the Injil and other Christian scriptures and connects it with the conspiracies of the ruling class. Although, the prophetic traditions mostly level the charge of corruption against the People of the Book in Jewish context, that is quite natural, in some cases, it does include the Christian scriptures as well.

The third chapter begins with the discussion about the etymology of the word Injil. It has been noticed that only the Qur'ānic commentators and Arab Linguists generally discussed the etymological aspect of the word Injil and that the scholars of other disciplines almost completely ignored this aspect. This difference of approach might have been caused by the nature of different Islamic disciplines. It may be argued that since the discipline of the exegesis is more analytical and explanatory in nature than those of the theology and history, for example, it relatively focuses on the etymological aspect more than they do. A number of scholars especially earlier ones generally seek the origin of the word Injil in the Arabic root. Regardless of the importance of this approach, it does explain how they see the Injil.

Whether the Injil contained the commandments or not has been discussed in the second section. The views of scholars significantly differ in this regard. It seems that both sides

have some support from the texts of both Qur'ān and Gospels. However, a more striking fact is that the Injil has epitomized a spiritual and ascetic scripture in Sufis' exegeses as opposed to the Tawrah, which has been thought to be a book of external sciences. This specific approach towards the Injil might have been developed under the influence of the ascetic personality of the Prophet 'Īsā (pbuh) as perceived in the writings of Sufi Masters and in Islamic ascetic literature.

It is evident that almost all of Muslim scholars are inclined to hold that those Qur'ānic verses which enjoin and demand the People of the Book, especially the Christians to act according to their scriptures neither imply that their existing scriptures are free of corruption nor do that they enjoy an independent scriptural authority after the advent of Islam. In fact they mostly interpret these verses to indicate that the People of the Book must avoid corrupting their scriptures and act according to the true spirit of their commandments which would ultimately lead them to the embracement of Islam, for these scriptures do contain the testimonies of the prophethood of the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh).

It seems that since the Qur'ān explicitly declares that the prophecies about the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) were found in the previous scriptures, Muslims from the outset sought to find such material to interpret the relevant verses. Discussion about the testimonies of the prophethood of the Prophet (pbuh) has been a hallmark of the Islamic apologetic and polemical literature from the early times to the modern ones. However, it is evident that Muslims did not have an easy access to the canonical scriptures or their Arabic translations in the earliest times. Therefore, in the earliest Muslim writings one does not find accurate quotations from the canonical literature of the Jews and the Christians. It seems that some early Muslims might have used the term Injil and likewise the Tawrah in a loose sense not referring to specific verses, but rather collecting the information they needed, with the help of people who knew these texts and quoted or read, translated, and explained them to the Muslims.

However, as a matter of fact, when Muslims conquered Christian territories they had to face a new situation. They became the rulers of lands whose majority was Christian. This situation might gradually have enabled or even compelled some Muslims to consult the



scriptures of the People of the Book, although mostly with the help of some informant, and find the material of their interest therein. Since that time, Muslims began to quote more exact passages from the canonical scriptures of the People of the Book. Moreover, it seems that this phenomenon also provided them with an opportunity to assess the texts of these scriptures and consequently caused a variety of opinions in this regard.

It is interesting to note, however, that many Qur'ānic commentators like al-Ṭabarī, al-Rāzī, and al-Qurṭubī etc. do not explicitly accuse the previous scriptures of textual corruption; rather their writings might imply that they are inclined to hold the view of the exegetical distortion only. Perhaps this is partially because of the inexplicit position of the Qur'ān in this regard and partially due to the nature of their discipline. On the other hand, the theologians more overwhelmingly accuse the People of the Book of the textual corruption of their scriptures, even if some of them take their text on its face value they mostly do so only for the sake of argument. Therefore, they should not be considered representatives of the second approach. It seems that the method of Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī and Muḥammad al-Ghazālī etc. should be viewed in this context as well.

It may be noted that Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and Raḥmat Allāh Kairānavī are among the earliest Muslim scholars who extensively made use of the results of western biblical scholarship in their biblical works. However, surprisingly their approaches are significantly different. Whereas the former adopts an apologetic and defensive approach, the latter prefers a polemical and offensive one. Similarly, they have reached quite opposite results, for the former denies the existence of the corruption of the Christian scriptures in the sense of addition, deletion, and alteration of text and the latter is overwhelmingly interested in demonstrating the existence of the same kinds of corruption.

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## RESEARCH PROPOSAL

## IMPORTANCE OF THE TOPIC

The Qur'ān discusses various important topics; one of these is the previous revelations, particularly the Injil. The Injil—mentioned twelve times in the Qur'ān— was a revelation revealed to the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him). It was the sacred book of the Christians of the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), regardless of whether it had been distorted or not. Many characteristics of the Injil have been mentioned in the Qur'ān. Some verses of the Qur'ān, according to some Muslim scholars viz. Ibn Taymiyyah might indicate that its some intact manuscripts were preserved by the Christians up to the advent of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him).

In fact, there seems to be a difference of opinion among Muslim scholars in this regard. Muslim scholarship has been very diverse in its approaches, because of its different historical, social, and geographical backgrounds. There have been many disciplines in Muslim scholarship; the most prominent, in the present context, being Exegesis, Theology, and History. Muslim scholars freely thought about and discussed the issues pertaining to other religions especially Christianity. The interaction between Muslims and Christians started very early in Islamic history and increased tremendously with the passage of time. The present research work aims to study principally the perceptions of the Injil in the Muslim tradition.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

This research work is intended to answer some questions usually raised in the minds of researchers about the Injil mentioned in the Qur'ān. Some of these questions are being mentioned below,

It is an established fact that the four Gospels had been canonized by the Christians long before Islam's advent. On the other hand, the Qur'ān mentions the Injil as a single book. This seems a paradoxical behavior. Was this issue raised in the early history of Islam? What did Muslim scholars do to resolve this paradox? What exactly does Muslim scholarship mean when it refers to or speaks about the Qur'anic term the Injil? Is there only one interpretation

of the Injil in Muslim scholarship or there exists a diversity of opinions in this regard? If there are differences, what are their bases?

About dealing with the issues of Christianity, two approaches may be identified: the mainstream adopted a polemical approach. The writings of al-Jāhiz, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyyah etc represent this approach. Others, instead of refuting other religions' doctrines concentrated on explaining the Islamic point of view. The Qur'ānic commentators, in general, have adopted this approach while interpreting the relevant Qur'ānic verses. What are the similarities and differences between the results of the two approaches? How did these approaches contribute to creating a specific concept of the Injil?

In the light of above-mentioned, it seems that it would be immense significant to investigate the Muslim perceptions of Injil and their development throughout history.

## THE OBJECTIVES OF THE WORK

The research work aims to achieve the following objectives,

1. This work would try to sketch out the concept of the Injil of the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) as mentioned in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.
2. I would collect, study, analyze, and compare the perceptions of Muslim scholars from different disciplines, in different parts of the world in different ages about the Injil.
3. This would help to identify the dominant trends in Muslim scholarship and their development about the Injil from the very early age to the present period.

## BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEMS TO BE ADDRESSED

The topic selected for the research is new one and there are very few scholarly works, which have dealt with the subject. Some related works are listed below,

The first significant book on the topic is that of the British Muslim scholar Ruqayyah Waris Maqsood, titled *A Muslim Study of the Origins of the Christian Church*, in which she has

discussed several issues regarding the origin and early history of the Christian Church. Although she has provided some significant information and has raised new questions about the origin of the Injil and the New Testament, she could not discuss this issue in sufficient detail because it was only a part of her larger subject. In her work, she has mostly depended on the theories of Kamal Salibi, and could not conduct a sufficient research by consulting the original Islamic sources. It is, however, worth noting that she introduced new ideas and opened new vistas for further research.

The second important book on the topic is *Who was Jesus: Conspiracy in Jerusalem*, which was written by Kamal Salibi, a Lebanese Christian historian. He has used his detailed knowledge of the geography of Arabia and his study of Biblical texts to put forward some very interesting theories. His research work suggests that the Bible narratives actually refer to people and places belonging to the west coast of the Arabian Peninsula. He also suggests that the Prophet 'Īsā of the Qur'ān is someone other than Jesus of the New Testament. According to him, 'Īsā of the Qur'ān had lived in Arabia four or five centuries before the Jesus of the New Testament. The Gospel of this monotheist prophet had been preserved till the seventh century, the time of the Prophet Muhammad. He also holds that the story of 'Īsā as described by the Qur'ān would not have been so different from that of in this Injil. Nevertheless, Salibi mostly argues for his theories on the basis of linguistic evidences. Therefore, there is a need to assess his theories through other sources as well. Salibi also wrote another book related to the topic namely *Secrets of the Bible People*.

Geoffrey Parrinder wrote *Jesus in the Qur'ān* and dedicated a short chapter to the Gospel (*Injil*). In the beginning of the chapter, he discusses the origin of the word Injil and then goes on to the issue of the corruption of the previous sacred books, especially the Injil. He mentions that some Muslim scholars declared that Christians had actually altered the text of the Injil, but some others said that they had interpreted the words of the Injil incorrectly. He prefers the latter viewpoint. He admits that to explain the relationship between the Injil of 'Īsā (peace be on him) and the record of his words in the four Gospels, is a difficult task.

He has quoted the opinions of the Muslim scholar Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Christian scholar W. C. Smith in this regard. He mentions that according to Yusuf Ali, the Injil mentioned in the Qur'ān is not the New Testament. It is not the four Gospels now received as canonical. It is the single Gospel which, Islam teaches, was revealed to Jesus, and which he taught. Fragments of it survived in the received canonical Gospels and in some others of which traces survive such as infancy Gospels and the Gospel of Barnabas. On the other hand, Parrinder mentions that according to W. C. Smith the identification of the Gospels with the Injil cannot but be regarded as an error by Christians and by historians of religion. In Smith's view, the parallel between the New Testament, and especially the four Gospels, and Ḥadīth, is seen to be quite close as soon as one thinks about it. Parrinder himself, however, believes that the four Gospels were more than the Injil. They included it and went beyond it. The Christian Gospels revealed not only the words of Jesus but also his activity.

Briefly, in the light of the above mentioned, it seems to the present researcher that there is sufficient justification for the proposed research work.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The research would be conducted in a limited area. I would try to focus on a survey of the Muslim interpretations of the Qur'ānic term Injil, studying the thoughts of the selected prominent Muslim scholars, to get a clear Muslim perception of the Qur'ānic term Injil. Throughout this discourse; I plan to analyze the available material carefully and critically. Thus, this study would be both descriptive and analytical.

## OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

The research work would consist of the following chapters and sub-headings,

## Proposal

### Introduction

#### An Overview of Christianity in Pre-Islamic Arabia

#### Chapter One: The Concept of the Injil in the Qur'ān

- 1.1 The Concept of the kitāb in the Qur'ān
- 1.2 Three-fold Typology of the Injil-related Verses
- 1.3 Characteristics of the Injil as mentioned in the Qur'ān
- 1.4 Question of Corruption
- 1.5 A Critical Appraisal

#### Chapter Two: The Concept of the Injil in Ḥadīth Literature

- 2.1 The Injil of Warqah b. Nawfal
- 2.2 How and when was the Injil revealed?
- 2.3 Prophecies about the Advent of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him)
- 2.4 Question of Corruption
- 2.5 A Critical Appraisal

#### Chapter Three: The Concept of the Injil in Muslim Scholarship

- 3.1 Etymological discussions about the word Injil
- 3.2 Commandments of the Injil and their Nature
- 3.3 Confirmation of the Injil for the Tawrāh
- 3.4 Judgment by the Injil for Christians
- 3.5 Observance of the Tawrāh and the Injil by the People of the Book
- 3.6 How and when was the Injil Revealed?
- 3.7 Prophecies about the Advent of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him)
- 3.8 Question of the Corruption
- 3.9 A Critical Appraisal

### Conclusions

### Bibliography



## INTRODUCTION

## AN OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIANITY IN PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIAN PENINSULA

### Geography of Arabia:

The Arabian Peninsula is the largest Peninsula of the world. Arabs call it *Jazīrat al-‘Arab* (the Island of the Arabs) metaphorically.<sup>1</sup> It has the shape of a rough quadrilateral with a length of c. 2200 km. from north-west to south-east and a breadth of c. 1200 km. On the west, south, and east it is clearly defined by the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Oman, and the Persian Gulf.<sup>2</sup> It has been reported from al-Aṣma‘ī (d. 216 AD) that *Jazīrat al-‘Arab* stretched from the farthest part of ‘Adan Abyan<sup>3</sup> to the fertile lands (*aryāf*) of Iraq in length as well as from Juddah<sup>4</sup> and its neighbouring seashores to the boundaries of Syria in breadth.<sup>5</sup> According to the Arab scholars, an imaginary line drawn out from the Gulf of ‘Aqabah to the mouth of Shaṭṭ al-‘Arab in the Arabian Gulf<sup>6</sup> is its Northern boarder and the northern Nefud separates it from the Fertile Crescent.<sup>7</sup>

However, the Arabs have been living on the either side of this imaginary line since

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<sup>1</sup> Jawād ‘Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal-fī Ta’rīkh al-‘Arab qabl al-Islām*, henceforth *al-Mufaṣṣal* (Baghdad: Dār al-‘Ilm li ‘l-Malāyīn, 1976), 1:140.

<sup>2</sup> G. Rentz, “Djazīrat al-‘Arab”, eds. B. Lewis et al., *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, henceforth *EI* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 1:534.

<sup>3</sup> Abyan is a district (*mikhlāf*) of ‘Adan, the famous city of Yemen on the shore of Indian Ocean. Perhaps, it is called ‘Adan Abyan to differentiate it from ‘Adan Lā‘ah, a district of Ṣan‘ā’. See, Yāqūt b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī & Mu‘assasat al-Ta’rīkh al-‘Arabī, 1997), 3:302.

<sup>4</sup> It is situated on the bank of Baḥr al-Yaman (Red Sea) and is a seaport of Makkah. Its distance from Makkah is of the Journey of three nights. See, Yāqūt b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, 2:39.

<sup>5</sup> Abd Allāh b. Muslim b. Qutaybah, *al-Ma‘ārif*, ed., Tharwat ‘Ukāshah (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Dār al-Kutub, 1960), 566. However, in the narration of Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī from al-Aṣma‘ī “boundaries of Syria” has been replaced with “al-Ubullah”, a city situated on the bank of Dajlat al-Baṣrat al-Kubrā in the corner of the gulf which enters the city of al-Baṣrah. See, Yāqūt b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, 2:56, 1:72. Al-Ḥamawī’s reported definition seems to be more precise.

<sup>6</sup> Arab writers commonly name it al-Khalij al-‘Arabī (Arabian Gulf). However, internationally recognized name is Persian Gulf. See, [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org), “Persian Gulf”, dated: March 26, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Jawād ‘Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal*, 1:143.

hundreds of years B.C. They settled down in Iraq between the west bank of the Euphrates and the borders of Syria as well as in Palestine and Sinai to the eastern shores of Nile. The ancient Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Syrian writers include all these lands within the abodes of Arabs and name them Arab Country (*Bilād al-'Arab*).<sup>1</sup> The territory of the Arabs includes the wastes of the Syrian Desert and the agricultural zones of Transjordan<sup>2</sup>. It includes the mountains of the Ḥijāz and the inland corridors of the Peninsula. Although the heartland of the Arab nations was what is known today as Saudi Arabia, the Romans gave the name Arabia to a province of their empire, which lay south, and east of Palestine, in the corner of the Mediterranean world between Syria and Egypt. It includes the present Negev, southern Syria, all of Jordan, and northwest Saudi Arabia.<sup>3</sup>

#### Religious Environment of Pre-Islamic Arabia:

Arabs held different beliefs and embraced various religions in the Jāhiliyyah period. Among them were Monotheists who believed in Allah alone. Many of them worshipped idols along with believing in Allah. Some embraced Judaism, Christianity, or Zoroastrianism. There were atheists who believed in nothing while some denied the Hereafter.<sup>4</sup> Some Arabs were Sabians. Others believed in Anwā'<sup>5</sup>. There were also worshippers of angels and demons among them.<sup>6</sup> Briefly, the Arabs of pre-Islamic era were not isolated from the rest of the world. They had a

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Transjordan was geographically equivalent to 1942-1965 Kingdom of Jordan (slightly different from today's borders). See, [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org), "Transjordan", dated: March 26, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (London: Harvard University Press, 1983), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Jawād 'Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal*, 6:34; cf., J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, henceforth *Christianity among the Arabs* (London: Longman Librarie du Liban, 1979), 243-48.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Anwā' is plural of al-naw'. Al-Naw' means the star that is about to set. The Arabs of Jāhiliyyah period believed that al-anwā' were 28 stars. Every thirteen nights one of them sets in the west at the break of dawn and at the same time another star rises from the east except for one namely al-Jabhah, which remains fourteen nights, and on the completion of this circle the year comes to an end as well. The Arabs of Jāhiliyyah period used to attribute the causes of climate changes, e.g., rains and winds etc. to these stars. See, Muḥammad b. Mukram b. Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* (Qum: Nashr Adab al-Ḥawzah, 1405 AH), 1:175-76.

<sup>6</sup> Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal* (Beirut: Dār al-M'arifah, 1995), 2:586.

pluralistic rather than a monolithic religious environment, which indicates the influence of surrounding religious communities upon them and *vice versa*.

### Christianity among the Pre-Islamic Arabs

Arabs never used the term *Masīhī* or *Masīhiyyah* in classical period; rather they used *Naṣrānī* or *Naṣrāniyyah* instead, mostly associating it with the city called *Nāṣirah*. The term *al-Naṣrāniyyah* flourished among the Arab tribes and their branches before the advent of Islam. Many Arabic verses contain it as well as the poetry of several Arab poets from Yemen, Ḥijāz, Iraq, and Syria etc refers to it.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to define the exact period when Christianity found its way into the Arabian Peninsula. It spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula by many ways such as missionary efforts, trade routes, and the trade of slaves especially of white ones who used to be imported from the civilized areas of the world.<sup>2</sup>

Church historians claim that the Christian missionaries did their best to propagate their religion among the Arabs. They did not care for the hardships and sufferings they faced in this regard. Rather they reached the remote areas of the Arabian Peninsula and lived with the Bedouin. Some of them even adopted the Bedouin's life style and dwelled in the tents with them. They were known as *Asāqifat al-khiyam* and *Asāqifat ahl al-wabr*.<sup>3</sup> Since they were knowledgeable, educated in Medicine and Logic and had effective convincing skills they succeeded in converting some tribal chiefs to Christianity and in getting their support for their cause. It is reported that some tribal chiefs got medical treatment from Christian priests and when they recovered from the diseases through their cure, they subsequently accepted Christian faith.<sup>4</sup> Church historians mention that Christian priests healed the barren women by their prayers and miracles so they bore children as well as some priests pleaded with God

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<sup>1</sup> Ḥusayn al-ʿUḍāt, *al-ʿArab al-Naṣārā: ʿArḍ Taʾrikhī*, henceforth *al-ʿArab al-Naṣārā* (Damascus: al-Ahālī li ʿl-Ṭibāʿah wa ʿl-Naṣr wa ʿl-Tawzīʿ, 1992), 26.

<sup>2</sup> Jawād ʿAlī, *al-Mufaṣṣal*, 6:586-87.

<sup>3</sup> Louis Cheikho, *al-Naṣrāniyyah wa ʿĀdābuhā bayn ʿArab al-Jāhiliyyah*, henceforth *al-Naṣrāniyyah* (Beirut: Maṭbaʿat al-Ābāʾ al-Mursalin al-Yasūʿiyyin, 1912), 1:37.

<sup>4</sup> Jawād ʿAlī, *al-Mufaṣṣal*, 6:587.

to give them a male child, so He accepted their prayers. For example, ʿDaj'am the chief of al-ʿDajā'imah<sup>1</sup> tribe was bestowed with a male child due to the prayer of a priest and consequently converted to Christianity along with his tribe.<sup>2</sup>

Some Arabs became Christians because of their interaction with the Christian merchants. It is related that some Christian merchants brought oil to Madinah from Syria. When they had sold it and wanted to return, two sons of an Anṣārī called Abū 'l-Ḥuṣayn came to them. They persuaded them to accept Christianity, so they accepted it and accompanied them to Syria.<sup>3</sup>

Christianity was also introduced to the Arabs through the male and female slaves imported to Arabia from different international markets especially from the Byzantine and Persian empires. Many Roman concubines bore those who were considered the pure Arabs. Most of such concubines were Christians. There were many Christian slaves in Makkah, Ṭā'if, Yathrib, and other parts of the Arabian Peninsula. They read, wrote, and interpreted what the Tawrah and the Injil contained. They told people Christian tales and explained the Christian religion to them. Some of them succeeded to convert some Arabs.<sup>4</sup> In Makkah, one of them was Jabr the slave of 'Āmir b. al-Ḥaḍramī. He was a Christian and could read the Tawrah and the Injil in his native language. Other Christian slaves include 'Ā'ish the slave of Ḥuwaytib b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā, 'Addās the slave of al-'Alā' b. al-Ḥaḍramī, Naṣṭās the slave of Ṣafwān b. Umayyah, Mīnā, and Ṣuhayb al-Rūmī. Many Christian slaves lived in Ṭā'if. One of them was 'Addās, the slave of 'Utbah and Shaybah the sons of Rabī'ah. Another name is of al-Azraq the

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<sup>1</sup> It is a branch of Salīh, the section of the famous Yemenite tribe Quḍā'ah. It migrated from Yemen around 230 AD and settled in Ḥawrān. They were the first Arabs who dwelled in Syria and created confederation with Romans and then Byzantines. See, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad Sālīm, *al-Muslimūn wa 'l-Rūm: Dirāsah fī Judhūr al-Ṣirā' wa Taṭawwurihī bayn al-Muslimīn wa 'l-Bayzanṭiyyīn ḥattā Wafāt al-Rasūl Ṣallā Allāh 'alayh wa Sallam*, henceforth *al-Muslimūn wa 'l-Rūm* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1418/1997), 35-36.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Cheikho, *al-Naṣṭāniyyah*, 1:35.

<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āyy al-Qur'ān*, henceforth *Jāmi' al-Bayān* (ed), Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir (n.p.: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n. d.), 5:410.

<sup>4</sup> Jawād 'Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal*, 6:588-89.

Roman the blacksmith.<sup>1</sup>

Hermitages also played an important role in introducing Christianity to the Arab merchants and the Bedouin. The Arab traders found in most of these hermitages room for rest, stores of water, and places for enjoinment during their tiresome journeys. While staying in these hermitages, they saw the priests and hermits performing their rituals. In this way, they learnt somewhat about their religion and rituals.<sup>2</sup>

These hermitages were the centres of Christian preaching and propagation. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 626 AH) mentions dozens of hermitages, found throughout the Arab territories.<sup>3</sup> They were numerous in Iraq and Syria. One also finds traces of their existence in Ḥijāz, Najd, and southern and eastern Arabian Peninsula. They received assistance from the Iraqi, Syrian, and Roman churches and could propagate Christianity among most of the Arab tribes. It might be rightly said that had Islam not come the picture of Arabia would have been different from that of today.<sup>4</sup>

Christianity penetrated into many Arab tribes before the advent of Islam, even some Christian scholars give a list of forty-six Arab tribes who partially or wholly accepted Christianity.<sup>5</sup> Muslim scholars, too, explicitly mention many Arab tribes whose members, whether in small or large number, were Christian. Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276 AH) mentions, "Christianity was found among Rabī'ah, Ghassān, and some of Quḍā'ah."<sup>6</sup>

Al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284 AH) more explicitly reports,

Among the Arab tribes who accepted Christianity were some members of Banū Asad b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā of Quraysh viz. 'Uthmān b. al-Ḥuwayrith b. Asad b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā and Waraqah b. Nawfal b. Asad. Of Banū Tamīm Banū Imra'i 'l-Qays b. Zayd Manāt converted to Christianity as well as Banū Taghlib of Rabī'ah, too, were Christians. Among the tribes of Yemen Ṭayy',

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 6:603-07.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 6:589.

<sup>3</sup> Yāqūt b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 2:331-69.

<sup>4</sup> Jawād 'Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal*, 6:589-90.

<sup>5</sup> Louis Cheikho, *al-Naṣrāniyyah*, 1:124-41.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Ma'ārif*, 621.

Midhḥaj, Bahrā', Salih, Tanūkh, Ghassān, and Lakhm were Christians.<sup>1</sup>

According to 'Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 AH), Christianity prevailed among Arab kings and tribes except for Muḍar. It prevailed among the tribes *i.e.* Lakhm, Ghassān, Ḥārith b. Ka'b, Quḍā'ah, Ṭayy', Rabī'ah, Taghlib, 'Abd al-Qays and some branches of Bakr especially in Āl Dhī 'l-Jadayn.<sup>2</sup>

#### Ecclesiastical Division of Pre-Islamic Christian Arabs:

Christianity penetrated Arabia from different directions, principally from three centres, viz. Syria in the north-west, Mesopotamia in the north-east, and Abyssinia in the west by the way of Yemen, which was for a time subject to an Abyssinian dynasty.<sup>3</sup>

The most defined divisions of the Syrian Christians during the fifth century AD were the Melkite<sup>4</sup> (Chalcedonian), the West Syrian (Monophysite)<sup>5</sup>, and the East Syrian (Nestorian)<sup>6</sup>. In consequence of these divisions, those northern Arab Christians, nomadic and settled alike, who fell within the spheres of Byzantium and Persia also became distinguished

<sup>1</sup> Aḥmad b. Abī Ya'qūb al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh al-Ya'qūbī* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādr & Dār Bayrūt, 1960), 1:257.

<sup>2</sup> Abū 'Uthmān 'Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Mukhtār fī 'l-Radd 'alā 'l-Naṣārā*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh al-Sharqāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Jil; Cairo: Maktabat al-Zahrā', 1411/1991), 61.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*, henceforth *The Origin of Islam* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1968), 17.

<sup>4</sup> The term is used of those Christians of Syria and Egypt who, refusing Monophysitism and accepting the Definition of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), remained in communion with the Imperial see of Constantinople as 'Emperor's men'. The Council of Chalcedon (451 CE) affirmed the existence of One Person in Two Natures, which were united unconfusedly (*sic*), unchangeably, indivisibly, and inseparably. See, F. L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 259, 883.

<sup>5</sup> They held the doctrine that in the Person of the Incarnate Christ there was but a single, and that a Divine Nature, as against the Orthodox teaching of double Nature, Divine and Human, after the Incarnation. They came into being as a distinct body immediately after the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), which formally defined the Dyophysite doctrine. See, F. L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 916.

<sup>6</sup> They held the doctrine that there were two separate Persons in the Incarnate Christ, the One Divine and the other Human, as opposed to the orthodox doctrine that the Incarnate Christ was a single Person, at once God and man. They were characterized by the rejection of the term Theotokos (God-bearer). See, F. L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 946.

ecclesiastically as Monophysites or Nestorians.<sup>1</sup> However, besides these major ecclesiastical trends some other Christian denominations, excommunicated by the Trinitarian Church, also entered the Arabia to take refuge from persecution such as Ebionites<sup>2</sup>, Nazarenes<sup>3</sup>, and Elkesaites<sup>4</sup>.<sup>5</sup> Little is known about them. However, what meager information Church historians provide about them shows that they may have been closer to Islam than Trinitarian Church.

#### Christianity in West Syria:

The Syriac and Arabic-speaking monks and Christians of provinces of Arabia, Phoenicia, and Palestine were strongly inclined towards adherence to the Monophysite formula, the remaining establishment bishops adhered to the imperial line.<sup>6</sup> Also the state Church, that is Greek Church, had a hold in the peninsula of Sinai where numerous monasteries and hermitages were Greek, not Nestorian or Jacobite.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, the phylarchs, the rulers of Banū Ghassān did not offer support to the Monophysites at first, but later on, they fell into the Monophysite line.<sup>8</sup> It was one factor, among the others, which caused the friction in relations between Monophysite Ghassānides and Dyophysite Byzantines in latter times,

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<sup>1</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs*, 159.

<sup>2</sup> It was a Jewish Christian sect, which flourished in the early centuries of the Christian era especially on the east of the Jordan. Two of their principle tenets were (1) a 'reduced' doctrine of the Person of Christ, to the effect, e.g., that Jesus was the human son of Joseph and Mary, (2) over-emphasis on the binding character of the Mosaic Law. See, F. L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 433.

<sup>3</sup> 'Nazarenes' occurs as a name given by fourth century writers to groups of Christians of Jewish race in Syria, who continued to obey much of the Jewish Law though they were otherwise orthodox Christians. They used a version of the Gospel in Aramaic, known as the 'Gospel according to the Hebrews'. The sect existed from the earliest times Christianity. See, F. L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 941.

<sup>4</sup> It was a Jewish Christian sect, which arose c. A. D. 100 in the country east of Jordan. They took their name from their sacred writing, the 'Book of Elkesai'. They held beliefs similar to those of the Ebionites. See, F. L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 447.

<sup>5</sup> Jawād 'Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal*, 6:634-37.

<sup>6</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs*, 166.

<sup>7</sup> De Lacy O'Leary, *History of Arabia before Muhammad* (Lahore: Alliance Publishers, 1989), 142.

<sup>8</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs*, 166.



especially in the sixth century AD.<sup>1</sup>

Banū Ghassān enjoyed the authority over all the Arab tribes in Syria from Ruṣāfah to Yathrib as well as they had relations with the Arabs of Ḥijāz and Yemen.<sup>2</sup> When the Ghassānide ruler al-Ḥārith (r. 529-569 AD) requested the Empress Theodora to appoint a Monophysite bishop to minister to the Arab tribes throughout Byzantine territory, she arranged for Theodosius, the Alexandrine Monophysite patriarch to consecrate two monks. One called Jacob Baradaeus (d. 578 AD) was chosen to be bishop for the provinces of Mesopotamia and Syria; while the other, Theodore (d. c. 572 AD), who was an Arab, was to be bishop of the camp of Banū Ghassān, covering the provinces of Palestine and Arabia.<sup>3</sup>

Little is known about the ministry of Theodore. He is frequently called Bishop of Bostra, but he did not reside in that city, and moved around with the Jafnid family in their seasonal migrations. Jacob Baradaeus travelled widely, organizing churches, ordaining clergy, and consecrating bishops. Through his efforts, the Monophysite church in Syria and Mesopotamia became organized separately and provided with a hierarchy.<sup>4</sup> He left such a mark on this independent Monophysite Church that it took his name and is known as Jacobite.<sup>5</sup> Monophysitism flourished among Ghassānides, Syrian nomads, some Arab tribes, Upper Syrian Peninsula, and some parts of Yemen and Ḥijāz.<sup>6</sup>

#### Christianity in East Syria (Mesopotamia):

To the north-east of the Arabian Peninsula, in Mesopotamia, within the Persian Empire the Dyophysite views prevailed, and taking its name from the deposed patriarch of Constantinople, the Church became definitely Nestorian. By the end of the sixth century, it had extended and deepened its hold so that probably no town of any size remained which had

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<sup>1</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad Sālim, *al-Muslimūn wa 'l-Rūm*, 39.

<sup>2</sup> Ḥusayn al-'Uḏāt, *al-'Arab al-Naṣārā*, 37-38.

<sup>3</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs*, 166.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 167-68.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam*, 21.

<sup>6</sup> Ḥusayn al-'Uḏāt, *al-'Arab al-Naṣārā*, 31.

not its church and its bishop.<sup>1</sup> The Nestorians were recognized by the Persian king as the only Christians entitled to recognition; they alone were the owners of the churches, monasteries, and other church properties in his dominations.<sup>2</sup> Nestorianism flourished in southern Iraq, Ḥīrah, nomadic Syria, some parts of Syrian Peninsula, eastern Arabian Peninsula, and some Christians of Yemen and Ḥijāz.<sup>3</sup> However, through the efforts of Simeon, Monophysite Christianity was also introduced into the Persian controlled territory to some extent.<sup>4</sup>

Ḥīrah<sup>5</sup> was the seat of the Lakhmide dynasty, the tributary sovereigns of the Arabs friendly to the Persian Empire. The Christians of Ḥīrah were called 'Ibād.<sup>6</sup> This was a grouping of mixed tribal elements such as Banū 'Alqamah and Banū Ayyūb, united by allegiance to Christianity. Ḥīrah became a diffusion-point for the Nestorian form of Christianity from about the year 400 AD and its spread among the Arabs of Babylonia. A Nestorian bishop called Hosea was settled in Ḥīrah in 410 AD, when he attended the Synod of Mār Isaac.<sup>7</sup>

The Lakhmide rulers of Ḥīrah did not adopt Christianity. However, as late as the early part of the sixth century, Hind bint al-Ḥārith one of the wives of al-Mundhir, the Arab king of Ḥīrah, was a faithful Christian. It is said that her son 'Amr b. al-Mundhir (r. 554-569 AD) was a professed Christian, but his successors did not adopt Christianity and returned to polytheism, until the Muslims conquered this territory.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, some historians

<sup>1</sup> Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam*, 24-25.

<sup>2</sup> De Lacy O'Leary, *History of Arabia before Muhammad*, 134.

<sup>3</sup> Ḥusayn al-'Uḍāt, *al-'Arab al-Naṣārā*, 30-31.

<sup>4</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs*, 169.

<sup>5</sup> It was situated at a distance of three miles from Kūfah in the place nowadays called al-Najaf. See, Yāqūt b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 2:201.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam*, 26.

<sup>7</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs*, 156, 171.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam*, 26-27. Bell confuses Hind bint al-Ḥārith b. Ḥujr b. Ākil al-Murār al-Kindi with Hind bint al-Nu'mān b. al-Mundhir, and more confusingly, he describes her father as a ghassānide prince perhaps confusing al-Ḥārith b. Ḥujr al-Kindi with al-Ḥārith b. Jabalah al-Ghassānī. However, as a matter of fact,

hold that even 'Amr b. al-Mundhir did not accept Christianity.<sup>1</sup> However, whether Lakhmide rulers accepted Christianity or not, the penetration of Christianity in Lakhmide tribe has been attested in Muslim historical sources.<sup>2</sup>

Anyhow, Christianity made some progress amongst the Arab tribes in the north-east of the Arabian Peninsula. Certain tribes are known to have adopted Christianity, among them were Taghlib and certain branches of Bakr b. Wā'il.<sup>3</sup>

#### Christianity in Abyssinia:

Studies have shown that east Africa and Arabia, in historical terms, were regarded as one geographic region and that long before the rise of Islam, the Arab merchants and politicians have been in contact with Africa.<sup>4</sup> The state of Axum, established in the first century AD, gained control of south-west Arabia towards the end of the third century AD. Under 'Ezānā, its first Christian king (r. c. 320-42 AD), the Axumite state reached the peak of its power, but towards the end his reign or shortly afterwards, South Arabia regained its independence in the form of a unified Ḥimyar state, which survived until 525 AD, when the Axumites again invaded and conquered South Arabia.<sup>5</sup>

According to the Christian historians, the historical date of the Christianization of Ethiopia has been fixed approximately as 340 AD.<sup>6</sup> Christian traditions relate that Frumentius (d. c. 383 AD) was ordained bishop by Athanasius in Alexandria and was sent to Ethiopia to take charge of the Church. He was the bishop in Axme in 356 AD.<sup>7</sup> The important landmark

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the mother of 'Amr b. al-Mundhir was Hind bint al-Ḥārith al-Kindī and not Hind bint al-Nu'mān, though, both ladies were Christians. See, Yāqūt b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 2:367-68.

