

Chapter 2: Pre-Islamic Revelations

1. Some Previous Books

The revelations sent to the previous prophets were often committed to writing. But only three of them have been mentioned by name in the Qur'an. The Tawrat which was revealed to Prophet Musa, the Zabur which was revealed to Prophet Dawud, and the Injil which was revealed to Prophet 'Isa (peace be on them all). Apart from those, there is a mention of "suhuf- books" of Ibrahim (a.s.).

Zoroastrians claim that the Zend Avasta is a divine book. Hindus claim the same about the Vedas. Allah had sent prophets to every nation and every region (Qur'an, 35:24.) Obviously they must have been given some books in their own languages (Qur'an, 14:4). However, we can neither confirm nor deny the claims made about the Zend Avasta or the Vedas because they are not mentioned in the Qur'an.

The Books of Ibrahim (a.s.) are completely lost, as is the Injil of Prophet 'Isa (a.s.). The two remaining books were all altered, added, subtracted and extensively changed by those very people who professed to believe in them. Some details of those alterations will be given in later chapters. Here this fact is mentioned just to explain why Allah sent a new shari'ah (Islam) and a new Book (the Qur'an). Our responsibility towards previous prophets and their books is that we should believe that they were true prophets sent by Allah and that they were given the books as mentioned in the Qur'an. But as we know that those books were either completely lost or extensively edited, we cannot accept anything written in them unless they conform completely with what is revealed in the Qur'an.

As the subject of this booklet is not the review of the previous books, I will not go into details about all of them. However, in these days our youths are mostly confronted with Christianity; therefore, in the following chapters, I will mention some aspects of the Old and the New Testaments only.

2. The Torah

History of its Present Compilation

The Torah (Law) is the name of the book of Prophet Musa (a.s.). The Jews and the Christians use this name for the first 5 books of Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Together they are called 'Pentateuch'. Pentateuch was believed to have been written by Musa (a.s.). He is probably to be dated in the fifteenth to thirteenth century BC and the belief that he wrote Pentateuch continued up to the 18th century CE; and this was in spite of the inherent impossibilities of this belief, like the account of the death of Moses himself.

In the 18th century, some Christian scholars started what is now known as 'higher criticism'. Their views are now accepted by majority of Christians. They proved that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses; that it is not even work of a single man or single era; that it contains the works of unknown number of people right up to 1,000 years *after* the death of Moses.

Rev. W. K. L. Clarke in his *Concise Bible Commentary*¹ gives the following timetable and sequence of editing:

The book says that by the end of the 19th century, it was generally recognized that there were four main sources in the Pentateuch, to be assigned to 9th, 8th, 7th and 5th or 4th centuries BC respectively.

"The first book at the Pentateuch shows three characteristic styles illustrated by Genesis 1, Genesis 2 and Deuteronomy and the documents marked by these styles were first to be noticed."

"The obviously early source begins in Gen. 2:4. This source is called 'J' after the 'J' of Jehovah (pronounced Jahweh). 'J' is generally thought to have been put into written form about 850 BC.

"Another source...is D, so called from the book of Deuteronomy, which was the book law discovered in Josiah's reign.

"The third source is called Priestly document, P for short. The writer is particularly interested in legislation and most of the laws of Exodus and all those of Leviticus and Numbers belong to P. A large part of the Priestly Code is believed to have been composed in Babylonia and brought to Jerusalem by Ezra in 397 BC. How much of P was omitted in final compilation of Pentateuch we have no means of knowing. Nothing has been said yet about a subordinate source found in Lev. 17-28 and known as the Code of Holiness, H for short. It was adopted into P but evidently had a separate history... Opinion is divided as to its date, whether it was written before 586 or whether exiled priests after the fall of the city committed to writing the Temple traditions ...:"

"Now comes the fourth source. After taking P, D and J from the Pentateuch a considerable amount of material remains, parallel to J, but in Genesis using Elohim for God and not Yahweh. This non-P Elohim matter begins in Gen. 20: 1-7... Altogether E is more mature religiously and is thought to have reached written form about 750 BC"

These are the four main sources of Pentateuch. How they were compiled to form the Pentateuch?

“The first step was to combine J and E. This must have been done after the fall of Samaria in 721 BC. The two were combined in a document which is called JE.”

“Then in 621 Deuteronomy was discovered, or at least a large part of it. The next stage was to put JE, and D together. This will have taken place during the exile... A perceptible amount of editing of JE took place.”

“P was written in Babylonia and brought to Jerusalem by Ezra in 397 BC. Later, editors used it as a frame work and incorporated JED, thus producing the Pentateuch ... in about 300 BC.”

