

Cite this article: Ranjbar, Ali. (2026) The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the Biblical Scriptures. Journal of Interreligious Studies on the Qur'an and the Bible. Vol-2, Issue-2, 264-294. <https://doi.org/10.22034/qb.2026.2070324.1049>

The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the Biblical Scriptures

Ali Ranjbar¹ 

(Received: 30 August 2025- Accepted: 26 March 2026)

Abstract

The Christian Holy Scripture consists of two parts: "The Old Testament and the New Testament." Jews accept only the Old Testament as their sacred scripture. The sacred book of Muslims is the Qur'an. Since these books serve as the primary sources of their respective religions, proving their susceptibility to alteration or their immunity from it directly affects the credibility of those religions' teachings, as well as the authority of these texts in distinguishing truth from falsehood. In this study, using an analytical-descriptive method, we address the question of what the reality is regarding the alterability or inalterability of these sacred texts, and we compare them in this regard. The findings show that the Bible, based on its own internal textual inconsistencies and also in light of Qur'anic verses, has undergone alteration and change. Some believe the Biblical scriptures are inerrant and unaltered, but this is incorrect, because their most important argument, divine inspiration of the Biblical text, suffers from problems such as circular reasoning. As for the Qur'an, according to all Islamic scholars, no alteration has occurred in it. While some Muslim scholars, based on certain narrations, have argued for omission in the Qur'an, such narrations cannot establish the claim. This is because those narrations point instead to misinterpretation, or to differences in the

¹. PhD of Religions and Mysticism, Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute, Qom, IRAN. ali_ranjbar_59@yahoo.com

arrangement of surahs between the time of revelation and the present Qur'an, or they are set aside due to definitive evidence confirming the Qur'an's protection from alteration.

Keywords: Alteration, Truth, Qur'an, Biblical Scriptures, Old and New Testaments.

Introduction

The Qur'an is the divine book of Islam, and the Old and New Testaments constitute the sacred scriptures of Judaism and Christianity. Therefore, these books hold an elevated position among the followers of these religions, making the question of their alteration or preservation highly significant. 'What, then, is the truth regarding the alteration of these sacred books?' 'Have the Qur'an and the Biblical scriptures been altered throughout history, or have they remained inerrant and protected from distortion?'

Within the communities of the People of the Book, views differ concerning the alteration of the Bible. Some treat the Bible as a human-authored text open to critique, and thus believe it has undergone alteration and change. In contrast, others maintain that the Bible is divinely inspired and therefore inerrant.

Regarding the Qur'an, some individuals, based on certain narrations, have claimed alteration, but the majority of Muslim scholars affirm that the Qur'an has not been altered and has remained protected, and they offer rational and textual evidence for this claim. The arguments presented for the Bible's inerrancy and its freedom from alteration are not acceptable and can be refuted. This is because the claim of divine inspiration, which is the strongest argument for Biblical inerrancy, suffers from circularity, and the Qur'anic verses that confirm the Torah and Gospel do not refer to the currently existing texts, but rather to the original Torah and Gospel revealed to the two prophets.

The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the Biblical Scriptures

Thus, considering the evidence of alteration in the Biblical scriptures, we conclude that the Bible has undergone both verbal and semantic alteration. The narrations that appear to support alteration of the Qur'an conflict with narrations affirming its preservation, or they only suggest differences in surah arrangement, or point to interpretive distortion rather than textual change. Therefore, the Qur'an has remained free from textual alteration and has only been subject to interpretive distortion.

1. Meaning of Alteration

Tahrīf of speech means inclining or bending it toward one direction, similar to the *Tahrīf* of a pen, meaning the tilting of its point to one side (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 228). Thus, *Tahrīf* of something means shifting it from its proper position to another (Ma'rifat, 2008 AD/1386 SH: 17). Martyr Motahhari states that *Tahrīf* means deviating something from the original path and proper condition it has, or ought to have (Motahhari, 2006 AD/1384 SH: 66).

2. Types of Alteration

A statement may be altered in different ways. Here, the various forms of alteration are discussed. In general, alteration is of two types:

2.1. Verbal Alteration

Verbal alteration occurs when the outward form of something is changed. For example, a person makes a statement to you, and you remove part of what they said, add something to it, or reorder their sentences in a way that changes

the meaning. In other words, you manipulate the outward expression and the wording of the statement; this is called verbal alteration (Motahhari, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 67).

Therefore, verbal alteration itself has several forms: Addition, omission, modification of the wording.

2.2. Semantic Alteration

Semantic alteration means that the outward wording remains unchanged, but the meaning and content are altered in such a way that the text is interpreted contrary to the speaker's intended meaning (Ma'rifat, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 17). *Rāghib* states that "Word Alteration" means interpreting a statement according to one of its possible meanings when it actually has two possible meanings, thereby steering it away from the intended one (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 228).

3. The Reality of Alteration in the Biblical Scriptures

The Bible is divided into two unequal sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament, which may also be regarded as the sacred scripture of the Jews, contains 46 books (although in Jewish and Protestant versions only 39 books are included). The New Testament belongs specifically to Christians and contains 27 books (Michael Thomas, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 23).