<sup>1</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs*, 196.

<sup>2</sup> Aḥmad b. Abī Ya'qūb al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh al-Ya'qūbī*, 1:257; 'Abū 'Uthmān 'Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiz, *al-Mukhtār fī 'l-Radd 'alā 'l-Naṣārā*, 61.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam*, 27.

<sup>4</sup> Mohammed b. Sillah, "Pre-Islamic Arabia and its Early Contacts with African World", *Hamdard Islamicus*, 32:2 (2009), 39, 41.

<sup>5</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs*, 287-88.

<sup>6</sup> Aziz S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity* (London: Methuen and Co Ltd, 1968), 152.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam*, 30-31. Trimingham dates it around 330 AD. See, *Christianity among the Arabs*,

in the propagation of both monasticism and Christianity was the advent of the Nine Saints about the year 480 AD.<sup>1</sup> These west Syrian Saints introduced their anti-Chalcedonian doctrinal outlook and Syrian liturgy, customs, monastic rules and discipline. Most important of all they translated the Gospels into Ethiopic.<sup>2</sup> From that period, the Church in Abyssinia was Monophysite.<sup>3</sup>

#### Christianity in South Arabia:

Eusebius (d. 339 AD) gives an account of Pantaenus (d. c. 200 AD), who undertook a missionary journey as far as India, where he found that he had been preceded by Bartholomew, one of the apostles, who had preached to them and had left behind Matthew's account in the actual Aramaic characters, and it was preserved till his mission.<sup>4</sup> India in this context signifies South Arabia, the gateway to India.<sup>5</sup>

Around 340 AD the Ḥimyarites expelled the Axumites, who had maintained a military presence in Yemen since the end of third century, and formed a unified state with its capital at Zafār. Constantinus II (r. 337-61 AD) sent an embassy in the leadership of Theophilus to propagate Christianity and to establish diplomatic relations with the new King Tha'rān and his son Malkī-Karib. It is said that the embassy turned out successfully; for the prince of the nation converted to Christianity. This mission also founded three churches there.<sup>6</sup>

The one centre in south-west Arabia where Christianity in its Monophysite form became established was Najrān. It is a point where two commercial currents from Yemen to the Mediterranean and Iraq diverge.<sup>7</sup>

Muslim Historians and *Ṣīrah* writers discuss the beginning of Christianity in Najrān.

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<sup>1</sup> Aziz S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity*, 152.

<sup>2</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs*, 289.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam*, 32.

<sup>4</sup> Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, trans. G. A. Williamson (London: Penguin Books, 1965), 213-14.

<sup>5</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs*, 291; Also see, De Lacy O'Leary, *History of Arabia before Muhammad*, 149.

<sup>6</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs*, 291-92.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

Al-Ṭabarī relates two traditions in this regard. One tradition that comes from Wahb b. Munabbih (d. c. 114 AH) states how a Syrian wandering ascetic, called Faymiyūn first time introduced Christianity to the idolatrous inhabitants of Najrān by demonstrating miracles. Another account, deriving from Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Quraḍī, attributes the initial conversion to a Najrānī called 'Abd Allāh b. al-Thāmir, converted to Christianity by the above mentioned Faymiyūn.<sup>1</sup> Ibn Qutaybah attributes the conversion of the inhabitants of Najrān to a man who came from Āl Jafnah, the kings of Ghassān.<sup>2</sup> Some other Arabic traditions refer to a Ḥimyarite king called 'Abd Kulāl being converted by a Syrian, who kept his conversion secret, but it was uncovered by his people who rebelled and killed the Syrian.<sup>3</sup> Although, all above mentioned traditions differ in details, they agree in one thing, that is Christianity was first introduced into Najrān by the way of Syria, which consequently leads one to assume that the Najrānī Christians had been adherents of the Monophysite form of Christianity, for the Monophysite Formula had been mostly adopted by the Syrian people during the fifth and sixth centuries AD.

Nestorian chroniclers, on the other hand, attribute the conversion of Najrānī people to the efforts of a Najrānī merchant named Ḥannān or Ḥayyān, who had come into contact with Nestorians in Ḥīrah in the time of Yazadgird I (r. 399-420 AD). On his return, he converted his family and formed a house-church. A trade route connected Ḥīrah with Najrān and it seems reasonable to suppose that Christianity passed down to the south by this route, too.<sup>4</sup> It is also assumed that Nestorian Christianity came into Arabia from Persia as a result of Sassanid Christian persecutions, notably in the reign of Shapur II (r. 310-79 AD), when Christian emigrants found a haven of peace among the Arabs in adjacent provinces from 339 AD onwards.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-Umam wa 'l-Mulūk* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1407 AH), 1:434-35.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Ma'ārif*, 637.

<sup>3</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs*, 295.

<sup>4</sup> De Lacy O'Leary, *History of Arabia before Muhammad*, 137, 43.

<sup>5</sup> Aziz S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity*, 258.

Muslim scholars commonly interlink the beginning of Christianity in Najrān, the persecution of the Najrānī Christians by a Jewish Ḥimyarite king Dhū Nuwās around 522 AD, and the verses 85:4-8 in the Qur'ān.<sup>1</sup> This persecution led the Axumite invasion into South Arabia in 525 AD and subsequently the rule of Dhū Nuwās came to an end.<sup>2</sup>

Some years later in 530 AD Abrahah, an Ethiopian general achieved the sovereignty of Ḥimyar and Saba', although, acknowledging Axume.<sup>3</sup> This Ethiopian interruption also may have caused the diffusion of Monophysite form of Christianity in South Arabia, for the Ethiopians were adherents of the Monophysite Church.<sup>4</sup> It is evident from that the Ḥimyarite king refused to receive a bishop from the Melkite patriarch. He wrote to Justinian (r. 527-65 AD) asking for a Monophysite bishop whom the Ḥimyarites would be prepared to accept, but Justinian refused and in consequence Yemenite Christians experienced a shortage of clergy. However, after twenty-five years, the indigenous priests held a council and chose a bishop from among themselves.<sup>5</sup>

#### Christianity in Ḥijāz:

Christianity did not spread in Ḥijāz and Najd as much as it spread in Ḥīrah, Ghassānide dynasty, and Yemen. It found its way into this area through migration, missionaries, slaves, and trade. Christians were found in Banū Shaybān; one of them was al-Nābighah al-Shaybānī. Some of Iyādī tribe were Christians such as Quss b. Sā'idah al-Iyādī is usually noted. From Thaḳīf, Umayyah b. Abī 'l-Ṣalt and al-Ḥārith b. Kaldah adopted Christianity. Many of Ṭayy'

<sup>1</sup> For example, see, Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ al-Umam wa 'l-Mulūk*, 1:434-35. However, the association of the beginning of Christianity in Najrān with the persecution of Najrānī people by Dhū Nuwās around 522 AD should be questioned, for the other sources indicate that the Christians existed in this area long before that date, as it has been mentioned above.

<sup>2</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs*, 299.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 300.

<sup>4</sup> However, one should not assume that the Abyssinian Monophysitism would have been completely in accordance with the Syrian or Alexandrian one, for the Abyssinians indigenized the Monophysitism according to their customs, native traditions and civilization. See, Aziz S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity*, 157.

<sup>5</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs*, 302.

professed Christianity; one of them was 'Adī b. Ḥātim, who accepted Islam afterwards.<sup>1</sup> It is reported that a Christian graveyard was also found near Makkah<sup>2</sup> which indicates the existence of a Christian population there.

Some Arabic traditions reveal that the Byzantines sought to extend their influence to Makkah and subsequently to the whole of Ḥijāz by promoting Christianity there. It is reported that 'Uthmān b. al-Ḥuwayrith b. Asad b. Abd al-'Uzzā converted to Christianity<sup>3</sup>, set out to meet the Byzantine Emperor, and requested him: "If you give me a letter patent, nominating me king, I shall force the Arabs to submit to you and to embrace your religion." Thereupon the Emperor wrote the desired letter, bestowed him a robe of honour, and gave him a mule with gilt saddle.<sup>4</sup>

Although 'Uthmān could not complete his plan and died on the way back to Makkah, this tradition reveals that the Byzantines enjoyed honour and respect among the Arabs of Ḥijāz, especially those of Makkah, in such a way that one of them sought their help to be nominated as a king over his people; that the Byzantines wished to include the territory of Ḥijāz to the sphere of their influence; and that they used the religion as a means to extend their influence to the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>5</sup> However, despite the fact that inhabitants of Makkah and Ḥijāz had relations with Christians of Byzantium and Abyssinia and the impulse of financial benefits might have inspired some of them to accept Christianity, the indigenous Makkans, renouncing their paganism and embracing Christianity, do not seem to exist, at least just before the dawn of Islām; they are certainly rare.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Husayn al-'Udāt, *al-'Arab al-Naṣārā*, 47-50.

<sup>2</sup> Abū 'l-Walid Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Azraqī, *Akhhbār Makkah wa mā jā' fihā min al-Āthār*, ed. Rushdī al-Ṣāliḥ Malḥas (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1403/1983), 2:298.

<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*, ed. Ānisah Īlzhah (Lahore: Dār Nashr al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, n. d.), 171.

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Hamidullah, "Two Christians of Pre-Islamic Mecca: 'Uthman ibn al-Huwairith and Waraqah ibn Naufal", *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, 6:2 (1958), 98-99.

<sup>5</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad Sālim, *al-Muslimūn wa 'l-Rūm*, 50.

<sup>6</sup> Muhammad Hamidullah, "Two Christians of Pre-Islamic Mecca: 'Uthman ibn al-Huwairith and Waraqah ibn Naufal", 97; 'Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad Sālim, *al-Muslimūn wa 'l-Rūm*, 52.

Perhaps the most important factor due to which the Makkans refrained from confessing Christianity was their consciousness of the importance of Ka'bah, which made Makkah the most important centre of religion, politics, and economics in the Arabian Peninsula. It was not reasonable for them to abandon such a centre to accept Christianity, which would have made them subject to others instead of others being subject to them. Moreover, the complicated discussions of Christian theology and the puzzling issues related to the divine and human nature of the Messiah (peace be on him) did not attract the Arab intellect which inclines naturally towards clarity and simplicity. In addition to this, the Arabs of Ḥijāz did not face those political and social circumstances, which were faced by their counterparts in Syria.<sup>1</sup>

#### Concluding Remarks:

This short overview shows that the Arab tribes were not confined to the Arabian Peninsula; rather they diffused into Syria and Mesopotamia as well. They were in constant contact with the neighbouring nations and civilizations, especially with the Romans, Persians and Abyssinians. The neighbours always did their best to gain control over the Arabian Peninsula directly if possible, or at least indirectly, because of its commercial importance.

It seems that Christianity began to spread among the Arabs in the fourth and fifth centuries and to the end of the sixth century a great number of Arabs of Syria and Mesopotamia as well as of Yemen had adopted Christianity. However, the situation of the Arabs of Ḥijāz, which includes Makkah, was quite different. Although the Arabs of Ḥijāz had commercial relations with the Christians of Syria, Mesopotamia, Yemen and Abyssinia, Christianity could not make its room among them at a huge scale. It remained confined to slaves, foreigners, and some individuals, and conversion among the indigenous Arabs was certainly rare.

Christianity penetrated into Arabia by missionary efforts in the first place. It is noted that the Byzantine Empire and the Church used to assist these missionaries for political and economic purposes, despite ecclesiastical disputations with them. The acceptance of

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<sup>1</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad Sālim, *al-Muslimūn wa 'l-Rūm*, 52-53.



Christianity by the royal families of Byzantium, Abyssinia, and Ghassān might have impact to some extent on the attitudes of Arabs towards Christianity, for it is said: *al-nās 'alā dīn mulūkihim* (Public adopt the religion of their rulers). Trade and Christian slaves also played a role in the spread of Christianity among the Arabs.

The Syrian Arabs were mostly Monophysites/Jacobites; on the other hand, most of the Mesopotamian Arabs adhered to the Nestorian Church, although the existence of Monophysitism cannot be denied. Since Christianity was introduced to south Arabia from Monophysite Abyssinia and Nestorian Hīrah, both kinds of Christianity coexisted there, although, with an upper hand of Monophysitism. Besides these major ecclesiastical trends some other Christian denominations also existed in Arabia in the course of history, but the sources provide with too meager information about them to assess their influence among the Arabs.

CHAPTER ONE  
THE CONCEPT OF THE INJĪL IN THE QUR'ĀN

## 1. 1 THE QUR'ĀNIC CONCEPT OF THE KITĀB

The term *kitāb* and different derivatives of its verb *kataba* occur frequently in the Qur'ān. To have a better understanding of the Qur'ānic concept of the Injīl, it is useful to understand the Qur'ānic concept of the *kitāb* first, because the Injīl has been conceived as a revealed book in the Qur'ān.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. 1. 1 Etymology and Literal Meaning of the Kitāb and its Variants

The term *kitāb* is an irregular verbal noun from *kataba yaktubu* which literally means act of writing.<sup>2</sup> It also refers to a written thing.<sup>3</sup> Originally, *kitābah* means compiling the words in writing, however, sometimes it metaphorically signifies the orally compiled words as well. That is why; the Word of God was named *kitāb* in 2:2 and 19:30 though it had not been written yet.<sup>4</sup>

According to Arthur Jeffery, the word appears to be a N. Semitic development and found only as a borrowed term in S. Semitic. He doubtlessly expresses that the borrowing was from Aramaic. He is also of the view that the borrowing may have taken place at al-Hīra, whence the art of writing spread among the Arabs.<sup>5</sup> However, the Arab lexicographers consider it a pure Arabic word and never characterize it as a borrowed one from any other language.

### 1. 1. 2 Some other Meanings of the Kitāb and its Variants

*Kitāb* is also used as a noun having the connotation of book, sheet (*ṣaḥīfah*), letter, book of deeds, and ink-pot.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes it means obligation (*fard*), decree (*ḥukm*), and fate (*qadar*).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ﴿قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَتُعَلِّمُنِي يَاسِينَ﴾ (19:30).

<sup>2</sup> Abū Fayḍ Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Urūs min Jawābir al-Qāmūs*, ed. 'Alī Shayrī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1414/1994), 2:351.

<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad A'lā al-Thānawī, *Kashshāf Istalāḥāt al-Funūn* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1413/1993), 2:1242.

<sup>4</sup> Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Kaylānī (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n. d.), 423.

<sup>5</sup> *The foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), 248-49.

<sup>6</sup> Muḥammad b. Mukram b. Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 1:698:99.

<sup>7</sup> Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Fayrawz'ābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1412/1991),

The verb *kataba* has been used in the Qur'ān to signify a variety of meanings. Sometimes it expresses the meaning of a focused intention (*al-murād al-mu'akkad*).<sup>1</sup> It signifies making something obligatory (*fard*) on someone<sup>2</sup> as well as it denotes predestination such as in 9:51.<sup>3, 4</sup>

### 1. 1. 3 Uses of the Kitāb in the Qur'ān

The term *kitāb* and its plural *kutub* occur 261 times in the Qur'ān; mostly in singular and only six times in plural. It occurs 128 times in Makkī verses and 133 times in Madanī ones.<sup>5</sup>

The term *kitāb* has been used in the Qur'ān to signify a variety of meanings, not only in describing the Qur'ān itself but also in referring to earlier scriptures and to various other means God employs in dealing with creation.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes the intended meaning is clear, but in other places, it needs exegetical considerations. In the latter case, the exegeses of al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH) and al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH) have been consulted to define the meaning, in this section, for the former represents the traditionalist trend and the latter represents the rationalist one. The

1:279.

<sup>1</sup> ﴿قُلْ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ لَبَرَزَ الَّذِينَ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ إِلَى مَضَاجِعِهِمْ وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللَّهُ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيُمَحَّصَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ﴾ (3:154); ﴿كُتِبَ اللَّهُ لِلَّهِ لَاغْلِبِينَ أَنَا وَرُسُلِي إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ غَزِيرٌ﴾ (58:21).

<sup>2</sup> ﴿كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ إِذَا خَافْتُمْ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتَ أَنْ تَرْكِبُوا خَيْرَ الْوَصِيَّةِ لِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ بِمَا مَعْرُوفٍ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾ (2:180); ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْعَتَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ﴾ (2:183); ﴿وَلَا تَزِرْ إِلَى اللَّهِ قِيلَ لَمْ يَكُنْ أُنْذِرْكُمْ وَأَمْسُوا الْعَصَاةَ وَأَتُوا الرِّكَاءَ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لِمَ كُتِبَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالُ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنَا إِلَى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ قُلْ مَتَاعُ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِمَنِ اتَّقَى وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا﴾ (4:77); ﴿وَكُتِبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِيهَا أَنَّ النَّفْسَ بِالنَّفْسِ وَالْعَيْنَ بِالْعَيْنِ وَالْأَنْفَ بِالْأَنْفِ وَالْأَذْنَ بِالْأَذَنِ وَالشَّعْرَ بِالشَّعْرِ وَالْجُرُوحَ بِمِثْلِهَا فَمَنْ تَصَدَّقَ بِهِ فَهُوَ كَفَّارَةٌ لَهُ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾ (5:45); ﴿ثُمَّ كُتِبْنَا عَلَى آبَائِهِمْ بِرِسَالَتِنَا وَكُتِبْنَا بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأًةً وَرَحْمَةً وَزَيَّنَّا لَهُ الْبُتُورَ مَا كُتِبْنَا عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ لَمَّا رَغَزُوا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِنَا تَائِبِينَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ﴾ (57:27).

<sup>3</sup> ﴿قُلْ لَنْ يُعِيبَنَا اللَّهُ لَا مَا كُتِبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَانَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ﴾ (9:51).

<sup>4</sup> Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Huṣayn b. Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Aṣṣḥānī, *al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 424.

<sup>5</sup> Muḥammad Fuwād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfāz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, henceforth *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n. d.), 592-95. It should be noted that in the present discussion *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras* by Muḥammad Fuwād 'Abd al-Bāqī has been made a base to consider any verse Makkī or Madanī.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Madigan, "Book", Jane Dammen McAuliffe, gen. ed., *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, henceforth *EQ* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1:242.



and the *hikmah* to his people.<sup>1</sup> Surprisingly, most of the *sūrah*s, beginning with the *Muqatta'āt*, contain the word *kitāb* in their introductory verses, referring to the Qur'ān<sup>2</sup> in different ways such as the Book of guidance having no doubt<sup>3</sup>; the Book sent down to the Prophet (peace be on him)<sup>4</sup>; the Book of Wisdom<sup>5</sup>; a Book, with verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning)<sup>6</sup>; the perspicuous Book<sup>7</sup>; a Book, whereof the verses are explained in detail<sup>8</sup>; the Book<sup>9</sup>; and the Revelation<sup>10</sup>. Even, some *sūrah*s not having the *Muqatta'āt*, contain the word *kitāb*, in their introductory verses, referring to the Qur'ān.<sup>11</sup> On some occasions, the *kitāb*

<sup>1</sup> ﴿رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ﴾ (2:129); ﴿عَمَّا أَرْسَلْنَا بِكُمْ رَسُولًا مِنْكُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمْ مَا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ﴾ (2:151); ﴿لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلِ لَقِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ﴾ (3:164); ﴿هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلِ لَقِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ﴾ (62:2).

<sup>2</sup> However, al-Ṭabarī or the exegetes he has recorded, surprisingly identify, in four cases, the *kitāb* with the previous revealed books especially the Tawrah and the Injil. See the commentary of al-Ṭabarī on the verses 2:2; 10:1; 13:1; and 15:1.

<sup>3</sup> ﴿إِنَّمَا (1) ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾ (2:2).

<sup>4</sup> ﴿إِنَّمَا (1) اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ (2) نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَأَنزَلَ التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ﴾ (3:3); ﴿الْمَلَأَ (1) تِلْكَ آيَاتِ الْكِتَابِ وَالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ الْحَقُّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾ (13:1); ﴿إِنَّمَا (1) كِتَابُ أَرْزَاقِهِ إِلَيْكَ لِنُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُبِينٍ﴾ (14:1).

<sup>5</sup> ﴿إِنَّمَا (1) تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْحَكِيمِ﴾ (10:1); ﴿إِنَّمَا (1) تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْحَكِيمِ﴾ (31:2).

<sup>6</sup> ﴿إِنَّمَا (1) تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْحَكِيمِ﴾ (11:1).

<sup>7</sup> ﴿إِنَّمَا (1) تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ﴾ (12:1); ﴿طَسَمَ (1) تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ﴾ (26:2); ﴿طَسَمَ (1) تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ﴾ (27:1); ﴿طَسَمَ (1) تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ﴾ (28:2); ﴿حَمَ (1) وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ﴾ (43:2); ﴿حَمَ (1) وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ﴾ (44:2).

<sup>8</sup> ﴿حَمَ (1) نُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (2) كِتَابَ فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ لِقُرْآنٍ غَرِيظٍ يَتْلُوهُنَّ﴾ (41:3).

<sup>9</sup> ﴿إِنَّمَا (1) تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ وَقُرْآنٍ مُبِينٍ﴾ (15:1).

<sup>10</sup> ﴿إِنَّمَا (1) تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾ (32:2); ﴿حَمَ (1) تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ﴾ (40:2); ﴿حَمَ (1) تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ﴾ (45:2); ﴿حَمَ (1) تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ﴾ (46:2).

<sup>11</sup> ﴿الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ الْكِتَابَ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ عِوَجًا﴾ (18:1); ﴿تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ (1) إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ﴾

refers to the Qur'ān being associated with the Muslims<sup>1</sup>, the People of the Book<sup>2</sup>, or even other unbelievers.<sup>3</sup>

The Book referring to the Qur'ān is a sure guidance, having no doubt, to those who fear Allah<sup>4</sup>; it was sent in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety<sup>5</sup>; in it are verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning); they are the foundation of the Book, others are allegorical<sup>6</sup>; it is a (new) light and a perspicuous Book from Allah, wherewith Allah guides all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leads them out of darkness, by His will, unto the light, and guides them to a path that is straight<sup>7</sup>; it is full of blessings<sup>8</sup>; it was revealed to lead mankind out of the depths of darkness into light, to make clear to them those things in which they differ, explaining all things, a Guide, a Mercy, and Glad Tidings to Muslims<sup>9</sup>; the Prophet (peace be on him) was demanded

(39:2).

<sup>1</sup> ﴿مَا كَانَ لِيُفْهَرُ أَنْ يُبَيِّنَ اللَّهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ثُمَّ يَقُولَ لِلنَّاسِ كُونُوا عِبَادًا لِي مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ كُونُوا رَبَّانِيِّينَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تُعَلِّمُونَ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْرُسُونَ﴾ (3:79); ﴿وَيَسْتَفْتُونَكَ فِي النِّسَاءِ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفَسِّحُ فِيهِمْ وَمَا يُغْنِي عَنْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ فِي نِهَايَةِ النِّسَاءِ الْآيَةُ﴾ (4:127); ﴿وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ أَنْ إِذَا تَعَلَّمْتُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ يُكْفَرُوا بِهَا وَيَسْتَفْتُوا بِهَا فَلَا تَعْلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ الْآيَةَ﴾ (4:140); ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَلْقَوْا بِمَارَاتِهِمْ بَرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً يُرْجَوْنَ تَجَارَةً لَنْ تَبُورَ﴾ (35:29).

<sup>2</sup> ﴿وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا مِنْهُمْ وَكَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلِ يَسْتَفْتِيهِمْ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَزَلُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ قُلْنَا لِلَّذِينَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ﴾ (2:89); ﴿ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِي الْكِتَابِ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ﴾ (2:176); ﴿يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا كُنْتُمْ تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ﴾ (5:15).

<sup>3</sup> ﴿أَفَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ اتَّعَمَّيْ حُكْمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا الْآيَةُ﴾ (6:144); ﴿وَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بِكِتَابٍ فَصَّلْنَا عَلَى عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾ (7:52); ﴿الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِالْكِتَابِ وَمَا أُرْسِلُوا بِهِ رَسُولًا فَذُنُوبُهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ﴾ (40:70); ﴿لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ كِتَابًا فِيهِ يُخَرِّجُكُمْ أَفْلًا تَقْبَلُونَ﴾ (21:10).

<sup>4</sup> ﴿إِنَّمَا (1) ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾ (2:2).

<sup>5</sup> ﴿وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ الْآيَةُ﴾ (5:48).

<sup>6</sup> ﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ الْآيَةُ﴾ (3:7).

<sup>7</sup> ﴿قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ (15) يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ مِثْلَ شُعْلَانٍ وَيُخْرِجُهُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ﴾ (5:16).

<sup>8</sup> ﴿وَهَذَا كِتَابُ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مَبَارَكٌ الْآيَةُ﴾ (6:92); ﴿وَهَذَا كِتَابُ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مَبَارَكٌ فَاطْمِنُوا وَأَقْبِلُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَرْضَوْنَ﴾ (6:155).

<sup>9</sup> ﴿إِنَّ كِتَابَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ الْآيَةُ﴾ (14:1); ﴿وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا بُحْبُوحَةً لِمَنْ الَّذِي اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ الْآيَةُ﴾ (16:64); ﴿وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ

بَيِّنَاتٍ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ﴾ (16:89).

to recite from the Book revealed to him as well as to relate in it the stories of the prophets and the righteous persons<sup>1</sup>; and, last but not least, it is a Book of exalted power<sup>2</sup> sent down during a Blessed Night.<sup>3</sup>

### 1. 1. 3. 2 Usage of the Kitāb for the Tawrah

The Qur'ān refers to the Tawrah as a kitāb about 45 times; 13 times in Makkī verses and 32 times in Madanī ones. It is evident that proportion of the Book as the Tawrah in Makkī and Madanī verses is reverse to that of it as the Qur'ān. It is frequently said that Allah gave the Prophet Mūsā (peace be on him) the kitāb.<sup>4</sup> Jews study it<sup>5</sup>; some of them only believe in a part of the *kitāb* and reject the rest<sup>6</sup>; some of them throw away the *kitāb* of Allah behind their backs, as if (it is something) they do not know<sup>7</sup>; there is among them a section who distort the *kitāb* with their tongues<sup>8</sup>; they make it into (separate) sheets for show, while they conceal

<sup>1</sup> ﴿وَإِنَّمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ مَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ الْآيَةِ﴾ (29:45); ﴿وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ مِثْرَهُ إِذِ انْتَبَذْتُ مِنْ أُهْلِهَا مِثْرًا شَرِيفًا﴾ (19:16); ﴿وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ كَانَ صَدِيقًا نَبِيًّا﴾ (19:41); ﴿وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى إِذْ كَانَ عَلَمًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا﴾ (19:51); ﴿وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ إِذْ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا﴾ (19:54); ﴿وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِدْرِيسَ إِذْ كَانَ صَدِيقًا نَبِيًّا﴾ (19:56).

<sup>2</sup> ﴿إِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ﴾ (41:41).

<sup>3</sup> ﴿حَمْدُ (1) وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ (2) إِذَا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ﴾ (44:3).

<sup>4</sup> ﴿وَإِذْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ﴾ (2:53); ﴿وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ الْآيَةِ﴾ (2:87); ﴿فَمِمْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ قَامًا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ الْحُسْنَى وَتَلْصِقًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهَدَى وَرَحْمَةً لَعَلَّهُمْ يَلْقَاءُ رَحْمَةً يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾ (6:154); ﴿وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَاخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَفُتِحَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ مُرِيبٍ﴾ (11:110); ﴿وَآتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَخَفَقْنَا هُدًى لِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَلَّا تَتَّبِعُوا مِنْ دُونِ رَبِّكَ وَكَيْلًا﴾ (17:2); ﴿وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَخَفَقْنَا مَعَهُ أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ وَزَوْرًا﴾ (25:35); ﴿وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ الْأُولَى بَعَثْنَا فِي نَفْسِهِ رُوحَنَا لِيُتْلِيَ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لَعَلَّهُمْ يَفْذَكُرُونَ﴾ (28:43); ﴿وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَلَا تُكْرِنُ فِي بَيْنِهِ مِنْ لِقَائِهِ وَخَفَقْنَا هُدًى لِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ﴾ (32:23); ﴿وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَاخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَفُتِحَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ مُرِيبٍ﴾ (41:45).

<sup>5</sup> ﴿أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَتَنْقَلِبُونَ﴾ (2:44).

<sup>6</sup> ﴿أَتَأْمُرُونَ بِغَضَبِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِغَضَبِ الْآيَةِ﴾ (2:85).

<sup>7</sup> ﴿وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَرَأَوْا ظُهُورَهُمْ مَكَانَهُمْ لَا يَقْلَمُونَ﴾ (2:101).

<sup>8</sup> ﴿وَإِنْ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقٌ يَلْعَنُونَ أَلَمْ يَلْعَنُوا بِالْكِتَابِ لِنَحْنُوهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ﴾ (3:78).



much (of its contents)<sup>1</sup>; however, as to those who hold fast by the kitāb and establish regular prayer, their reward would never be suffered to perish<sup>2</sup>; the kitāb of Mūsā (peace be on him) which helps to make things clear<sup>3</sup> is a divine book, completing (divine favour) to those who would do right, and explaining all things in detail<sup>4</sup>, a light, mercy, and guidance to humanity especially to the Children of Israel.<sup>5</sup> Al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, while commenting on the verse 2:53 says that the Tawrah has been called *kitāb*, because it contains the commandments.<sup>6</sup>

When the kitāb is mentioned in a general phrase such as *ahl al-kitāb*, (the People of the Book), *alladhīn ūtū 'l-kitāb* (those who have been given the Book), *alladhīn ūtū naṣībān min al-kitāb* (those who have been given a portion of the Book), *alladhīn ātaynāhum al-kitāb* (those to whom We have given the Book), *alladhīn yaqra'ūn al-kitāb* (those who read the Book), and *alladhīn ūrithū 'l-kitāb* (those who have inherited the Book) etc. it may refer to the Tawrah or the Injil, or both of them.<sup>7</sup> It is the context of the verse or the occasion of the revelation that defines the intended meaning in such cases.

#### 1. 1. 3. 3 Usage of the Kitāb for the Injil

In contrast to the Tawrah, the Injil alone has been referred to by the kitāb only on four occasions; once in a Makkī verse and thrice in Madanī ones.<sup>8</sup>

#### 1. 1. 3. 4 Usage of the Kitāb for both the Tawrah and the Injil

The most frequent usage of the kitāb in the Qur'ān as referring to the previous scriptures is of

<sup>1</sup> ﴿قُلْ مَنْ أَنْزَلَ الْكِتَابَ الَّذِي جَاءَ بِهِ مُوسَى نُورًا وَهُدًى لِلنَّاسِ يَتَمَطَّلُونَ فَزَاطِيسَ يُثْبِتُونَهَا وَيُخْفُونَ كَثِيرًا﴾ (6:91).

<sup>2</sup> ﴿وَالَّذِينَ يُمَسِّكُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّا لَا نَضِيعُ أَعْزَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ﴾ (7:170).

<sup>3</sup> ﴿وَأَتَيْنَاهُمَا الْكِتَابَ الْمُسْتَبِينَ﴾ (37:117).

<sup>4</sup> ﴿وَلَمْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ قَامًا عَلَى الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ وَتَفْصِيلًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لَعَلَّهُمْ يَلْقَاءُ رَبَّهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ﴾ (6:154).

<sup>5</sup> ﴿قُلْ مَنْ أَنْزَلَ الْكِتَابَ الَّذِي جَاءَ بِهِ مُوسَى نُورًا وَهُدًى لِلنَّاسِ﴾ (6:91); ﴿وَأَتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَخَفَقْنَا بِهِدْيَ لَيْلَى إِسْرَائِيلَ أَلَّا تَتَّبِعُوا مِنْ دُونِي رَيْبًا﴾ (17:2).

<sup>6</sup> Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Huṣayn b. Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 425.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامَ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أَوْتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ يَتَنَبَّهْ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَتَنَبَّهْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَرِيعَ الْحِسَابِ﴾ (3:19); ﴿يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا

تَقْلُوبُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ﴾ (4:171); ﴿قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلِبُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا أَهْوَاءَ قَوْمٍ قَدْ ضَلُّوا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَضَلُّوا كَثِيرًا وَضَلُّوا عَنْ سَوَاءِ

السَّبِيلِ﴾ (5:77); ﴿قَالَ إِنْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَانِ الْكِتَابَ وَخَفَعْنِي نَبِيًّا﴾ (19:30).

referring to both the Tawrah and the Injil. It refers to both of them about 48 times; seven times in Makkī verses and 41 times in Madanī ones. It is noted, however, that the kitāb mostly refers to both Tawrah and Injil when it is made a part of a phrase referring to the People of the Book. Moreover, such phrases are mostly used in Madanī verses and their mentioning in Makkī verses is very rare. For instance, the term *ahl al-kitāb* has been mentioned 31 times in the Qur'ān, but it has only once been used in the Makkī verses.<sup>1</sup> The term *alladhīn ūtū 'l-kitāb/naṣīban min al-kitāb* has occurred 21 times in the Qur'ān, but it has only twice been used in the Makkī verses as well as the term *alladhīn ātaynāhum al-kitāb* has been mentioned six times out of eight in Madanī verses.<sup>2</sup> However, the phrase *alladhīn ūtū 'l-'ilm* (those upon whom knowledge has been bestowed) has been slightly more frequent in Makkī verses than in Madanī ones; five times in Makkī verses and four times in Madanī verses,<sup>3</sup> but it does not necessarily refer to the people of the Book.