We might as well sum it up in the words of the commentator himself. “Probably a multitude of persons have combined to give us Genesis (etc.), covering in their lives a span of 1,000 years.” And this book, compiled 1,000 years after Moses is called the Book of Moses! But it appears from the same authorities that probably it was not attributed to Moses till 200 BC!

Even that minority of the Christian scholars which still holds fast to the theory of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch has to admit that it must have been re-written by the subsequent generations to modernize the language. This concession has to be given because “it is hardly probable that the Hebrew of Moses’ day was like that of Biblical Hebrew.” (See the *Westminster Dictionary of the Bible* under “Pentateuch”).

Further Details about the Torah

The Bible itself states, explicitly or implicitly, that the Torah was destroyed twice: First, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar; after a long time, it was restored or re-written by Ezra. Second time, it was ruthlessly destroyed by Antiochus. Nothing is known as to how it was restored.

The early Christian scholars believed that there was no proof of the authenticity of the Old Testament until Jesus came and confirmed it. But, in fact, Jesus has never confirmed the Old Testament (which comprises of 39 or 46 books). He speaks about the authenticity of the ‘Law’ only.

If further proof is needed, one has only to compare the old manuscripts known as ‘Dead Sea Scroll’ with the relevant parts of the present Old Testament, to find out how great the differences are between the two.² We are not concerned with the judgment as to which writing is more acceptable. What we are concerned with is the fact that the scribes were free long before the coming of Jesus to add, subtract, change and alter the texts of the books attributed to the Israeli prophets including the book or books of Prophet Musa (a.s.).

Old Testament: Contradictions & Absurdities

Allah has said about the Holy Qur’an:

وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

**“...Had it been from someone other than God, they would have found in it ample contradiction.”
(4:82).**

This verse provides us with a sure way of verifying the authenticity or otherwise of a book claimed to have come from God. If it is from God, there would be no discrepancy in it.

Judging the Pentateuch by this standard, we are astonished to find hundreds of wrong and contradictory statements in it. It is not a place to go in detail; yet I will give here a few examples. There is no need to go any further than the very first two chapters.

Genesis 1 describes that Adam and Eve were created on the 6th day when, on the previous days, heaven, earth, seas, grass, herbs with seeds, fruits, stars, sun, moon, water creatures, birds, whales and earth creatures, cattle and beasts (in that sequence) were already created.

Genesis 2 says that man was created before the trees and vegetables, beasts, birds and cattle.

Which statement is correct?

Then Genesis 1 says that God created man (male) and female both together on the same day. Genesis 2 says that man (male) was created before flora and fauna, and it was after he was put in the Garden of Eden that woman was created.

The fact is that the writers have filled this book with all the trends of 1000 years during which time it was being compiled. Thus we find that to justify their own shortcomings they have put God and His prophets in such a bad light as leaves no room for any respect and dignity.

The God of Bible has human form, hair and legs, is jealous of Adam, does get tired and needs rest, walks like a man in garden of Eden, Adam hides from him and he calls out “Where art thou?”; wrestles with Ya’qub (a.s.) whole night without being able to knock him down; comes down on a mountain, enters into a cloud, and resides in Zion; repents after doing a work; tells lies while the serpent tells the truth.

The Qur’an pointedly ignores all such statements, which were paganistic in origin.

Now let us see the narrations about the prophets of God, chosen by Him to lead their people onto the right path. If we read the account of the people of Lot (a.s.) in the Qur’an we will find that it does not mention the conspiracy of the daughters of Lot (a.s.) to cohabit with their father, and the shameful details of alleged fulfillment of that capital sin. The Qur’an confirms the prophethood of Lot (a.s.) and destruction of his people: This is Confirmation. But it rejects, by not mentioning or hinting even once, the interpolation of human mind: it is the guardianship. Another example is the narration of the calf-worship of Israel.

In short, the Qur'an confirms the basic truths and rejects the interpolations of the scribes. It is *musaddiq* (confirmer), and it is *muhaimin* (guardian) of the previous books, all at one and the same time.

3. The Injil

Was it a Book?

The Qur'anic expressions denote that Injil was a book revealed to Prophet 'Isa (a.s.). But the Christians say that Jesus Christ did not leave any book behind him. They say that Injil (i.e. 'Gospel') means just "the good tidings," brought by Jesus Christ. Thus they use the name 'Injil' (or Gospel) for the first four books of the New Testament which are supposedly written by Sts. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The scholars of higher criticism agree that Mark is the earliest of these 4 'Gospels'. It was written in or about 60–70 CE.