There is no disagreement among Christians regarding the books of the New Testament; all, Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants, agree upon and believe in the authenticity of its 27 books (Michael Thomas, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 26). Regarding alteration of the Biblical scriptures, various views exist. Here, we examine this issue.

The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the Biblical Scriptures

3.1. The View Affirming Alteration of the Biblical Scriptures

Some scholars argue that the Torah and the Gospel have been altered and present various forms of evidence for this claim. Below, we examine some of this evidence.

A) Evidence from within the Biblical Text Itself

Certain passages in the Bible indicate that alteration has occurred. Some examples are examined below.

1) Doubts Regarding Authorship

In the first five books of the Torah (the Pentateuch), there are passages that cannot be the words of Prophet Moses himself, even though Jews consider him the author of the Torah. Therefore, these passages are later additions and indicate alteration by increase.

In some passages of the Pentateuch, place-names appear that were not in use during the time of Moses. For example, Genesis states:

"When Abram heard that his brother had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen of them, and pursued as far as Dan." (Genesis 14:14)

However, the name *Dan* was only given to that city after Joshua, during the period of the Judges. At the time of Moses, the city was called *Laish*:

"And they named the city Dan, after the name of Dan their forefather who was born to Israel. But the name of the city was first Laish." (Judges 18:29)

Another example is the description of the burial place of Moses. Such passages cannot be the words of Moses himself:

"And he buried him in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no one knows the place of his burial to this day." (Deuteronomy 34:6)

2) Improper Attributions to God

The Bible contains statements about God that contradict divine attributes and cannot be attributed to the Divine Being.

For instance, in the story of Adam and Eve eating from the forbidden tree, an anthropomorphic image of God is presented:

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave to her husband, and he ate. Then the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves... And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, 'Where are you?' And he said, "I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." (Genesis 3:6–10)

Likewise, in the account of God wrestling with Jacob (Genesis 32:24–32), a physical portrayal of God appears.

Additionally, verses 6 and 7 of chapter 6 of Genesis depict God as regretting the creation of humankind.

According to the New Testament, God became human and corporeal: "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." (Romans 8:3)

Statements and descriptions of this kind concerning God are incorrect and cannot be attributed to divine inspiration. Therefore, the presence of such

The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the Biblical Scriptures

content about God in the Biblical scriptures indicates that they were altered, either deliberately and maliciously by some, or unintentionally.

3) Improper Attributions to the Prophets

Some passages of the Bible ascribe improper actions to the prophets, things that cannot be true. Such passages therefore also point to alteration by addition in the Biblical scriptures. For example, the Prophet Solomon is accused of idolatry: "And likewise did he for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. Therefore, the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the Lord God of Israel." (1 Kings 11:8–9)

However, based on other passages of the Bible (1 Kings 2:9; 1 Chronicles 28:5), Solomon possessed a lofty spiritual rank and was a prophet; therefore, attributing idolatry to Solomon cannot be correct.

Prophet David is also accused of adultery (1 Chronicles 11:2–5), whiles him, too, and is one of the prophets of God, making such an attribution unacceptable.

According to some passages of the Gospel of John (John 2:1–11), Jesus miraculously produced wine at a wedding feast, even though wine is prohibited in the Bible itself (Leviticus 10:9–10).

4) Passages that Testify to Alteration

Some passages of the Bible explicitly indicate that the text has been altered. For example, in the Book of Jeremiah we read: "But do not mention the

burden of the Lord again, for every man's own word will become his burden; for you have perverted the words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, and our God." (Jeremiah 23:36)

In chapter eight of Jeremiah, it says: "How can you say, "We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us?" Indeed, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie." (Jeremiah 8:8) Alteration is also mentioned in 2 Peter (2 Peter 3:16).

Thus, according to these Biblical statements, changes and distortions have occurred within the scriptures.

5) Contradictions and Inconsistencies

Another indication of alteration in the Bible is the presence of contradictions and inconsistencies in the texts of the Old and New Testaments. If the scriptures were divinely inspired and free of alteration, one would expect no internal conflicts. Therefore, the existence of such discrepancies is clear evidence of textual alteration.

A careful study of the Bible reveals numerous contradictions. For example, the Gospel of Matthew traces the genealogy of Jesus back to David through Solomon:

"And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her who had been the wife of Uriah." (Matthew 1:6) But the Gospel of Luke traces Jesus's lineage to David through Nathan: "...The son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David." (Luke 3:31)

Another contradiction in the New Testament concerns the timing of the Last Supper: "The Gospel of John places it before the Feast of Passover, whereas the other Gospels describe it as occurring during the Passover." Maurice

The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the Biblical Scriptures

Bucaille writes: "John says that this supper occurred before the Feast of Passover, while the other Gospels say that it took place during the Feast itself." (Bucaille, 2004: 122)

6) The Loss of the Torah

According to the Biblical account, the Torah was lost and out of reach for a period, and then rediscovered during the reign of Josiah in the Temple of Jerusalem by Hilkiah the priest (2 Kings 22:8–11).

