

Reviewing The Theory of Qur'an's Adaptation

Is Islam Adapted From Previous Religions?

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During 2 last centuries, some orientalist argued that Similarities between some Islamic teachings, and teachings of Old Testament, New Testament, Avesta and likewise, show that Islam religion is adapted from previous religions. Their claim, regarding this matter, is presented in their books. In Mizan ul-Haqq written by (C.G. Pfander) – the German missionary and priest – he states:

In a word, there remains no doubt among the learned that the Qur'an is a book composed of matter selected from the doctrines and precepts of the Old and New Testaments from the legends which were current among the Christians and Jews in the days of Muhammad, and from the ceremonies and customs which prevailed among the Magi and Arabs of that time. Thus, we see that Muhammad, having the design of forming a new religious system out of the systems and ceremonies of the Jews, Christians, and Arabs, took from them whatever fell in with his opinions and suited his plan, and set it forth in the Qur'an.

It may be said, in brief, that as those things contained in the Qur'an which are true and good have been taken from the Old and New Testaments, they cannot prove anything as to its divine origin.¹

Also, a Jew Orientalist of Hungary, Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921) in his books, "Schools of Kor'anic commentators" and "Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law" claims that Islamic teachings, even in their very beginning, were the trend of choosing and mixing Judaism, Christianity, Persian religion and other religions. Also, some strange works of teachings' experiments penetrated into Islamic society and grew up the issues which were become significant latterly.²

Islam, in its way of advances, was colored by Greek thoughts and ideas: its precise structure of Fiqh (jurisprudence) is the influence of Roman's laws; the Doctrine of its governorship, created in Abbasid era, declares the interference of Persian politics' point of view, its Irfan (Mysticism) is nothing more than imitating the thoughts of Indians Muhammad, its founder, did not bring new ideas and thoughts... . The message of this Arabian prophet is nothing more than a selected mixture of religions acquired by contacts with Jews, Christians and others; the ideas and thoughts by which he himself was affected significantly and recognized them important to awake religious feelings of his fellow countrymen... . Far from this, we come to Zoroastrian-

¹Fender, C.G., (1867), *The Mizan ul-Haqq or The Balance of Truth*, pp.108, 110. London.

² Goldziher, Ignaz.(1920) *Schools of Kor'anic commentator*.(Quoted and translated into English from Arabic translation: *Mazaheb al-Tafsir al-Islami*, p.171.)

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Persian customs affecting Arab's prophet's wisdom and recognition. Because He, besides being in connection with Jews and Christians, was in touch with the followers of these religions¹

Carl Brockelmann (1868-1956), the famous Semitist, also has some statements in his famous book, *Tarikh Al-Sho'ob Al-Islamiyah*. He claims that the Prophet's theology was not something new, except some small parts of it. The utmost part of it is derived from Judaism and Christianity. Muhammad adjusted them to the needs of his nation... undoubtedly, his beliefs of the Hereafter is traced back to Judaism and indirectly to Persian and old Babel.²

I.p.Petrushevski (1898 A.C.), a materialist Orientalist from Ukraine says in his book "Islam in Iran" that, "in this new religion (Islam) which is a reflex of the need of new society, the elements of other religions, more developed ones, like Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrian more, and Manichaeism and Gnosticism less, can be found. Especially some religious practices of the Arabs of pre-Islamic era can be seen in Islam as well."³

Yet some of Muslim scholars refuse these misunderstandings. They try to show, by proof and reasoning, the rightness of Islam's messenger. He made the spring of God's guidance through the hearts and souls of people; while they were entangled with the old, half-eaten, and damaged

¹ Goldziher, Ignaz. *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*. (Quoted and translated into English from Arabic translation: *al-Aghidah val Sharia in Islam*, p.11, 12, 26.

² Brockelmann, Carl. *History of the Islamic Peoples*, Quoted and translated into English from Arabic translation: *Tarikh Al-Sho'ob Al-Islamiyah*

³ Petrushevski. I.p., *Islam in Iran*. Quoted and translated into English from Persian translation: *Islam in Iran*, p.19.)

inheritance of the former religions. This article will try to give two answers to this subject.

1. A simple, but necessary point one which can uproot the mentioned misunderstanding is:

All prophets were sent by the same God; their words and messages are from Him as well. So, inevitably, all heavenly religions, in their principles of knowing God and pillars of divine law, are compatible and similar.