The 'gospel' of Matthew was written in or about 70–90 CE.

The 'gospel' of Luke came later and that of John in or about 100 CE.

Now the experts of higher criticism assert that a certain 'written document' was extant in the first half of the first century. They believe that there was a 'written source' of the gospels of Luke and Matthew which is called 'Q' in the Christian writings. Rev. W.K.L Clarke writes in his *Concise Bible Commentary*:

"That Mark is the earliest gospel is agreed by scholars who are not bound by the authority to maintain the priority of Matthew. Only so can the close resemblances be explained..."

"The arguments which convince us that Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source, point also to a written source to the sections common to the two gospels but not derived from Mark. This is called 'Q' (German Quelle = source)... How much narrative 'Q' contained is unknown ... Again, had 'Q' a Passion-story? If so, does it lie behind Luke's or John's Passion-story? If not, what kind of Gospel was it that said nothing about the cross?"³

Now, a document which can be regarded as a 'source of revelation' cannot be denied a place in the list of revealed books itself. This source was extant in the first century; and we may presume that it was possibly the original 'Injil' brought by Prophet 'Issa' (a.s.).

Also, there are various references to 'gospel' (Injil) in the letters of St. Peter and St. Paul which, undoubtedly were written before these four so-called Gospels came into being.

Which 'Gospel' or 'Injil' do those letters refer to, if not to the written book of Prophet 'Issa' (a.s.)? Now that Injil is lost.

It will be of interest to note that these four so-called 'Gospels' were not given this title upto the end of the

second century CE.

Who Wrote the 'Gospels'?

Coming to the present four 'gospels' the first thing which must be mentioned is that it is not certain who wrote the first and the fourth books.

The first is the 'gospel' attributed to St. Matthew, who was one of the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ. But this 'gospel' is based mostly on the 'gospel' of Mark who was not a disciple of Jesus and had no first-hand knowledge of the events of the ministry of Jesus.

Westminster Dictionary of Bible (under 'Matthew') mentions that according to many scholars it is difficult to accept that Matthew was the author of that gospel. "Matthew reproduces about 90 per cent of the subject matter of Mark in language very largely identical with that of Mark. Now it is highly improbable that an apostle would have used as a major source the word of one who in all likelihood had not been an eye witness of the ministry of Jesus."

Moreover, Papias wrote in about 140 CE that "Matthew collected 'logia' (sayings or oracles) in the Hebrew language and each one interpreted them as he was able." But the original 'gospel' of Matthew is not in Hebrew; it is in Greek; and Greek was not the language of Matthew!

It is thus clear that the book written by Matthew was lost and later his name was transferred to another edited work.

Likewise, it is not known who was John, the author of the fourth 'gospel'. But Christian public is led to believe that it was written by John, the apostle of Jesus Christ.

But the above-mentioned dictionary (under 'John' the gospel according to) clearly says that many scholars believe that the author was some "disciple and follower of John the son of Zebedee (the apostle). His name is either unknown to us or, more likely, was John the Presbyter or Elder."

Writers of the remaining two 'gospels' were disciples and followers of the Apostles, and most probably had not seen or met Jesus Christ at all.

Thus, not only that these four "books" were written decades after Jesus Christ, but also they were not written by his immediate disciples either. And at least two of them were written by unknown persons.

The Gospels: Not Trustworthy

Apart from this dubious authorship, the texts of these 'gospels' show that their writers were not trustworthy. Let me point to a few examples of blatant alterations;

The figure '7' was considered very important by Israelites (no doubt, because of the paganistic idea that

God was tired after creating the universe in 6 days, and rested on the 7th day). Thus they were fond of adjusting known historical facts to fit in the frame of '7' or multiples of '7'. The author of the 'gospel' according to Matthew gives the genealogy of Jesus Christ in the first chapter. He divides it in 3 parts of 14+14+14. And to fit the names in this scheme of '14', he omits 4 names in between. He has omitted the name of Jehoiakim between Josias and Jechonias (thus presenting the grandson as the son); and the names of Ahaziah, Goash and Azariah between Joram and Cziar, (thus presenting a great-great-grandson as the son).

It is quite apart from other known historical inaccuracies, which permeate this genealogy.

Then if you compare this genealogy with that given in the 'gospel' according to Luke (chapter 3) you will find that the names between David and Joseph are completely different, putting one man in two different clans.

In the 'gospel' of Matthew, Joseph was son of Jacob, son of Matthew who was from the clan of Solomon son of David, and between Joseph and Solomon, were 24 generations.