Thus, one important point in examining the alteration of the Bible is this historical disappearance of the Torah. The loss of the Torah strengthens the claim of textual alteration, because there is no certainty that the scroll found by Hilkiah was the same Torah possessed by Ezra the priest.

Will Durant also expresses doubt that the version read by Josiah was the same as the one read by Ezra, noting that Ezra's reading of the Torah took seven days, whereas Josiah's Torah was read twice in a single day (Will Durant, 1991 AD/1370 SH: 1, 383).

B) From the Perspective of the Qur'an

The Noble Qur'an affirms that the original Torah and Gospel were divine revelations sent to Moses and Jesus. However, several Qur'anic verses indicate that alterations and changes occurred in the Biblical scriptures. Some of these verses are mentioned below.

1) Verbal Alteration of the Scriptures

According to the Qur'an, the People of the Book subjected their scriptures to verbal distortion. Some verses point to omission, while others indicate modification or substitution.

1.1. Alteration by Omission

A study of the Qur'an shows that certain teachings of the revealed scriptures were concealed or removed by the People of the Book. Examples include concealing matters such as resurrection and the Hereafter, as well as hiding the descriptions and characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

According to the Qur'an, belief in the Hereafter was among the earliest divine messages revealed to Moses. In Surah *Tāhā*, God says to Moses: "Indeed, the Hour is coming; I nearly conceal it so that every soul may be recompensed for what it strives for." (*Tāhā*: 15)

Yet, no discussion of the Resurrection or the Afterlife appears in the Old Testament, indicating concealment of this doctrine and alteration of the Torah by omission.

Another matter concealed by the People of the Book, revealed by the Qur'an, was the clear set of attributes describing the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) that had existed in the Torah. Jewish scholars concealed these qualities and replaced them with other descriptions. God says:

"Those to whom We gave the Scripture recognize him as they recognize their own sons; yet a group of them knowingly conceal the truth." (*al-Baqarah*: 146)

It is reported that Jewish scholars "Distorted the Torah and altered the descriptions of the Prophet in order to cast doubt among the common people."

The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the Biblical Scriptures

For example: "In the Torah, the Prophet was described as wheat-colored and of medium height, but they altered this and described him as tall." (Ṭabrisī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 292)

Thus, the clear and complete characteristics of the Prophet of Islam were present in the sacred scriptures, so clearly that the People of the Book recognized him as they recognized their own children. Nevertheless, they deliberately concealed these descriptions.

1.2. Alteration by Addition

Other Qur'anic verses indicate that the People of the Book also added material to the scriptures. For example, in Surah *al-Baqarah*, God states:

"So woe to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say, "This is from God," in order to gain a small price. Woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn." (al-Baqarah: 79)

2) Semantic Alteration (Tahrif Ma'nawī) of the Scriptures

In Surah *al-Nisā'*, God says: "Among the Jews are those who distort words from their [proper] places." (al-Nisā': 46)

Similarly, God states: "They distort words from their proper places and forget a portion of what they were reminded of." (al-Mā'idah: 13)

From these verses, it becomes clear that Jewish scholars engaged in semantic distortion, manipulating meanings rather than altering the literal text.

Javadi Amoli writes:

"Parts of the Torah were subjected to semantic distortion (interpretation based on personal opinion) when legal rulings were issued. The majority of their distortions were of this kind. Verses such as "Among the Jews are those who

distort words from their places" and "Because they broke their covenant, We cursed them and hardened their hearts; they distort words from their places" refer to this form of alteration." (Javadi Amoli, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 22, 467)

By examining the statements within the Biblical texts themselves and considering the verses of the Holy Qur'an, it can be concluded that the Old and New Testaments have been subject to both semantic and verbal alteration.

3.2. The View Denying Alteration of the Biblical Scriptures

Before the Renaissance, the Bible held a very special status among Christians. However, after the Renaissance and during the Enlightenment period, Christians began to subject the Bible to criticism much like any other human book.

A) From the Perspective of Biblical Interpreters

The critical study of the Bible after the Renaissance raised debates about whether the Bible is fallible or infallible. Some scholars argued that the Bible is infallible and free from error.

1) The Infallibility of the Biblical Scriptures

The most important argument of the defenders of Biblical infallibility is that the Bible is divinely inspired. Some Christians, based on certain Biblical passages, believe that the authors of the Bible wrote their texts through divine inspiration and therefore their writings are free from error and mistake.

Supporters of Biblical impeccability cite several passages of the Bible to demonstrate its divine inspiration. For example:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16)

Similarly, Paul states:

The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the Biblical Scriptures

"And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it truly is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

Heinrich Bullinger also maintains:

"All Holy Scripture, precisely because it is the Word of God, possesses in itself sufficient authority and credibility." (McGrath, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 306)

Another argument advanced for the divine inspiration of the Bible is the prophecies contained in the Old and New Testaments. Advocates of Biblical infallibility argue that the presence of prophecy indicates divine inspiration, since ordinary humans cannot produce such predictions.

One example is the Biblical prophecy regarding the virgin birth of Jesus:

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which means, "God with us." (Matthew 1:23)

The Book of Isaiah also speaks about the future rebuilding of Jerusalem and its sanctuary (Isaiah 44:28).