This unity in religions and similarity among them, is not only due to their shortcomings or the Prophet's untruthfulness, but also is a sign of its originality and honesty of its carrier. Because, based on the witness of nature, on the long or small branches of a tree, one special fruit or blossom, with special fragrant and color will grow. And if some differences find among them is only in their sizes.

God, once creating human beings, with the abilities of understanding, thinking, recognizing, choosing, doing and making; out of his kindness and mercy, met their needs of heavenly guidance by appointing trained leaders. These heavenly Hojjahs (Signs of God) who were sent for all nations and in all ages bring the same and unique religion that was generally called "Islam". Its bases were on the unchangeable Fitrat (nature) of human being. Among those religions no significant differences can be found in their teachings, legal rules, in general, and even in lots of details. The contents of those religions are good evident on this truth. Mostly, the existing differences among these can be resulted from the following:

1. The academic statements or the level of people's understanding in comprehending the truth of religious beliefs

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are the reasons of differences. but differences in surface only and not in depth. As a matter of fact, such differences are signs of growth and development of human race, and perfection of religions.

2. The changes resulted from abrogation (Naskh) and change (Tabdil), which are in the domain of practical rules, and occur in order to meet the (special) personal and social needs of the nation(s) and communities. Sometimes, the aims of all these abrogation and changing are to give an independent identity to a group or to put them in trial or to punish them or to encourage the faithful people.

3. Edit (or distortion) of the original texts, or translation of some of the old religious texts, purposely or inadvertently, have significant role in make religious books incompatible.

After all, except the last case, we should not expect to observe differences or inconsistencies in subjects like ethical teachings, historical events, or the future-bound promised issues among heavenly religions. Therefore, the unity of the messages and similarities of the words of God's messengers should not be considered as "adaptation". Though, according to sound mind, it is natural that an ethical truth or advice, practical principles and prophecies be mentioned by prior religion, and this priority is not opposite to the perfection and completion of newer religions.

2. To clear the negligence of the holders of this view, and extend credit to the above-mentioned explanations, we provide some examples from Qur'an:

1. The truth and stable religion of God is in fact the one which is based on human beings' unchangeable nature and it is named "Islam". Therefore, the former prophets and their followers, in Qur'an 's words, are all called "Muslims".

“surely the (true) religion with Allah is Islam, and those to whom the book had been given did not show opposition but after knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves; and whoever disbelieves in the communications of Allah then surely Allah is quick in reckoning” (Qur’an; 3:19)

“When his lord said to him, be a Muslim, he said: I submit myself to the lord of the worlds” (Qur’an; 2:131)

“And the same did Abraham enjoin on his sons and (so did) Jacob. O my sons! Surely Allah has chosen for you (this) faith, therefore die not unless you are Muslims” (Qur’an; 2:132)

“And when I revealed to the disciples, saying, believe in me and my messenger, they said: we believe and bear witness that we submit (ourselves) “ (Qur’an; 5: 111)

“But we did not find therein save a (single) house of those who submitted (the Muslims)” (Qur’an; 51:36)

2. There is no difference or logical controversies among God's messengers in the bases of intuitive knowledge (ma'arif) and principles of teachings and laws; the division-makers will suffer from God's anger.

“say: we believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham and Samuel and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and what was given to Moses and Jesus and to the prophets from their lord; we do not make any distinction between any of them, and to him do we submit” (Qur’an; 3:84)

“and those who believe in Allah and his messengers and do not make a distinction between any of them- Allah will grant them their rewards; and Allah is forgiving, merciful” (Qur’an; 4:152)

3. The holy prophet “Muhammad” approved the former messengers, and his book is in confirmation and protector of their books.

“surely we revealed the Taurat in which was guidance and light; with it the prophets who submitted themselves (to Allah) judged (matters) for those who were Jews, and the masters of divine knowledge and the doctors, because they were required to guard (part) of the book of Allah, and they were witnesses thereof; therefore fear not the people and fear me, and do not take a small price for my communications; and whoever did not judge by what Allah revealed, those are they that are the unbelievers” (Qur’an; 5:44)

“and we sent after them in their footsteps Jesus, son of Mary, verifying what was before him of the Taurat and we gave him the Gospel in which was guidance and light, and verifying what was before it of Taurat and a guidance and an admonition for those who guard (against evil)” (Qur’an; 5:46)

“and we have revealed to you the book with the truth, verifying what is before it of the book and a guardian over it, therefore judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their low desires (to turn away) from the truth that has come to you; for every one of you did we appoint a law and a way, and if Allah had pleased he would have made you (all) a single people, but that he might try you in what he gave you, therefore strive with one another to hasten to virtuous deeds; to Allah is your return, of all (of you), so he will let you know that in which you differed;” (Qur’an; 5:48)