According to the 'gospel' of Luke, Joseph was son of Heti, son of Matthat, who was from the clan of Nathan son of David; and between Joseph and Nathan were 39 generations.

Naturally, one man cannot be born in two different lines of David: he cannot be at one and the same time from the progeny of Solomon s/o David and that of Nathan s/o David.

This one example is enough to show that these so-called 'gospels' are not truthful. In this background the English phrase 'gospel truth' may mean anything from the newsbulletins of Goebels to the 'informations' of fighting countries. An observer has a right to ask that if the writers of these gospels could have changed the established facts to suit their whims, what assurance was there that they had not changed the creed to suit their fancy?

The New Testament: Misinterpretations

The New Testament was not free from serious 'misinterpretations'. To give one most important example:

'Son of God' was an expression in Hebrew language, which meant 'beloved of God' or 'chosen by God'. Adam, Jacob, Efraim, the whole tribe of Israelites, the whole group of the followers of Jesus Christ, and the whole mankind have been called 'Son of God' or 'the Dear Son of God' or 'the Children of God' in the New and Old Testaments.

This expression was never meant to be exported to other countries or cultures, because the Old Testament was a Book for the tribe of Israelites, and so was the ministry of Jesus who expressly limited his jurisdiction to the tribe of Israel and said: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:23); and sent his apostles saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles (non-

Israelites), and into the city of Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'” (Matthew 10:5–6).

But St. Paul, who had never met Jesus Christ in his life, overruled the apostles who had spent their times with him and were conversant with his ministry. He took the Christianity to the Gentiles and this transplanting bore out such fruits, which could never be palatable to Jesus Christ himself.

When that Hebrew expression reached the Greek civilization it naturally conveyed a different meaning to its people. The Greeks believed in scores of gods and semi-gods together with their wives, mistresses and children; they were used to hear about their rivalries, love and jealousy. No wonder they interpreted the Hebrew expression in their own terms and made Jesus Christ ‘Son of God’ in the literal sense.

The differences of the Councils, in the 3rd and 4th centuries of the Christian era, about the relationship between Jesus and God, provide ample proof in themselves that the idea of Sonship of God (in its present sense) was not the original or universally accepted one. (The word ‘Trinity’ does not occur even once in the New or the Old Testament).

When the Nicea Council (325 CE) adopted the Nicene Creed, which contained the statement that the son was ‘of one substance with the Father’, reaction in the Christian circles was very violent. At least 13 more Councils were held between 325 and 381 CE. Meanwhile persecution of one or the other party continued relentlessly.

There emerged four groups:

1. Homoousians (Orthodox) – believing that the son was ‘of one substance’ with the Father;
2. Homoeans (Arian) – believing that the son was ‘like’ the Father;
3. Homoiousians (Semi-Arian) – believing that the son was ‘of like substance’ with the Father;
4. Anomoeans (Ultra-Arian) – believing that the son was ‘unlike’ the Father.

Numerous Councils were held to decide the issue. Sometimes one group succeeded and at other times the other group swayed the council with it; and the Roman Emperors played a very active part in influencing the decisions of the Councils. It was just a chance of history that the emperor, who influenced the last council on the subject, favored the old pagan idea of “sonship” and thus the Greek meaning superceded the original Hebrew meaning. Here we may see what damage was done to the basic faith, by neglecting the command of Jesus Christ about going ‘not beyond the house of Israel’.

Once that meaning was changed, it was just ‘natural’ to believe that the Son of God was himself God. I remember reading in the English *Summa Theologica* that “as son of man is man; son of horse is horse; likewise, Son of God is God.”

Then as the interpolations in the Torah had necessitated the coming of Jesus Christ, the changes in the pure belief of Christianity necessitated the coming of Muhammad (s.a.w.) with the Qur'an to confirm the truths which were still extant in the Torah and Injil of his time (which incidentally, are still extant, with periodical changes!), and to correct the wrong beliefs which had crept into these books as a result of pagan influence.

4. The Qur'an, Hadith Qudsi & Hadith

According to the Muslims, the revelations from God are of three kinds:

(a) **The Qur'an:** where the words and meanings both are revealed from God, and it is meant to be a miracle in itself. The only example of such Revelation is the Qur'an. No other Revelation was meant to be a miracle, challenging the antagonists to bring its 'like' if they could, and prophesying that they could never do so.

(b) **Hadith Qudsi:** where the words and meaning are both from God, but it is not intended to be a miracle. It is called *hadith qudsi*. It is found in the books of traditions and generally begins with these words: "The Holy Prophet said that Allah said".