Thus, according to those who believe in the infallibility of the Bible, since the ultimate author of the Bible is God, and God does not lie (Numbers 23:19); the Bible must therefore be free from error.

2) Critique of the Doctrine of Biblical Impeccability

This argument is based on the assumption that the entire Bible is divinely inspired, yet such a claim cannot be proven. The primary evidence presented for the divine inspiration of the Bible is the Bible's own statements. However, this reasoning is problematic.

First, such passages do not necessarily demonstrate that the entire Bible is divinely inspired.

Second, the presence of errors in the Bible indicates that not all of it can be inspired; therefore, the possibility of error and alteration exists within it.

Third, appealing to these passages is only valid if these very passages themselves are divinely inspired and infallible; thus, relying on them results in circular reasoning.

Regarding Biblical prophecies, two responses can be offered:

- Some of these statements were not genuine prophecies but were written after the events had already occurred.
- The failure of certain prophecies indicates that the Bible cannot be entirely divinely inspired.

For example, the Bible predicts the imminent return of Christ, yet this did not occur:

"Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." (Matthew 16:28)

However, this prophecy was not fulfilled, and Christ did not return.

B) From the Perspective of the Qur'an

Some scholars, based on Qur'anic verses that confirm the Torah and the Gospel, argue that these scriptures have not been altered.

For example, in verse 44 of Surah *al-Mā'idah*, God says:

"Indeed, We revealed the Torah, in which there was guidance and light." (al-Mā'idah: 44)

In this verse, the Torah is described as a source of guidance and light.

In another verse, the Gospel is also described as containing guidance and light:

The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the Biblical Scriptures

"And We gave him the Gospel, in which was guidance and light, confirming what had come before it in the Torah, and as guidance and admonition for the God-fearing." (al-Mā'idah: 46)

Another verse describes the Prophet as confirming the Torah:

"And when a messenger from God came to them confirming what was with them, a group of those who had been given the Scripture threw the Book of God behind their backs as though they did not know." (al-Baqarah: 101)

These verses, and others like them, affirm the Torah and the Gospel. However, other Qur'anic verses (as previously discussed) indicate that the Biblical scriptures were altered. Therefore, there appears to be a tension between these two sets of verses.

To resolve this contradiction, it is said that what is meant by the verses indicating distortion refers to the current Torah and Gospel, while what is meant by the verses that affirm and confirm refers to the original Torah and Gospel. In other words, one group of Qur'anic verses regards the Torah revealed to Prophet Moses and the Gospel of Prophet Jesus as a source of guidance and light, not the Torah and Gospel that presently exist, and other verses indicate that these have been distorted.

Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī writes:

"The verses which state that the Prophet of Islam accepts the Torah and the Gospel do not mean the Torah and Gospel commonly circulated at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an; rather, they refer to the Torah and Gospel which were taught to him through revelation." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 3, 201)

The argument that the Bible is divinely inspired and therefore infallible is not acceptable. The Holy Qur'an confirms and verifies the original Torah and Gospel, not the entirety of the present-day Bible in which distortion has occurred.

4. The Reality of Distortion in the Qur'an

After examining the issue of the possibility of distortion in the sacred scriptures of two divine religions (Judaism and Christianity), we now examine the issue of distortion regarding the sacred scripture of the final divine religion (Islam), namely the Qur'an.

Regarding distortion of the Qur'an, two general viewpoints can be mentioned.

4.1. The View That the Qur'an Has Been Distorted

Some Shi'a hadith scholars, the Hashwiyya, and a group of Sunni hadith scholars believe that the Noble Qur'an has been distorted, meaning that something has been omitted from it, some of its words have been altered, and the order of its verses has been disturbed.

As for distortion in the sense of addition, that something has been added to it, this is a hypothesis that no Muslim scholar has ever accepted (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 12, 108).

Those who believe in distortion of the Qur'an have relied on the content of certain narrations. In some of these narrations the word "Distortion" is explicitly used; others indicate that the Qur'an of Imam 'Ali (AS) was more complete than the existing Qur'an; and still others state that the impeccable Imams (AS) possessed complete knowledge of the Qur'an.

A) The Distortion of the Qur'an

The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the Biblical Scriptures

In some narrations, there is explicit mention of distortion of the Qur'an, and the word "Distortion" is used in them. For example, the narration of *Jābir Ju'fī*, who reports from Imam *Bāqir* (AS):

"The Messenger of God (PBUH) called his companions at Mina and said: "O! People! I am leaving among you the two weighty things (*Thaqalayn*)"; so long as you hold fast to them, you will never go astray: "The Book of God and my progeny, the people of my household. They will never separate until they return to me at the Pond. Then he said: "O! People! I leave among you the sacred trusts of God: the Book of God, my progeny, and the Ka'bah, the Sacred House." Then *Abū Ja'far* (AS) said: "As for the Book of God, they distorted it; as for the Ka'bah, they demolished it; and as for the progeny, they killed them; and they have renounced all the trusts of God." (Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 23, 140)