#### 1. 1. 3. 5 Usage of the Kitāb for the Revealed Scriptures in a General Sense

Besides referring to some specific revealed scriptures, the kitāb and its plural *kutub* also refer to all or some revealed scriptures in a general sense.<sup>4</sup> It happens in Makkī verses 17 times and in Madanī verses 12 times. The real righteousness is to believe in Allah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Books and the Messengers: "It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards east or west; but it is righteousness to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the

<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad Fuwād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras*, 95-96.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 9-11.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>4</sup> ﴿مَا كَانَ لِيَشْرَ أَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُ اللَّهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنَّبُوءَ ثُمَّ يَقُولَ لِلنَّاسِ كُونُوا عِبَادًا لِي مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ الْآيَةُ﴾ (3:79); ﴿وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ لَمَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَحُكْمٍ ثُمَّ خَافَ كُلُّهُمْ رَسُولَ مُصَدِّقٍ لِمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِ وَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ الْآيَةُ﴾ (3:81); ﴿هَآ أَنتُمْ أَوَّلَ حُجُوبَتِهِمْ وَلَا يَجِئُونَكُمْ وَلَوْلَا أَنْ تَرْثُوهُمْ بِالْكِتَابِ كُلِّ الْآيَةُ﴾ (3:119); ﴿أَمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ مِّنْ فَتْنَةٍ لِّمَنْ لَّدُنَّ أَلْإِبْرَاهِيمَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَآتَيْنَاهُمْ مُلْكًا عَظِيمًا﴾ (4:54); ﴿يَسْأَلُكَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ أَنْ تُنَازِلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتَابًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ الْآيَةُ﴾ (4:153); ﴿وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيِّبًا عَلَيْهِ الْآيَةُ﴾ (5:48); ﴿أَوَلَيْكَ الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنَّبُوءَ فَإِنْ يَكْفُرْ بِمَا هَؤُلَاءِ فَقَدْ وَكَلْنَا بِمَا يَكْفُرُونَ﴾ (6:49); ﴿أَوْ تَقُولُوا لَوْ أَنَّا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْكِتَابُ لَكُنَّا أَهْدَىٰ مِنْهُمْ الْآيَةُ﴾ (6:157); ﴿يُؤْمِنُونَ لَكَ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِ النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ أَخْرَةً فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ﴾ (29:27); ﴿وَإِنْ يَكْذِبُوا فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ خَافَتُهُمْ رَسُولُهُمْ بِالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ﴾ (35:25); ﴿ثُمَّ أَنْزَلْنَا الْكِتَابَ الْبَيِّنَ اضْطَعَلْنَاهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْآيَةُ﴾ (35:32); ﴿أَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ كِتَابًا ثُمَّ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِنْهُ الْآيَةُ﴾ (35:40); ﴿أَمْ لَكُمْ كِتَابٌ فِيهِ تَلْذُسُونَ﴾ (68:37).

Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers.”<sup>1</sup> Muslims believe in all revealed books: “The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believes in Allah, His angels, His books, and His apostles.”<sup>2</sup> Those who disbelieve in the revealed books are far from the right path: “Any who denies Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Day of Judgment, has gone far, far astray.”<sup>3</sup> Some people dispute about Allah without the authority of any revealed book: “Yet there is among men such a one as disputes about Allah, without Knowledge, without Guidance, and without a Book of Enlightenment.”<sup>4</sup> The Prophet (peace be on him) is demanded to believe in every book revealed by Allah: “but say: ‘I believe in the Book which Allah has sent down’.”<sup>5</sup> The Prophet is also advised to ask the unbelievers to bring a revealed kitāb as a proof for their beliefs: “And say: ‘Do you see what it is you invoke besides Allah. Show me what it is they have created on earth, or have they a share in the heavens bring me a book (revealed) before this, or any remnant of knowledge (you may have), if you are telling the truth!’.”<sup>6</sup> So it is evident that in Qur’ānic context the kitāb also refers to revealed books in a general sense and as a scriptural evidence.

#### 1. 1. 3. 6 Usage of the Kitāb for *al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz* (Preserved Tablet)

It is commonplace in Near Eastern religions that God keeps both an inventory of everything created as well as a detailed record of all human deeds. The Qur’ān addresses its hearers as though they are quite familiar with these ideas.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, the Qur’ān uses the term kitāb to refer to *al-lawḥ al-mahfūz* (Preserved Tablet)<sup>8</sup> about 24 times; 15 times in Makkī verses and

<sup>1</sup> ﴿لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تُولُوا وَخُوفَكُمْ قِيلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ﴾ (2:177).

<sup>2</sup> ﴿آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ﴾ (2:285).

<sup>3</sup> ﴿وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا﴾ (4:136).

<sup>4</sup> ﴿وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِمَا يَمْتَرُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ﴾ (22:8).

<sup>5</sup> ﴿وَقُلْ آمَنْتُ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ كِتَابِ الْآيَةِ﴾ (42:15).

<sup>6</sup> ﴿قُلْ أَزِيدُكُمْ مَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْ بِيْ مَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ الثَّوْنِ يَكْتَابُ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا أَوْ آتَاةٍ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾ (46:4).

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Madigan, “Book”, *EQ*, 1:243.

<sup>8</sup> ﴿مَا قَرَأْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ثُمَّ إِلَى رَبِّكُمْ نُحْشِرُونَ﴾ (6:38).

nine times in Madanī ones. It mainly refers to *al-lawḥ al-mahfūz* when it has association with the divine knowledge. Every thing has been inscribed in a *kitāb mubīn*. “With Him are the keys of the unseen, the treasures that none knows but He. He knows whatever there is on the earth and in the sea. Not a leaf does fall but with His knowledge; there is not a grain in the darkness (or depths) of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered), but is (inscribed) in a clear book.”<sup>1</sup> Allah has the knowledge of the previous generations recorded in a *kitāb*: “(Pharaoh) said: ‘What then is the condition of previous generations?’ He (Mūsā) replied: ‘The knowledge of that is with my Lord, duly recorded: my Lord never errs, nor forgets’.”<sup>2</sup> In this context, it also refers to the predestination.<sup>3</sup> Some times it is referred to as *umm al-kitāb*: “Allah does blot out or confirm what He pleases: with Him is the Mother of the Book.”<sup>4</sup>

In 78.29, the Qur’ān says “each thing we enumerate as [or in] a *kitab*”<sup>5</sup> and al-Ṭabarī appends to the verse by way of elaboration “its number, its amount, and its extent — the knowledge of (any) thing does not escape us”. This might suggest that al-Ṭabarī considers *kitāb* merely as a metaphor for Allah’s knowledge. However, from his comments elsewhere on Allah’s knowledge, it is quite evident that he is not speaking metaphorically. For example, in 35.11<sup>6</sup> where the Qur’ān states that the length or shortness of a person’s life is in a *kitāb* is explained by al-Ṭabarī as “it is in a *kitāb* with Allah, written which he computes and knows”.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ﴿وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِيحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَبْلُغُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٌ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يَظِبُّ وَلَا يُغَابِسُ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ﴾ (6:59).

<sup>2</sup> ﴿قَالَ لَمَّا بَالَ الْقُرُونِ الْأُولَى (51) قَالَ عَلِمْتُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي فِي كِتَابٍ لَا يَغْيِلُ رَبِّي وَلَا يَنْسَى﴾ (20:52).

<sup>3</sup> ﴿لَمَّا أَظْلَمَ مِنْ الظُّرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ أُولَئِكَ يَنْتَظِمُ لِنُصِيصِهِمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ الْآيَةُ﴾ (7:37); ﴿لَوْلَا كِتَابٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ سَتَق لَنَسْتَكُنَّ فِيمَا أَخَذْتُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ﴾ (8:68); ﴿وَأُولُو الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَى بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ﴾ (8:75); ﴿إِنَّ عَذَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خُلِقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْآيَةُ﴾ (9:36).

<sup>4</sup> ﴿يَمْحُو اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُثَبِّتُ وَعِنْدَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ﴾ (13:39); ﴿وَإِنَّ فِي أُمِّ الْكِتَابِ لَذِكْرًا لِقَوْمٍ عَلِيمٍ﴾ (43:4).

<sup>5</sup> ﴿وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ كِتَابًا﴾ (78:29).

<sup>6</sup> ﴿وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ أُنْثَى وَلَا تَضَعُ إِلَّا بِعِلْمِهِ وَمَا يُعْتَرِ مِنْ مَعْتَرٍ وَلَا يُنْقِصُ مِنْ عُمُرِهِ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ﴾ (35:11).

<sup>7</sup> Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi’ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āyy al-Qur’ān*, henceforth *Jāmi’ al-Bayān* (ed), Maḥmūd

### 1. 1. 3. 7 Usage of the Kitāb for the Record of Deeds

The kitāb has also occurred to stand for the record of deeds. It refers to it 20 times but never in Madanī verses. Although the record of deeds is often spoken of as a single entity<sup>1</sup>, the final judgment is pictured as one in which each person will be handed the kitāb detailing his or her deeds. "Then he that will be given his Record in his right hand will say: 'Ah here! Read you my Record!'"<sup>2</sup> "And he that will be given his Record in his left hand, will say: 'Ah! Would that my Record had not been given to me!'"<sup>3</sup> The record of the wicked people is preserved in *sijjīn* as well as the record of the righteous ones is preserved in 'illiyyīn.<sup>4</sup> *Sijjīn* and 'illiyyīn are fully inscribed registers.<sup>5</sup> In another place, there seems to be a separate *kitāb* for each nation:<sup>6</sup> "Every sect will be called to its Record."

### 1. 1. 3. 8 Some Rare Uses of the Kitāb in the Qur'ān

Apart from above mentioned, the term *kitāb* has also occasionally occurred in the Qur'ān to signify a number of other meanings such as a letter<sup>8</sup>, an act of writing<sup>9</sup>, a manmade book<sup>10</sup>, Qur'ānic themes or verses<sup>11</sup>, a verbal noun to emphasize (*maṣdar li 'l-ta'kid*)<sup>1</sup>, 'iddah (legal

Muḥammad Shākir (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1421/2001), 22:146; Herbert Berg, "Ṭabarī's Exegesis of the Qur'ānic Term *al-Kitāb*", *Journal of American Academy of Religion*, 63:4 (1995), 763-64.

<sup>1</sup> ﴿هَذَا كِتَابُنَا عَلَيْنَا بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّا كُنَّا نَسْتَنْبِغُ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ﴾ (45:29); ﴿وَلَدَيْنَا كِتَابٌ يَنْطِقُ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ﴾ (23:62); ﴿وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ وَجِيءَ بِالنَّبِيِّينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ﴾ (39:69).

<sup>2</sup> ﴿وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوْقِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَيَقُولُ هَؤُلَاءِ أَقْرَبُوا كِتَابَتِي﴾ (69:19).

<sup>3</sup> ﴿وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوْقِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِشِمَالِهِ فَيَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُوتَ كِتَابَتِي﴾ (69:25).

<sup>4</sup> ﴿كَذَٰلِكَ إِن كِتَابَ الْغَايَةِ لَفِي سِجِّينٍ﴾ (83:7); ﴿كَذَٰلِكَ إِن كِتَابَ الْأَنْزَارِ لَفِي عِلِّيِّينَ﴾ (83:18).

<sup>5</sup> ﴿كِتَابٌ مُزِينٌ﴾ (83:9,20).

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Madigan, "Book", *EQ*, 1:243-44.

<sup>7</sup> ﴿وَنُزِّلَ كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ حَاتِيَةً كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ تُدْعَى إِلَى كِتَابِهَا الْيَوْمَ تُحْزَنُونَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ﴾ (45:28).

<sup>8</sup> ﴿أَذْهَبَ بِكِتَابِي هَذَا فَأَلْقَاهُ إِلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا يَرْجِعُونَ﴾ (28) قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ إِنَّ إِلَيْنَا الْكِتَابُ كَرِيمٌ﴾ (27:29).

<sup>9</sup> ﴿وَيُسْأَلُنَّ أَمْثَلُ مَا لَمْ يَكْتُبُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا أَمَانَةً وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظْلَمُونَ﴾ (2:78); ﴿وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالْذِّكْرَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ﴾ (3:48).

<sup>10</sup> ﴿نُزِيلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يُكَلِّمُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ الْآيَةُ﴾ (2:79); ﴿وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَتْلُوا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَحِطُّ بِتَبِيِّنِكُمْ إِذَا لَارْتَابَ الْمُنَاطِلُونَ﴾ (21:48).

<sup>11</sup> ﴿وَيَسْمَعُ كُتُبَ قَيْسَةٍ﴾ (98:3).

period of retirement assigned to a widow or divorced woman before she may marry again) of a woman<sup>2</sup>, an agreement between a master and his slave to enable the slave to earn his freedom for a certain sum<sup>3</sup> (*mukātabah*)<sup>4</sup>, and a term of time<sup>5</sup>.

#### 1. 1. 4 Synonyms of the Kitāb Used in the Qur'ān

A common synonym of the kitāb in the Qur'ān is *ṣaḥīfah* (sheet), used only in plural (*ṣuḥuf*). It occurs seven times in Makkī verses and only once in Madanī ones.<sup>6</sup> It refers to some of the same meanings for which the term kitāb has been used in the Qur'ān such as the previous revealed scriptures<sup>7</sup> especially of Ibrāhīm and Mūsā (peace be on both of them)<sup>8</sup>; *al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*<sup>9</sup>; records of the deeds of human beings<sup>10</sup>; and the Qur'ān<sup>11</sup>.

Another synonym of the kitāb is the Zabūr. Its plural *zabur* has more frequently been

<sup>1</sup> ﴿وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ﴾ (4:24); ﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تَقُولَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ كِتَابًا مُؤْتًى﴾ (3:145); ﴿إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْثُوتًا﴾ (4:103).

<sup>2</sup> Al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Dāmaghānī, *Qāmūs al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz Sayyid al-Ahl (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li 'l-Malāyīn, 1977), 400; Muḥammad Fuwād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *Mu'jam Gharīb al-Qur'ān Mustakhrijan min Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, henceforth *Mu'jam Gharīb al-Qur'ān* (Makkah al-Mukarramah: al-Maktabah al-Tijāriyyah, n. d.), 205. See,

﴿وَلَا تَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُدَاكَ الْكَوَاعِبُ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ الْكِتَابَ أَجَلَهُ﴾ (2:235).

<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad A'lā al-Thānawī, *Kashshāf Istalāḥāt al-Funūn*, 2:1242-43.

<sup>4</sup> ﴿وَالَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الْكِتَابَ يَمَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ فَكَايَرُوهُمْ إِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا﴾ (24:33).

<sup>5</sup> Al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Dāmaghānī, *Qāmūs al-Qur'ān*, 401; Muḥammad Fuwād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *Mu'jam Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 205. For example see,

﴿وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ إِلَّا وَلَهُ كِتَابٌ مَعْلُومٌ﴾ (15:4).

<sup>6</sup> Muḥammad Fuwād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras*, 403.

<sup>7</sup> ﴿وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا يُأْتِينَا بَآئِرٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ أَوْ لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ يَبْتَئُونَ مَا فِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى﴾ (20:133); ﴿إِنَّا نُرِيدُ كُلَّ فِرْعَوْنَ مِنْهُمْ أَنْ يُؤْتِيَ صُحُفًا مَنشُورَةً﴾ (74:52); ﴿إِنَّ هَذَا لَفِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى﴾ (87:18).

<sup>8</sup> ﴿إِنَّمَا بُنِيَ بِمَا فِي صُحُفِ مُوسَى (36) وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ الْأَبْدِيِّ وَآدَمَ﴾ (53:37); ﴿صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى﴾ (87:29).

<sup>9</sup> ﴿فِي صُحُفٍ مُكَرَّمَةٍ﴾ (80:30).

<sup>10</sup> ﴿وَإِذَا الصُّحُفُ نُشِرتْ﴾ (81:10).

<sup>11</sup> ﴿رَسُولٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ يَتْلُو صُحُفًا مُطَهَّرَةً﴾ (98:2).

used in the Qur'ān.<sup>1</sup> The literal meaning of the Zabūr is a written thing, from *zabar al-kitāb* to mean writing a book.<sup>2</sup> In the Qur'ānic context, however, it refers to a specific book revealed to the Prophet Dāwūd (peace be on him)<sup>3</sup>; the records of the deeds<sup>4</sup>; and most frequently to the previous revealed scriptures<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad Fuwād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras*, 329-30.

<sup>2</sup> 'Abd Allāh b. Muslim b. Qutaybah, *Tafsīr Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣāqar (n. p.: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1378/1958), 37.

<sup>3</sup> ﴿وَاتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ زَبُورًا﴾ (4:163); ﴿وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا نَعَضَ الْجَبِينِ عَلَى نَحْضٍ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ زَبُورًا﴾ (17:55).

<sup>4</sup> ﴿وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ نَعْلَمُهُ فِي الزُّبُرِ﴾ (54:52).

<sup>5</sup> ﴿إِن كَذَّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ جَاءُوا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ﴾ (3:184); ﴿بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾

(16:44); ﴿وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزُّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ﴾ (21:105); ﴿تَقَطَّعُوا أَسْرَعَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فُرِحُونَ﴾ (23:53); ﴿وَرِثَاقُ لَقَى

زُرِ الْأَوَّلِينَ﴾ (26:196); ﴿وَإِنْ يُكَذِّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ﴾ (35:25); ﴿أَكَلْتُمُ خَيْرَ مِنْ أَوْلَئِكَمْ أَمْ لَكُمْ بَرَاءَةٌ فِي

الزُّبُرِ﴾ (54:43).

## 1.2 THREE-FOLD TYPOLOGY OF THE INJIL-RELATED VERSES

The word *Injil* occurs twelve times in the *Qur'ān*. It has mostly been mentioned in Madanī revelations and the only exception is of 7:157, which is considered a Makkī verse. Moreover, it is noted that the occurrences of this word in the fifth sūrat al-Mā'idah — that is five times — are considerably more frequent than any other sūrah.<sup>1</sup> In the following lines the *Injil*-related verses and their English translation are being presented. These verses can be characterized to be of three-fold typology.

Firstly, those verses which indicate that Allah revealed/taught/gave or will teach the *Injil* to the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him). Those verses which mention the *Injil* as a revealed book without referring to the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) should also be counted in this class. Such verses, it seems, speak about the original *Injil* of the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him), and do not refer to the Christian Canonical Gospels, because according to both the Christians and the Muslims the Canonical Gospels were not revealed to the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him); rather they are the product of his disciples and the disciples of his disciples. It should also be noted that this is the dominant category of the *Injil*-related verses.

1. 2. 1 ﴿إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ (2) نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَأَنزَلَ التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ (3) مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا هَدَى لِلنَّاسِ وَأَنزَلَ الْفُرْقَانَ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ﴾ (3:4).

A. L. M. Allah! There is no god but He, - the Living the Self-Subsisting, Eternal. It is Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion (of judgment between right and wrong). Then those who reject Faith in the Signs of Allah will suffer the severest penalty, and Allah is Exalted in Might, Lord of Retribution.

1. 2. 2 ﴿وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ﴾ (3:48).

And Allah will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel.

1. 2. 3 ﴿يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَحَاجُّونَ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَا أُنزِلَتِ التَّوْرَةُ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ﴾ (3:65).

<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad Fuwād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras*, 688.



Ye People of the Book! Why dispute ye about Abraham, when the Law and the Gospel were not revealed till after him? Have ye no understanding.

1. 2. 4 ﴿وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾ (5:46).

And in their footsteps 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, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah.

1. 2. 5 ﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اذْكُرْ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَتِكَ إِذْ أَيَّدْنَاكَ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ تُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَإِذْ عَلَّمْنَاكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَإِذْ تَخْلُقُ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ بِإِذْنِي فَتَنفُخُ فِيهَا فَتَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِي وَتُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَةَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ بِإِذْنِي وَإِذْ تُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِي وَإِذْ كَفَفْتُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَنْكَ إِذْ جِئْتَهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ﴾ (5:110).

Then will Allah say: "O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount my favour to thee and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened thee with the holy spirit, so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. Behold! I taught thee the Book and wisdom, the Law and the Gospel. And behold! Thou makest out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My leave, and thou breathest into it, and it becometh a bird by My leave. And thou healest those born blind and the lepers by My leave. And behold! thou bringest forth the dead by My leave. And behold! I did restrain the Children of Israel from (violence to) thee when thou didst show them the Clear Signs, and the unbelievers among them said: 'This is nothing but evident magic.'

1. 2. 6 ﴿لَمَّا قَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَرَهَابَاتٍ يُدْعَوْنَ بِهَا كِتَابًا عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا فَآتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ﴾ (5:27).

Then in their wake, We followed them up with (others of) Our apostles: We sent after them Jesus the son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel; and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him Compassion and Mercy. But the Monasticism which they invented for themselves, We did not prescribe for them: (We commanded) only seeking for the Good Pleasure of Allah; but they did not foster as they should have done. Yet We bestowed, on those among them who believed, their (due) Reward, but many of them are

rebellious transgressors.

Secondly, the verses in which Allah enjoins the Christians to judge by what He revealed in it, or rebukes them for not having stood fast by it. Muslim scholars are of different views about whether the Christians mentioned in such verses are of the period of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) or are those who passed away prior to him. The intended meaning differs in either interpretation. This issue would further be discussed in section 3.4 in *shā Allāh*.

1. 2. 7 ﴿وَلِيُخْذَكُمُ أَهْلَ الْإِنْجِيلِ يَا أُنْزِلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾ (5:47).

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.

1. 2. 8 ﴿وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ أَقَامُوا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ رَحْمَةٍ لَأَكَلُوا مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ مِنْهُمْ أُمَّةٌ مُقْتَصِدَةٌ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ سَاءَ مَا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾ (5:66).

If only they had stood fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that was sent to them from their Lord, they would have enjoyed happiness from every side. There is from among them a party on the right course; but many of them follow a course that is evil.

1. 2. 9 ﴿قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَسْتُمْ عَلَى شَيْءٍ حَتَّى تُقِيمُوا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَتُزِيدَنَّهُ كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ﴾ (5:68).

Say: "O People of the Book! Ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord." It is the revelation that cometh to thee from the Lord, that increaseth in most of them their obstinate, rebellion and blasphemy. But sorrow thou not over (these) people without Faith.

Thirdly, there are verses in which the Injil has been mentioned as containing a prophecy, promise and similitude which have been referred to in the Qur'ān. In this kind of verses, the Injil besides referring to the original Injil may refer to the existing Christian Gospels, too, especially in the verse (7:157) which indicates that the People of the Book find the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) mentioned in the Injil.

1. 2. 10 ﴿الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُخْلِئُ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ

وَيَحْزَمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْحَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ مَعَهُ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿7:157﴾

“Those who follow the Apostle, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (Scriptures); - in the Law and the Gospel; for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil: he allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from what is bad (and impure); he releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them. So it is those who believe in him, honour him, help him, and follow the Light which is sent down with him, it is they who will prosper.”

1. 2. 11 ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنْ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةُ يُقِيمُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيُحَنِّلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ وَعَدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَاسْتَبِشِرُوا بِتَيْبِئِكُمْ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُمْ بِهِ وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ﴾ (9:111).

Allah hath purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the Garden (of Paradise): they fight in His Cause, and slay and are slain: a promise binding on Him in Truth, through the Law, the Gospel, and the Qur'ān: and who is more faithful to His Covenant than Allah? Then rejoice in the bargain which ye have concluded: that is the achievement supreme.

1. 2. 12 ﴿عَمَّدَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءَ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا نِيَمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِنْ أَرْرِ السُّجُودِ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَى عَلَى سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرْعَ لِيُغَيِّظَ بِحِمِّ الْكُفَّارِ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا﴾ (48:29).

Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah; and those who are with him are strong against unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other. Thou wilt see them bow and prostrate themselves (in prayers), seeking Grace from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure. On their faces are their marks, (being) the traces of their prostration. This is their similitude in the Taurāt; and their similitude in the Gospel is: Like a seed which sends forth its blade, then makes it strong; it then becomes thick, and it stands on its own stem, (filling) the sowers with wonder and delight. As a result, it fills the Unbelievers with rage at him. Allah has promised those among them who believe and do righteous deeds Forgiveness, and a great Reward.

### 1. 3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INJIL AS MENTIONED IN THE QUR'ĀN

It has already been mentioned in the previous section that the word Injil has occurred twelve times in the Qur'ān. It must be noted that the Qur'ān has always mentioned the word Injil in singular form and never used its plural, although it seems that the plural form of the Injil was not unfamiliar to the Arabs of that time.<sup>1</sup> The Qur'ān, however, does not always refer to the Injil by using its proper name, for some times it is also referred to by the word Kitāb, as it has been discussed in the first section of this chapter.

The Qur'ān mentions the Injil with the same reverence as all other divine books. Many characteristics and attributes of the Injil have been stated. Since it seems helpful to discuss them to clarify the Qur'ānic concept of the Injil, they will be briefly discussed in the following lines.

The first thing that strikes the mind of every person who reads the Injil-related verses of the Qur'ān is that it mostly accompanies the Tawrah and always comes after it. Eight times out of twelve, it immediately follows the Tawrah. It reveals the close relation between them and that both belong to the same divine source. It may also indicate that the Injil descended after the Tawrah and complemented it, as the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) states somewhere else in the Qur'ān that he has come to confirm the Tawrah and to make lawful to the Israelites part of what was before forbidden to them.<sup>2</sup> This view may also have been supported by "Jesus's statement that he came not to destroy the Torah but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:15)".<sup>3</sup>

The Injil is a revelation given and taught by Allah to the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on

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<sup>1</sup> See, Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1424/2004), 16:88; Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Ṣāliḥī al-Shāmī, *Subul al-Hudā wa 'l-Rashād fī Sirat Khayr al-'Ibād*, eds. 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd and 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwid (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1428/2007), 1:534.

<sup>2</sup> ﴿وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْوَحْيِ وَلَاحِجٌ لِّكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذِي حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَجَنَّتُمْ يَاتِيَةً مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا﴾ (3:50).

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad Abu Laylah, *The Qur'an and the Gospels: A Comparative Study*, henceforth *The Qur'an and the Gospels* (Cairo: El-Falah for Translation Publishing, 1998), 143.

him). It was a fact of such an importance that Allah declared it to his Mother Maryam (peace be on her) even before his birth,<sup>1</sup> as well as it was one of those facts which he revealed before the Israelites in his cradle.<sup>2</sup>

The Injil is guidance for human beings. It is significant that the Injil has twice been attributed as being the guidance in the verse (5:46). In the same verse, the Qur'ān characterizes it with three other remarkable attributes; light, confirmation of the Tawrah that had come before it and admonition to those who fear Allah.<sup>3</sup> It may be convenient to quote the comments of the classical exegete Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the above-mentioned attributes of the Injil,

... the Injil is guidance, for it contains the proofs of the Oneness and Exaltation (*tanzih*) of Allah; of His Exoneration (*barā'ah*) from having wife, son, similar, and opponent (*didd*); and of the prophethood and the Hereafter. This is the meaning of its being guidance. It is a light, for it explains the commandments of the *Shari'ah* and the details of the injunctions (*takālif*). However, its confirmation of what had come before it may denote that it contains the prophecies about the prophethood of Muḥammad (peace be on him) and his advent. It has been described as guidance again, for its prophecies about the advent of Muḥammad (peace be on him) cause the people to be led to (the belief in) the prophethood of Muḥammad (peace be on him). Since this is the real bone of contention between the Muslims and the Jews and the Christians, Allah the Exalted repeats it again to remind that the Injil clearly indicates to the prophethood of Muḥammad (peace be on him). Subsequently, it is the guidance in this matter, which extremely needs elaboration and ascertainment. It is, however, an admonition, because it contains forceful and emphasized advices, admonitions and rebukes (*al-zawājir*). Since only those who fear Allah profit by the admonition, it has been specified with them, as the same in ﴿هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾ (2:2).<sup>4</sup>

The Qur'ān introduces Christians as a religious group by using an Injil-related phrase

<sup>1</sup> ﴿قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِي بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكِ اللَّهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ﴾ (47), وَتِلْكَ الْكِتَابُ وَالْحِكْمَةُ وَالْتُورَةُ وَالْإِنْجِيلُ ﴿﴾ (3:48).

<sup>2</sup> ﴿قَالَ إِنِّي عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنَابِي الْكِتَابُ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا﴾ (19:30).

<sup>3</sup> ﴿وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّورَةِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّورَةِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾ (5:46).

<sup>4</sup> Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 12:9.



similitude of his companions and promises made by Allah for the believers, the Qur'ān, too, mentions the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) as a highly respected prophet;<sup>1</sup> it refers to his disciples and quotes their conversations;<sup>2</sup> and it mentions the promises made by Allah for those Christians who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness.<sup>3</sup> The Tawrah also shares many attributes with the Injil.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ﴿قَالَ إِبْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ آتَانِ الْكِتَابَ وَحَقْلِي نَبَا (30) وَحَقْلِي مُبَارَكَا أَمِنْ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا (31) وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدِيَّ وَدِّمَ بِحَقْلِي حَبِيرًا شَعْبًا (32) وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا (33) ذَلِكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ الَّذِي فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ﴾ (19:34).

<sup>2</sup> ﴿فَلَمَّا أَحَسَّ عِيسَى مِنْهُمُ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ﴾ (3:52); ﴿فَوَإِذَا نُوحِيتُ إِلَى الْحَوَارِيِّينَ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِي وَبِرَسُولِي قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ (111) إِذْ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ هَلْ نَسْتَطِيعُ زُكْرًا أَنْ يَنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا مَائِدَةٌ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ قَالُوا لَئِنْ لَمْ يَنْزِلْ عَلَيْنَا لَنَعْلَمَنَّ أَنَّكَ نَزَلْتَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَمَّا نَزَّلَتْ مَائِدَتُنَا لَعَنَّاهُمْ وَجَعَلَ رَبُّهُمْ مِنْهُمْ نَجَسًا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ عَاظِمًا﴾ (112) قَالُوا نُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمْلِكَ مِنْهَا وَنَطْلُبَ مِنْ قُلُوبِنَا وَمَنْعَلَمَ أَنْ قَدْ صَدَّقْنَا وَنَكُونَ عَلَيْهَا مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ﴾ (5:113).

<sup>3</sup> ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِقِينَ وَالصَّابِرِينَ مِنَ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلُوا صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ﴾ (2:62).

<sup>4</sup> ﴿إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورًا الْآيَةَ﴾ (5:44).

## 1.4 QUESTION OF THE CORRUPTION

The Qur'ān accepts the Tawrah and the Injil as genuine divine scriptures revealed from the same divine source as the Qur'ān itself and brought by true messengers to both Jews and Christians respectively.<sup>1</sup> The question of the corruption of the existing biblical texts, however, is a major bone of contention among the three communities; Jews, Christians, and Muslims. There has always been heated discussion about this topic.<sup>2</sup>

Muslims and the Western scholars of Islam alike commonly refer to a series of verses in the Qur'ān when they discuss the issue of the *tahrīf*. A total of 25 verses from the Qur'ān are associated with this accusation. These may be called the 'tampering' verses because the tampering is an elastic term which can include a wide variety of actions.<sup>3</sup>

Of the terms related to "distortion" and "corruption" of the text used in the Qur'ān, the popular Muslim view takes the derivatives of the term *tahrīf* as the basis of its instance on the deliberate falsification of *Tawrah* and *Injil* by Jews and Christians, respectively.<sup>4</sup> The term *tahrīf* may be defined as "corruption of a document, whereby the original sense is altered. It may happen in various ways, by direct alteration of the written text, by arbitrary alterations in reading aloud the text which itself is correct, by omitting parts of it or by interpolations or by a wrong exposition of the true sense."<sup>5</sup> There are four Qur'ānic verses which use derivatives of the term *tahrīf*.

The Qur'ān criticizes the believers for hoping that those Jews, a party among whom

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<sup>1</sup> «وَأَتَيْنَا نُوْحًا بِالْكِتَابِ وَحَفَّتْهُ خُذًى لِّبَنِي إِسْرَآئِيلَ أَلَّا تَتَّبِعُوا مِن دُونِي وَكِيلًا» (17:2)، «إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا التَّوْرَةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ الْآيَةُ» (5:44)، «وَوَقَّعْنَا عَلَى أَنفُسِهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ مِّنْ عَهْدٍ لَّنَا أَن نَقُذَّكَم مِّنْ التَّوْرَةِ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ وَنَعْتَدُكَ لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَخُذَى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ» (5:46).

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Abu Laylah, *The Qur'an and the Gospels*, 173.

<sup>3</sup> Gordon Nickel, "Early Muslim Accusations of *Tahrīf*: Muqātil ibn Sulaymān's Commentary on Key Qur'anic Verses", ed. David Thomas, *The Bible in Arab Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 207. G. Nickel counts a total of 25 Qur'ānic verses associated with the accusation. However, it seems that it is not a hard and fast counting, for the number of such verses can be either slightly reduced or extended depending on their interpretations.

<sup>4</sup> 'Abdullah Saeed, "The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures", *The Muslim World*, 92 (2002), 420.

<sup>5</sup> H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers, eds. *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 560.



used to change the word of Allah after listening to it, will believe in them, by saying,

Can ye (o ye men of Faith) entertain the hope that they will believe in you - seeing that a party of them heard the Word of Allah, and perverted it knowingly after they understood it?<sup>1</sup>

Of the Jews, there are those who displace words from their places. The Qur'ān says in this regard,

Of the Jews there are those who displace words from their (right) places, and say: "We hear and we disobey"; and "Hear what is not Heard"; and "Ra'ina"; with a twist of their tongues and a slander to Faith. If only they had said: "We hear and we obey"; and "Do hear"; and "Do look at us"; it would have been better for them, and more proper; but Allah hath cursed them for their Unbelief; and but few of them will believe.<sup>2</sup>

But because of their breach of their covenant, We cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard; they change the words from their (right) places and forget a good part of the message that was sent them, nor wilt thou cease to find them- barring a few - ever bent on (new) deceits: but forgive them, and overlook (their misdeeds): for Allah loveth those who are kind.<sup>3</sup>

O Messenger! let not those grieve thee, who race each other into unbelief: (whether it be) among those who say "We believe" with their lips but whose hearts have no faith; or it be among the Jews,- men who will listen to any lie,- will listen even to others who have never so much as come to thee. They change the words from their (right) times and places: they say, "If ye are given this, take it, but if not, beware!" If any one's trial is intended by Allah, thou hast no authority in the least for him against Allah. For such - it is not Allah's will to purify their hearts. For them there is disgrace in this world, and in the Hereafter a heavy punishment.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ مِنْهُمْ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُخَرِّجُونَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَلَمْ يَمْلِكُوا﴾ (2:75).

<sup>2</sup> ﴿يَمِينُ الَّذِينَ خَادُوا يُخَرِّجُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا وَاسْمِعْ غَيْرَ سَمِعْنَا وَاتَّقِنَا يَا آلِ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا وَاسْمِعْ وَانظُرْنَا لَكُنَّا خَيْرًا لَكُمْ وَأَنزِلُوا وَلَكِنْ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا﴾ (4:46).

<sup>3</sup> ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّا جَاءَكُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً يُخَرِّجُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى خَائِنَةٍ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ نَاعَفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾ (5:13).