“Nay: he has come with the truth and verified the messengers” (Qur’an; 37:37)

“In their histories there is certainly a lesson for men of understanding. It is not a narrative which could be forged, but a verification of what is before it and a distinct explanation of all things and a guide and a mercy to a people who believe” (Qur’an; 12:111)

“And who believe in that which has been revealed to you and that which was revealed before you and they are sure of the hereafter” (Qur’an; 2:4)

“These are on a right course from their lord and these it is that shall be successful” (Qur’an; 2:5)

4.The Almighty God orders all those who accepted Muhammad's religion, the idol-worshipers, and unbelievers to believe and accept all other former holy religions.

“and do not dispute with the followers of the book except by what is best, except those of them who act unjustly, and say: we believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you, and our Allah and your Allah is one, and to him do we submit” (Qur’an; 29:46)

“to this then go on inviting, and go on steadfastly on the right way as you are commanded, and do not follow their low desires, and say: I believe in what Allah has revealed of the book, and I am commanded to do justice between you: Allah is our lord and your lord; we shall have our deeds and you shall have your deeds; no plea need there be (now) between us and you: Allah will gather us together, and to him is the return” (Qur’an; 42:15)

5.The aim of the appointment of the prophets was to solve the problems, disputes and disagreement among people and not to intensify them.

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The arguments and disputes among nations and discrepancies among their beliefs are not only from people's ignorance and lack of information, but also from their enmity; as their mundane and mean drives make them distort or manipulate the content or appearance of the God's words.

“do you then hope that they would believe in you, and a party from among them indeed used to hear the word of Allah, then altered it after they had understood it, and they know (this)” (Qur'an; 2:75)

“woe, then, to those who write the book with their hands and then say: this is from Allah, so that they may take for it a small price; therefore woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn” (Qur'an; 2:79)

“surely those who conceal any part of the book that Allah has revealed and take for it a small price, they eat nothing but fire into their bellies, and Allah will not speak to them on the day of resurrection, nor will he purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement” (Qur'an; 2:174)

“(all) people are a single nation; so Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and he revealed with them the book with truth, that it might judge between people in that in which they differed; and none but the very people who were given it differed about it after clear arguments had come to them, revolting among themselves; so Allah has guided by his will those who believe to the truth about which they differed and Allah guides whom he pleases to the right path” (Qur'an; 2:213)

“and they did not become divided until after knowledge had come to them out of envy among themselves; and had not a word gone forth from your lord till an appointed term, certainly judgment would have been given between them; and those who were made to inherit the book after them are most surely in disquieting doubt concerning it” (Qur’an; 42:14)

6.The trivial differences or secondary changes in some parts of legal or practical issues of one religion with other religions are more a means in order to test people.

“and we have revealed to you the book with the truth, verifying what is before it of the book and a guardian over it, therefore judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their low desires (to turn away) from the truth that has come to you; for every one of you did we appoint a law and a way, and if Allah had pleased he would have made you (all) a single people, but that he might try you in what he gave you, therefore strive with one another to hasten to virtuous deeds; to Allah is your return, of all (of you), so he will let you know that in which you differed;” (Qur’an; 5:48)

“O you who believe! do not say raina and say unzurna and listen, and for the unbelievers there is a painful chastisement” (Qur’an; 2:104)

7.The teachings of Qur'an include all truths descended to all prophets, and therefore, are the most complete, perfect and comprehensive religion in the world.

“He has made plain to you of the religion what he enjoined upon Noah and that which we have revealed to you and that which we enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus that keep to obedience and be not divided therein; hard

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to the unbelievers is that which you call them to; Allah chooses for himself whom he pleases, and guides to himself him who turns (to him), frequently” (Qur’an; 42:13)

“forbidden to you is that which dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine, and that on which any other name than that of Allah has been invoked, and the strangled (animal) and that beaten to death, and that killed by a fall and that killed by being smitten with the horn, and that which wild beasts have eaten, except what you slaughter, and what is sacrificed on stones set up (for idols) and that you divide by the arrows; that is a transgression. This day have those who disbelieve despaired of your religion, so fear them not, and fear me. this day have I perfected for you your religion and completed my favor on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion; but whoever is compelled by hunger, not inclining willfully to sin, then surely Allah is forgiving, merciful” (Qur’an; 5:3)