B) The Completeness of Imam 'Ali's Copy

From some narrations it is understood that the Qur'an possessed by Imam 'Ali (AS) was more complete than the Qur'an in the possession of the Muslims. For example, Imam Ali (AS), in arguing with a group of the *Ansar* and *Muhajirun*, said:

"O *Ṭalḥah*! Every verse that God, Mighty and Exalted, revealed to Muhammad is with me, dictated by the Messenger of God and written in my own hand; and the interpretation of every verse that God revealed to Muhammad, and every lawful and unlawful matter, every prescribed punishment, every ruling, and everything the community will need until the Day of Resurrection, even the compensation for a scratch, is written, dictated

by the Messenger of God (PBUH) and written in my own hand." (Ṭabrisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 1, 153)

From this narration, it is understood that Imam Ali (AS) possessed a complete Qur'an, some of whose verses were not present in the Muslims' Qur'an.

C) The Complete Knowledge of the Imams (AS) of the Qur'an

Some narrations state that knowledge of the outward and inward meanings of the Qur'an, and of all of it, is exclusive to the impeccable Imams (AS). For example, a narration transmitted by Jabir from Imam *Bāqir* (AS):

"No one is able to claim that he possesses all of the Qur'an, its outer and inner meanings, except the successors (the Imams)." (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 1, 228)

Imam *Bāqir* (AS) said: "No one can claim that the entire Qur'an, its outward and inward meanings, is with him except the successors."

Based on such narrations, complete knowledge of the Qur'an is with the Ahl al-Bayt (AS). Therefore, the existing Qur'an does not contain everything that is with the Imams.

D) Examining the Narrations About Distortion

These narrations do not indicate distortion. The narrations that use the word "Distortion" refer to interpretation of the Qur'an. The narrations that say the Qur'an of Imam Ali (AS) differed from the Muslims' Qur'an refer to differences in the order of the surahs. And the complete knowledge of the Imams (AS) of the Qur'an does not imply distortion; it simply shows that they knew the Qur'an completely, including matters such as abrogating and abrogated verses, and so on.

Ayatollah Javadi Amoli says regarding the narrations that appear to imply distortion:

The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the Biblical Scriptures

"Some of them pertain to interpretation based on personal opinion and practical distortion, not verbal distortion; others relate to circumstances of revelation, application, and esoteric interpretation, not distortion of the Qur'an; others that contain the expression "*Aṣḥāb al-'Arabī*" refer to differences in recitations; and finally, those narrations that indicate a difference between the Qur'an written by Imam Ali (AS) and the existing Qur'an refer partly to differences in the order of their surahs." (Javadi Amoli, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 346)

The narrations that state that the Imams possess knowledge of the entire Qur'an do not indicate distortion; and even if they did, because they contradict definitive rational proofs and Qur'anic teachings, they must be interpreted as referring to spiritual or interpretive distortion.

Ayatollah Javadi Amoli writes:

"Another group of narrations states that knowledge of the outward and inward meanings, the esoteric interpretation, revelation, and all aspects of the Qur'an, including abrogating and abrogated verses, is with the Imams (AS). This is different from distortion of the Qur'an or the addition or omission of verses. And if it is assumed that these narrations appear to indicate verbal distortion of the Qur'an, they must, based on the earlier arguments (their contradiction with definitive reason and the Qur'an), be interpreted as referring to spiritual distortion or interpretation based on personal opinion." (Javadi Amoli, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 346)

4.2. The View That the Qur'an Has Not Been Distorted

The Qur'an, as the final divine scripture, has been protected from distortion, and no form of distortion has occurred in it. Both rational and textual evidence supports this view.

A) The Rational Argument for the Qur'an's Protection from Distortion

Reason indicates that the Qur'an must be protected from distortion. This is because divine grace and wisdom, the Qur'an's miraculous nature, and the necessity of completing the proof require the Qur'an to remain free from change and distortion.

1) The Principle of Divine Grace and Wisdom

Islam is the final religion, and the Qur'an is the last divine book revealed for the guidance of humanity. Therefore, it must be free from any alteration or distortion in order to remain trustworthy and capable of guiding people. Otherwise, it would lose its reliability and its guiding function, which would be contrary to divine grace and wisdom.

Ayatollah Javadi Amoli writes: "According to reason, the final book of guidance for humanity must be protected from all kinds of distortion, because the series of prophets has ended and the path of revelation is closed. If the final heavenly book were distorted, people would fall into misguidance and destruction. This contradicts divine grace and wisdom, as well as the general proof of prophethood, which requires that God guide people in every age through His messengers." (Javadi Amoli, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 17, 252)

It can also be said that the purpose of sending prophets and divine books is to guide humanity to happiness. Therefore, if the Qur'an is the final divine scripture, it must not be distorted; otherwise, it would fail to fulfill its divine purpose, which would be a violation of divine wisdom.

2) The Necessity of Completing the Proof

The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the Biblical Scriptures

The Prophet of Islam is the final divine messenger, and the Qur'an is the final divine proof upon the servants, upon which people must act. Thus, the Qur'an must not undergo distortion, for otherwise it would no longer serve as a valid proof. Yet reward and punishment are based on the completion of proof. Therefore, the Qur'an must remain protected from distortion.