<sup>4</sup> ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ لَا يَحْزَنْكَ الَّذِينَ يُبَاغِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ مِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِالْمَوَاجِهِمْ وَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا سَاعَُونَ لِلْكَذِبِ سَاعَُونَ لِقَوْمٍ آخَرِينَ لَمْ يَأْتُواكَ بِالْكَلِمِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوَاضِعِهِ يَقُولُونَ إِنْ أُوتِيتُمْ هَذَا فَخُذُوا وَإِنْ لَمْ تُؤْتَوْهُ فَاحْذَرُوا وَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ فِتْنَتَهُ فَلَنْ تَمْلِكَ لَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُمْ قُلُوبُهُمْ كُنْ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَزِينًا وَمَنْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ

All four of above-mentioned verses state that the Jews commit the *tahriḥ al-kalim* (tampering with the words). In the view of al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥāhānī, the term *tahriḥ* literally means to incline (*imālah*). *Tahriḥ al-kalām* is to speak in such a way which causes the speech to carry more than one possible meaning.<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere, after having mentioned the possibility of either the distortion of text or meaning, he prefers the second one, arguing that it is difficult to alter the text after having been current and popular.<sup>2</sup> The author of *Lisān al-ʿArab* also seems to hold that the Qurʾānic concept of *tahriḥ* stands for the alteration of meaning rather than text and that the Jews used to alter the meanings of the Tawrah.<sup>3</sup>

One of the terms used in the Qurʾān is *tabdīl*, which means to change, exchange or substitute. The Qurʾān says,

But the transgressors changed the word from that which had been given them; so We sent on the transgressors a plague from heaven, for that they infringed (Our command) repeatedly.<sup>4</sup>

Another variant of this verse is (7:162).<sup>5</sup> *Al-Tabdīl* generally signifies replacement of one thing with the other. However, sometimes it denotes merely alteration, whether there is substitution or not.<sup>6</sup>

There is also a reference in the Qurʾān to some people — apparently a reference to certain Jewish scholars — writing something and then attributing it to God, but without specifying what that is,<sup>7</sup>

عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ (5:41).

<sup>1</sup> Abū ʿI-Qāsim al-Ḥuṣayn b. Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥāhānī, *al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qurʾān*, 114.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 440-41. Muḥammad Abū Laylah quotes from al-Aṣḥāhānī that *tahriḥ* means “to twist words to correspond to one’s own desire.” Muhammad Abū Laylah, *The Qurʾān and the Gospels*, 203. However, it seems that al-Aṣḥāhānī does not define *tahriḥ* in this way; rather he defines it as it has been explained above.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 9:43.

<sup>4</sup> ﴿فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَمَا كَانُوا يَشْعُرُونَ﴾ (2:59).

<sup>5</sup> ﴿فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَمَا كَانُوا يَنْظُرُونَ﴾ (6:162).

<sup>6</sup> Abū ʿI-Qāsim al-Ḥuṣayn b. Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥāhānī, *al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qurʾān*, 39.

<sup>7</sup> ʿAbdullah Saeed, “The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures”, 420.

Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: "This is from Allah," to traffic with it for miserable price!- Woe to them for what their hands do write, and for the gain they make thereby.<sup>1</sup>

This verse indicates that the Jews used to produce forgeries. As the Qur'ān attributes the production of fake book to their hands here, it attributes the fake speech to their mouths in 9:30.<sup>2</sup>

The Qur'ān also makes reference to a form of distortion during recitation whose purpose is to give a false impression to the listener that what is being recited is the word of God,<sup>3</sup>

There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues: (As they read) you would think it is a part of the Book, but it is no part of the Book; and they say, "That is from Allah," but it is not from Allah. It is they who tell a lie against Allah, and (well) they know it!<sup>4</sup>

Al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī comments that the first mentioning of the Book, in the above-mentioned, signifies the book which they wrote with their hands and was referred to in the verse 2:79, the second mentioning indicates to the Tawrah and the third one refers to all books of Allah as a whole.<sup>5</sup>

The verb which occurs most frequently in the Qur'ān's semantic field of tampering is *katam* (to conceal). Together with the occurrences of the similar verbs *asarra* and *akhfā*, they constitute a group of eleven verses.

In the concealment verses, the Qur'ān forbids the People of the Book and especially

<sup>1</sup> ﴿فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ بِمَا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ بِمَا يَكْتُمُونَ﴾ (2:79).

<sup>2</sup> ﴿وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عِزَّىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِالزَّوَاهِدِمْ يُضَاهَوْنَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ تِلْكَ قَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا﴾ (9:30).

<sup>3</sup> Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Ḥuṣayn b. Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, *al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 425.

<sup>4</sup> 'Abdullah Saeed, "The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures", 420.

<sup>5</sup> ﴿وَإِنْ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقٌ يَلْعَنُونَ أَلَسْتُمْ بِالَّذِينَ نَحْنُ بِهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكُذِبَ وَلَهُمْ يَنْتَلُونَ﴾ (3:78).

<sup>6</sup> Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Ḥuṣayn b. Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, *al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 425.

the Jews from concealing the truth.<sup>1</sup> It also informs that some of them deliberately conceal the truth<sup>2</sup> as well as they make the Tawrah into separate sheets for show and conceal much of its contents.<sup>3</sup>

The Qur'an declares that those who conceal the clear (Signs) Allah has sent down, and the Guidance, after He has made it clear for the people in the Book, — on them shall be His curse, and the curse of those entitled to curse.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, those who conceal Allah's revelations in the Book, and purchase for them a miserable profit, — they swallow into themselves not but Fire; Allah will not address them on the Day of Resurrection, nor purify them and grievous will be their penalty.<sup>5</sup>

Elsewhere in the Qur'an, Allah questions the People of the Book why they confuse the Truth with falsehood, and conceal the Truth, while they have knowledge.<sup>6</sup> He also questions them if they do not know that Allah knows what they conceal and what they reveal.<sup>7</sup> Allah tells the People of the Book that the Messenger (peace be on him) reveals to them much that they used to hide in the Book, and passes over much that is now unnecessary.<sup>8</sup> Allah does not love those who hide the bounties which Allah has bestowed on them.<sup>9</sup> These bounties, according to the authorities of al-Tabarī, include the name and description of Muḥammad

<sup>1</sup> ﴿وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ﴾ (2:42); ﴿وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ فَنَبَذُوهُ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَاشْتَرَوْا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَبَيَّنَّ مَا يَشْتَرُونَ﴾ (3:187).

<sup>2</sup> ﴿وَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَغْرُبُونَ كَمَا نَغْرُبُونَ أَنْبَاءَهُمْ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ﴾ (2:146).

<sup>3</sup> ﴿وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ إِذْ قَالُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَى نَبِيٍّ مِنْ شَيْءٍ قُلْ مَنْ أَنْزَلَ الْكِتَابَ الَّذِي جَاءَ بِهِ مُوسَى نُورًا وَهَدًى لِلنَّاسِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الْآيَاتِ الَّتِي نُبَيِّنُهَا لَكُمْ وَهُمْ غَلْفُونَ كَثِيرًا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مَا لَمْ نَعْلَمُوا أَنْتُمْ وَلَا آبَاؤُكُمْ قُلِ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ﴾ (6:91).

<sup>4</sup> ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَى مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّاعِنُونَ﴾ (2:159).

<sup>5</sup> ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ إِلَّا النَّارَ وَلَا يَكْلَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ﴾ (2:174).

<sup>6</sup> ﴿يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُونَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ﴾ (3:71).

<sup>7</sup> ﴿وَلَا يَغْلِبُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُغْلِبُونَ﴾ (2:77).

<sup>8</sup> ﴿يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا كُنْتُمْ تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ﴾ (5:15).

<sup>9</sup> ﴿وَالَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُونَ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا﴾ (4:37).



price, the Qur'ān praises those People of the Book who believe in Allah, in the revelation to Muslims, and in the revelation to them, bowing in humility to Allah, and they do not sell the Signs of Allah for a miserable gain. For them, there is a reward with their Lord, the Qur'ān declares.<sup>1</sup>

In two verses, Allah censures the People of the Book for throwing the Book of Allah and His covenant behind their backs.<sup>2</sup> This expression is used in Arabic language to indicate negligence, abandonment, and rejection of something considering it insignificant.<sup>3</sup>

The Qur'ān also blames both the Jews and the Christians of forgetting a part of that whereof they were admonished.<sup>4</sup> In Arabic vocabulary, *al-nisyān* means to forget as well as to abandon something. Therefore, in 5:13-14 it can be interpreted either as forgetting or abandoning a part of that whereof they were admonished.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ﴿وَإِنَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ خَاشِعِينَ لِلَّهِ لَا يَتَشَتَّرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ قَلِيلًا وَلَا كَثِيرًا أُولَئِكَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ آخِزَةٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ﴾ (3:199).

<sup>2</sup> ﴿وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾ (2:101).

<sup>3</sup> Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Huṣayn b. Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, *al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 480.

<sup>4</sup> ﴿فَلَمَّا نَفَضْنَاهُمْ مِثْقَلَهُمْ لَعْنَاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا دُكِّرُوا بِهِ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى خَآئِنَةٍ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ فَاعْتَزْ بِهِمْ وَاصْفَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (13) وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا تَنَصَّرْنَا أَخَذْنَا مِثْقَلَهُمْ قَتَلُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا دُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَأَعَزَّنَا فِي بَيْنِهِمْ الْغَدَاةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَسَوْفَ يَنْبَغِي اللَّهُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْتَعِلُونَ﴾ (5:14).

<sup>5</sup> Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 15:323.

## 1.5A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

The Qur'ān describes the Injil as a *kitāb*. The term *kitāb* has been used in the Qur'ān to refer to several meanings. Nevertheless, in spite of the diversity of its usages, the meaning can easily be identified by the help of context and the occasions of the revelation. To use one word for various entities and concepts is a basic characteristic and beauty of Arabic Language. Those who have command over and the taste of this language, are never confused nor do face difficulty in identifying the correct and exact meaning.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it seems quite difficult to agree with Herbert Berg on his assessment that "[a]l-Tabari, in seeking to comment on the Qur'an, fails to lessen the degree of confusion created by the Qur'an through its use of one word for all of the various entities and concepts mentioned thus far. It would therefore seem that the word *kitab* became, or more likely remained, an unstable semantic signifier."<sup>2</sup>

One of its important meanings is the previous revealed scriptures especially the Tawrah and the Injil. However, the specific usage of the *kitāb* for the Injil is considerably less than that of it for the Tawrah or the Qur'ān.

It seems that the act of writing has a special status in the Qur'ānic concept of scriptures, for the terms that have frequently been used in the Qur'ān for them are *kitāb*, *ṣuḥuf*, and *Zabūr* or *zukur*, and all of them entail the meaning of writing.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, it does not necessarily mean that all scriptures contained hard and fast form of a book composed on pages and bound in covers. They could be written in any form on any thing according to the circumstances of the day even sometimes spoken words could metaphorically be called as a *kitāb*. The Qur'ān does not clearly state if the Injil had been composed in the life of the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) or not. Nevertheless, if it is accepted, as al-Ṭabarī views, that the *kitāb* in 3:48 and 5:110<sup>4</sup> means act of writing<sup>5</sup> then it seems that there is enough reason to

<sup>1</sup> See, Muḥammad Ṭāhir b. 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabārī wa 'l-Tanwīr* (n. p. Dār al-Tūnasiyyah li 'l-Nashr, n. d.), 1:93-100.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Berg, "Ṭabarī's Exegesis of the Qur'ānic Term *al-Kitāb*", 773.

<sup>3</sup> Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Ḥuṣayn b. Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 211, 275, 423.

<sup>4</sup> ﴿وَنُفِثْنَا الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ﴾ (3:48); ﴿وَأَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِكُمَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَمُ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ﴾ (5:110).

<sup>5</sup> Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 6:422, 11:215.

suppose that the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) must have composed his Injīl in his life.

The Qur'ān characterizes the Injīl as guidance, light, confirmation of the Tawrah that had come before it, admonition to those who fear Allah and a revelation to the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him).<sup>1</sup> But it does not describe what kind of Injīl or Anājīl existed during the life of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) in the beginning of the seventh century AD in Arabian Peninsula nor it tells about its language. The Qur'ān always mentions the Injīl in singular form. It never uses the term New Testament. It mentions the disciples of the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) sometimes but never attributes the authorship of the Injīl to them. It seems that according to the Qur'ān the nature of the revelations of the Qur'ān, the Tawrah and the Injīl was the same, regardless of to which extent the latter two remained intact.

Many Qur'ānic verses indicate that the People of the Book especially the Jews of Madīnah have been tampering with their scriptures. This tampering entails a variety of actions as it has been discussed in section 1.4. Majority of such actions may be interpreted as referring to the distortion of meaning; rather than of the text, even the taḥrīf-related verses seem to refer to the distortions committed by the Jews during the conversations and in the commandments of the Tawrah. Perhaps the only clear reference to textual falsification is in 2:79<sup>2</sup>.

It should be noted, however, that the context or the occasions of the revelation of all the tampering verses clearly indicate that these verses speak about the corruption of the Jews — regardless of corruption of text or meaning — not that of the Christians. Perhaps the only exceptions in this regard are 5:13-14 which accuse the Christians along with the Jews of having forgotten the part of that whereof they were admonished.<sup>3</sup> But forgetting itself is not crystal clear in referring to the textual distortion, for it can be interpreted either as forgetting or as

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<sup>1</sup> ﴿وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آلِهَتِهِم بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُذْهَبًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ وَمُضَدًّا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾ (5:46).

<sup>2</sup> ﴿فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيُشْتَرَوْا بِهِ قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ﴾ (2:79).

<sup>3</sup> ﴿فَإِذَا نَعَّبْتَهُمْ بِمَا لَهُمْ نَعَاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا دُكِّرُوا بِهِ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى خَائِبَةٍ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ نَاعَبْتَ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ

يُحِبُّ الْمُخْسِرِينَ (13) وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَعَارَىٰ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَهُمْ فَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا دُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَأَغْرَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَسَوْفَ يَنْسِفُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَنْسِفُونَ﴾ (5:14).



abandoning a part of that whereof they were admonished.<sup>1</sup>

It would be argued that the Tawrah and the Injil should separately be treated in regard to the distortion. It is evident by many verses and prophetic traditions that the Tawrah had been possessed in its original language by the Jews of the Madinah during the life of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) regardless of its being textually intact or not. Moreover, the Qur'ān and the Jews were principally agreed on that the Tawrah was revealed to the Prophet Mūsā (peace be on him).<sup>2</sup> Consequently, it is quite reasonable to hold that the Qur'ān, while addressing the Jews of Madinah, definitely refers to the Tawrah possessed by them.

In contrast to this, not a single substantial evidence is found to support that the Qur'ānic Injil was preserved in its original language in Arabia during the life of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him); rather historical evidences have proved that the Christian canonical scriptures or their Arabic fragments were available to the Syrian-Arab Christians in that time.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Islamic and the Trinitarian Christian concepts of the revelation are quite different.<sup>4</sup> So it seems to be paradoxical to hold that the Qur'ān characterizes the Injil as a book revealed to the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) on one hand, and refers to the Christian scriptures of its era as the same Injil, on the other hand.<sup>5</sup>

In a nutshell, it may rightly be argued that neither the distortion of the Injil should be

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 15:323

<sup>2</sup> ﴿وَمَا قَدْزُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ إِذْ قَالُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ بَشَرٍ مِّن شَيْءٍ قُلْ مَن أَنزَلَ الْكِتَابَ الَّذِي جَاءَ بِهِ مُوسَىٰ نُورًا وَغَدَىٰ لِلنَّاسِ يُحْكُمُونَ فَرِيقِينَ تَبَدُّونَهَا مُنْقَوِرُونَ كَثِيرًا وَغُلَبُوا مَا لَمْ تَغْلِبُوا أَنكُم وَلَا آتَاكُم قُلُوبُ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ﴾ (6:91).

<sup>3</sup> David Cook, "New Testament Citations in the Ḥadīth Literature and the Question of Early Gospel Translations into Arabic", eds. Emmanouela Grypeou et al., *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 185.

<sup>4</sup> 'Abdullah Saeed, "The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures", 431-36; Sidney H. Griffith, "The Gospel in Arabic: an inquiry into its appearance in the first Abbasid century", *Oriens Christianus*, 69, (1985), 129.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. James Mel. Ritchie, "Are the old and New Testaments the same as the Tawrat and Injil Referred to in the Qur'an?" *Bulletin of Christian Institutes of Islamic Studies*, 4 (1981), 56-75; 'Abdullah Saeed, "The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures", 431-36.

related to that of the Tawrah nor the proofs of the textual distortion of both scriptures should be considered to be solely based on the Qur'anic evidence, for the Muslim scholars have applied a number of research methods along with the Qur'anic evidences, to reach the conclusions in regard to the corruption of the previous scriptures, i.e. the study of their discrepancies, the historical criticism, the critical study of the text and the chain of transmitters, and, last but not least, the study of irrational and blasphemous doctrines. Allah knows the best.

CHAPTER TWO  
THE CONCEPT OF THE INJĪL IN ḤADĪTH  
LITERATURE

## 2.1 THE INJIL OF WARAQAH B. NAWFAL AND THE ḤADĪTH LITERATURE<sup>1</sup>

In the first section of this chapter, a survey of ḥadīth literature would be done to illuminate the concept of the Injil preserved by Waraqah b. Nawfal, in ḥadīth literature.

Waraqah b. Nawfal b. Asad b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā b. Quṣayy was the cousin of Khadijah bint Khuwaylid b. Asad b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā b. Quṣayy, the wife of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him). His lineage meets with that of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) on Quṣayy, the third grandfather of Waraqah and Khadijah and the fourth one of the Prophet (peace be on him).<sup>2</sup>

In Islamic literature, Waraqah is remembered for his knowledge of the scriptures, both the Tawrah and the Injil.<sup>3</sup> He was one of few Makkans who renouncing their paganism became monotheists prior to the advent of Islam.<sup>4</sup> Islamic sources testify to his adoption of Christianity.<sup>5</sup> The famous historian Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb (d. 245 AH) explains in his book *Kitāb al-Munammaq* why Waraqah leaned to embrace Christianity. According to him, Waraqah composed an elegy, to mourn his Christian cousin 'Uthmān b. al-Ḥuwayrith, who was allegedly killed by 'Amr b. Abī Shamir, the Christian sovereign of Syria. When 'Amr b. Abī Shamir came to know this poem he swore to kill him. On hearing this news, Waraqah left Makkah to take refuge in the territory of the tribe Ṭayy', where he remained for a long time.<sup>6</sup> It should be kept in mind that the tribe Ṭayy' was one of the Arab tribes into which

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the term ḥadīth literature or ḥadīth tradition will be used in the present discussion in a loose sense, which includes the sayings of the Companions of the Prophet (peace be on him) and some times of the Successors as well.

<sup>2</sup> Ghassān 'Azīz Ḥusayn, *Waraqah b. Nawfal Mubashshir al-Rasūl; 'Aṣṛuhū, Ḥayātuhū, Shi'ruhū* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1423/2002), 49-50.

<sup>3</sup> Sidney H. Griffith, "The Gospel in Arabic: An Inquiry into its Appearance in the First Abbasid Century", *Oriens Christianus*, 69 (1985), 144.

<sup>4</sup> 'Abd al-Malik b. Hishām, *Sīrat al-Nabī* (n. p. Dār al-Fikr, n. d.), 1:242.

<sup>5</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismā'il al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 1419/1999), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Muhammad Hamidullah, "Two Christians of Pre-Islamic Mecca: 'Uthman ibn al-Huwairith and Waraqah ibn Naufal", 97-100.

Christianity penetrated, in the period of ignorance.<sup>1</sup> Then he went to Bahrain.<sup>2</sup> Again, Bahrain is one of the cities of Arabia where Christianity flourished prior to Islam.<sup>3</sup> When he arrived there, a Christian told him how to seek pardon from the King. He told him to go to the King and to seek the protection of Christ against the King. As he did what the Christian told him to do, the King not only forgave him; rather he gave protection to him and his people. All this touched him so much that he felt an inclination for Christianity.<sup>4</sup>

Waraqah also visited Najāshī, the King of Abyssinia, a tradition says, after the unsuccessful military expedition of Abrahah against Makkah.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, its detailed account seems to be mythological more than historical. Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalānī holds that Waraqah b. Nawfal left Makkah for Syria and other lands in search of the true religion. He liked Christianity, became a Christian, and met those monks who held the unchanged religion of the Prophet ʿĪsā (peace be on him).<sup>6</sup> Most probably, from such monks he learned about the expected advent of a prophet and subsequently attested his prophethood.

The traditions which describe the incident of the first revelation to the Prophet (peace be on him) generally relate that Waraqah b. Nawfal used to write or read the Injil. However, they do not agree upon the language he used to write or read in. Al-Bukhārī relates twice, "He (Waraqah) used to write *al-kitāb al-ʿarabī*, and write down from the Injil *bi l-ʿarabiyyah* whatever Allah wanted him to write."<sup>7</sup> The version of this ḥadīth, related in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* is in accordance with this reading.<sup>8</sup> In another place, however, al-Bukhārī relates, "He used to

<sup>1</sup> Aḥmad b. Abī Yaʿqūb al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh al-Yaʿqūbī*, 1:257.

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Hamidullah, "Two Christians of Pre-Islamic Mecca: ʿUthman ibn al-Huwairith and Waraqah ibn Naufal", 100.

<sup>3</sup> Jawād ʿAlī, *al-Mufaṣṣal*, 6:621.

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Hamidullah, "Two Christians of Pre-Islamic Mecca: ʿUthman ibn al-Huwairith and Waraqah ibn Naufal", 100-101.

<sup>5</sup> Ismāʿīl b. Kathīr, *al-Sīrat al-Nabawīyyah*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Wāḥid (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1398/1978), 1:367-68.

<sup>6</sup> Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Hajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, henceforth *Fath al-Bārī* (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 1418/1998), 1:34.

<sup>7</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 886, 1204.

<sup>8</sup> Muslim b. Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 1419/1998), 80.

write *al-kitāb al-ʿibrānī*, and he would write down from the Injil *bi ʿl-ʿibrāniyyah*.”<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere he narrates, “He used to read the Injil *bi ʿl-ʿarabiyyah*.”<sup>2</sup>

A survey of ḥadīth literature shows that most of the traditions, including those of al-Bukhārī, maintain that Waraqah b. Nawfal used to write or read the Injil *bi ʿl-ʿarabiyyah*,<sup>3</sup> only one version of one tradition quoted in al-Bukhārī reads that he used to write *al-kitāb al-ʿibrānī*, and write down from the Injil *bi ʿl-ʿibrāniyyah*.<sup>4</sup>

Muslim commentators of the ḥadīth do not see this variation of reading much problematic. They declare both readings as authentic simply arguing that since Waraqah b. Nawfal knew both the languages he wrote the Injil in Arabic as well as in Hebrew.<sup>5</sup> Even some of them hold that Waraqah was a polyglot and supposedly knew three languages; Arabic, Hebrew and Syriac, arguing that the Injil had been written in Syriac and that Waraqah used to copy it in Arabic and Hebrew alike.<sup>6</sup> Ibn Hishām, on the other hand, records, “Waraqah had professed Christianity, read the scriptures, and heard from the people of the Tawrah and the Injil.”<sup>7</sup> However, he leaves mentioning the language in which Waraqah read or wrote the scriptures, perhaps to avoid creating confusion. It is interesting, however, to note that none of them inquired where this multilingual Injil had gone.

<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 567.

<sup>3</sup> For example see, ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. Humām al-Ṣanʿānī, *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-Aʿzamī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1403 AH), 5:321; Muḥammad b. Ḥabbān al-Bustī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥabbān bi Tartīb Ibn Balbān* (n. p.: Muʾassasat al-Risālah, n. d.), 1:218; Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* (Hyderabad: Deccan Majlis Dāʾirat al-Maʾārif al-Nizāmiyyah, 1344 AH), 9:5; Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm Rahwayh al-Ḥanzalī, *Musnad Ishāq b. Rahwayh*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ghafūr b. ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq (al-Madīnat al-Munawwarah: Maktabat al-ʾImān, 1412/1991), 2:316; Abū ʿAwānah Yaʿqūb b. Ishāq al-Isfarāʾīnī, *Musnad Abī ʿAwānah* (Beirut: Dār Maʾrifah, n. d.), 1:103.

<sup>4</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1. Perhaps the only exception is Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī, *al-Musnad* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʾrafah, n. d.), 206, which relates that Waraqah b. Nawfal used to read the Injil *bi ʿl-ʿibrāniyyah*.

<sup>5</sup> Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, 1:34; Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Sharḥ al-Imām Abī Zakariyyā Y aḥyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1424/2004), 1:165.

<sup>6</sup> Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad al-ʿAynī, *ʿUmdat al-Qārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1399/1979), 1:52.

<sup>7</sup> ʿAbd al-Malik b. Hishām, *Sīrat al-Nabī*, 1:256.

Muhammad Hamidullah holds that the word *‘ibrāniyyah*, mentioned in al-Bukhārī, denotes Syriac and not Hebrew. He attempts to reconcile the variant readings of al-Bukhārī’s report saying, “Both may be true; having learnt Syriac he could read in that language, and also translate in his mother tongue, Arabic.”<sup>1</sup> The inconsistency, however, has not been completely resolved, for al-Bukhārī’s report manifestly reads that he used to write in *‘ibrāniyyah* as well.<sup>2</sup>

A. Sprenger proposes another solution, that is, the “Hebrew” in question is actually the Aramaic script employed by Jews, and that in this narration it means that Waraqah was writing Arabic in the Aramaic script. So in his view there is no real conflict between the two versions of the narration.<sup>3</sup>

This view has further been adopted and elaborated with some modification by Kamal Salibi who holds that Hebrew in this context “could have meant either Biblical Hebrew or Aramaic. For the term often indicated the common script in which the two related languages could be written, rather than the language itself.”<sup>4</sup> He argues that in post-exilic times, Aramaic rapidly replaced Hebrew as the common Israelite language, and Hebrew script was maintained for it.<sup>5</sup> He concludes that “The Gospel which still existed in Arabia in the seventh century AD — the one used by Waraqah Ibn Nawfal — was most probably written in Aramaic, not Hebrew.”<sup>6</sup> It implies that that Injīl was written in Aramaic, but with Hebrew script.

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<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Hamidullah, “Two Christians of Pre-Islamic Mecca: ‘Uthman ibn al-Huwairith and Waraqah ibn Naufal”, 102.

<sup>2</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Sidney H. Griffith, “The Gospel in Arabic: An Inquiry into its Appearance in the First Abbasid Century”, 145.

<sup>4</sup> Kamal S. Salibi, *Who was Jesus: Conspiracy in Jerusalem* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2007), 60.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. However, it should be noted that in the view of Kamal Salibi the Injīl of Waraqah b. Nawfal is not one of the canonical Gospels; rather it must have been a much older one, perhaps it dated as far as the fourth or fifth century BC, associated with the Qur’ānic ‘Isā. Ibid., 63. For his radical views on the origin of Judaism and Christianity see, Kamal S. Salibi, *The Bible Came from Arabia* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985) and idem., *Who was Jesus: Conspiracy in Jerusalem* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2007).

However, S. H. Griffith, criticizing Sprenger's view, says,

Historically there is not only the example of Arabic speaking Jews writing Arabic in "Hebrew" characters. Syriac speakers also employed their own alphabet to write Arabic, a writing called *Garṣuni* in Syriac. But Waraqah, a Meccan and a native Arabic speaker, and not a Jew but an alleged Christian, would hardly have had any need to borrow the "Hebrew" script. By this time the north Arabic script, albeit with an obvious debt to the Syriac script in its origins, would certainly have been available to Waraqah.<sup>1</sup>

This criticism may be criticized, for some sources indicate that Waraqah b. Nawfal had converted to Judaism before his conversion to Christianity.<sup>2</sup> So keeping it in mind, there is no unlikelihood in his using Hebrew or Aramaic script for religious writings.

Griffith himself inclines to hold that in all likelihood the Christians of Ḥijāz had their Injīl in Syriac during the Prophet Muḥammad's (peace be on him) time, and that Waraqah b. Nawfal copied from the Injīl in his native, Arabic language. One of his arguments, among the others, is that the Arabic speaking Christians had strong ties with and were influenced by the Syriac speaking Christians and that the language of the vernacular scriptures in much of Syria and Palestine prior to the rise of Islam was the Aramaic dialect known as Palestinian Syriac.<sup>3</sup> Though, he does not clearly mention the language of the Injīl from which Waraqah used to copy in Arabic, one may safely assume, after reading his arguments, that it was Syriac.

He explains the variant of the narrative which reads, "He (Waraqah) used to write *al-kitāb al-ʿibrānī*, and he would write down from the Injīl *bi l-ʿibrāniyyah*," as a later correction of the narrative, contributed by someone who thought that the language of the original Injīl was Hebrew.<sup>4</sup> However, this explanation may not be correct, for it is based on an unsound hypothesis, that is, ḥadīth literature has been produced to meet the requirements of Islamic

<sup>1</sup> Sidney H. Griffith, "The Gospel in Arabic: An Inquiry into its Appearance in the First Abbasid Century", 145.

<sup>2</sup> Abū Mūsā al-Ḥarīrī, *Qaṣṣ wa Nabī: Baḥṭh fī Nashʾat al-Islām* (Beirut: n. p., 1979), 14. Abū Mūsā al-Ḥarīrī refers to Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat al-Nabī*, 1:203 for this information, but I could find it neither in Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat al-Nabī* nor in any other early source.

<sup>3</sup> Sidney H. Griffith, "The Gospel in Arabic: An Inquiry into its Appearance in the First Abbasid Century", 147.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 145.



apologetics.<sup>1</sup>

A book entitled *Qass wa Nabī* suggests that Waraqah b. Nawfal was associated with the Ebionite heresy and the Injil he possessed was the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew which is also known as Gospel according to Hebrews.<sup>2</sup> This view, however, does not seem to be correct, for there is no evidence that this sect which flourished in Trans-Jordan in the early centuries of the Christian era survived until the seventh and, what is more, in Makkah.<sup>3</sup>

Quite interestingly, Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 AH) proclaims, in the context of refuting the Christian claim that the disciples translated the Tawrah and the Injil into every language, that Arabs never possessed any Arabic version of the Tawrah or Injil since the time of the Messiah (peace be on him); even there had not been any manuscript of Tawrah or Injil at all in Makkah, neither in Arabic nor in non-Arabic. His argument is based on the unavailability of the ancient Arabic manuscripts of the scriptures as well as on the verse (28: 46)<sup>4</sup>.<sup>5</sup> However, his view might be criticized partially because authentic sources indicate that the Injil in some form was found in Makkah during the seventh century AD<sup>6</sup> and partially because the above-quoted verse does not necessarily imply that there had not been any kind of scripture in

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<sup>1</sup> For western debate on the authenticity question of ḥadīth literature see, Jonathan A. C. Brown, *Ḥadīth: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2010), 197-239. For the methods and history of ḥadīth criticism see, Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri II: Qur'ānic Commentary and Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1967); Mohammad Mustafa Azmi, *Studies in Early Ḥadīth Literature: with a Critical Edition of Some of Early Texts* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1968).

<sup>2</sup> Abū Mūsā al-Ḥarīrī, *Qass wa Nabī: Baḥṭh fī Nash'at al-Islām*, 56-59. It is entirely a polemical book, written in the wake of the Civil War in Lebanon during which Muslim-Christian relations reached their lowest ebb. For a critical review of it see, Aḥmad 'Umrān, *al-Ḥaqīqat al-Ṣa'bat fī 'l-Mizān* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasat al-'Alamī li 'l-Maṭbū'at, 1415/1995).

<sup>3</sup> Irfan Shahīd, "Islam and Oriens Christianus: Makka 610-622 AD", eds. Emmanouela Grypeou et al., *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 18.

<sup>4</sup> ﴿وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الطُّورِ إِذْ نَادَيْنَا وَلَكِنْ رَحْمَةً مِنْ رَبِّكَ لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مِمَّا أَتَاهُمْ مِنْ نَذِيرٍ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ﴾ (28: 46).

<sup>5</sup> Aḥmad b. Taymiyyah, *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ liḥman Baddal Dīn al-Maṣīḥ*, henceforth *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, eds. 'Alī b. Ḥasan b. Nāṣir et al. (Riyadh: Dār al-'Āshimāh, 1414 A. H.), 2:80-82; 3:417.

<sup>6</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismā'il al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1, 567, 886, 1204; Muslim b. Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 80.

Makkah before the advent of Islam.

After analyzing the available data, it seems that the Injil possessed by Waraqah b. Nawfal — regardless of whether it was a complete manuscript of the Injil or only a fragment — was most probably written in Syriac, not because it has been described in al-Bukhārī's report, rather because the historical evidences indicate that the language of the vernacular scriptures in much of Syria and Palestine — whence Christianity came to Arabia — prior to the rise of Islam was Syriac. This Syriac known as Palestinian Syriac was, in fact, a dialect of Aramaic.<sup>1</sup> Since Hebrew and Aramaic (Palestinian Syriac) used to be written in a common script, as Kamal Salibi proposes, it is possible that in Islamic Literature, sometimes Syriac has confusingly been named as Hebrew. Therefore, it seems that when Islamic literature reads, "He (Waraqah) used to write *al-kitāb al-'ibrānī*, and he would write down from the Injil *bi l-'ibrāniyyah*," it may mean that he used to write in Syriac. On the other hand, those who hold that it was written in Aramaic perhaps they mean by it Palestinian Syriac that was a specific dialect of Aramaic. (Allah knows the best.)

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<sup>1</sup> De Lacy O'Leary, *Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1923), 14-15.

## 2.2 HOW AND WHEN WAS THE INJIL REVEALED?

Muslims believe that a number of divine books were revealed to the respective Prophets prior to the Qur'ān. Some prophetic traditions deliberately describe when and how these divine books or sheets were revealed. Therefore, an analysis of such narrations may help to understand the concept of the Injil as perceived in the ḥadīth literature.

Al-Ṭabarānī narrates on the authority of Wāthilah b. Asqa' who narrates from the Messenger of God (peace be on him),

The Sheets of Ibrāhīm descended in the first night of Ramaḍān; the Tawrah descended in the sixth night of Ramaḍān; the Injil descended in the thirteenth night of Ramaḍān; the Zabūr descended in the eighteenth night of Ramaḍān; and the Qur'ān descended in the twenty-fourth night of Ramaḍān.<sup>1</sup>

It may be noted that a reference has been made to the sheets of Ibrāhīm (peace be on him) along with the four famous divine books. The Qur'ān also makes brief references to them.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting that all of these books revealed in Ramaḍān's nights with a gap of about six days between each one i.e. 1<sup>st</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 24<sup>th</sup> of Ramaḍān. The Zabūr has been mentioned after the Injil, which is against the chronological order, for the Injil was revealed after the Zabūr. All of these scriptures have been described to descend in an identical pattern which shows that the nature of the previous revelations, including that of the Injil, was the same as of the Qur'ān itself.

However, there are some other versions of this ḥidīth which differ from the above

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<sup>1</sup> Sulaymān b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-Awsat*, eds. Ṭāriq b. 'Awd Allāh and 'Abd al-Muḥsin b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥusaynī (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥaramay, 1415 AH), 4:111. Al-Ṭabarānī comments on this narration that only 'Imrān al-Qaṭṭān narrated this ḥadīth from Qatādah (d. 118 AH), and that it has been narrated from the Messenger of God (peace be on him) only by this chain. However, this claim is questionable, for Ibn Kathīr mentions that Ibn Mardawayh narrates this ḥadīth, though with some variations, on the authority of Jābir b. 'Abd Allāh as well. See, Ismā'il b. 'Umar b. Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, ed. Sāmī b. Muḥammad Salāmah (n. p. Dār Ṭaybah, 1420/1999), 1:501; also see, Abū Ya'lā Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Tamīmī, *al-Musnad*, ed. Ḥasan Salīm Asad (Damascus: Dār al-Ma'mūn li 'l-Turāth, 1404/1984), 4:135.