These revelations are scattered in the books of traditions and have the same value as the traditions of the Holy Prophet and are subject to the same tests. One scholar has tried to collect them in a separate book. But that collection is obviously not complete.

The tablets of Torah given to Musa (a.s.) come into this category, because therein the meanings and words both were from Allah, but they were not sent as a miracle or as a challenge.

(c) **Hadith:** where only the meanings are from God but the words are of the prophet. Inspirations, and also traditions of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) come into this category.

Thus it will appear that according to the Muslims only the third kind of revelation is clothed in the prophet's own wordings; and even then there is no suggestion or hint that the prophet could or did alter the meaning conveyed by Allah.

It will be interesting to compare the above with the Christians' idea of revelation.

According to them, the message of God becomes tainted with human thoughts in its very origin, when it is received by the prophet. The above mentioned *Concise Bible Commentary* explains: "Note that there are three elements in revelation: God who initiates; the recipient who apprehends it according to his capacity and those who in each generation receive the message mediated through the first recipient. The corporate experience of the church, whether of the Old or New dispensation, is molding it all the time. In other words, revelation is continuous..."⁴

To comprehend fully what is meant by the second and third stages, I quote from the same Commentary: “the third stage is when the disciples of the prophet, if not he himself, write down the message that has been circulating in oral form. Some editing and accommodation to current needs is inevitable, though we need not suppose that anything of value is lost... editors do sometimes improve the work submitted by authors, if only by making it intelligible to the reading public, and those who arranged the utterances of the great prophets did a great service”.⁵

Thus revelation, according to the Christians thought, is bound to be modified by the prophets, as well as the subsequent scribes and writers, according to the needs of their times. For them, editing and changing does not affect the authenticity of revelation, while for a Muslim, this editing makes it ‘corrupt’. It is evident that the Muslims and the Christians are not speaking the same language when they converse about either ‘revelation’ or alteration:

It just happens that the Christians cannot show any ‘revealed’ authority for their interpretation of Revelation. There is no sentence in the Bible to show that the words of God can be corrupted and still maintain their authenticity and originality. This interpretation, allowing for additions, alterations, editing and manipulations of scribes in the Books of God, is very late in its origin; and has been invented to accommodate the differences, historical inaccuracies and contradictory statements of the Bible. But for the Muslims such contradictions are definite proof that the text in question is not from God.

Looking at the conceptions of revelation in Islam and Christianity, if we try to fit the Old and New Testaments in the frame of the Muslims’ belief, as mentioned earlier, we may be tempted to put it in the third category, in which the ideas come from God and the words are supplied by the prophet himself.

But this attempt would be unjustified, because:

(a) Though Muslims do know and accept the presence of a number of forged traditions in the books of traditions, they do not attribute them to the Prophet himself. They have never thought that the Prophet himself could ever make any mistake in comprehending the message of Allah. The Christians, on the other hand, say that the mistakes could have started at such an early stage of revelation as the prophets themselves.

(b) Resulting from this attitude is their respective treatment of the traditions and revelations. The Muslims have set severe tests to verify the genuineness or otherwise of a given tradition. All traditions, which are not up to the mark, are rejected as fabrications of the narrators. The Christians are not free to reject any part of the Bible, because, according to their belief, every single word of it is revealed.

Except for these two difficulties, the revelation of Christians’ conception might be placed in the third category i.e. ‘revealed thoughts’. Still they will not be the Torah and Injil of the Qur’an, which were ‘revealed books’.

Anyhow, this difference in the conception of revelation is the basic factor in this whole argument. What is

termed as ‘continuous revelation’ by the Christians is treated as ‘corruption’ in the academic world. Frankly speaking, if additions, mixing of different sources into one, changing the sequence of the events, and adjusting the facts to a self-imposed scheme, is not ‘alteration’ of a work, then the word ‘alteration’ should be removed from the dictionary.

- [1.](#) I have just given a brief outline, omitting the technical arguments and reasons.
- [2.](#) For example, fifteen strips of parchment were discovered in the last quarter of the 19th century. “After studying his acquisition for some weeks, Shapira realized that what he had was an ancient version of the Book of Deuteronomy, one which differed markedly from the established biblical text.” See Baigent, M. and Leigh, R., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception* (London: Corgi Books. 1992) p.333.
- [3.](#) Clarke, W. K. L., *Concise Bible Commentary*, pp. 685–687.
- [4.](#) *Concise Bible Commentary*. p.4.
- [5.](#) *Ibid*, p.3.

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