Ayatollah Javadi Amoli writes: "If distortion were possible, not only would the authority of the Qur'an and the completion of God's proof for people be undermined, but the continuation of the Prophet's prophethood and his enduring mission would also be questioned. Consequently, to complete the proof for humanity, God would have had to send a new prophet and reveal a new book endowed with full authority, just as He did with earlier nations. But such a thing is absolutely impossible after the mission of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)." (Javadi Amoli, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 43)

3) Concern for Preserving the Qur'an

The Qur'an is the primary source for Muslims, and they have always shown, and continue to show, great concern for preserving it. Therefore, how could it possibly have been subject to alteration or distortion? (Ma'rifat, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 35)

4) The Qur'an's Miraculous Nature and Its Freedom from Distortion

The miraculous nature of the Qur'an is itself proof that it has not been distorted; for if the Qur'an were distorted, its miraculous character would be nullified, whereas its miraculous nature is clearly and permanently established through evidences such as the verses of challenge.

Ayatollah Javadi Amoli writes in this regard:

"The miraculous nature of the Qur'an is established by its own specific proofs, such as its challenge to produce the like of it, and this is an accepted matter among all Muslims. The relationship between the Qur'an's miraculous nature and its immunity from distortion can be established through rational proof; that is, reason judges that if the miraculous nature of the Qur'an is an established fact, which it is, then this book must necessarily not have been subjected to any distortion, whether by addition or omission; accepting the possibility of distortion amounts to denying its miraculous nature." (Javadi Amoli, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 44)

B) Textual Evidence for the Qur'an's Protection from Distortion

Some Qur'anic verses and narrations indicate that the Qur'an is protected from distortion. A few examples are mentioned below.

1) Qur'anic Verses

Within the Noble Qur'an itself, there are verses that indicate its freedom from distortion and from any form of alteration. Some examples are as follows:

1.1. The Verse of Preservation

In Surah *al-Hijr*, God says: "Indeed, We have sent down the Reminder, and indeed We will surely preserve it." (al-Hijr: 9)

The argument based on the Verse of Preservation can be formulated as a categorical syllogism: "God has undertaken to preserve the Qur'an, and whatever God undertakes to preserve must necessarily remain protected; therefore, the Qur'an will remain protected from any harm." (Javadi Amoli, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 52)

1.2. The Verse of Extinguishing the Light of God

The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the Biblical Scriptures

In Surah *al-Tawbah*, God says: "They wish to extinguish the light of God with their mouths, but God refuses except to perfect His light, even though the disbelievers dislike it." (al-Tawbah: 32)

This verse indicates that the Qur'an has not been distorted. According to this verse, any attempt by the enemies of Islam to destroy the foundations of the Qur'an or distort it in order to invalidate it is negated (Javadi Amoli, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 68).

1.3. The Verse Negating Falsehood

In Surah *al-Fuṣṣilat*, God says concerning the Qur'an: "Falsehood cannot approach it from before it nor from behind it; it is a revelation from One who is All-Wise, Praiseworthy." (al-Fuṣṣilat: 42)

This verse clearly indicates the absence of distortion in the Qur'an. Any form of change, alteration, addition, or omission would amount to the entry of falsehood into it, yet this verse explicitly negates the entry of any falsehood into the Qur'an.

Ayatollah Ma'rifat writes regarding this verse: "The indication of this verse is even clearer than that of the previous verse (the Verse of Preservation). The Wise God promises that the Qur'an will remain safe from destruction and defeat, and that the hand of time will not reach it. It will remain protected forever, opening its path toward a bright future and advancing safely." (Ma'rifat, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 46)

Ayatollah Javadi Amoli writes concerning this verse: "The negation in 'falsehood shall not approach it' is comprehensive; that is, it negates the

infiltration of all forms of falsehood into the domain of the Qur'an." (Javadi Amoli, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 61)

2) Narrations

Various narrations also indicate the absence of distortion in the Qur'an, such as the Hadith *al-Thaqalayn* and the narrations that instruct believers to present hadith reports before the Qur'an for verification, both of which demonstrate the Qur'an's immunity from distortion.

2.1. Hadith al-Thaqalayn

The Noble Prophet (PBUH) said: "Indeed, I am leaving among you two things; you will never go astray after me as long as you hold fast to them: the Book of Allah and my progeny, the people of my household (Ahl al-Bayt). For the All-Subtle, the All-Aware has informed me that these two will never separate until they return to me at the Pond." (al-Kulaynī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 4, 198)

In this narration, the Prophet (PBUH) places the Qur'an alongside the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) and considers adherence to them the cause of protection from misguidance. Therefore, the Qur'an must be free from distortion; otherwise it would lead to misguidance. Hence, "It would make no sense for the Prophet to command people to hold fast to a distorted book while at the same time negating eternal misguidance for those who adhere to it." (Hosseini Tehrani, 2004 AD/1425 AH: 14, 93).

Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, referring to this hadith, writes: "If the Noble Qur'an were destined to undergo distortion, it would make no sense for the Prophet to refer people to a book that had been altered and distorted, and to emphasize

The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the Biblical Scriptures

so strongly that "As long as you hold fast to these two you will never go astray." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 12, 107)

2.2. Narrations of Presenting Reports to the Qur'an

In some narrations it is stated that to determine whether a statement is correct or incorrect, it should be presented to the Book of Allah. If it accords with the Book, it should be accepted; if it contradicts the Qur'an, it should be rejected.

In part of the narration of *Ḥanzalah* it is reported:

I said: "What if both reports from you are well-known and trustworthy narrators have transmitted both? He said: "It should be examined. Whatever ruling agrees with the Book and the Sunnah and differs from the majority (i.e., non-Shi'a) should be taken, and what contradicts the ruling of the Book and the Sunnah while agreeing with the majority should be abandoned." (al-Kulaynī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 170)

In this narration it is stated that between two conflicting reports, the report that agrees with the Qur'an should be accepted and the one that contradicts the Qur'an should be rejected. Thus the Qur'an is presented as the criterion for choosing between two conflicting narrations, which is incompatible with the idea that the Qur'an has been distorted.

In another narration, the Prophet (PBUH) commanded acting upon whatever agrees with the Qur'an and rejecting whatever contradicts it (al-Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 69). This instruction indicates that the Qur'an is protected from distortion, because if it were susceptible to distortion, the Prophet would not have made it the standard for distinguishing truth from falsehood.

Some have argued that these narrations refer only to presenting juridical narrations to the verses of commandments. Therefore, they would only indicate the absence of distortion in the legal verses, not the entire Qur'an. However, this claim is incorrect. As Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī writes: "The instruction is absolute and contains no qualification that only juridical reports should be presented to the Qur'an. Restricting it to juridical narrations would be specification without evidence." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 12, 107)

2.3. Narrations on Referring to the Qur'an during Times of Tribulation

Some narrations state that during times of tribulation, one must turn to the Qur'an. This indicates that the Qur'an is protected from distortion; otherwise, referring to a distorted Qur'an would be meaningless. In one narration, Prophet (PBUH) said:

"When tribulations become confused and engulf you like patches of a dark night, then hold fast to the Qur'an." (Ḥurr 'Āmilī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 6, 171)

"When tribulations confront you like fragments of a dark night, you must turn to the Qur'an."

From such narrations it is also understood that the Qur'an is safeguarded from alteration; for if it had been distorted, how could referring to it bring salvation from trials?

2.4. Narrations on the Reward for Completing the Qur'an

Some narrations mention great rewards for reciting the chapters of the Qur'an or for completing the entire Qur'an. For example, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) is reported to have said:

"Whoever recites "*Waylun li Kulli Humazatin*" (Surah *al-Humazah*) in his obligatory prayers, Allah will remove poverty from him, draw provision toward him, and protect him from an evil death."

The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the Biblical Scriptures

(Ibn Bābawayh, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 126)

In another narration it is stated that for one who completes the Qur'an in Mecca, a reward and good deeds will be recorded for him from the first Friday that existed in this world until the last Friday that will exist (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 2, 612).

From such narrations it may be inferred that nothing has been omitted from the Qur'an. These reports assign reward to the recitation of its chapters or to completing the Qur'an in full. If something had been removed from it, reciting a complete chapter or completing the entire Qur'an would not have been possible; consequently, encouraging its recitation and promising reward for it would have been meaningless.

C) The View of Imami Scholars Regarding the Non-Distortion of the Qur'an

The overwhelming majority of Imami (Shi'a) scholars maintain that the Qur'an has not been distorted. Here we cite the statements of some of them on this matter.

Shaykh Mufīd, concerning the view of the Imami School on distortion of the Qur'an, writes:

"A group among the Imamīs have said that nothing has been omitted from the Qur'an, neither word, nor verse, nor chapter. Rather, what have been omitted are interpretations and explanations that were recorded in the Qur'an of Imam Ali (AS), which clarified the true meaning of the revelation without being counted as part of the miraculous Qur'an itself... I consider this statement preferable to the view of those who have claimed an actual deficiency in the

Qur'an itself rather than in its interpretation, and I incline toward it, asking God for guidance to what is right." (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 81)

Muhammad Husayn Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' states that the Qur'an which is presently in our hands is exactly the same Qur'an that God revealed to the Prophet (PBUH), and that no distortion has occurred in it (Kāshif al-Ghiṭā', 1996 AD/1413 AH: 66-67).

Sayyid Abul Qāsim Khu'ī, regarding the non-distortion of the Qur'an, writes: "The truth is that, as will be demonstrated by the arguments forthcoming, distortion, in the sense over which the dispute has occurred, has not taken place." (Khu'ī, 2009 AD/1430 AH: 207)

Khu'ī then goes on to present detailed proofs for the non-distortion of the Qur'an.

Based on Qur'anic verses and narrations, the existing Qur'an is protected from verbal distortion and is identical to what was revealed to the Prophet (PBUH). However, according to certain narrations, it has been subject to misinterpretation.