<sup>2</sup> ﴿إِنَّمَا تُنْزِلُهَا فِي صُحُفٍ مُوسَى﴾ (36) وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِي وَثَّى ﴿(53:37)؛ ﴿إِنَّ هَذَا لَمِنَ الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى﴾ (18) صُحُفٍ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى ﴿(87:19).

mentioned in some details. For instance, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal mentions the same tradition on the authority of the same Wāthilah b. Asqa' from the Messenger of God (peace be on him), but he omits the mentioning of the Zabūr. <sup>1</sup> Ismā'il b. Kathīr, on the other hand, mentions that Ibn Mardawayh narrates the same ḥadīth on the authority of Jābir b. 'Abd Allāh, but he reverses the order of Zabūr and Injīl as he makes the revelation of the Zabūr on the twelfth of Ramaḍān and of the Injīl on the eighteenth of Ramaḍān.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of all these variations, these traditions indicate that each of these divine books, including the Injīl, descended on the respective prophet in a specific night of Ramaḍān. Perhaps that is why the majority of Muslim scholars hold that the previous divine books *i.e.* Sheets, Tawrāh, Zabūr, and Injīl were sent down all at once, and that the Qur'ān was sent down to *Bayt al-'Izzah* in the first heaven in the same way and then whence it descended on the Prophet (peace be on him) step by step.<sup>3</sup> These narrations also signify the importance of Ramaḍān in relation to all revelations, especially the Qur'ān, for it claims about itself that it has been sent down in Ramaḍān, specifically in *Laylat al-Qadr*.<sup>4</sup> Later on, Muslim scholars gave more specific accounts in this regard, perhaps using such traditions along with some biblical materials. For instance, Ibn Kathīr narrates on the authority of Abū Zur'ah al-Dimashqī (d. 281 AH) that the Tawrāh descended on Mūsā (peace be on him) in the sixth night of Ramaḍān; the Zabūr descended in the twelfth night of Ramaḍān after 482 years from the Tawrāh; the Injīl descended on 'Īsā b. Maryam (peace be on him) in the eighteenth night of Ramaḍān after 1050 years from Zabūr; and the Qur'ān descended in the twenty-fourth night of Ramaḍān.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, commented by, Ḥamzah Aḥmad al-Zayn (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1416/1995), 13:223. Its chain is *ḥasan*, because of 'Imrān al-Qaṭṭān. However, the rest of transmitters are *thiqāt* (reliable). See, *Ibid.*, footnote no. 16921.

<sup>2</sup> Ismā'il b. 'Umar b. Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, 1:501.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> ﴿شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ الْكَرِيمُ﴾ (2:185), ﴿إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ﴾ (97:1).

<sup>5</sup> Ismā'il b. 'Umar b. Kathīr, *Qīṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā (Beirut: al-Maktabat al-Islāmiyyah, 1401/1981?), 2:402.

It should also be noted that such prophetic traditions are in accordance with the Qur'ānic concept of the Injīl which maintains that it was a divine book revealed to the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him), by Allah. They do not support the Christian view of the gospels, which denies that Jesus was given any book known as Gospel by God; rather it maintains that gospels were composed after Jesus by his disciples and apostles, as a historical account of his life.

Some prophetic traditions picture the previous scriptures divided into sūrahs (chapters) in the same way as is the case in the Qur'ān. They also compare some specific sūrahs of the Qur'ān with previous revealed books, along with the Injīl. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, for instance, mentions on the authority of Wāthilah b. Asqa' from the Prophet (peace be on him), "I have been given *al-Sab'* instead of the Tawrāh, *al-Mi'in* instead of the Zabūr, and *al-Mathānī* instead of the Injīl, as well as I have been given superiority by *al-Mufaṣṣal*."<sup>1</sup>

It is generally held that the term *al-Sab'* or *al-Sab' al-Ṭiwāl* signifies first seven sūrahs of the Qur'ān, excluding al-Fātiḥah, al-Anfāl and al-Tawbah, i.e. al-Baqarah, Āl 'Imrān, al-Nisā', al-Mā'idah, al-An'ām, al-A'rāf and Yūnus.<sup>2</sup> Some scholars replace Yūnus with al-Anfāl and al-Tawbah, considering them one sūrah.<sup>3</sup> Al-Mi'in are those sūrahs which contain hundred and above verses. The term al-Mathānī, on the other hand, is interpreted either as sūrat al-Fāṭiḥah or as those sūrahs which are longer than al-Mufaṣṣal but shorter than al-Mi'in.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps in the present context, it is better to adopt the second interpretation, for in another prophetic tradition, sūrat al-Fātiḥah has been considered a unique sūrah, which has no compatible sūrah in any revealed book.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 13:222. Its chain is *ḥasan*, because of 'Imrān al-Qaṭṭān. See, Ibid., footnote no. 16919.

<sup>2</sup> Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-Ṣuḡhrā*, ed. 'Abd al-Muṭī Amīn Qal'ajī (Karachi: Jāmi'at al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyyah, 1410/1989), 1:341.

<sup>3</sup> 'Abd Allāh b. Muslim b. Qutaybah, *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1408/1988), 54.

<sup>4</sup> Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-Ṣuḡhrā*, 1:341. Ibn Qutaybah mentions that sometimes the number of verses in some al-Mi'in sūrās is less than one hundred. 'Abd Allāh b. Muslim b. Qutaybah, *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, 54.

<sup>5</sup> See, Muḥammad b. 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī* (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām), 646. Al-Tirmidhī declares it *ḥasanun ṣaḥīḥ*, ibid., 647; Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, , 15:405-06.

In some other versions of the above-mentioned prophetic tradition, *al-Mathānī* were made substitute for the Zabūr instead of the Injil.<sup>1</sup> Somewhere else *al-Mā'idah* was made substitute for the Injil and *al-Ḥawāmīm* for the Zabūr as well as the Tawrāh was ascribed to be replaced by *al-Mathānī*.<sup>2</sup> It has also been reported that *Ṭāhā*, *Ṭawāsīn*, and *al-Ḥawāmīm* were revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) from the tablets (*al-wāh*) of Mūsā (peace be on him) and *sūrat al-Baqarah* from *al-dhikr al-awwal*.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, some less authentic traditions state that the Prophet (peace be on him) was given *al-Rā'āt* in place of the Injil and *sūrahs* from *al-Ṭawāsīm* to *al-Ḥawāmīm* in place of the Zabūr as well as he was honoured by *al-Ḥawāmīm* and *al-Mufaṣṣal*, for none of prophets ever recited them before him.<sup>4</sup>

It is obvious that all of these traditions differ markedly and it seems difficult to reconcile them. However, all of them do agree on one thing, that is, the compatibility of some parts of the Qur'ān — whatever they are — with some previous revealed books. This view is further strengthened by the following saying of 'Abd Allāh b. (Mas'ūd) which reads, "*Al-Sab' al-Ṭuwal* are like Tawrāh; *al-Mi'in* are like Injil; *al-Mathānī* are like Zabūr; and the rest of the Qur'ān is surplus (which has no match in the previous revelations)."<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, it has also been reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) declared some of the Qur'ānic

<sup>1</sup> Sulaymān b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, Ḥamdī 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Salafī (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyyah, 1983 AD?), 22:75.

<sup>2</sup> Abū Nu'aym Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Aṣḥabānī, *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah* (Hyderabad Deccan: Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyyah, 1369/1950), 1:28.

<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak 'alā 'l-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, ed. Maḥmūd Maṭraǧī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1422/2002), 2:125. Al-Ḥākim declared it *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic), but al-Dhahabī narrated, in *al-Talkhīṣ*, from Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal that scholars of Ḥadīth gave up narrations of one of its transmitters 'Ubayd Allāh. See, *ibid.*, footnote no. 2129.

<sup>4</sup> Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Marwazī, *Mukhtaṣar Qiyām al-Layl* (Faisalabad: Ḥadīth Akādmī, 1408/1988), 170. However, al-Albānī declares it as *ḍa'if jiddan* (extremely unreliable), because of one of its transmitters, Khārījāh b. Muṣ'ab. See, Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ḍa'ifah wa 'l-Mawḍū'ah wa Atharuhā 'l-Sayyī' 'alā 'l-Ummah* (Riyadh: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1412/1992), 7:51.

<sup>5</sup> 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī, *Musnad al-Dāramī*, ed. Ḥusayn Salīm Asad al-Dārānī (Riyadh: Dār al-Mughnī, 1421/2000), 4:2140. Its chain is *ḍa'if* (unauthentic), for al-Musayyib b. Rāfi' who narrated it from 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd did not meet him. See, *ibid.*, footnote no. 5.

sūrahs viz. al-Fātiḥah, al-Ikhlāṣ, al-Falaq, and al-Nās, as the best sūrahs which had no similitude in the Tawrah, the Zabūr, the Injil or even in the Qur'ān itself.<sup>1</sup>

It seems that the main thrust of such traditions is to establish the *fadā'il* (merits) of the Qur'ānic sūrahs as well as to demonstrate the supremacy of the Qur'ān over the previous scriptures, but they do imply that the intact previous revelations, along with the Injil, have been considered, in the ḥadīth literature, as verbal words of God as are certain sūrahs of the Qur'ān and not as historical or biographical accounts compiled by the followers of the prophets.

There are found some other traditions, which tell about the number of previous revealed books. However, such narrations too, have the problem of variations as they differ in their accounts.

Ibn Ḥabbān narrates, on the authority of Abū Dharr from the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him), a long tradition in which the Prophet (peace be on him) tells Abū Dharr that Allah revealed one hundred and four books. Fifty sheets descended on Shīth (peace be on him); thirty sheets descended on Idrīs (peace be on him); ten sheets descended on Ibrāhīm (peace be on him); and ten sheets descended on Mūsā (peace be on him) before the Tawrah as well as Tawrah, Injil, Zabūr and Qur'ān descended (on the respective Prophets).<sup>2</sup> This tradition mentions some details about the contents of the sheets of Ibrāhīm and Mūsā (peace be on them) as well. One observes that it informs about the number of divine scriptures and about the prophets to whom they were revealed. However, one finds in historical and Sīrah literature some different information in this regard. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Ṣāliḥī (d. 942 AH) mentions that sheets of Ādam (peace be on him) were 51, of Shīth (peace be on him) were 20 and of Idrīs were 30.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH) relates on the authority of al-

<sup>1</sup> Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 13:344; 376; 15:405-06. These ḥadīths are *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic). See, *ibid.*, footnotes no. 17267, 17383, 20993 and 20994.

<sup>2</sup> Muḥammad b. Ḥabbān al-Bustī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥabbān bi Tartīb Ibn Balbān*, 2:76. The chain of this ḥadīth is *ḍa'īf* (unauthentic), for one of its transmitters is Ibrāhīm b. Hishām b. Yaḥyā al-Ghassānī whom Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zur'āh declared *ḍa'īf* (unreliable), though Ibn Ḥabbān authenticated him (*waththaqahu*). See, *ibid.* footnote.

<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Ṣāliḥī, *Subul al-Hudā wa 'l-Rashād fī Sirat Kayr al-'Ibād*, 1:319.

Tha'labī that the total of books descended on the Envoys are four; the Tawrah, the Injīl, the Zabūr and the Furqān. As far as the revealed sheets are concerned, they are 110; 60 sheets descended on Shīth b. Ādam (peace be on him), 30 sheets descended on Idrīs (peace be on him) and 20 sheets descended on Ibrāhīm (peace be on him).<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that above-mentioned traditions, too, place the Injīl and the Qur'ān in the line of all previous revealed books and do not indicate to any substantial difference between the nature of their revelation.

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā'i' al-Duhūr* (n. p.: n. p., n. d.), 1:187. (The book, however, is not according to the published edition. It has been cited from *al-Maktabat al-Shāmilah*, ed. 3.28.)



## 2.3 THE QUESTION OF CORRUPTION

The ḥadīth literature not only provides information about the history of alteration of the previous revealed books; it also provides material about the nature of Jewish-Christian scriptural corruption, during the early Islamic period. There are certain traditions which explain how the corruption found its way into the previous scriptures of the People of the Book, especially into the Injil. They also shed light on their motives behind the falsification of scriptures.

According to ḥadīth literature, the ruling class is responsible for corrupting the Christian scriptures. A tradition reported from Ibn ‘Abbās charges those rulers who came after the era of the Prophet ‘Īsā (peace be on him) of altering the Tawrāh and the Injil.<sup>1</sup> Such alteration, however, was not accepted by the whole community; rather there remained a minority of believers who continued to read the Tawrāh and the Injil in undistorted form. Nevertheless, those who altered their scriptures complained to the rulers that the believers had annoyed them by reading intact scriptures and blaming them of blasphemy for not judging by what Allah had revealed. They demanded from them to enforce the believers to read and believe as they read and believed. So the rulers called them and gave them a choice between death and reading the intact Tawrāh and the Injil. The believers, however, tried to make a deal and requested a third option; that was self-exile.<sup>2</sup>

Their forms of self-exile correspond to three kinds of monastic life. One group said, “Build for us a column (*ustuwānah*), then raise us up to it and give us something so that we can

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<sup>1</sup> Aḥmad b. Shu‘ayb al-Nasā’i, *Sunan al-Nasā’i al-Ṣuḡhrā* (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 1420/1999), 732.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. It may be noted that J. D. McAuliffe misunderstands this tradition when she thinks that the faithful group complained to the ruler against those who falsified the scripture and that the falsifiers were the ones who chose the self-exile. She says, “Goaded by the taunts of the falsifiers, the faithful group sought redress from a sympathetic authority, demanding that he order their coreligionists to cease the altered recitation. When the king complied with this request, the falsifiers took umbrage and chose to exile themselves rather than return to the original scriptures.” Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qur’anic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 264.

lift up our food and drink, thus we would not come to you.”<sup>1</sup> Another group chose a different path, saying, “Let us roam about the land and wander, drinking what the wild beasts drink. If you find us in your territory kill us.”<sup>2</sup> Yet a third group demanded, “Build for us a dwelling in the desert and we will dig wells and cultivate herbs, so we would neither come to nor pass with you.”<sup>3</sup> Since each of the tribes had friends among those believers, they let them choose self-exile.<sup>4</sup> This tradition illuminates the beginning of monasticism in Christianity on the one hand and explains the starting point of the scriptural alteration in Christianity, on the other.

It seems that the above-mentioned believers who made a deal with those who corrupted the scriptures were the third category of those three Christian groups which have been mentioned in another prophetic tradition reported on the authority of ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas‘ūd. It begins with a quotation from the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) that those who preceded him were subdivided into seventy-two groups of which only three were saved while the rest perished. The first of these actively opposed the unjust rulers but were killed, fighting for the religion of God and the religion of ‘Īsā b. Maryam (peace be on him). The second group lacking the capacity to oppose the rulers, stayed among their people preaching them about the religion of God and the religion of ‘Īsā b. Maryam (peace be on him), but the rulers killed them, too, sawing them up with saws. The third group lacking the courage to oppose the rulers and to live among their people preaching them about Allah and the religion of ‘Īsā b. Maryam (peace be on him), wandered around the mountains, living as monks and hermits.<sup>5</sup>

On the base of above-mentioned, one may argue that the attempts were made to falsify

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<sup>1</sup> Aḥmad b. Shu‘ayb al-Nasā‘ī, *Sunan al-Nasā‘ī al-Ṣuḡhrā*, 732.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak ‘alā ‘l-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 3:85. Al-Ḥākim declared it *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic), but al-Dhahabī, in *al-Talkhīṣ*, declared it unauthentic because of one of its transmitters ‘Aqīl b. Yaḥyā whom al-Bukhārī declared *munkar al-ḥadīth*. See, *ibid.*, footnote no. 3840.

the Tawrah and the Injil by the ruling class as early as after the ascension of the Prophet 'Isā (peace be on him). However, some faithful believers stood against such attempts, but they were defeated by the powerful rulers; others changed the strategy and did not involve in direct encounter with the rulers, rather preached to the masses living among them, but they were also treated intolerantly and were slaughtered mercilessly. Realizing their helplessness, the remaining true believers preferred to flee into the deserts and mountains to save their belief. As a result, the official Christianity became corrupted having changed its scriptures while the true followers of the Prophet 'Isā (peace be on him) scattered into remote areas beyond the range of the Christian authorities to escape the persecution, perhaps preserving with them some fragments of the original Injil of the Prophet 'Isā (peace be on him). Official Christianity declared them heretics and their scriptures apocryphal and extra-canonical.

One should not suppose, however, that the doctrines of the third group completely remained intact. It is hardly possible in such circumstances. In fact, the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth literature indicate that their doctrines also could not remain pure and that polytheism (*shirk*) crept into the beliefs of their subsequent adherents.<sup>1</sup> However, they were the people, as the traditions say, among whom a few survived till the advent of Islam. So "a man descended from his cell (*ṣawma'ah*), a wanderer came forth from his wanderings, the one who had a constructed dwelling (*ṣāhib al-dayr*) came from his abode and they all believed in and confirmed the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him)."<sup>2</sup>

Besides providing information about the history of the falsification of the previous scriptures, the ḥadīth literature sheds light on the perspective of the Prophet (peace be on him) and his companions to the scriptures available in seventh century AD. Some traditions apparently indicate that the texts of the Tawrah and the Injil were not tampered with, rather they were misinterpreted. Al-Bukhārī narrates on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās that the word *Yuharrifūn* means that they displace (*yuzilūn*).<sup>3</sup> Then he further elaborates it by saying, "None displaces the text of any book of God — the Exalted and Glorious — rather they

<sup>1</sup> Aḥmad b. Shu'ayb al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī al-Ṣuḡhrā*, 733.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismā'il al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1303.

commit *tahrif* which means that they wrongly interpret it.”<sup>1</sup>

However, it is not certain whether this further elaboration is of Ibn ‘Abbās or al-Bukhārī’s own. Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlavī ascribes it to Ibn ‘Abbās, as he writes, “It should be kept in mind that the Jews would modify the translation of Pentateuch and not the original text. This is what has been ascertained by me on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās.”<sup>2</sup> However, others ascribe it to al-Bukhārī himself. Ibn al-Mulaqqin is one of them.<sup>3</sup> Ibn Hajar thinks that both are possible, but he prefers the second one, for he mentions later on, “al-Bukhārī implies by *yata’awwalūnahū* that they tamper with the intended meaning with some kind of interpretation (*ta’wīl*), as if a Hebrew word contained two meanings; one was clear that was the intended one, and the other was farfetched; they would interpret it with the farfetched one.”<sup>4</sup> It seems more plausible to ascribe this explanation to al-Bukhārī rather than to Ibn ‘Abbās, for elsewhere Ibn ‘Abbās has been said to have a different view. It is reported that he says,

Why do you ask the people of the scripture about any thing while your Book (Qur’ān) which has been revealed to Allāh’s Apostle (may the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him) is newer? You read it pure, undistorted and unchanged, and Allah has told you that the people of the scripture (Jews and Christians) changed their scripture and distorted it, and wrote the scripture with their own hands and said, ‘It is from Allāh’, to sell it for a little gain. Does not the knowledge which has come to you prevent you from asking them about anything? No, by Allāh, we have never seen any man from them asking you regarding what has been revealed to you!<sup>5</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī also narrates from Ibn ‘Abbās while interpreting 3:78, “They are the Jews.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Hujjat Allāh (sic) al-Dihlawī, *al-Fawz al-Kabīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr* (Beirut: Dār Qutaybah, 1409/1989), 22. The translation is of Shah Waliyullah, *al-Fawz al-Kabir fī Usul al-Tafsir: The Principles of Quran Commentary*, trans. G. N. Jalbani (Islamabad: National Hijra Council, 1405/1985), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, 13:642.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 13:645.

<sup>5</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1266. The translation is of Imam Abi Abdullah Muhammad bin Ismaiel al-Bukhari, *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhari: Arabic-English*, trans. Muhammad Matraji (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 1997 AD), 9:357, 359.

They used to add to the Book of Allah what Allah never revealed.”<sup>1</sup> Such traditions shed light on the attitude of Ibn ‘Abbās towards the scriptural corruption of the People of the Book as well as they demonstrate that his above-mentioned perception has been based on the Qur’ānic judgment, as he argues, “Allāh has told you that the people of the scripture (Jews and Christians) changed their scripture and distorted it, and wrote the scripture with their own hands and said, ‘It is from Allāh’, to sell it for a little gain.”<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it should be kept in mind that above-mentioned al-Bukhārī’s statement specifically concerns the Tawrah and should not be generalized to include the Christian scriptures.

Ibn ‘Abbās’ perception may have been influenced by that of the Prophet (peace be on him) himself who did not like for his companions looking into the scriptures possessed by his contemporary People of the Book.<sup>3</sup> Even he forbade the Muslims from confirming or rejecting what the People of the Book informed them about the contents of their scriptures and demanded them to say only, “We believed in whatever had been sent to us and whatever had been sent to you.”<sup>4</sup> It implies that the Prophet (peace be on him) was not comfortable with the authenticity of the scriptures possessed by his contemporary Jews and Christians, though he showed immense reverence for the original Books revealed to the respective Prophets (peace be on them).

Some prophetic traditions reveal that the Tawrah which the Jews of Madīnah possessed during the life of the Prophet (peace be on him) was in Hebrew and they recited it in Hebrew, but explained its contents to the Muslims in Arabic.<sup>5</sup> It also contained some intact portions of the original Tawrah, viz. the injunction about the fornication, but they tried level

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<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi’ al-Bayān*, 6:536.

<sup>2</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1266. The translation is of Imam Abi Abdullah Muhammad bin Ismaiel al-Bukhari, *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhari: Arabic-English*, 9:357, 359.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī, *Musnad al-Dārimī*, 1:403. Its chain is *ḍa‘īf* (unauthentic), because of one of its transmitters Mujālid. However, the ḥadīth is *ḥasan* at least. See, *ibid.*, footnote no. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1266.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1302.

best to conceal it.<sup>1</sup> The Qur'ān also refers to this matter.<sup>2</sup>

The Jews and Christians of the time of the Prophet (peace be on him), some traditions inform, possessed the Tawrah and the Injil and they read them, but they neither practiced their teachings nor made use of them.<sup>3</sup> Such traditions, however, may imply that the People of the Book distorted the meanings of their scripture; sought false interpretations to avoid practicing them and as a result became deprived of their guidance, despite possessing them.

Interestingly, in ḥadīth literature one finds that the Jews of Madīnah were not only accustomed to the Injil; rather they studied it as well as it appears as though the Prophet (peace be on him) thought that the Jews of Madīnah revered it. It has been reported on the authority of al-Faltān b. 'Āṣim that a Jew told the Prophet (peace be on him) that he had read the Tawrah and the Injil. It also has been said that the Prophet (peace be on him) asked him about his prophecies in the Tawrah and the Injil saying, "I ask you by Him who sent down the Tawrah and the Injil ... if you do not find me in both of them."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, contrary to this, there are other traditions which show that the Jews of Madīnah disbelieved in 'Īsā (peace be on him) and the Injil as well as the Christians of Najrān disbelieved in the prophethood of Mūsā (peace be on him) and the Tawrah.<sup>5</sup> The later report is further strengthened by the Qur'ānic statement in 2:113,<sup>6</sup> though the Christians, in general, recognize Mūsā (peace be on him) and the Tawrah.

In sum, it seems that although the ḥadīth literature indicates to both kinds of corruption of the previous scriptures, especially of the Injil, it is the textual alteration, which seems to be more manifested.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 776.

<sup>2</sup> ﴿وَكَيْفَ يُحْكُمُونَكَ وَعِنْدَهُمُ التَّوْرَةُ فِيهَا حُكْمُ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّوْنَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَمَا أُولَئِكَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ (5:43).

<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad b. Yazīd b. Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah* (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 1420/1999), 585; Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak 'alā 'l-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 1:199-200. Al-Ḥākim declared it *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic), and al-Dhahabī, in *al-Talkhīs*, agreed with him. See, *ibid.*, footnote no. 341-42.

<sup>4</sup> Sulaymān b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, 18:332-34. The author of *al-Majma'* declared its transmitters as *thiqāt* (reliable). See also, *ibid.*, footnote no. 854.

<sup>5</sup> 'Abd al-Malik b. Hishām, *Sīrat al-Nabī*, 2:175

<sup>6</sup> ﴿وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَ الْنَصَارَى عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى لَيْسَ الْيَهُودُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ﴾ (2:113).

## 2.4 PROPHECIES ABOUT THE ADVENT OF THE PROPHET

### MUḤAMMAD (peace be on him)

In ḥadīth literature, one finds a number of traditions which indicate that the scriptures of the People of the Book, the contemporaries of the Prophet (peace be on him) contained descriptions of and prophecies about him. Some of them have been narrated by the companions or the successors (*al-tābi'ūn*) and have not been attributed to the Prophet (peace be on him), but others, however, have directly been reported from the Prophet himself.

Since the Qur'ān plainly states that the People of the Book find the description of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) in their scriptures, "Those who follow the apostle, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (scriptures), - in the law and the Gospel",<sup>1</sup> and refers to some specific similes which had also been mentioned in the previous scripture,<sup>2</sup> it was quite natural and logical for the Prophet (peace be on him) and his companions to attempt to find them out in the existent stock of the previous scriptures of their time.

It is reported that Negus, the King of Abyssinia, acknowledged before the companions who migrated there, as follows, "I witness that he is the Messenger of God; that we find him in the Injil; and that he is the Messenger about whom 'Īsā b. Maryam prophesized."<sup>3</sup>

The ḥadīth and sīrah literature preserves several traditions which reveal that the Prophet (peace be on him) himself inquired the People of the Book about his prophecies mentioned in their scriptures. It has been reported on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās that the Messenger of God (peace be on him) wrote to the Jews of Khaybar. After mentioning his companionship, brotherhood, and corroboration for the Prophet Mūsā (peace be on him), he quoted the verse 48:29 and then asked them,

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<sup>1</sup> «الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْنُونًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي الْوَرْدَةِ وَالْأَنْجِيلِ» (7:157)

<sup>2</sup> «يُحَمَّدُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرَاهُمْ رُفْقًا شَدِيدًا يُنْفَعُونَ فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا بَيْنَهُمْ فِي أَوَّلِ السُّجُودِ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَى عَلَى سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرْعَ لِيُخَيِّطَ بِهِمْ الْكُفَّارَ وَعَذَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا» (48:29).

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 4:246. The chain of this ḥadīth is *ḥasan*. See, *ibid.*, 4:244, footnote no. 4400.

I adjure you by God, by that which has come down to you, and by him who fed manna and quails to your forbears and tribes, who dried up the sea for your forefathers to save you from Pharaoh and his deeds that you must tell us whether you find in God's revelations to you (the fact) that you should believe in Muḥammad. And if you do not discover that in your scriptures, then you would not be enforced at all. (By now) what is right has become clear from what is error. And I call you to God and his Prophet."<sup>1</sup>

The verse, referred to in this letter, was revealed on return from Ḥudaybiyyah. After a short time, the Prophet (peace be on him) went on a military expedition against the Jews of Khaybar.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, most probably this letter had been written not long after the Pact of Ḥudaybiyyah. There are several things to be noted in this passage. Since the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) wrote this letter to the Jews, he mentioned himself as the companion, brother and corroborator of the Prophet Mūsā (peace be on him) in the opening part of the letter. He was convinced of being mentioned in the previous revelations to the effect that he referred to the above-mentioned verse and argued against the Jews on its basis. He mentioned the blessings which Allah bestowed upon their forefathers and asked them about his prophecy, adjuring them by Allah who gave them such blessings. He assured them that if they really could not find his description in their book, they would not be enforced to hold it.

Some traditions reveal that the Jews of Madīnah definitely knew him as a Prophet and found his descriptions in their scripture, but they denied him in envy. It is reported on the authority of Abū Hurayrah that when the Prophet (peace be on him) asked 'Abd Allāh b. Šūriyā, the most learned Jew of Madīnah of his time, about his prophethood he answered, "I know (that you are the Messenger of Allāh) and the Jews know what I know as well. Your description has clearly been mentioned in the Tawrah, but they envied you."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismā'il b. Kathīr, *al-Sīrat al-Nabawiyyah*, 1:324-25. The translation is, with some slight changes, of Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, trans. Trevor Le Gassick (Berkshire: Garnet Publishing Ltd, 1998), 1:234-35.

<sup>2</sup> 'Abd al-Malik b. Hishām, *Sīrat al-Nabī*, 3:369, 378.

<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismā'il b. Kathīr, *al-Sīrat al-Nabawiyyah*, 1:324.



In some other traditions, the Prophet (peace be on him) informs the Jews that they find his description in their scriptures. It is reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) passed by some Jewish schools and said to the Jews, "O Jews, accept Islam. For, by him in whose hand is my soul, you certainly find my description in your scriptures."<sup>1</sup>

It is reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* that 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ who found at the battle of Yarmūk two bags of scriptures of the People of the Book and used to relate from them a great deal,<sup>2</sup> said,

Certainly, he is, by God, referred to in the Tawrah as he is in the Qur'ān. 'O Prophet, we have sent you to give witness, to bring good tidings, and to warn, and to protect the illiterates. You are my slave and my messenger. I have named you *al-Mutawakkil*; a man not rough or uncouth nor one who shouts loudly in the markets; a man who does not pay back evil with evil, but one who forgives and pardons; and He will not take him until he sets the deviant community aright by having them bear witness that there is no god but Allah. By him He will open blind eyes, dead ears, and closed hearts.<sup>3</sup>

The same description, with slight variation, has been reported from 'Abd Allāh b. Salām and Ka'b al-Aḥbār, the two well-known converted Jewish scholars, as well.<sup>4</sup> Some parts of this description have also been reported from 'Ā'ishah, but she has been said to refer it to the Injil rather than the Tawrah. It is reported that she said, "The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) has been described in the Injil as (one who is) not rough, nor uncouth, not one who shouts loudly in the markets, and (as one who) does not repay evil with the like, but pardons and forgives."<sup>5</sup> Some times mistakenly this tradition is directly (*marfū'an*) related

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 1:326-27.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 1:328. Ibn Kathīr notes that many previous Muslim scholars used the term Tawrah to denote the scriptures of the People of the Book in general and that their perception of the Tawrah is broader than what was actually revealed to the Prophet Mūsā (peace be on him). Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismā'il al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 341.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.; Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 13:164.

<sup>5</sup> Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak 'alā 'l-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 3:214-15. Al-Ḥākim declared it *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic), and al-Dhahabī, in *al-Talkhīs*, agreed with him. See, *ibid.*, footnote no. 4277.

from the Prophet (peace be on him) on the authority of 'Ā'ishah,<sup>1</sup> as well as some of these descriptions are also reported from her without a reference to the Injil.<sup>2</sup>

Description of the Prophet (peace be on his) is not confined to the Tawrah and the Injil; rather there are narrations which entail that he has been prophesized in the Zabūr as well. It is reported on the authority of Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 114/732) that Allah revealed to the Prophet Dāwūd (peace be on him) in the Zabūr as follows,

O Dāwūd, there will come after you a prophet named Aḥmad and Muḥammad, a truthful man, a lord; I will never be angry with him, and he will never make me angry with him. I have forgiven him before he disobeyed me, both his previous and his later sins. His nation is forgiven. I have made gifts to them similar to those I gave to the prophets, and I imposed duties upon them that I imposed upon the prophets and the messengers, so that they will come to me on Judgment Day with their light like that of the prophets.<sup>3</sup>

Many ḥadīth traditions show how a number of people in the prophetic period found or asserted to find the prophecies about and descriptions of the prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) in the Injil available to them. Al-Suyūṭī records from al-Bayhaqī (d. 458 AH) on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68 AH) that al-Jārūd b. 'Abd Allah came to the Prophet (peace be on him), accepted Islam and said, "By whom who sent you in truth, I have found your description in the Injil. And for sure, the son of the blessed virgin has prophesied you."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, he and Al-Ālūsī (d. 1270 AH) report from Ibn Sa'd (d. 230 AH) and Ibn 'Asākir (d. 610 AH) on the authority of Sahl, the freedman of Khaythamah, that he read the description of the Prophet (peace be on him) in the Injil as follows,

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<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismā'il b. Kathīr, *al-Bidāyat wa 'l-Nihāyah*, ed. 'Alī Shayrī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1408/1988), 2:400.

<sup>2</sup> Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah*, ed. 'Abd al-Mu'tī Qal'ajī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1429/2008), 1:315.

<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismā'il b. Kathīr, *al-Sīrat al-Nabawiyyah*, 1:329. The translation is of Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, 1:237-38.

<sup>4</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī 'l-Tafsīr al-Ma'thūr* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1421/2000), 3:245.

He would be neither short nor tall. He would be white coloured and wear two shabby clothes. There would be a seal of the prophethood between his shoulders. He would sit mostly in the position of *iḥtibā'*. He would not accept charity (for himself). He would ride on the donkey and the camel. He would draw milk from the goat and wear the patched gown (*qamīs*). The person acts so, is free of haughtiness. He would act so and would be the offspring of Ismā'īl (peace be on him).<sup>1</sup>

These traditions indicate that some copies of the Injīl, which contained the prophecies about the Prophet (peace be on him) must have survived in the Arabian Peninsula at least till the seventh century. We do not have enough information about them; however, one thing is confirmed that their contents must have been different from the canonical Gospels, for the Gospels do not contain such prophecies.

Some later authorities ascribe to the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) some prophecies about the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him), but without a reference to the Injīl, as Muqātil b. Ḥayyān (d. 150 AH) reports that the Almighty and Glorious Allah revealed to 'Īsā b. Maryam (peace be on him) as follows,

Serve me well and listen and obey, O son of the pure, chaste, virgin. I have created you without a physical father and have made you a sign for the worlds, so worship me only, and explain to the people of Sūrān in Syriac; tell those around you that I am the Existent Truth that will never pass away, believe in the Arab *ummī* (unlettered) Prophet; he who has the camel, and wears a *midra'ah* (outer garment), and a turban that is his crown, and sandals, and has a cane that is his staff. His hair is curly, his brow is broad, his eyebrows are joined, his eyes are large, his lashes are fine, his eyes are black, his nose is curved, his cheeks are distinct, and his beard is full. The sweat of his face is like pearls; from him the scent of musk emanates. His neck is like a silver vessel, and along his collarbone gold seems to flow. He has hair that grow long and soft from his throat to his navel, his stomach bearing no other hair. He is broad of fingers and toes. He overshadows all when he is with others. When he walks he seems to emerge from the rock and flow from the stream. He has

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.; Abū 'l-Faḍl Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ṣayyid Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm wa 'l-Sab' al-Mathānī*, henceforth *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Amad and 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām al-Salāmī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī and Mu'assasah al-Ta'rīkh al-'Arabī, 1420/1999), 9:107-08.

few progeny, — as if he meant males as is offspring.<sup>1</sup>

It is surprising to note, however, that most of the above-mentioned prophetic descriptions have also been narrated in the books of *Sīrah* and especially of *Shamā'il* in the same way, but without any reference to the previous scriptures. For instance, compare the above-mentioned passage with the following one,

It is reported from 'Alī that the Prophet (peace be on him) was neither very tall nor short. He is broad of fingers and toes. He had a large head. The joints of the bones were also large. There was a thin line of hair from the chest to the navel. When he walked, it appeared as if he was descending from a high place.<sup>2</sup>

The rest of descriptions are also described in other ḥadīths.<sup>3</sup> However, such descriptions do not have any parallels in the existing gospels; some of them might have been derived from the same source whence the corpus of Jesus' sayings and stories emerged and scattered in the Islamic literature especially in the ascetic books and in a genre of religious literature called "Tales of the Prophets" (*Qīṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismā'il b. Kathīr, *al-Sīrat al-Nabawīyyah*, 1:330-31. The translation is, with some variations, of Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, 1:239.

<sup>2</sup> Muḥammad b. Sūrat al-Tirmidhī, *al-Shamā'il al-Muḥammadiyyah*, ed. Muḥammad 'Afif al-Za'bi, (Jeddah: Dār al-Maṭbū'āt al-Ḥadīthah, 1409/1988), 19.

<sup>3</sup> See, Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah*, 1:268-75.

<sup>4</sup> On Jesus' sayings and stories as preserved in Islamic literature see, Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), that also contains a detailed introduction, in which the author attempts to place this genre in its historical context. He names this kind of literature "Muslim gospel".

## 2.5 A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

It may be noted that although the ḥadīth literature contains a number of useful references to the Injīl which was revealed to the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him), some aspects are still in darkness. References are found to the Injīl possessed by Waraqah b. Nawfal, but information in this regard is both meager and confusing. Even the knowledge about the personality of Waraqah is obscure. Although, Islamic sources testify to his adoption of Christianity they do not identify his denominational position among the Christian sects of his time. Moreover, neither the sources of his Injīl are known nor did it leave any traces behind. However, since the Islamic traditions attest his traveling to Syria, Baḥrayn and the territories of the tribe of Ṭayy', it may be assumed that he might have had some association with either Nestorianism or Monophysitism, for these two denominations generally prevailed in these areas.

Hadīth literature indicates that Waraqah's Injīl was either in Arabic or in 'Ibrānī or in both. However, the modern scholarship, both Muslim and western, is inclined to hold that it was most probably in Syriac and that he used to translate it in Arabic. Some classical Ḥadīth commentators also seem to have suggested such a view. Moreover, if the 'Ibrāniyyah mentioned in the ḥadīth literature is equated with the Syriac then almost all inconsistency will be removed as it has been explained above.

Those ḥadīth traditions which explain how and when the Injīl was revealed and inform about the number of previous revealed scriptures help to conceptualize the nature of the Injīl's revelation. However, it should be noted that comparatively less authentication and consistency characterize such traditions. It clearly seems that the ḥadīth literature's attitude towards the Injīl is an expansion of that of the Qur'ān. In the ḥadīth traditions, the Injīl has been depicted as a divine revelation to the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him). One finds many parallels between the Qur'ān and the Injīl; both were revealed in a specific night of Ramaḍān; both were divided into sūrahs and; some specific sūrahs of the Qur'ān were declared as substitute or simile of the Injīl as well as others were supposed to be unique having no similitude in any revealed scripture. It may imply that the original Injīl has been considered, in the ḥadīth literature, as verbal words of God as are certain sūrahs of the Qur'ān and not as

historical or biographical accounts compiled by someone else after the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him).

Ḥadīth literature points out the start of the corruption of the Injil and other Christian scriptures and connects it with the conspiracies of the ruling class. It draws attention towards the persecution of the true Christians after the ascension of the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him), almost in accordance with the accounts of the history of Christianity as perceived by the Christians. However, it seems more likely to set the scene of the ḥadīth literature's account of the persecution in the fourth century AD when the Trinitarian Church started a vigorous campaign against its opponents after the conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine I (d. 337 AD). Although, the prophetic traditions mostly level the charge of corruption against the People of the Book in Jewish context, that is quite natural, in some cases, it does include the Christian scriptures as well. Whether this charge involves the corruption of both text and meaning or only of the meaning is a complex question, for the evidence seems to support either of views, though the textual corruption is more evident.

CHAPTER THREE  
THE CONCEPT OF THE INJĪL IN MUSLIM  
SCHOLARSHIP

Muslims have a long and rich tradition of scholarship. They never ceased to explore the new horizons of knowledge, as the corpus of Arabic literature clearly shows this. Their intellectual integrity and honesty compelled them to reflect upon the nature, scope, and function of religion on one hand, and to understand the creeds, cults, customs, and conducts of the different religious groups on the other. Since, Aasi argues, they could be ignored only at the cost of their own intellectual and existential advancement, the Muslims made a significant contribution to studying the religious history of mankind thereby augmenting the common fund of human knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Muslims were extremely curious about other religions and made intense efforts to describe and understand them. A special brand of Arabic literature — *al-Milal wa 'l-Nihāl* — dealt extensively with different sects and theological groups within Islam as well as with other religions and denominations. Judaism and Christianity loom large in this literature as the earlier monotheistic religions with which Islam had come to terms.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter, therefore, an attempt will be made to illuminate the concept of the Injil as it has been perceived by Muslim scholarship which represents a spectrum of Islamic sciences and a diversity of thoughts.

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<sup>1</sup>Ghulam Haider Aasi, *Muslim Understanding of other Religions: A Study of Ibn Hazm's Kitāb al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Nihāl*, henceforth *Muslim Understanding of other Religions* (Islamabad: IIIT & IRI, 1999), 31.

<sup>2</sup> See, Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "Some Neglected Aspects of Medieval Muslim Polemics against Christianity", *The Harvard Theological Review*, 89:1 (1996), 61-62.



### 3.1 ETYMOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE WORD *INJIL*

Among the Muslim scholars, Qur'ānic commentators and Arab Linguists generally discuss the etymological aspect of the word *Injil*; others rarely touch the issue. It seems, however, that Qur'ānic commentators and Arab Linguists do not agree on its etymology. They differ among themselves whether it is originally an Arabic word or not. Further, those who take it as an Arabic word hold different views about its derivation, and those who consider it a non-Arabic word, also differ about which language it came from.

It is, however, worth noting that many early and later commentators do not discuss the etymological aspect of the word *Injil* at all.<sup>1</sup> This indicates that all Muslim commentators do not equally focus on this matter. If some focus on it, there are others who ignore it.

'Abd Allāh b. Muslim b. Qutaybah might have been the first commentator who discussed the origin of the word *Injil*. He suggests that the *Injil* is originally an Arabic word derived from the *najl*, which means to draw some thing out. It was named *Injil*, he argues, for it supported the true religion that had weakened.<sup>2</sup> Other commentators like Abū 'l-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. 375 AH), Abū Ishāq Aḥmad al-Tha'labī (d. 427 AH), al-Wāḥidī (d. 468 AH), al-Baghawī (d. 516 AH), al-Ṭabrisī (d. 535 AH), al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH), al-Qurtubī (d. 671 AH), Ibn 'Ādil (d. 880 AH), al-Biqā'ī (d. 885 AH), al-Barūsawī (d. 1137 AH) and al-Ālūsī also mention this derivation and meaning.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150 AH), Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH), Ibn Abī Ḥatīm (d. 327 AH), Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Māturidī, (d. 333 AH), Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370 AH), Shaykh Rawzbihān al-Baqalī (d. 606 AH), Shaykh Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638 AH), 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Khāzin (d. 725 AH), 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Tha'ālibī (d. 876 AH), Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH), Thanā' Allah Amritsarī (d. 1367 AH), and Abū 'l-A'lā Maudūdī (d. 1399 AH).

<sup>2</sup> 'Abd Allāh b. Muslim b. Qutaybah, *Tafsīr Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 36.

<sup>3</sup> Abū 'l-Layth Naṣr b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-'Ulūm*, eds. 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwad et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1413/1993), 1:244; Abū Ishāq Aḥmad al-Tha'labī, *Al-Kashf wa 'l-Bayān*, ed. Abū Muḥammad b. 'Āshūr (Beirut: Dār Ihya' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1422/2002), 3:8; Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī al-Nisābūrī, *al-Wasīt fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd*, eds. 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Ābd al-Mawjūd et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1415/1994), 1:448; Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Mas'ūd al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, eds. Khālīd 'Abd al-Rahmān al-'Akk and Marwān Sawār (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n d), 1:277;

Besides the above-mentioned, al-Tha'labī, mentions another derivation of the word, that is *mutanjāl* (sic), which means the breath. Since through the Injīl, Allah enriched the straits of the people of the Tawrah, it was called Injīl.<sup>1</sup> Latter commentators like al-Baghawī, al-Ṭabṛasī, al-Rāzī, al-Qurṭubī, Ibn 'Ādil and al-Ālūsī also mention this meaning.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps al-Tha'labī is the first commentator who mentions the view that Injīl is pronounced in Syriac language as *Inqliyūn* which means *Sharī'ah*.<sup>3</sup> Al-Wāhidī, al-Baghawī, al-Qurṭubī, Ibn 'Ādil, al-Barūsawī and Ibn 'Ajībāh also repeat this view.<sup>4</sup>

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Abū 'Alī al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Faḍl al-Ṭabṛasī, *Majma' al-Bayān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1418/1997), 2:182. He holds that the son is called *najl* of his father, because his father draws him out of his own backbone and his wife's womb. The Injīl was named so, because the knowledge of lawful and unlawful matters had been deduced from it. It helps to suggest that al-Ṭabṛasī (d. 535 AH) views the Injīl as a book of commandments.; Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 7:171; Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, eds. Ṣadqī Muḥammad Jamīl and 'Irfān al-'Ashshā (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1414/1994), vol. 2, part 4, pp. 7-8; Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar b. 'Alī b. 'Ādil al-Ḥanbalī, *al-Lubāb fi 'Ulūm al-Kitāb*, eds. 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1419/1998), 5:19-20. He holds that it is named Injīl, for it was derived from *al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz*.; Burhān al-Dīn Abū 'l-Ḥasan Ibrāhīm b. 'Umar al-Biqā'i, *Naẓm al-Durar fi Tanāsuh al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar* (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, 1413/1996), 4:208. He reports it from al-Ḥarālī (d. 637 AH). In his view, Injīl is called so, because it drew out the extract of the light of the Tawrah and disclosed the inner side of the commandments of which the Tawrah showed the outer side only.; Ismā'il Ḥaqqī al-Barūsawī, *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān*, ed. Aḥmad 'Ubayd wa 'Ināyah (Beirut: Dār Ihya' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1421/2001), 9:70. On the contrary, while interpreting the verse (3:3), he holds that the Tawrah and the Injīl both are non-Arabic words; The Tawrah is Hebraic and the Injīl is Syriac.; Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 3:103.

<sup>1</sup>Al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa 'l-Bayān*, 3:8. He reports this view from 'Alī b. 'Īsā. (d. 420 AH).

<sup>2</sup>Al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, 1:277; Al-Ṭabṛasī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, 2:182. He reports this view from Ibn Fuḍāl (d. 224 or 290 AH); Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 7:171; Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2, part 4, pp. 7-8; Ibn 'Ādil, *al-Lubāb fi 'Ulūm al-Kitāb*, 5:19-20. In his view, according to this meaning, it is named Injīl, because it provided comforts (*ta'wsi'ah*) and declared some unlawful things lawful.; Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 3:103.

<sup>3</sup>Al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa 'l-Bayān*, 3:8

<sup>4</sup>Al-Wāhidī, *al-Wasīl fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd*, 1:448. He mentions that the Tawrah, the Injīl and the Zabūr were nouns arabized from Syriac and Hebraic languages. Therefore, they do not need to be in accordance with the paradigms of the Arabic language. These nouns are pronounced in Syriac language as *Tūrī*, *Inklyūn* and *Zūftā*.; Al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, 1:277. The same view has been mentioned above from al-Tha'labī.

He also mentions, that al-Ḥasan (d. 110 AH) pronounces it as “Anjīl”. However, others pronounce it as “Injīl” like *iklīl*.<sup>1</sup> Al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH), al-Ṭabrisī, al-Zamakhsharī, al-Qurṭubī and Ibn ‘Ajībāh also point to this difference.<sup>2</sup>

Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, a *Shi‘ī* commentator, mentions that the word Injīl was derived from the *najl* that means *aṣl* (the source). He records from al-Zujāj (d. 311 AH) that in the view of all the philologists, the Injīl is like the paradigm *afīl* (sic), derived from *najl*. It is called Injīl, he argues, because it is one of the sources of knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Other commentators who agree with al-Ṭūsī on this are al-Wāḥidī, al-Ṭabrisī, al-Rāzī, al-Qurṭubī and Ibn ‘Ādil.<sup>4</sup>

Elsewhere in his commentary, however, al-Ṭūsī mentions some other meanings of *najl* as well.<sup>5</sup>

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Nevertheless, he gave its meaning as Law (*Sharī‘ah*) and not as crown (*al-iklīl*). In fact, he views that Injīl is like *iklīl*, in the terms of paradigm. It seems that al-Baghawī quotes this information from al-Tha‘labī, but he confuses the paradigm with the meaning.; Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li Ahkām al-Qur‘ān*, vol. 2, part 4, pp. 7-8. He recorded it from al-Tha‘labī and quoted it as *Inkliyūn*.; Ibn ‘Ādil, *al-Lubāb fi ‘Ulūm al-Kitāb*, 5:19-20; Al-Barūsawī, *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān*, 2:6.; Abū ‘l-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Mahdī b. ‘Ajībāh, *al-Baḥr al-Madīd fi Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān al-Majīd*, ed. ‘Umar Aḥmad al-Rāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1423/2002), 7:329.

<sup>1</sup>Al-Tha‘labī, *al-Kashf wa ‘l-Bayān*, 3:8

<sup>2</sup>Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fi Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān*, ed. Ahmad Ḥabīb Qaṣīr al-‘Āmilī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, n d), 3:541-42. Nevertheless, unlike al-Tha‘labī, he comments that this is an irregular and weak opinion, for the Arabic language does not have any word like *afīl*.; Al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma‘ al-Bayān*, 2:182; Maḥmūd b. ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf ‘an Haqā‘iq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl wa ‘Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fi Wujūh al-Ta‘wīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, n d), 1:335-36. He argues that since the Arabic language does not have any paradigm like *afīl*, this recitation suggests its non-Arabic origin.; Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li Ahkām al-Qur‘ān*, vol. 2, part 4, pp. 7-8; Ibn ‘Ajībāh, *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 7:329.

<sup>3</sup>Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fi Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān*, 2:391. This knowledge could be of both legal and mystic.

<sup>4</sup>Al-Wāḥidī, *al-Wasīt fi Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān al-Majīd*, 1:448. However, he records from Ibn al-Ambārī (d. 328 AH) that Injīl is called this name, because it was a source for those people to whom it was revealed and according to it they acted.; Al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma‘ al-Bayān*, 2:182; Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 7:171; Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li Ahkām al-Qur‘ān*, vol. 2, part 4, pp. 7-8; Ibn ‘Ādil, *al-Lubāb fi ‘Ulūm al-Kitāb*, 5:19-20.

<sup>5</sup>Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fi Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān*, 3:541-42. These are (a) to draw out the water from the earth (b) the son (c) to cut some thing, that is why, a reaping hook is called *minjal*. It is clear that al-Ṭūsī considers the Injīl as

Al-Ṭabrisī mentions that some scholars hold that *najl* means consequence (*far'*) that is why the son is called *najl*. In this case, the Injil is a consequence (*far'*) of the Tawrah from which it was deduced.<sup>1</sup> This view implies that the Injil is not an independent book of commandments.

It seems that al-Zamakhsharī is the first commentator who holds that the Injil is a non-Arabic word and subsequently it does not need to be derived from the root *najl*.<sup>2</sup> Although, some of his predecessors<sup>3</sup> had already mentioned it, they merely referred to it as one of the opinions, but did not own it. The later commentators 'Abd Allāh al-Nasafī (d. 710 AH) and Abū 'l-Sa'ūd (d. 982 AH) also hold the same view of al-Zamakhsharī.<sup>4</sup>

Al-Rāzī, a theologian and rationalist commentator of the Qur'ān firmly prefers the viewpoint of al-Zamakhsharī and holds that the Tawrah is Hebraic name and the Injil is Syriac one, perhaps presuming that the original language of the Tawrah is Hebrew and of the Injil is Syriac.<sup>5</sup> However, he mentions the views of other scholars about the derivation of these words as well. He mentions four views, but three of them had already been mentioned by his predecessors. The new one, which al-Rāzī offers on the authority of Abū 'Amr al-Shaybānī (d. 206 AH) suggests that the word Injil has been derived from *al-tanājul*, which means "to quarrel". According to this viewpoint, the Book of 'Īsā (peace be on him) is called Injil, for the Christians quarreled about it.<sup>6</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, Ibn 'Ādil and al-Ālūsī also quote this meaning.<sup>7</sup> This view reveals the fact that the Arabs were familiar with the controversies of

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originally an Arabic word.

<sup>1</sup>Al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, 2:182.

<sup>2</sup>Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1:335-36.

<sup>3</sup>For instance, al-Tha'labī, al-Wāhidī and al-Baghawī.

<sup>4</sup>'Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd al-Nasafī, *Madārik al-Tanzīl wa Ḥaqā'iq al-Ta'wīl*, ed. 'Zakariyyā 'Amīrāt (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1415/1995), 1:162; Abū 'l-Sa'ūd, *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm ilā Mazāyā al-Kitāb al-Karīm*, henceforth *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm* (n p: Dār al-Fikr, n d), 1:325.

<sup>5</sup>However, Ibn Taymiyyah would argue against the second part of this view and would hold that the original language of the Injil is Hebrew rather than Syriac. See, Aḥmad b. Taymiyyah, *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:32-33.

<sup>6</sup>Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 7:171.

<sup>7</sup>Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2, part 4, pp. 7-8; Ibn 'Ādil, *al-Lubāb fi 'Ulūm al-Kitāb*, 5:19-20; Al-

Christians over the Injil.

After mentioning these views, however, al-Rāzī criticizes those scholars who attempt to derive it from Arabic roots. He argues that they hold that every word must be derived from some other one. However, if this were the case, it would necessarily lead to either *ad infinitum* or circular argument. Nevertheless, since both the options are fallacies, there must be some original words from which all other words would be derived. He continues to argue that if the Tawrah were named because of its clarity and the Injil were named because of its being source, then every clear thing must be named Tawrah and every thing that is source for something else, must be called Injil. However, since the case is not so, the linguistic nomination (*wad' al-lughah*) is inevitable.<sup>1</sup>

While interpreting the word Injil, al-Qurtubī offers the following new meanings,

(a) Shamir (d. 255 AH) narrates from some scholars that Injil is every written book that contains many lines.<sup>2</sup>

(b) It has been derived from *najal*, which means to work or to make something, as a poet said:

“وأنجل في ذلك الصنيع كما نجل.”

It means, I will do or make....<sup>3</sup>

Unlike other commentators, Ḥaqqānī (d. 1335 AH), a Muslim commentator of British India, holds that the word Injil is the arabized form of the Hebrew word *Angiyul*, which verbally means good news. It stands for the book, which descended to 'Īsā (peace be on him) and perished during the disasters caused by Caesars.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps he is the only commentator who

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Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 3:103.

<sup>1</sup>Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 7:171.

<sup>2</sup>It indicates that the Injil must have been in the shape of a book.

<sup>3</sup>Al-Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qurān*, vol. 2, part 4, pp. 7-8.

<sup>4</sup>Abd al-Ḥaqq Ḥaqqānī, *Tafsīr Fath al-Mannān al-Mashhūr bi Tafsīr Ḥaqqānī* (Lahore: Shaykh Ghulām 'Alī and Sons, 1951), 7:48. Perhaps the only exception is Abū Ḥayyān (d. 745 AH) who also holds that Injil is a Hebraic word. However, unlike Ḥaqqānī he does not mention its Hebraic pronunciation. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf Abū Ḥayyān, *Tafsīr al-Bahr al-Muḥīṭ*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1403/1983), 2:371.

holds that the Injil is originally a Hebrew word.

Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1354 AH) mentions first time in the exegetical literature, that the word Injil has a Greek origin, which means good news or new teaching.<sup>1</sup> Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī (d. 1403 AH) and Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī (d. 1418 AH) also hold that Injil is originally a Greek word, though, they do not mention its Greek origin.<sup>2</sup>

Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir b. 'Āshūr (d. 1393 AH), suggests that the word Injil is an arabized form of the Latin (*rūmī*) word *Ithānjayliyyūn*<sup>3</sup>, which means good news. He mentions that al-Qurṭubī quoted from al-Tha'labī that the Injil is the arabized form of the Syriac (*suryānī*) word *Inkliyyūn*. He criticizes al-Tha'labī's view by saying that he became confused by placing Syriac (*Suryāniyyah*) in lieu of Latin (*Rūmiyyah*). He argues that this word is not Syriac, but since the Christians of Iraq spoke of it, al-Tha'labī took it as a Syriac, or there is a mistake in the text and the correct reading is *al-Yūnāniyyah* (Greek) instead of *al-Suryāniyyah* (Syriac). In Greek, it is *Aw-wānayliyyūn*<sup>4</sup>, which means a forceful word (*al-lafẓ al-faṣīḥ*).<sup>5</sup>

It is interesting that some scholars suggest that the word Injil might have had Persian origins.<sup>6</sup>

This survey of Islamic literature reveals that the etymological discussion about the

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Sayyid Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1420/1999), 3:132.

<sup>2</sup> Muḥammad Husayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Qum: Mu'assasat Maṭbū'ātay Ismā'īliyyān, 1391/1972), 3:9; Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān* (Lahore: Fārān Foundation, 1982), 8:359. Iṣlāhī (d. 1418 AH) adds that there is no controversy in that the Injil is originally Greek word which means good news (*al-Bashārah*). He suggests that since the special mission of the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) was to prophecy about the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) who was to come after him, his Book was named Injil (good news), so that its name should reveal the nature of his mission.

<sup>3</sup> The Latin pronunciation of this word is as *evangelium*. Raymond F. Collins, "Gospel", ed. Mircea Eliade, *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 6:79.

<sup>4</sup> The Greek pronunciation of this word is as *Ευαγγέλιον*. G. C. Anawati, "Indjil", *EI*<sup>2</sup> (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 3:1205; Liddle and Scott, *Greek-English Dictionary* (n. p.: n. p., n. d.), 267.

<sup>5</sup> Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr wa 'l-Tanwīr*, 3:149.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 3:9.

word Injil is not focused on in the early Islamic literature. Perhaps that is why many scholars do not talk about it. Those early scholars, who discuss it, hold that it is originally an Arabic word derived from the Arabic root *najl* or *najal*. However, since this root has different meanings they also differ about its derivations. Perhaps Abū Ishāq Aḥmad al-Tha‘labī is the first who mentions the Syriac pronunciation of the word Injīl, but it seems that al-Zamakhsharī is the first commentator to hold that the Injīl is a non-Arabic word and that it does not need to be derived from the root *najl*. Al-Rāzī further elaborates on this view and severely criticizes those scholars who attempt to derive it from Arabic roots. Nevertheless, in spite of this, many commentators after al-Rāzī continued to consider it an Arabic word. With the dawn of modern era, however, the classical approach to this matter, changes in two ways,

- (a) They begin to pay less attention to the etymological discussions.
- (b) They almost agree on that it is a non-Arabic word.

Modern Muslim scholars attribute this word to different foreign languages such as Hebrew, Latin, and Persian, but preferably to the Greek. It seems that those who consider its origin as non-Arabic are closer to the reality, for the Injīl was first introduced to the non-Arabs and then Arabs came to know it. Therefore, it seems quite natural and logical that when Arabs came to know this scripture they arabized its name for their own use. It may be noted that in spite of all controversies among the modern Muslim scholars over the origin of the word Injīl, they almost agree on that this word means good news. This is quite different from the classical view and there is apparently no relation between them. It seems that the views of the modern commentators have been influenced by the occidental researches, for some western scholars suggest that this is originally a Greek word which entered the Arabic either directly or through one of some other Semitic tongues. Nöldeky would prefer the Ethiopian as a medium language.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Jeffery, *The foreign Vocabulary of the Qur’ān*, 71-72.

### 3.2 COMMANDMENTS OF THE INJIL AND THEIR NATURE

In this section, an attempt would be made to shed light on the views of Muslim scholars about the commandments of the Injil and their nature. The basic question of this section is whether the Injil had commandments according to the Muslim scholars or not. Moreover, if it contained them, what was their nature? Again those who discuss these questions among Muslim scholars are mostly Qur'ānic commentators.

It is, however, interesting that many early and later Muslim scholars do not provide any information about the commandments of the Injil and their nature.<sup>1</sup> A study of Islamic literature reveals that Muslim scholarship is not of single view in this regard. Some scholars hold that the Injil did contain commandments; the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) had an independent *Sharī'ah* (the Law); he was enjoined to act according to its injunctions — regardless they were small in number or large; and not to practice according to the Tawrāh alone.<sup>2</sup> It implies that the Injil was an independent book of laws. However, those commandments of the Tawrāh, which were not abrogated by the Injil were also binding.

Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150 AH) provides some specific information about the commandments of the Injil. He holds that the Injil commanded its followers to forgive the murderer, injurer and beater and not to get revenge on them.<sup>3</sup> He is of the view that the

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<sup>1</sup>For instance, Ibn Qutaybah, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Māturidī, al-Jaṣṣāṣ, al-Tha'labī, al-Ṭūsī, al-Wāḥidī, al-Baghawī, al-Tabrāsī, Shaykh Rawzbihān al-Baqālī, al-Qurṭubī, al-Nasafī, al-Tha'ālibī, Ibn 'Ādil, al-Suyūṭī, Rashid Riḍā, Ibn 'Āshūr and Abū 'l-A'ālā Maudūdī do not discuss the commandments of the Injil and their nature.

<sup>2</sup>See, al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1:639. He argues for this view, by ﴿ وَلْيَحْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْإِنْجِيلِ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ ﴾ (5:47) "Let the People of the Gospel Judge by what Allah hath revealed therein.", and ﴿ بِكُلِّ جُنُودٍ جَنَاحٌ بِكُمْ رِعْزٌ مِّنْهَا ﴾ (5:48) "To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way."; Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 12:9. That is why, he argues, the people of the Injil were commanded to judge by what Allah revealed therein.; Al-Biqā'ī, *Nazm al-Durar*, 6:159; Abū 'l-Sa'ūd, *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm*, 2:49; Al-Barūsawī, *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān*, 9:451. He holds that Judaism was abrogated by the advent of the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him).; Ibn 'Ajibah, *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 2:49; Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 6:436-37; Al-Ḥaqqānī, preface, *Tafsīr Ḥaqqānī*, 118. He holds that most of the commandments of the Tawrāh and the Injil were preserved in then existing Tawrāh and the Injil. Therefore, it helps to conclude that the People of the Book had the commandments of the Tawrāh and the Injil in that time.

<sup>3</sup>Muqātil b. Sulaymān b. Bashīr, *Tafsīr Muqātil b. Sulaymān*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah,



commandments concerning the stoning (*rajm*) and fornication (*zinā*) were the parts of the Tawrah and not of the Injil.<sup>1</sup> He also mentions some commandments which were abrogated in the Injil, as the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) declared lawful to eat those meats, suet, all clawed animals and fish, which were unlawful for the Israelites as well as he annulled the Sabbath.<sup>2</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī suggests that the Injil was an explanation of Allah's commandments, which He liked for the pious beings in the era of 'Īsā (peace be on him),<sup>3</sup> but he does not mention whether the Injil explained the same commandments of the Tawrah or it introduced some new injunctions. However, al-Samarqandī states that the Injil contained the same teachings of the Tawrah concerning *tawḥīd* (oneness of God) and some other commandments. Perhaps, he wants to say that the Injil confirmed all the *uṣūl* of the Tawrah and abrogated some of its *furū'* as well as it confirmed the others. He also maintains that the Injil commanded the Christians to forgive the transgressors.<sup>4</sup>

It seems that Sufis have a unique approach towards the commandments of the Injil. The Sufi commentator Shaykh Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638 AH) declares that the Injil contained the internal/spiritual sciences (*al-'ulūm al-bāṭinah*), which was ingenerated from the sciences of the disclosures of attributes (*'ulūm tajalliyāt al-ṣifāt*), the commandments of attributes and the commandments concerning the conditions of the heart and its attributes and acts.<sup>5</sup> In this way, he suggests that the Injil mostly contained the knowledge of the disclosure of the attributes, the ethics, the admonitions and the homilies which concerned the purification and

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1424/2003), 1:303. Perhaps, he got this information from the Gospel of Matthew (5:38).

<sup>1</sup>Ibid. 1:311. Perhaps, he is referring to the Gospel of John (8:3-11), which tells how Jesus managed to restrain the scribes and Pharisees from stoning a woman who had been caught in adultery.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. 1:171.

<sup>3</sup>Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 10:373.

<sup>4</sup>Al-Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-'Ulūm*, 1:440-41. Perhaps, he got this information from the Gospel of Matthew (5:38).

<sup>5</sup>Muḥyī 'l-Dīn b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad, *Tafsīr Ibn 'Arabī*, ed. Samīr Muṣṭafā Rabāb (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1422/2001), 1:188. On the contrary, he holds that the Tawrah was the book of external sciences (*al-'ulūm al-zāhirah*) and the commandments concerning with acts (*al-af'āl*) as well as it discussed the conditions of the soul and its attributes.

enlightenment of the heart.

Like Sufis, some other scholars are also inclined to interpret the injunctions of the Injil in an ascetic and spiritual way.<sup>1</sup> Al-Biqā'ī suggests that the Injil contained the inner facts only. It discussed the spiritual matters (*al-umūr al-naḥṣāniyyah*) which concerned the life of the Hereafter. It not only ignored the worldly reformation; rather condemned it. Concisely, the Injil was revealed to achieve the goal of the Hereafter and to condemn the worldly things, remaining limited to achieving minimum success in this world. The revelation of the Injil, in fact, was the manifestation of Allah's name *al-Bāṭin*.<sup>2</sup> It seems that al-Biqā'ī also has a mystical view about the Injil. He considers the Injil a book that discussed the spiritual issues more than legal ones. In addition to this, he classifies the injunctions of the Injil into two categories: *al-muḥkam*, which could be understood by everyone and *al-mutashābih*, which could be comprehended only by specific strata. Moreover, out of those who understood the Injil, only pious people observed its limits (*al-ḥudūd*).<sup>3</sup> Obviously, this categorization of commandments echoes the Qur'ānic notion which has been expressed in the verse (3:6).<sup>4</sup>

Since the Qur'ān mentions the Injil as an admonition, some scholars describe it as containing forceful sermons, warnings and proverbs.<sup>5</sup> This view presents the Injil as more identical to the existing canonical Gospels. It seems that later Muslim scholars tend to consult the existing Gospels to explain the nature of the injunctions of the Injil. Al-Barūsawī, for instance, mentions some commandments, which had been made obligatory for the Christians.

<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shāhristānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, 1:255. He maintains that the Tawrah contains only the commandments of the general and outward manners, as well as the Injil includes only those of personal and inward conduct.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 4:208-09. In contrast, according to him, the commandments of the Tawrah were based on the following three principles: (a) to encompass visible acts (b) to reform the worldly condition (c) and to get success in the Hereafter. In this way, the Tawrah was a comprehensive book of phenomena, revealed to reform this world as well as to achieve success in the Hereafter and its revelation was the manifestation of Allah's name *al-Zāhir*. Thus, both the books encompassed the internal and external matters as a whole.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 6:159.

<sup>4</sup> ﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ﴾ (3:6).

<sup>5</sup> Al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl*, 2:50.



that the Injil that was revealed to the Messiah (peace be on him) contained neither the commandments nor the lawful or unlawful matters; rather it contained allegories, proverbs, homilies and rebukes (*mazājir*).<sup>1</sup> In the same line, al-Qarāfi argues that the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) confirmed the Tawrah, practiced its commandments and asked his people to act upon them as well. He did not add any new commandment to it except for the homilies and the teachings of humbleness, mercy, and compassion.<sup>2</sup>

Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī further elaborates this view and holds that the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) had neither an independent *Sharī'ah* nor did the Injil contain commandments, for he followed and preached the Book and the *Sharī'ah* of Mūsā (peace be on him) and did not bring any *Sharī'ah* other than the Tawrah. He firmly declared this fact again and again. However, he miraculously revealed the spirit and wisdom of this *Sharī'ah*. The Gospels, in fact, are the collection of these wisdoms.<sup>3</sup> Even some earlier scholars suggest that Christianity as a religion does not have the concept of penal laws *i.e.* the fire of Hell in the Hereafter and the commandments of *hudūd*, retaliation and *qisās* in this world.<sup>4</sup>

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“انك ان لطمتي احتملك منك.” Ibid., 146.; Aḥmad b. Taymiyyah, *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥiḥ*, 1:343.; Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kitāb Hidāyat al-Hayārā fi Ajwibat al-Yahūd wa 'l-Naṣārā*, (Makkah: Mu'assasat Makkah li al-Ṭibā'ah wa 'l-I'lām, 1396 AH), 16.; Al-Ṭabāṭabā'i, *al-Mizān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, (Qum: Mu'assasat Maṭbū'atay Ismā'iliyān, 1391/1972), 3:198. He argues by the verses 3:50; 5:46-47 and criticizes those who argue by the verse 5:47 to prove that the Injil consisted of detailed commandments (*sharā'i' mufaṣṣalah*) in the same way, as the Tawrah did. Ibid. (Tahrān: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 1362) 5:377.

<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, 1:248-49.

<sup>2</sup> Aḥmad b. Idrīs al-Qarāfi, *al-Ajwibah al-Fākhirah 'an al-As'ilah al-Fājirah*, ed. Majdī Muḥammad al-Shahāwī (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1426/2005), 69.

<sup>3</sup> Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, *Tadabbur-e-Qur'ān* (Lahore: Fārān Foundation, 1403/1983), 2:94. In Iṣlāhī's view, the central thesis of the Gospels is to prophecy about the kingdom of the Heaven. This thesis has been mentioned in them repeatedly, in different ways, styles and parables. The characteristics of this kingdom, the concept of its historical development and the descriptions of those who would deserve it and those who would be deprived of it, clearly show that this is, in fact, the prophecy about the prophethood of Muḥammad (peace be on him). Ibid. 8:359-60.

<sup>4</sup> 'Abū 'Uthmān 'Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāhiz, *al-Mukhtār fi 'l-Radd 'alā 'l-Naṣārā*, 68.