Conclusion

The Holy Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, according to its own text and in light of Qur'anic verses, has undergone interpretive (semantic) distortion, as well as textual alteration in the form of addition, omission, and changes. The belief of some Biblical exegetes in the inerrancy of the Bible is incorrect, for their main argument, namely, the claim of divine inspiration, is logically circular, among other issues.

The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the Biblical Scriptures

Furthermore, those Qur'ānic verses that speak of the Torah and the Gospel do not endorse the present-day Bible; rather, they refer to the original Torah and Gospel revealed to the two Prophets of God.

Regarding the Noble Qur'an, all Muslim scholars agree that no addition has occurred in it. As for omission, two views exist: "A small group maintains that some omission has occurred, whereas the majority of Muslim scholars reject the notion of omission and provide strong arguments against it."

Those who claim omission in the Qur'an rely on certain narrations. However, even setting aside their weak chains of transmission, such narrations either point to misinterpretation, or indicate only a difference in the arrangement of chapters between the time of revelation and the current codex, or else must be dismissed altogether because they contradict decisive proofs for the non-distortion of the Qur'an.

Therefore, the Qur'an is protected from verbal distortion and has only been subject to misinterpretation.

References

Holy Quran.

Holy Bible.

Bucaille, M. (2004 AD). *The Qur'an, the Torah, the Gospel, and Science*.
Cairo: Maktabat Madbouli.

Hosseini Tehrani, M. H. (2004 AD/1425 AH). *Imamology*. (Vol. 14).
Mashhad: Allameh Tabataba'i Publishing.

- Hurr 'Āmilī, M. (1988 AD/1409 AH). *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*. (Vol. 6). Qom: Al al-Bayt Institute.
- Ibn Bābawayh, M. (1985 AD/1406 AH). *Thawāb al-A'māl wa 'Iqāb al-A'māl*. Qom: Dār al-Sharīf al-Raḍī.
- Ibn Bābawayh, M. (n.d.). *al-I'tiqādāt*. (A. Mirsharifi; I, Abd al-Sayyid. Eds). Qom: Shaykh Mufid Congress.
- Javadi Amoli, A. (2009 AD/1388 SH). *Tasnim*. (Vol. 9). Qom: Isra.
- Javadi Amoli, A. (2009 AD/1388 SH). *The Qur'an in the Qur'an*. (M. Mehrabi, Ed). Qom: Isra.
- Javadi Amoli, A. (2010 AD/1389 SH). *The Qur'an's Immunity from Distortion*. (A. Nasiri, Ed). Qom: Isra.
- Kāshif al-Ghiṭā', M. (1992 AD/1413 AH). *Aṣl al-Shī'a wa Uṣūluhā*. Beirut: Al-A'lamī Institute.
- Khu'ī, A. (2009 AD/1430 AH). *al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. Qom: Ihyā' Āthār al-Imām al-Khu'ī.
- Kulaynī, M. (1986 AD/1407 AH). *Kāfī*. (Vol. 1). (A. Ghafari; M. Akhundi, Eds). Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya.
- Kulaynī, M. (2008 AD/1429 AH). *Al-Kāfī*. (Vol. 4). (Dar al-Hadith, Ed). Qom: Dar al-Hadith.
- Ma'rifat, M. H. (2007 AD/1386 SH). *Ṣīyānat al-Qur'ān min al-Taḥrīf*. Qom: Tamhid.
- Majlisī, M. B. (1982 AD/1403 AH). *Biḥār al-Anwār*. (2nd Ed.). Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī.
- Mak Grath, A. (2008 AD/1387 SH). *An Introduction to Reformation Thought*. (B. Haddadi, Trans.). Qom: University of Religions and Denominations.

**The Truth about the Alterability or Inalterability of the Qur'an and the
Biblical Scriptures**

- Mousavi Khomeini, R. (n.d.). *Tahdhīb al-Uṣūl*. (Vol. 2). Qom: Ismā'īliyyān.
- Mufīd. (1992 AD/1413 AH). *Awā'il al-Maqālāt fī al-Madhāhib wa al-Mukhtārāt*. Qom: International Congress of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd.
- Mutahhari, M. (2005 AD/1384 SH). *Collected Works*. (Vol. 17). Tehran: Sadra Publications.
- Rāghib Iṣfahānī, R. (1991 AD/1412 AH). *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*. Beirut: Dār al-Qalam.
- Ṭabāṭabā'ī, M. H. (1992 AD/1371 SH). *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. (Vols. 3-12). Qom: Ismā'īliyyān.
- Ṭabrisī, A. (1982 AD/1403 AH). *al-Iḥtijāj 'alā Ahl al-Lijāj*. (M. B. Khorasani, Ed). (Vol. 1). Mashhad: Murtaza Press.
- Ṭabrisī, F. (1987 AD/1408 AH). *Majma' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. (H. Rasouli; F. Tabataba'ī Yazdi, Eds). (Vol. 1). Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa.
- Thomas, M. (2002 AD/1381 SH). *Christian Theology*. (H. Toḥīqī, Trans.). Qom: Center for Religious Studies.

پژوهشگاه علوم انسانی و مطالعات فرهنگی
پرتال جامع علوم انسانی