### 3.3 THE INJIL CONFIRMS THE TAWRĀH

The Qur'ān suggests, while characterizing the relationship of the Injil with the Tawrāh that the former confirms the latter.<sup>1</sup> Muslim scholars have attempted to clarify the nature of this confirmation. To have a better understanding of the Injil, its functions, and its relation with the previous revelations it seems helpful to see how the Muslim scholars have interpreted this phenomenon.

Muslim scholars generally hold that, although, the Injil abrogated some of the Jewish laws, it did not supersede the whole Tawrāh.<sup>2</sup> The Tawrāh continued to enjoy the authority as a binding scripture even after the advent of the Injil. It has been reported in the Islamic literature that the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) used to recite the Tawrāh and even he learnt it by heart.<sup>3</sup> He was well versed in it, disclosed its mysteries in front of his people and argued against them by its texts.<sup>4</sup>

Some scholars would suggest that the confirmation of the Injil for the Tawrāh may mean that it contains the evidence of the truthfulness of the Tawrāh; that it declares the injunctions of the Tawrāh as obligatory instead of abolishing them and; that it had been sent down in the same way as it had been predicted in the Tawrāh.<sup>5</sup> It also seems as if some scholars believe that the Injil abrogated the Tawrāh and its confirmation for the Tawrāh means only to believe that the Tawrāh was a truly revealed book by Allah and that it was binding before it had been abrogated.<sup>6</sup> This interpretation is identical to the confirmation of the Qur'ān for the Tawrāh and the Injil.

Contrary to the general opinion, some may consider the Injil superior to the Tawrāh

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<sup>1</sup> «وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَى آلِهِمْ بِبَيْتِ الْمَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَإِنَّا لَهُم مُّسْتَدْفِعُونَ وَهَدَىٰ وَمُزَكِّيًا لِلنَّبِيِّينَ» (5:46).

<sup>2</sup> Muqātil, *Tafsīr Muqātil b. Sulaymān*, 1:303, 373.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, ed. Maḥmūd Shākir (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1421/2001), 3:321; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, 2:654; al-Biqā'i, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 4:402; Al-Barūsawī, *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān*, 2:45-46.

<sup>4</sup> Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 3:256.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, 3:262.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 12:9.

### 3.4 QUR'AN URGES THE CHRISTIANS TO JUDGE BY THE *INJIL*

The Qur'an urges the Christians to judge by what Allah revealed in the Injil.<sup>1</sup> The basic question which strikes the mind of the reader is what does the commandment of judgment by what Allah revealed in the Injil mean? And more importantly who are the addressees?

Before being fully engaged in the discussion, it would be better to mention that the phrase ﴿وَلْيَحْكُمْ﴾ has been recited in two ways (*qirā'āt*). The first *qirā'ah* is to pronounce it as ﴿وَلْيَحْكُمْ﴾ with the *kasr* of *lām* and the *naṣb* of *mīm*. In this case, it is an aorist verb (*mudāri'*), and the *lām* is for reasoning (*ta'lil*). The second *qirā'ah* is to pronounce it as ﴿وَلْيَحْكُمْ﴾ with the *sukūn* of *lām* and the *Jazm* of *mīm*. It is an imperative mood. The first *qirā'ah* has been recited by al-A'mash (d. 148 AH) and Ḥamzah (d. 156 AH), while the rest of *qurrā'* preferred the second *qirā'ah*. This variation is worth-mentioning, because the interpretations of the verse have been influenced by this.

Muslim scholars generally respond to above-mentioned questions in the following ways,

According to many scholars, the verse has been directed to those Christians who lived before the dawn of Islam. They argue that if the above-quoted phrase is recited as ﴿وَلْيَحْكُمْ﴾ it would be connected with the previous sentence ﴿وَأَنبَأَهُ الْإِنجِيلَ﴾ and would mean, "And we gave him the Injil ... so that they would judge by what Allah revealed therein".<sup>2</sup> It is evident that the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) was given the Injil before the advent of the Prophet

<sup>1</sup> ﴿وَلْيَحْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْإِنجِيلِ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ﴾ (5:47).

<sup>2</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 10:374-376; Al-Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-'Ulūm*, 1:440; Al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa 'l-Bayān*, 4:73; Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 2:541; Al-Wāḥidī, *al-Wasīṭ fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd*, 2:194; Al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, 2:42; Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1:639; Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 12:10; Al-Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 3, part 6, p. 151; Al-Nasafī, *Madārik al-Tanzīl*, 1:324; Al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl*, 2:50; Aḥmad b. Taymiyyah, *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:423-24.; Al-Tha'libī, *al-Jawābir al-Ḥisān*, 1:433; Ibn 'Ādil, *al-Lubāb fī 'Ulūm al-Kitāb*, 7:364; Al-Biqā'i, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 6:173; Abū 'l-Sa'ūd, *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm*, 2:49; Ibn 'Ajibah, *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 2:183; Al-Ālūsī al-Baghdādī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 6:436-37; Rashīd Ridā, *Tafsīr al-Manār* 6:333; Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa 'l-Tanwīr*, 6:219; Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, 2:532;

Muḥammad (peace be on him).

However, if the above-quoted phrase is read as ﴿وَلْيُحْكَمْ﴾ then the verse will be interpreted into following ways,

- (a) This command was directed to those Christians who lived before the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him). Here it has been mentioned as a report of what they had been enjoined to do when the Injil was revealed. In this case, a verb has been omitted here that is *qulnā* (we said). The verse then means, "We gave him the Injil ... and said, 'Let the People of the Injil judge by what Allah had revealed therein'."
- (b) It is a command directed to the Christians of the period of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him).

A number of scholars interpret the verse in the first way (a),<sup>1</sup> as well as some others suggest the both interpretations (a) and (b) or only (b).<sup>2</sup>

In the case of interpretation (b), one may question; how is it possible to command Christians to judge by what Allah revealed in the Injil after the Qur'ān has descended?

Muslim scholars have generally responded to this question in the following ways,

- (i) When this verse was revealed, the commandments of the Injil were in accordance with those of the Qur'ān, and had not been abrogated yet.<sup>3</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup>Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 10:374-376; Al-Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-'Ulūm*, 1:440-41; Al-Wāḥidī, *al-Wasīṭ fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd*, 2:194; Al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, 2:42; Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1:639; Al-Nasafi, *Madārik al-Tanzīl*, 1:324; Al-Barūsawī, *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān*, 2:480; Ibn 'Ajībah, *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 2:49; Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa 'l-Tanwīr*, 6:219; Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, 2:532.

<sup>2</sup>Al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa 'l-Bayān*, 4:73; Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 2:541. However, he prefers interpretation (a); Al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, 3:262. However, like al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH), he also prefers interpretation (a); Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 12:10; Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 3, part 6, p. 151; Al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl*, 2:50; Aḥmad b. Taymiyyah, *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:425-427.; Al-Tha'libī, *al-Jawābir al-Hisān*, 1:433; Ibn 'Ādil, *al-Lubāb fi 'Ulūm al-Kitāb*, 7:364; Al-Biqā'i, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 6:173; Abū 'l-Sa'ūd, *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm*, 2:49. He preferred interpretation (b); Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 6:436-37. Like Abū 'l-Sa'ūd, he preferred interpretation (b); Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 6:333. He prefers interpretation (a).

<sup>3</sup>Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 2:541; Al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, 3:262.

response might be criticized, for the verse was revealed in the last years of the prophetic era and till that time most of the Islamic laws had been descended. If the verse was revealed at the outset of the prophetic era then this response might have been reasonable.

- (ii) The verse means, "Let the people of the Injil judge by what Allah had revealed therein, save it would have not been abrogated by the Qur'ān yet."<sup>1</sup> In fact, this response is hardly more reasonable than the first one.
- (iii) The purpose of this verse is to make the people of the Injil avoid committing distortion and alteration in the Injil as Jews concealed the commandments of the Tawrah. Therefore, the verse means, "Let the People of the Injil acknowledge what Allah had revealed therein without committing any distortion or alteration."<sup>2</sup>
- (iv) Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1354 AH) proposes that the purpose of this verse is to establish the argument against the Christians (*iqāmat al-ḥujjati 'alayhim*) and to show their disability (*al-ta'jiz*), for neither they can act upon the Injil nor they would be able to do so. Nevertheless, he himself rejects it and prefers interpretation (a).<sup>3</sup>
- (v) The verse implies to enjoin the Christians to believe in Muḥammad (peace be on him). Since the Injil contains the testimonies and the proofs of the necessity of believing in the Prophet (peace be on him), it ultimately leads to the belief in his prophethood. The reason behind this view, is that the abrogation is only possible in the *furū'* (consequences) and not in the *usūl* (principles).<sup>4</sup> This is the

<sup>1</sup>Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 12:10; Abū 'l-Sa'ūd, *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm*, 2:49; Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'āni*, 6:436-37.

<sup>2</sup>Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 12:10.

<sup>3</sup>Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār* 6:333.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.; Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qurān*, vol. 3, part 6, p. 151; Al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl*, 2:50; Aḥmad b. Taymiyyah, *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:425-427.; Al-Tha'ālībī, *al-Jawābir al-Ḥisān*, 1:433; Ibn 'Ādil, *al-Lubāb fi 'Ulūm al-Kitāb*, 7:364. He quotes al-Rāzī word by word.; Al-Biqā'i, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 6:173. However, he also mentions the invaluable commandments and sermons which had been described in the Injil, in this regard.; Abū 'l-Sa'ūd,



most popular response among the Muslim scholars, because it is in complete accordance with the famous Muslim doctrine namely the pre-description of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) in the previous scriptures.

### 3.5 OBSERVANCE OF THE TAWRĀH AND THE INJĪL BY THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

The Qur'ān twice advises the People of the Book to observe the Tawrāh and the Injil.<sup>1</sup> Muslim scholars have made invaluable attempts to clarify the concept of the observance of the Tawrāh and the Injil in a number of ways, however, it seems that many of them are substantially identical and can be categorized in following five major types,

Firstly, some earliest scholars connect this observance with the text of the scriptures. They are of the view that the people of the Book have been demanded to recite the Tawrāh and the Injil in the same way as Allah revealed to them.<sup>2</sup> It implies that they should avoid tampering with the texts of the scriptures. Some later scholars are inclined to equate the above-mentioned observance with revealing what the people of the Book hid<sup>3</sup> and avoiding the scriptural corruption.<sup>4</sup> It has internal evidences from the Qur'ān itself, for the Qur'ān accuses them of concealing the contents of their scriptures time and again.<sup>5</sup> It is, however, obvious that the latter has more general implications than the former, for it includes both the text and the meaning. Moreover, it is important to note that this type of interpretation works well, regardless of whether the referred People of the Book are supposed to be of the time of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) or of the era prior to his advent, for the preservation of the text and content of the divine scriptures is always desirable.

Secondly, it is commonly suggested that the observance of the Tawrāh and the Injil

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<sup>1</sup> ﴿وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَالْإِنجِيلَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ لَأَكْمَلُوا مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَبِمَنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ مِنْهُمْ أُمَّةٌ مُقْتَصِدَةٌ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ شَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ﴾ (5:66); ﴿قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَسْتُمْ عَلَى شَيْءٍ حَتَّى تُبَيِّنُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَالْإِنجِيلَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَلِتُزَكَّيْتُمْ بِهِمْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ﴾ (5:68).

<sup>2</sup> Muqātil, *Tafsīr Muqātil b. Sulaymān*, 1:312.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-'Ulūm*, 1:448-49; Al-Wāhidī, *al-Wasīṭ fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd*, 1:208-10. He narrates this and other interpretations from Ibn 'Abbās.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 3, part 6, pp. 178, 181.

<sup>5</sup> ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّاعِنُونَ﴾ (2:159); ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلْنَا اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَٰئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ إِلَّا بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا الشَّارَ وَلَا يَكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ﴾ (2:173).

means practicing according to their contents<sup>1</sup> as well as standing fast by their commandments and *ḥudūd*.<sup>2</sup> However, since such interpretation may cause rise of objections some scholars relate this observance with the era prior to the advent of Islam<sup>3</sup> or limit it to those commandments which have not been abrogated by Islam.<sup>4</sup> It must be kept in mind that, in the present context, Muslim scholars mean only *furū' al-aḥkām*, for the *uṣūl* remain same in all divine religions and can never be nullified.

Thirdly, the Sufi exegetical trend is inclined to differentiate between the observance of the Tawrah and that of the Injil, as it presents the Tawrah as the symbol of '*ulūm al-zāhir*' (external/materialistic sciences) and the Injil as the symbol of '*ulūm al-bāṭin*' (internal/spiritual sciences). Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638 AH), for instance, suggests that the observance of the Tawrah means attaining the '*ulūm al-zāhir*', fulfilling the requirements of the *tajalliyāt al-af'āl* and observing carefully the commandments of the Tawrah in practice. On the other hand, to

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<sup>1</sup>Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 10:462; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, 4:1170. He narrates it from Mujāhid.; Al-Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-'Ulūm*, 1:449; Al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa 'l-Bayān*, 4:94. He records this interpretation from *al-Hidāyah* by Makki.; Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 2:585; Al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, 3:288, 292; Rawzbihān al-Baqālī, '*Arā'is al-Bayān fī Ḥaqā'iq al-Qur'ān*', (Lakhnow: Nawalkishawr, n d), 185.; Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 3, part 6, pp. 178, 181; Al-Tha'libī, *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisan*, 1:441-42; Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 2:527. He records it from Mujāhid (d. 104 AH) on the behalf of Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Abū 'l-Shaykh (d. 369 AH); Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, 2:564.

<sup>2</sup>Al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa 'l-Bayān*, 4:94; Al-Wāhidī, *al-Wasīṭ fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd*, 1:208-10; Al-Barūsawī, *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān*, 2:51; Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1:658; Al-Nasafī, *Madārik al-Tanzīl*, 1:332; Al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl*, 2:62; Al-Ḥaqqānī, Preface. *Tafsīr Faṭḥ al-Mannān*, 118.

<sup>3</sup>Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 10:462-63; Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 2:590. He narrates this view from Abū 'Alī (al-Jubā'ī) (d. 303 AH); Al-Ṭabrisī, *Majm' al-Bayān*, 3:288, 292. He also narrates it from (Abū 'Alī) al-Jubā'ī (d. 303 AH); Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 3, part 6, pp. 178, 181. Al-Qurṭubī narrates this, like al-Ṭūsī and al-Ṭabrisī on the authority of Abū 'Alī (d. 303 AH); Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa 'l-Tanwīr*, 6:253.

<sup>4</sup>Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 10:462-63; Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, 1:250. He suggests that it is impossible for the Jews and the Christians to stand fast with the Tawrah and the Injil without standing fast with the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* of the last Prophet, the Prophet of mercy.; Abū 'l-Sa'ūd, *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm*, 2:67, 69; Aḥmad b. Taymiyyah, *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:439-440. Al-Barūsawī, *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān*, 2:500, 503; Ibn 'Ajībāh, *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 2:197, 199; Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 6:481, 500.

stand fast by the Injil means acquiring the *'ulūm al-bāṭin*, fulfilling the requirements of the *tajalliyāt al-ṣifāt* and observing carefully its commandments.<sup>1</sup> Such interpretation is, in fact, a logical result of his mystic outlook on the nature of the commandments of the both scriptures. It has been mentioned elsewhere that some other Muslim scholars also share this mystical approach towards the Injil.<sup>2</sup> This tendency might have been influenced by the image of the Prophet 'Isā (peace be on him) as perceived in the Islamic ascetic literature.<sup>3</sup>

Fourthly, some scholars interpret the observance of the Tawrah and the Injil by affirming their contents<sup>4</sup> and setting them before the eyes.<sup>5</sup> This approach concerns the theoretical aspect more than the practical one. A number of Muslim scholars suggest more specifically that it means confirmation of those prophecies of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him), which were revealed in the Tawrah and the Injil as well as practicing accordingly, which would lead them to the embracement of Islam.<sup>6</sup> Some scholars would also refer to the fulfillment of the Covenant of Allah,<sup>7</sup> which might have been mentioned in the Qur'ān (3:187),<sup>8</sup> but it is obvious that this covenant also concerns the prophecies of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) and belief in him.

<sup>1</sup> Muḥyi 'l-Dīn, *Tafsīr Ibn 'Arabī*, 1:180-181.

<sup>2</sup> See, section no. 3.2.

<sup>3</sup> See, Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus*.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-'Ulūm*, 1:448-49; Al-Ṭabṛasī, *Majma' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 3:288, 292; Ibn 'Aḥibah, *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 2:197, 199.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 2:585; Al-Ṭabṛasī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, 3:288, 292; Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 12:46; Ibn 'Ādil, *al-Lubāb fī 'Ulūm al-Kitāb*, 7:434.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 2:590; Al-Wāḥidī, *al-Wasīṭ fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd*, 1:208-10; Al-Ṭabṛasī, *Majma' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 3:288, 292; Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1:658; Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 12:46; Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 3, part 6, pp. 178, 181; Al-Nasafī, *Madārik al-Tanzīl*, 1:332; Al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl*, 2:62; Al-Tha'libī, *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, 1:441-42; Ibn 'Ādil, *al-Lubāb fī 'Ulūm al-Kitāb*, 7:434; Abū 'l-Sa'ūd, *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm*, 2:67, 69; Al-Barūsawī, *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān*, 2:500, 503; Ibn 'Aḥibah, *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 2:197, 199; Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 6:481, 500; Ibn 'Ashūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa 'l-Tanwīr*, 6:253, 265.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Wāḥidī, *al-Wasīṭ fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd*, 1:208-10; Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 12:46; Al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl*, 2:62; Ibn 'Ādil, *al-Lubāb fī 'Ulūm al-Kitāb*, 7:434; Al-Barūsawī, *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān*, 2:500, 503.

<sup>8</sup> ﴿وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكُونُ مَنَعًا فَلَمَّا بَيَّنَّاهُ لَهُمْ قَالُوا ظَنُّنَا بِهِ أَنَّا قُلُوبًا فَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ فِيهِمْ فَاِثْنَيْتَنَّهُمْ لَبَّىٰ ذَرْوَا نَحْنُ مُتَبَرِّغُونَ﴾ (3:187).

Fifthly, modern scholars tend to synthesize most of the above-mentioned interpretations. Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1354 AH) would suggest that it means practicing the Tawrāh and the Injīl in the best way. It includes the action of the heart that is to believe and to submit, the action of the body and organs, the pure oneness of Allah, the good deeds and the prophecies about the Prophet who would come out of the offspring of Ismā'īl (peace be on him) and to whom al-Masīh called *Rūḥ al-Ḥaqq* and Paraclete.<sup>1</sup>

Abū 'l-A'lā Maudūdī writes in this regard as follows,

The Bible contains two kinds of writings. Some portions in them have been interpolated by the Jewish and the Christian scholars. It is obvious that the Quran does not demand the observance of these parts. Nevertheless, there are other portions that have been put down as the commandments of God or as the sayings of Moses, Jesus and other Prophets (Allah's peace be upon them all). The Quran demands the observance of the latter parts only, for there is no marked difference between the teachings contained in them and those of the Quran. Though even these parts of the Bible have not remained wholly intact and have been tampered with by the translators etc., nevertheless one does feel that these teach the same fundamental principles of the faith that the Quran teaches, and guides man to the same way of life that has been laid down in the Quran.<sup>2</sup>

Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī holds that the observance of the Tawrāh and the Injīl enjoins to practice those *sharā'i'* (commandments) of Allah, which they contain and to believe in the doctrine of beginning (*mabda'*) and ending (*ma'ād*), which Allah declared therein, without committing distortion, concealment and obvious abandonment.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 6:380, 391.

<sup>2</sup>Abū 'l-A'lā Maudūdī, *The Meaning of the Qur'ān*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1972, 3:57-58.

<sup>3</sup>Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān*, 6:38.

### 3.6 HOW AND WHEN WAS THE INJİL REVEALED?

Elsewhere in the present dissertation, some prophetic traditions have been discussed, which indicate how and when the Injil was sent down to the Prophet 'Isā (peace be on him).<sup>1</sup> One of such traditions says,

The Sheets of Ibrāhīm descended in the first night of Ramaḍān; the Tawrāh descended in the sixth night of Ramaḍān; the Injil descended in the thirteenth night of Ramaḍān; the Zabūr descended in the eighteenth night of Ramaḍān; and the Qur'ān descended in the twenty-fourth night of Ramaḍān.<sup>2</sup>

In the light of such traditions and on the basis of some other arguments majority of the Muslim scholars hold that the previous scriptures were revealed to their respective Prophets all at once (*jumlatan wāḥidah*),<sup>3</sup> as opposed to the Qur'ān which was sent down to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) gradually.

Al-Zamakhsharī might have been the first Qur'ānic exegetic to present a linguistic-based argument in favour of this view. He argues that Allah specified *al-tanzīl* with the Qur'ān and *al-inzāl* with the Tawrāh and the Injil, for *al-tanzīl* signifies the plurality (*al-takthīr*), which suits the fact that the Qur'ān was revealed step by step. On the other hand, since the Tawrāh and the Injil were sent down all at once, they were specified with *al-inzāl*, which does not denote the meaning of plurality.<sup>4</sup> However, Abū Ḥayyān (d. 745 AH) is not convinced of this argumentation and criticizes it. His criticism is based on the following three premises,

Firstly, to make the verb transitive by doubling of the letter (*al-tad'īf*) does not indicate

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<sup>1</sup> See, section no. 2.2.

<sup>2</sup> Sulaymān b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ*, 4:111.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Wāḥidī, *al-Wasīṭ fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd*, 1:412; Al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, 1:277; Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 1:336; Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 7:170; Al-Qurtubī, *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2, part 4, pp. 7-8; Al-Nasafī, *Madārik al-Tanzīl*, 1:162; Al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fi Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl*, 1:224; Abū 'l-Sa'ūd, *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm*, 1:325; Al-Barūsawī, *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān*, 2:6; Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 3:102-03; Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 3:132; 6:240, 251; Al-Ṭabāṭabā'i, *al-Mizān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, (Qum: Mu'assasat Maṭbū'atay Ismā'īliyyān, 1391/1972), 3:7.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn 'Ādil, *al-Lubāb fi 'Ulūm al-Kitāb*, 5:14.

the meaning of plurality (*al-takthīr*) or separation (*al-tanjīm*).

Secondly, both *al-inzāl* and *al-tanzīl* have been used for the Qur'ān as well.

Thirdly, wherever the word *nazzala* has been mentioned in the Qur'ān, it also has been recited as *nazala* in some other *qirā'āt* with the exception of very few occasions. It indicates that both recitations have the same meaning, otherwise it would lead to the contradiction between the reports (*qirā'āt*) of the Qur'ān, which is quite impossible.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of this criticism, however, majority of the Muslim scholars continued to hold that the previous scriptures were revealed to the respective Prophets all at once (*jumlatan wāḥidah*). Nevertheless, with the dawn of modern era, a little shift from the classical view seems to appear. Ibn 'Āshūr holds and prefers that like all other revelations, the Tawrāh and the Injīl were also revealed step by step during the whole prophetic period of the respective Prophets, for it could not be proved by any evidence that any book was sent down to any Prophet all at once.<sup>2</sup>

It seems that Abū 'l-A'ālā Maudūdī also holds the same view, for he defines the Injīl as those inspired discourses and sayings, which the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) uttered as a prophet during the last couple of years of his life.<sup>3</sup>

The latter view seems to be more authentic and strong, for the arguments offered by the former view-holders do not definitely prove their opinion. Moreover, the latter is in consistence with the way according to which the Qur'ān has been sent down. Perhaps for this reason al-Ālūsī justifies his view in a different way. He argues that Allah used *al-tanzīl* for the Qur'ān and *al-inzāl* for the Tawrāh and the Injīl, because the Qur'ān had two descents; one from *al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz* to the *Bayt al-'Izzah* of the first heaven all at once, and the second from there to the Prophet (peace be on him) step by step in twenty three years, according to the famous view. On the other hand, the Tawrāh and the Injīl had only one descent.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. 5:15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr wa 'l-Tanwīr*, 3:148.

<sup>3</sup>Abū 'l-A'ālā Maudūdī, *The Meaning of the Qur'ān*, 2:13-14.

<sup>4</sup>Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 3:102-03.

### 3.7 PROPHECIES ABOUT MUḤAMMAD (peace be on him) AND HIS COMPANIONS IN THE INJIL

The Prophecies about the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) and his companions as mentioned in the previous scriptures occupy a significant place in Islamic literature. Since some Qur'ānic verses such as 7:157; 61:6; and 48:29 refer to these prophecies, this topic has frequently been drawing the attention of Muslim scholars throughout the ages.

A survey of Islamic literature reveals that Muslim scholars have generally adopted two types of approaches towards the prophecies regarding the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) and his companions as mentioned in the previous scriptures.

Firstly, some scholars especially of the earlier times tend to discuss this issue in the light and context of those traditions which were transmitted to the Islamic literature from the Jewish and Christian authorities who converted to Islam. Most of such traditions, however, have been discussed elsewhere in the present dissertation.<sup>1</sup> Many scholars, viz. Al-Ṭabarī, al-Tha'labī, al-Baghawī, al-Qurṭubī, al-Khāzin, Ibn 'Ādil, Al-Ālūsī record certain Islamic and Israelite traditions on the authority of 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr b. al-Āṣ (d. 65 AH), Ka'b al-Aḥbār (d. 32-36 AH) and Abū Mālik<sup>2</sup> etc, containing the prophecies about Muḥammad (peace be on him) as mentioned in the Tawrah.<sup>3</sup> However, they do not refer to any prophecy about the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) as mentioned in the Injil. One may safely assume that such scholars have not consulted neither the Tawrah nor the Injil for this purpose; rather they

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<sup>1</sup> See, section no. 2.2 above.

<sup>2</sup> Abū Mālik has only been quoted by al-Tha'labī.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, ed. Maḥmūd Shākir (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1421/2001), 9:101-02; Al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa 'l-Bayān*, 4:292-93; Al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, 2:205; Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qurān*, vol. 4, part 7, p. 268; Al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl*, 2:257. He does not quote Ka'b and Abū Mālik (d. AH); Ibn 'Ādil, *al-Lubāb fi 'Ulūm al-Kitāb*, 9:342; Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, 9:107-08. He records the same tradition of 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr b. al-Āṣ, but on the authority of 'Abd Allāh b. Salām (d. 43 AH) from Ibn Sa'd, al-Dārimī (d. 255 AH) and al-Bayhaqī (d. 458 AH). However, he does not quote Ka'b and only refers to the tradition of 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr b. al-Āṣ.



merely depended on some Islamic and Israelites traditions.<sup>1</sup>

It seems that as early as the time of Qatādah, Muslim scholars had fully been convinced that the People of the Book find the descriptions and prophecies of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) as well as those of his companions in their scriptures.<sup>2</sup> Even many of them narrate on the authority of Qatādah that the similitude of the companions of the Prophet (peace be on him), as mentioned in the Injīl is, "they would grow as a plant grows, enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong."<sup>3</sup> However, it is not certain from which source Qatādah received this information. It is also reported that the similitude of the Prophet's companions which has been mentioned in the Injīl is "they would be few and then would increase in number."<sup>4</sup>

Muslims used to accuse the People of the Book of concealing and altering the prophecies. Al-Khāzin (d. 725 AH) asserts that the prophecies about the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) were mentioned in the Tawrah and the Injīl and the People of the Book were fully aware of them. Nevertheless, they concealed and altered them out of their envy for him and fear of losing their leadership.<sup>5</sup>

Secondly, many scholars especially of relatively later times do not confine themselves

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<sup>1</sup> For Israelite traditions see, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Abū Shahbah, *al-Isrā'iliyyāt wa 'l-Mawḍū'at fi Kutub al-Tafsīr* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Sunnah, 1408 AH); Roberto Tottoli, "Origin and Use of the Term *Isrā'iliyyat* in Muslim Literature", *Arabica*, 46 (1999), 193-210.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, ed. Maḥmūd Shākir (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1421/2001), 9:102; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, 5:1582; Hugh and al-Qāḍī abū 'l-Walīd al-Bājī, *Risālat Rāhib Faransā ilā 'l-Muslimīn wa Jawāb al-Qāḍī abī 'l-Walīd al-Bājī 'alayhā*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh al-Sharqāwī (Riyadh: al-Ri'āsah al-'Āmmah li Idārāt al-Buḥūth al-'Ilmiyyah wa al-Ifṭā' wa al-Da'wah wa al-Irshād, 1407/1987), 76. However, he does not refer to any specific prophecy.; Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 3:242.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, ed. Maḥmūd Shākir (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1421/2001), 26:131; Al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa 'l-Bayān*, 9:66; Al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, 4:206; Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, 4:348. However, he does not mention the name of Qatādah.; Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qurān*, vol. 8, part 16, p. 268; Al-Nasafī, *Madārik al-Tanzīl*, 2:578. Like al-Zamakhsharī, he also does not mention the name of Qatādah.; Al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl*, 4:172-73; Ibn 'Ajībah, *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 7:153.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, 4:206

<sup>5</sup> Al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl*, 2:257.

to the Islamic and Israelite literature; rather they prefer to directly consult the Jewish and Christian scriptures to prove the prophecies about Muḥammad (peace be on him) and his companions.<sup>1</sup>

Muḥammad b. Ishāq (d. c. 150 AH), a well-known biographer of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) might have been the earliest Muslim scholar who sought to find the prediction about the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) in the canonical scriptures of the Christians of his time. He quotes the "Paraclete" passage from John 15:23-16:1.<sup>2</sup> This passage, as Alfred Guillaume suggests, in all likelihood has been taken from the Palestinian Syriac Lectionary.<sup>3</sup> Other Muslim writers in the early Islamic period after the time of Ibn Ishāq, such as Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276 AH) and al-Ya'qūbī (d. 257 AH), also quoted from the canonical Gospels to reinforce the distinctive Islamic prophetology.<sup>4</sup>

ʿAlī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. c. 240 AH), an ex-Christian frequently quotes from the Gospels to refer to the prophecies about the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him). He not only mentions a host of relevant passages from the Old Testament, but also mentions many prophecies from the New Testament. He quotes (Matthew 24:2; 26:51-52; Luke 22:35-36, 50-51; John 14:16, 26; 16:7-8, 13; 18:10-11; Gal. 4:22-26; 1 John 4:1-3; 1 Pet. 4:17).<sup>5</sup> It is evident that besides the Gospels he also quotes from other books of the New Testament, even he argues by the writings of Paul. Needless to say, his Christian background enabled him to be involved in this debate with such a detail and depth which is quite rare in his contemporary Muslim scholars. He attributes every book to his author and only refers to the numbers of the

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<sup>1</sup> For instance see, Aḥmad b. Taymiyyah, *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 5:283-318.; ʿAbd Allāh al-Tarjumān, *Tuhfat al-Arib fi 'l-Radd 'Alā Ahl al-Ṣalīb*, ed. Maḥmūd ʿAlī Ḥimāyah, (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), 137-143.

<sup>2</sup> ʿAbd al-Malik b. Hishām, *Sīrat al-Nabī*, 1:251.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Guillaume, "The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina circa A.D. 700" in *al-Andalus*, 15 (1950), 292; Also see, Sidney H. Griffith, "The Gospel in Arabic: An Inquiry into its Appearance in the First Abbasid Century", 137-43.

<sup>4</sup> Sidney H. Griffith, "The Gospel, the Qurʾān, and the Presentation of Jesus in al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh*", ed. John C. Reeves, *Bible and Qurʾān: Assays in Scriptural Intertextuality* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 141.

<sup>5</sup> ʿAlī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī, *al-Dīn wa 'l-Dawlat fi Itḥbāt Nubuwwat al-Nabī Muḥammad ṣallā allāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam*, ed. ʿĀdil Nuwayhid (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadidah, 1393/1973), 184-89.

chapters, but his numeration is slightly different from that of the present numeration, however. It may be noted that the Bible used by him incorporated the Acts and the Catholic Epistles under one title *Praxis*, as it is in the Syrian Churches.<sup>1</sup>

Al-Ṭūsī a Shī'ī commentator of the Qur'ān is one of the early commentators who quoted from the Tawrah and the Injil. He records (Deuteronomy 33:2; 18:18; Genesis 17:20) from the Tawrah and (John 14:16; 16:8, 13-14) from the Injil.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting that unlike 'Alī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī he mentions the Injil only in singular form and does not attribute it to any of four authors of the canonical gospels. Moreover, he refers neither to the numbers of the chapters nor to those of the verses. About one century after al-Ṭūsī, al-Ṭabrisī another Shī'ī exegete records the same prophecies. However, it is obvious that both scholars have mentioned a loose translation of the Injil of their time and that al-Ṭabrisī's translation is more precise than that of al-Ṭūsī.<sup>3</sup>

Al-Rāzī proclaims that the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) prophesied the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) many times in the Injil. For this purpose, he quotes (John 14:16-17, 26; 16:4, 7-8, 12-13) and mentions that this is the text of the Injil, translated into Arabic. He uses the word *al-Fārqalīṭ* for the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him).<sup>4</sup>

The translation of the verses he quotes is close to that of the existing Gospels. For example, one Arabic translation quoted by him is,

5: "وأما الفارقليط روح القدس يرسله أبي باسمي ويعلمكم ويعنحكم جميع الأشياء وهو يذكركم ما قلت لكم."

It refers to (John 14:26), which reads, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance of all things that I said to you." One can easily judge how much identical are both texts.

Al-Biqā'ī is a major figure of the Muslim scholarship of the Middle Ages who

<sup>1</sup> Idem., *The Book of Religion and Empire*, trans. & ed. A. Mingana, D. D. (Lahore: Law Publishing Company, n. d.), 141, footnote no. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 4:156.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma' al-Bayan*, 4:287.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsir al-Kabir*, 29:313.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

frequently quotes from the canonical Gospels of his time while working on his Qur'ānic commentary. It is evident that he uses the Arabic translations of the Gospels for this purpose. While interpreting the verse (4:158), he records the whole story of the Ascension from the Gospels. He mostly narrates the story from the Gospel of Matthew, but also frequently quotes from the Gospel of Mark, Luke and John to indicate the differences between their narrations.<sup>1</sup> He begins the story from (Matthew 23: 39) to the end of the Gospel. However, he leaves a number of verses. But as a whole the narrations quoted by him are consistent with those of the present Gospels.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, he also quotes (John 15: 26; 16: 7), which contain the word Paraclete (*al-Fārqaṭī*).<sup>3</sup>

Al-Biqā'i records many parables from the four gospels while interpreting the verse (7:157). The first parable follows as, "But Many who are first will be last and the last first" (Matthew 19: 30) Then he records verses from Matthew (20: 1-16; 21: 23-46; 22: 1-14), Luke (14: 16-24) and John (10: 1-3, 11-14, 16, 19-21).<sup>4</sup> He also mentions (John 15: 23-27; 16: 1) which Ibn Hishām (d. c. 150 AH) cites in his *Sīrah* Book to point out the prophecy about the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him).<sup>5</sup>

However, while interpreting the verse (48:29), he turns to the former approach and records some prophecies about the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) and his companions as mentioned in the Tawrāh on the authority of Ka'b al-Aḥbār. Although, he mentions a proverb from the translated Tawrāh (Deuteronomy 33:2) he does not mention any reference from the Injīl in this context.<sup>6</sup>

Sometimes it is suggested that the prophecies of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on

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<sup>1</sup> It may be noted, however, that his methodology differs from that of his predecessor al-Ya'qūbī (d. 257 AH), as the latter relies for the most part on John's Gospel, adding details from those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Sidney H. Griffith, "The Gospel, the Qur'ān, and the Presentation of Jesus in al-Ya'qūbī's *Ta'rikh*", 156.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Biqā'i, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 5:467-95.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 5:482.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 8:112-16.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 8:116-17.

<sup>6</sup> See, *ibid.*, 18:341-43.

him) must not have been cited in the previous scriptures in plain words, for then the wise and hard working would not have been distinguished from the unintelligent and negligent one. Therefore, they must be symbolic and be subsequently subjected to the interpretations, which might be misleading.<sup>1</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah further proposes that although Allah has told that the prophecies, the description, the place of appearance, and the qualities of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) have been mentioned in the previous books, He has never told that his exact Arabic name had been mentioned therein.<sup>2</sup>

Some modern scholars argue in favour of the prophecies about the Prophet (peace be on him) in another way. Ḥaqqānī, for instance, argues that if the name of the Prophet had not been mentioned in the religious scriptures of the Jews and the Christians, which they believed to be the Tawrah and the Injil, they would have accused him of lying. But their avoidance of accusing him of lying can only be justified if the name, description and place of the birth of the Prophet (peace be on him) had been composed in the Tawrah and the Injil. The witness and confession of many scholars of the People of the Book further strengthen this argument. On the contrary, he admits that one does not find his name and the descriptions in the existing Tawrah and the Injil. It means that either these scriptures have been corrupted or the genuine books have been lost. However, despite all this, many prophecies about the Prophet (peace be on him) can be found in the Tawrah and the Injil till the present day. For this purpose, he refers to the 18<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Deuteronomy and to the 14<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Gospel of John. Moreover, he holds that the Gospel of Barnabas contains the name of the Prophet (peace be on him) to the present day.<sup>3</sup>

In the line of this context, Ḥaqqānī comments on the verse (48:29) that since the genuine Tawrah and the Injil do not exist any more, it is not necessary to point out prophecies of the Prophet (peace be on him) and descriptions of the companions therein.

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<sup>1</sup> Abū 'l-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Abī Dharr Yūsuf al-Āmirī, *Kitāb al-Ilām bi Manāqib al-Islām*, 202. Also see, Raḥmat Allāh Kairānavī, *Izhār al-Ḥaqq*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Malkāwī (Riyadh: Ri'āsat Idārat al-Buḥūth al-ʿIlmiyyah wa al-Iftā', 1414/1994), 4:1079.

<sup>2</sup> Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kitāb Hidāyat al-Ḥayārā*, 42.

<sup>3</sup> Ḥaqqānī, *Tafsīr Fath al-Mannān*, 4:162.

However, he also attempts to show these prophecies from the existing Tawrah and the Injil. For this purpose, he refers to the beginning of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Chapter of the Deuteronomy and to the Gospel of Matthew (13: 8, 31-32).<sup>1</sup>

Rahmat Allāh Kairānavī (d. 1306 AH) mentions eighteen prophecies of the previous Prophets about Muḥammad (peace be on him) from the Christian scriptures. Seven of them are from the New Testament and the rest of them are from the Old Testament. The prophecies from the New Testament include (1) Jude 14-15 (2) Matthew 3:1-2, 4:12, 17, 23, 6:10, 10:7, 13:24, 31, 33; Luke 9:1-2, 10:1-2, 8-11 (3) Matthew 13:31-32 (4) 20:1-16 (5) 21:33-45 (6) The Revelation 2:26-29, (7) John 14: 15-17, 26, 30; 15:26-27; 16: 7-15.

The author discusses the word *Fārqaḷiṭ* at length. While responding to the Christian priests' objection that the Muslims confused the Greek word "Parakletos" with "Periklytos", he holds that whether the word *Fārqaḷiṭ* has derived from "Parakletos" or "Periklytos" it can be fully applied on the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him).<sup>2</sup>

More recently, scholars like Abū 'l-A'ḷā Maudūdī, Ibn 'Āshūr, and Iṣlāhī also cite a host of quotations from the Old and New Testaments to refer to the prophecies, while commenting on the relevant verses.<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to note that a modern Shī'ī scholar al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, although, holds that the verse (7:157) indicates that the Prophet (peace be on him) had been prophesied and attributed with three qualities (*al-Rasūl*, *al-Nabī* and *al-Ummī*) in both the Tawrah and the Injil, he does not cite any prophecy regarding the Prophet (peace be on him) from the Tawrah or the Injil,<sup>4</sup> rather he is generally inclined not to refer to the verses of the existing Tawrah or the Gospels in his exegesis.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6:257.

<sup>2</sup> Rahmat Allāh Kairānavī, *Izhār al-Ḥaqq*, 4:1187, 1190; Rashid Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 9:196-251. Rashid Riḍā heavily depends on Rahmat Allāh Kairānavī's work.

<sup>3</sup> Abū 'l-A'ḷā Maudūdī, *The Meaning of the Qur'ān*, 1976, 4:76-77; 7:473-75. He refers to (the Deut. 18:15-19; 33:2); (Matthew 13:3-9; 21:33-46); (Mark 4:3-20); (Luke 8: 4-15); (John 1:19-21; 14:15-17, 25-30, 15: 25-26; 16: 7-15); Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa 'l-Tanwīr*, vol. 9, part 1, p. 134. He refers to two citations; one (Matthew 24:11-14) and the other (John 14:26); Iṣlāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, 3:373-75. He cites (Deuteronomy 18:15-19; 33:2), (Isaiah 42:1-4), (Matthew 21:42-44) and (John 14:17,31); For some more recently published works see, 'Abdu 'l-Aḥad Dawud, *Muḥammad in the Bible* (Doha: Presidency of Shariyah Courts & Religious Affairs, 1980 AD); Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood, *A Muslim Study of the Origins of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 159-68.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān*, 8:280.

### 3.8 THE QUESTION OF CORRUPTION

A significant point of tension between Muslims and those whom the Qur'ān calls "the People of the Book" is the Qur'ānic accusation that the scriptures of Jews and Christians have been falsified, corrupted, altered and changed, and are therefore not to be relied on as the "word of God" in any matters of religion, faith or law.<sup>1</sup> The accusation of forgery, however, was a widespread polemical motif, already in pre-Islamic times used by pagan, Samaritan and Christian authors to discredit their opponents' scriptures.<sup>2</sup>

The general scholarly opinion leans towards the impression that the accusation of *tahrīf* is the starting point of the Muslim polemical discourse.<sup>3</sup> For instance, Thomas Michel, in his extensive introduction to *Ibn Taymiyya's al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, asserts, "The question of *tahrīf* was a central issue in all polemical debates between Christians and Muslims".<sup>4</sup>

Whether the previous scriptures have been subjected to the corruption of the text (*tahrīf al-naṣṣ*) itself or that of the meaning of the text (*tahrīf al-ma'nā*) only, has not decidedly been settled in the writings of the Muslim scholars yet. Nevertheless, as J. D. McAuliffe suggests, multiple Qur'ānic references to some kinds of scriptural tampering compelled the classical commentators and apologists to grapple with the charge and consequently to assess the textual and exegetical authenticity of what were called the Tawrah and the Injil.<sup>5</sup> It has been maintained elsewhere in the present dissertation that "[m]any Qur'ānic verses indicate that the People of the Book especially the Jews of Madīnah have been tampering with their scriptures. ... Majority of such actions may be interpreted as referring to the distortion of the meaning; rather than of the text, even the *tahrīf*-based verses seem to refer to the distortions

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<sup>1</sup> 'Abdullah Saeed, "The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures", 419.

<sup>2</sup> Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "Tahrīf", eds. P.J. Bearman et al., *EP*, 10:111.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Accad, "The Gospels in the Muslim Discourse of the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries: an exegetical inventorial table (part I)", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 14:1 (2003), 72.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas F. Michel, S. J., ed. and trans., *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, (Delmar, New York: Caravan Books, 1999), 89.

<sup>5</sup> Jane Dammen McAuliffe, "The Qur'ānic Context of Muslim Biblical Scholarship", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 7:2 (1996), 145.

committed by the Jews during the conversations and in the commandments of the Tawrah. Perhaps the only clear reference to the textual falsification is in 2:79".<sup>1</sup> It might be this Qur'anic context which urges many Muslim scholars to be more cautious in their assessment of the issue of distortion and to take *tahrif* to signify mainly the distortion of the meaning of the text. However, the more common understanding, as Lazarus-Yafeh proposes, of *tahrif* among Muslim authors, especially from the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century up to modern times, has been the one which accused Jews and Christians of having deliberately falsified the text of their respective scriptures.<sup>2</sup>

Aḥmad Amīn (d. 1954 AD), however, characterizes Muslim understanding of *tahrif* of the Tawrah to be of three-fold typology. Firstly, some scholars claim that it is not the Tawrah which was revealed to Mūsā (peace be on him); rather it has completely or mostly been altered and changed. They argue by its inconsistencies and self-contradictions. Secondly, some scholars of Ḥadīth, Fiqh and Kalām hold that the *tahrif* did not occur in the text of the scripture but in its interpretation. Thirdly, some scholars view that *tahrif* has occurred at some places in the text of the scripture; some phrases have been added to it, but most of them are intact as they were revealed.<sup>3</sup> The same controversy is found about the authenticity and distortion of the Injil, save some scholars like Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Taymiyyah etc. more forcefully rejected the authenticity of the existent Gospels than they rejected that of the Tawrah.<sup>4</sup>

The attitude of absolute corruption towards the Tawrah and the Injil might have been adopted by a minority of Muslims. Ibn Taymiyyah mentions that some later Muslim theologians hold that the text of every manuscript of the Tawrah, Injil and Zabūr in every language has completely been altered; therefore they do not give them any sanctity at all and consider it lawful to use them in toilet. However, it is not the opinion of *salaf*, Ibn

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<sup>1</sup> See, section no. 1.5, above.

<sup>2</sup> Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "Tahrif", *EP*, 10:111.

<sup>3</sup> Aḥmad Amīn, *Ḍuḥā 'l-Islām* (Cairo: al-Maktabat al-Tawfiqiyyah, n. d.), 1:334-35.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:345-46.



Taymiyyah declares.<sup>1</sup>

Al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī (d. 246 AH) is sometimes thought to be an earliest representative of the second approach.<sup>2</sup> He accuses Christians of having misinterpreted their scriptures to make them consistent with their dogmas, while their texts could have been interpreted in the right way.<sup>3</sup> He suggests that the Messiah has been called the “Son of God” to refer to his relationship of love, friendship and worship with Allah. To strengthen his interpretation he refers to or quotes from the Gospels the sayings of the Messiah (Matthew 5: 48; John 15: 15-16), those of the disciples (Matthew 12: 17), and the testimony of his mother Mary (Luke 2: 25-30, 41-53) and that of John the Baptist (John 1: 11-14).<sup>4</sup> Although, he does not explicitly accuse the Christians of having corrupted the text of the Gospels, he frequently uses doubt-creating phrases i.e., “They believe or think that the Gospels contain such and such information....” and “The Injil which is called Injil by you...”. This obviously implies that he does not fully trust the text of Christian scriptures of his time.

Al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 345 AH) also defines *ṭahrīf* in the manner of those scholars who consider it to consist of distorted interpretation of the text rather than distortion of the text itself.<sup>5</sup>

It seems that many Qur’ānic exegetics are inclined to prefer the second approach. In his treatment of 2:75, al-Ṭabarī explains *yuharrifūnahū* as “they alter its meaning; that is, they change its direction and its meaning to another meaning.”<sup>6</sup> Later on, he implies that the alteration of meaning is more likely, which seems to confirm that he saw *ṭahrīf* as related to the meaning of the text, not the actual text itself.<sup>7</sup>

Al-Rāzī explains the nature of *ṭahrīf* in three ways, but prefers that “what is meant by

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<sup>1</sup> Aḥmad b. Taymiyyah, *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:420, 448.

<sup>2</sup> Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, “Ṭahrīf”, *EP*, 10:111.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Rassī, *al-Radd ‘alā ‘l-Naṣārā*, ed. Imām Ḥanafī ‘Abd Allāh (Cairo: Dār al-Āfāq al-‘Arabiyyah, 1420/2000), 41.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 44-48.

<sup>5</sup> Ghulam Haider Aasi, *Muslim Understanding of other Religions*, 37.

<sup>6</sup> Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, 2:248-49; 8:432.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Abdullah Saeed, “The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures”, 423.

*tahrīf* is to cast false and doubtful (statements), to give false interpretations, and to change the true meaning of a word to a false meaning using various linguistic tricks, as is done by the people of innovation in our time with regard to (Qur'ānic) verses that are not in line with their schools (*madhāhib*).<sup>1</sup> However, immediately after this he suggests that the alteration of the text is also possible, based on the verse (5:41), where the term "*min ba'di mawāḍi'ihī*" has been used. He says, "As for the verse mentioned in *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (5:41), it indicates that they combined the two forms (of *tahrīf*): they used to give false interpretations (to texts) and they used to take word (*al-lafẓ*) out of the Book."<sup>2</sup>

On balance, however, al-Rāzī does not give a definite view on this. The possibility of both types of *tahrīf* exists, but he seems to be leaning towards the *tahrīf* of meaning.<sup>3</sup> Al-Qurṭubī also holds that the phrase *yuharrifūnahū* in (4:46) implies that they incorrectly interpret it.<sup>4</sup> However, in his treatment of the verse (5:13), he mentions the possibility of the *tahrīf* of the text as well.<sup>5</sup>

Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī explicitly says that the scriptures of the Peoples of the Book have been subjected to disordered interpretations and their Gospel has been prevailed over by their misleading whims.<sup>6</sup> It implies that the Tawrah and the Injil have been misinterpreted (*tahrīf al-ma'nā*),<sup>7</sup> but he does not explicitly accuse the People of the Book of distorting the text of their scriptures (*tahrīf al-lafẓ*). Muḥammad al-Ghazālī also treats the text of the Gospels presupposing that it is authentic.<sup>8</sup> It may imply that he considers the Gospels textually intact.

Some western scholars ascribe to Ibn Kaldūn (d. 808 AH) the view that the previous

<sup>1</sup> Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 10:111-12. The translation is of 'Abdullah Saeed, "The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures", 424.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> 'Abdullah Saeed, "The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures", 424.

<sup>4</sup> Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qurān*, vol. 3, part 5, pp. 209.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., vol. 3, part 6, pp. 75.

<sup>6</sup> Abū 'l-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Abī Dharr Yūsuf al-Āmirī, *Kitāb al-I'lām bi Manāqib al-Islām*, 167.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 202. He says: "وتعريف الألفاظ المرموزة بالتأويلات الفاسدة يكون أهون منه بكثير. فمن هذا الوجه ما تأتى لهم كتمان خبره، وإخفاء نبأه."

<sup>8</sup> See, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Radd al-Jamīl li Ilāhiyyat 'Īsā bi Sharīḥ al-Injīl*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh al-Sharqāwī, ed. 2<sup>nd</sup> (Cairo: Dār al-Hidāyah, 1406/1986).

scriptures had not been textually distorted,<sup>1</sup> “since custom prevents people who have a (revealed) religion from dealing with their divine scriptures in such a manner.”<sup>2</sup> According to them, he also distinguishes between Qur’ānic and non-Qur’ānic moods of revelation as he is thought to have said,

All this indicate that the Qur’ān is alone among the divine books, in that our Prophet received it directly in the words and phrases in which it appears. In this respect it differs from the Torah, the Gospel, and other heavenly books. The prophets received them in the form of ideas during the state of revelation. After their return to a human state, they expressed those ideas in their own ordinary words. Therefore, those books do not have “inimitability”.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, attribution of this view to Ibn Khaldūn is questionable, since the texts on which these scholars based their argument are found neither in Arabic manuscripts nor in their published editions. They have only been included in the English translation of *Muqaddimah* by Franz Rosenthal who admits that the former text is found in the margin of C (and in MS. Nuru Osmaniye, 3424), but appears neither in the earlier texts nor in D.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, the second passage, Rosenthal acknowledges, is contained only in a marginal note of the MS. Raghib Pasa.<sup>5</sup> Internal evidence does not seem to support this view as well, for Ibn Khaldūn does not consider the text of the Gospels of his time pure revelation as he clearly mentions, “They (the Apostles) then wrote down the Gospel that had been revealed to Jesus, in four recensions according to their different traditions. ... Not all of it is pure revelation, but (the Gospels) have an admixture of the words of Jesus and of the Apostles. Most of (their) contents consists (sic) of sermons and stories. There are very few laws in them.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, if

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<sup>1</sup> Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, “Taḥrīf”, *ET*, 10:111; Jane Dammen McAuliffe, “The Qur’ānic Context of Muslim Biblical Scholarship”, 146.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 1:20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:20, footnote no. 51.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:192, footnote no. 260.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, ed. ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Wāḥid Wāfi (Cairo: Dār

it is presumed that the mood of the previous revelations differs from that of the Qur'ān as mentioned above, the question of textual distortion will totally become irrelevant, for if the revelation is sent down in the form of ideas rather than of words there will be no question of the distortion of the words, due to the nonexistence of any actual divine text.

However, the most prominent representative of this view is the nineteenth century's Muslim scholar and reformist Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān who overwhelmingly suggests that the corruption of the Christian scriptures in the sense of addition, deletion and alteration of the text has not been proved.<sup>1</sup>

It seems, nevertheless, that majority of Muslim scholars continued to hold the third approach that the scriptures of the People of the Book had been subjected to the corruption of both text and meaning.

Ibn Taymiyyah extensively discusses the issue. His discussion comprehensively portrays the position of Muslim circles regarding the issue till his days. Therefore, it seems to be helpful to summarize his discussion below.

He mentions that the correct and the preferred view of the majority of Muslims as well his own is that some of the words of the previous books have been corrupted as well as many of their meanings have been altered. On the other hand, some Muslims view that their meanings alone have been corrupted not the words.<sup>2</sup> Then some Muslims view that it happened before the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him). Others hold that it occurred after the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him), even there are others who view that it happened in both periods; before and after or at least they consider it possible.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, some Muslims hold that a large portion of these books has been altered or even the altered portion is more than the unaltered one, especially of the Gospel, for it has

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Nahḍat Miṣr, n. d.), 2:650-52. The translation is of Ibn Khaldūn *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 1:476-77.

<sup>1</sup> See, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, *Tabyīn al-Kalām fī Tafsīr al-Tawrah wa al-Injīl 'alā Millat al-Islām*, (Ghāzipūr: Author's private press, 1278/1862), 1:66-67.

<sup>2</sup> Aḥmad b. Taymiyyah, *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:407, 419-420; 3:9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 2:419;

been subjected to the accusation of alteration more frequently and more obviously than the Tawrah.<sup>1</sup> Al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415 AH) and ‘Alī b. Aḥmad b. Ḥazm might have been the earliest Muslim scholars who most rigorously and systematically advocate this view.<sup>2</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah holds that some people possess the intact manuscripts of the Gospel as well as others possess altered ones. However, he does not present any argument in favour of this assertion,<sup>3</sup> save it is impossible to prove otherwise.<sup>4</sup>

However some accounts of Ibn Taymiyyah seem to be self-contradictory, as once he says that the existence of alteration in the Gospels is more evident (*aẓhar*) and that many people hold that the Gospels contain very little words of God; rather the Gospel, which is the word of God, is not these Gospels,<sup>5</sup> but elsewhere he holds that most of the commandments (*al-awāmir wa ’l-nawāhī*) of the Injil are textually intact. Only some words of narrative accounts (*al-akhbār*) and interpretation of some commands have been changed.<sup>6</sup>

Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī suggests that Jews distorted the text and meaning of the Tawrah, concealed its verses, and added to it falsely that is not of it. He, however, gives a unique explanation of the corruption of the text, for he defines it as committing corruption in translation etc. rather than in original text. He ascribes this explanation to Ibn ‘Abbās as mentioned in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.<sup>7</sup> However, it has been discussed elsewhere that according to the preferred view, this explanation is of al-Bukhārī himself rather than of Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>8</sup>

It may be noted that Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and Raḥmat Allāh Kairānavī are among

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 2:420.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Tathbīt Dalā’il al-Nubuwwah*, 1:152-55; Gabriel Said Reynolds, *A Muslim Theologian in the Sectarian Milieu ‘Abd al-Jabbār and the Critique of Christian Origins* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 83; Abū Muḥammad ‘Alī b. Aḥmad b. Ḥazm, *al-Faṣl fī ’l-Milal wa ’l-Ahwā’ wa ’l-Niḥal*, eds. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣr and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Umyarah (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, n.d.), 1:201; 2:13.

<sup>3</sup> Aḥmad b. Taymiyyah, *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:31-32.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 2:422.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 2:420.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 3:34; 2:423-424.

<sup>7</sup> Ḥujjat Allāh (sic) al-Dihlawī, *al-Fawz al-Kabīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, 21-22.

<sup>8</sup> See, section no. 2.3, above.

the earliest Muslim scholars who extensively made use of the results of western biblical scholarship in their biblical works. However, surprisingly their approaches are significantly different. Whereas the former adopts an apologetic and defensive approach, the latter prefers a polemical and offensive one. Similarly, they reach quite opposite results, for the former denies the existence of the corruption of the Christian scriptures in the sense of addition, deletion and alteration of text and the latter is overwhelmingly interested in demonstrating the existence of the same kinds of corruption.

Raḥmat Allāh Kairānavī holds that there is no disagreement between Muslims and Christians about the existence of the “distortion of meaning” (*tahrīf al-ma’nā*) in Christian scriptures. However, the existence of the “distortion of word” (*tahrīf al-lafz*) is controversial; Christians deny it but the author holds that the “distortion of word” (*tahrīf al-lafz*) with all forms; alteration, addition and deletion, is found in their scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

He mentions 35 examples to prove the “distortion of word” by alteration in the Bible. However, 31 examples concern the Old Testament and only four are from New Testament. Moreover, none of these four is from the Gospels, rather they are from the Acts (20:28), 1 Timothy (3:16), the Revelation (8:13), and the Ephesians (5:21). He narrates all these four examples of alteration on behalf of a Protestant biblical scholar Griesbach (1745-1812).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, these four examples may not be regarded as a vital alteration. He mentions 45 examples of the “distortion of word” by addition in the Bible. Twenty-six examples are from Old Testament and nineteen are from the New Testament. Eleven examples out of nineteen are from the Gospels and the rest of them are from other books of the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> Finally, he mentions 20 examples of the “distortion of word” by deletion in the Bible. Fifteen examples are from the Old Testament and only five are from the New Testament.<sup>4</sup>

It is, however, noteworthy that in each of these categories the number of the examples of the “distortion of word” is comparatively much lower in the New Testament than in the Old Testament.

<sup>1</sup> Raḥmat Allāh Kairānavī, *Izhār al-Haqq*, 2:427.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 2:460-61.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 2:463-512.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 2:513-41.

### 3.9 A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

This chapter begins with the discussion about the etymology of the word Injil. It has been noticed that only the Qur'ānic commentators and Arab Linguists generally discussed the etymological aspect of the word Injil and that the scholars of other disciplines almost completely ignored this aspect. This difference of approach might have been caused by the nature of different Islamic disciplines. It may be argued that since the discipline of the exegesis is more analytical and explanatory in nature than those of theology and history, for example, it relatively focuses on the etymological aspect more than they do.

A number of scholars especially earlier ones generally seek the origin of the word Injil in Arabic root. Regardless of the importance of this approach, it does explain how they see the Injil. According to different meanings which they have ascribed to its root, the Injil has been characterized as a book which strengthens the true religion probably the religion of the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him), enriches the straits of the people of the Tawrah, provides the knowledge of lawful and unlawful matters, draws out the extract of the light of the Tawrah and discloses the inner side of the commandments of which the Tawrah shows the outer side only and sheds light on the controversies of the Christians, as well as it was deduced from *al-lawḥ al-mahfūz* and was a consequence (*fara'*) of the Tawrah.

Whether the Injil contained the commandments or not has been discussed in the second section. The views of scholars significantly differ in this regard. It seems that both sides have some support from the texts of both Qur'ān and Gospels. However, more striking fact is that the Injil has epitomized a spiritual and ascetic scripture in Sufis' exegeses as opposed to the Tawrah which has been thought to be a book of external sciences. This specific approach towards the Injil might have been developed under the influence of the ascetic personality of the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) as perceived in the writings of Sufi Masters and in Islamic ascetic literature.

It is evident from the previous discussion that almost all Muslim scholars are inclined to hold that those Qur'ānic verses which enjoin and demand the People of the Book, especially the Christians to act according to their scriptures neither imply that their existing scriptures are free of corruption nor do that they enjoy an independent scriptural authority

after the advent of Islam. In fact they mostly interpret these verses to indicate that the People of the Book must avoid corrupting their scriptures and act according to the true spirit of their commandments which would ultimately lead them to the embracement of Islam, for these scriptures do contain the testimonies of the prophethood of the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh)

It seems that since the Qur'ān explicitly declares that the prophecies about the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) were found in the previous scriptures, Muslims from the outset sought to find such material to interpret the relevant verses. Discussion about the testimonies of the prophethood of the Prophet (peace be on him) has been a hallmark of the Islamic apologetic and polemical literature from the early times to the modern ones. However, it is evident that Muslims did not have an easy access to the canonical scriptures or their Arabic translations in the earliest times; rather they might have collected some meager information from oral tradition and religious lore of the People of the Book. Such material was mostly transmitted to the Islamic literature through the channel of people like 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr b. 'Āṣ, 'Abd Allāh b. Salām, Ka'b al-Aḥbār, Wahb b. Munabbih and Qatādah etc. It may be noted that many of these personalities played a major role in diffusion of the Israelite traditions in Islamic literature especially in the Tafsīr.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, in the earliest Muslim writings one does not find accurate quotations from the canonical literature of the Jews and the Christians. It seems that some early Muslims might have used the term Injīl and likewise the Tawrāh in a loose sense not referring to specific verses, but rather collecting the information they needed with the help of people who knew these texts and quoted or read, translated, and explained them to the Muslims.<sup>2</sup> Lazarus-Yafeh, perhaps unnecessarily expanding the period of this phenomenon to the ninth century AH and so on, concludes, "With a few exceptions (like Ibn Ḥazm), most of Muslim authors up to Al-Biqā'ī had no direct knowledge of the Biblical text. Even after Al-Biqā'ī, many still quoted traditional polemical or fictitious verses."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 113-14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 129.



However, as a matter of fact, when Muslims conquered Christian territories they had to face a new situation. They became the rulers of lands whose majority was Christian. This situation might gradually have enabled or even compelled some Muslims to consult the scriptures of the People of the Book, although mostly with the help of some informant, and find the material of their interest therein. Since that time, Muslims began to quote more exact passages from the canonical scriptures of the People of the Book. Moreover, it seems that this phenomenon also provided them with an opportunity to assess the texts of these scriptures and consequently caused a variety of opinions in this regard. However, it is interesting to note that before the modern era Muslims never referred to any Injil other than Qur'ānic Injil or four canonical Gospels, with only one exception, however, of the Gospel of Infancy to which al-Qarāfi made a brief reference.<sup>1</sup> The Gospel of Barnabas caught the attention of Muslims only in the Modern era. Moreover, the Injil possessed by Waraqaḥ b. Nawfal has regrettably been completely ignored by Muslim scholars throughout the centuries.

Aḥmad Amīn suggests three positions of Muslims in regard to the corruption of the previous scriptures; absolute rejection of the text, complete acceptance of the text with accusation of misinterpretation, and rejection of a small portion of the text with the accusation of misinterpretation of it. Although, this three-fold typology seems to be more accurate than that of Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, it does not include all positions of Muslims in this regard, as it has been mentioned above with the reference to Ibn Taymiyyah.

It is interesting to note, however, that many Qur'ānic commentators like al-Ṭabarī, al-Rāzī, and al-Qurṭubī etc. do not explicitly accuse the previous scriptures of having textually been corrupted; rather their writing might imply that they are inclined to hold the view of the exegetical distortion only. Perhaps this is partially because of the inexplicit position of the Qur'ān in this regard and partially due to the nature of their discipline. On the other hand, the theologians more overwhelmingly accuse the People of the Book of the textual corruption of their scriptures, even if some of them take their text on its face value they mostly do so only for the sake of argument, as Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī (d. 1349 AH) mentions, "... in such case

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<sup>1</sup> Aḥmad b. Idrīs al-Qarāfi, *al-Ajwibat al-Fākhirah 'an al-As'ilat al-Fājirah*, 45.

if we treat with any tradition of the Injil, it does not imply that we accept its authenticity; rather it merely means that we accept its authenticity without any research and evaluation for a while and presuming that we wish to explain it.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, they should not be considered representatives of the second approach. It seems that the method of Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī and Muḥammad al-Ghazālī etc. should be viewed in this context as well.

It seems favourable that both complete rejection and complete acceptance of the text of the Tawrah and the Injil have been held only by a tiny minority of Muslim scholars. The majority hold that some of the text and most of meanings had been altered, as Ibn Taymiyyah has suggested. Therefore, if the opinion of the majority of Muslims is kept in mind the accusation of distortion and search for prophecies at the same time cannot be characterized as contradictory estimations, as it has been accused by some western scholars.<sup>2</sup> Allah knows the best.

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<sup>1</sup> Imām Ḥmid al-Dīn Farāhī, *Aqsām-e Qur’ān* (A’zam Gar: Dā’irah-e Ḥamīdiyyah, 2009), 106.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Dammen McAuliffe, “The Qur’ānic Context of Muslim Biblical Scholarship”, 141

## CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this humble dissertation, following tentative conclusions have been reached,

1. To the end of the sixth century AD, Christianity had been introduced to many Arab tribes as well as a number of famous Arab individuals had been considered Christians. Therefore, at least some of them—given the fact that the general population of the Arabs was illiterate—must have possessed some kind of scriptural material in Arabic or Syriac, if not a complete version.
2. It seems that the act of writing occupies a special status in the Qur'ānic concept of scriptures, for the terms that have frequently been used in the Qur'ān for them are kitāb, ṣuḥuf, and Zabūr or zūbur, and all of them entail the meaning of writing. Nevertheless, it does not necessarily mean that all scriptures contained hard and fast form of a book composed on pages and bound in covers. They could be written in any form on any thing according to the custom of the day even sometimes spoken words could metaphorically be called as a kitāb.
3. The Qur'ān does not clearly state if the Injīl had been composed in the life of the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) or not. However, if it is accepted, as al-Ṭabarī views, that the kitāb in 3:48 and 5:110<sup>1</sup> means act of writing then it seems that there is every reason to suppose that the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) must have composed his Injīl in his life.
4. The Qur'ān always mentions the Injīl in singular form. It never uses the term New Testament. It mentions the disciples of the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) sometimes, but never attributes the authorship of the Injīl to them. It seems that according to the Qur'ān the nature of the revelations of the Qur'ān, the Tawrah and the Injīl is same.
5. For reasons mentioned in the dissertation, it may rightly be argued that neither the distortion of the Injīl should be related to that of the Tawrah nor should the proofs of the textual distortion of both scriptures be considered to be solely based on the

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<sup>1</sup> ﴿وَنُفِثَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالْزُورَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ﴾ (3:48); ﴿وَزَادَ غُلَّتُكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالْزُورَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ﴾ (5:110).

Qur'ānic evidence, for the Muslim scholars have applied a number of research methods along with the Qur'ānic evidences, to reach the conclusions in regard to the corruption of the previous scriptures, i.e. the study of their discrepancies, the historical criticism, the critical study of the text and the chain of transmitters, and, last but not least, the study of irrational and blasphemous doctrines.

6. In ḥadīth literature, references are found to the Injīl possessed by Waraqah b. Nawfal, but information in this regard is both meager and confusing. However, since the Islamic traditions attest his traveling to Syria, Baḥrayn and the territories of the tribe of Ṭayy', it may be assumed that he might have had some association with either Nestorianism or Monophysitism, for these two denominations generally prevailed in these areas.
7. Ḥadīth literature indicates that Waraqah's Injīl was either in Arabic or in 'Ibrānī or in both. However, modern scholarship, both Muslim and western, is inclined to hold that it was most probably in Syriac and that he used to translate it in Arabic. Some classical Ḥadīth commentators also seem to have suggested the same view.
8. It clearly seems that the ḥadīth literature's attitude towards the Injīl is an expansion of that of the Qur'ān. One finds many parallels between the Qur'ān and the Injīl in the ḥadīth literature; both were revealed in a specific night of Ramaḍān; both were divided into sūrahs; and some specific sūrahs of the Qur'ān were declared as substitute or simile of the Injīl.
9. Ḥadīth literature points to the start of the corruption of the Injīl and other Christian scriptures and connects it with the conspiracies of the ruling class. It draws attention towards the persecution of the true Christians after the ascension of the Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him), almost in accordance with the accounts of the history of Christianity as perceived by the Christians. However, it seems more likely to set the scene of the ḥadīth literature's account of the persecution in the fourth century AD when the Trinitarian Church started a vigorous campaign against its opponents after the conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine I (d. 337 AD).
10. Although, the prophetic traditions mostly level the charge of corruption against the

People of the Book in Jewish context, that is quite natural, in some cases, however, it does include the Christian scriptures as well. Whether this charge involves the corruption of both text and meaning or only of the meaning is a complex question, for the evidence seems to support either of the views, though textual corruption seems to be more evident.

11. It is evident that Muslims did not have an easy access to the canonical scriptures or their Arabic translations in the earliest times; rather they might have collected some meager information from oral tradition and religious lore of the People of the Book. Such material mostly transmitted to the Islamic literature through the channel of the people like 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr b. 'Āṣ, 'Abd Allāh b. Salām, Ka'b al-Aḥbār, Wahb b. Munabbih and Qatādah etc. It may be noted that many of these personalities played a major role in diffusion of the Israelite traditions in Islamic literature especially in the Tafsīr.
12. Before the modern era Muslims never mentioned any Injīl other than Qur'ānic Injīl or four canonical Gospels, with only one exception, however, of the Gospel of Infancy to which al-Qarāfi made a brief reference. The Gospel of Barnabas caught the attention of Muslims only in the Modern era. Moreover, the Injīl possessed by Waraqah b. Nawfal has regretfully been completely ignored by Muslim scholars throughout the centuries.
13. Many Qur'ānic commentators do not explicitly accuse the previous scriptures of textual corruption; rather their writing might imply that they are inclined to hold the view of the exegetical distortion only. On the other hand, the theologians more overwhelmingly accuse the People of the Book of the textual corruption of their scriptures, even if some of them take their text on its face value they mostly do so only for the sake of argument.
14. It seems, therefore, favourable that both complete rejection and complete acceptance of the text of the Tawrah and the Injīl have been held only by a tiny minority of Muslims. The majority hold that some of text and most of meanings had been altered.
15. Some modern scholars who utilized the results of the western biblical scholarship adopted quite opposite approaches towards the previous scriptures and reached very different conclusions.

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