

The authorship of The Qur'an (2 of 3): The Words of a Poet or a Teacher?

[English]

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[اللغة الإنجليزية]

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The Style of the Quran

There is a world of difference between the style of the Quran and Muhammad's own style as recorded in the books of Ahadeeth. The differences between the two in every respect – style and contents – are immediately evident. The sayings of Muhammad (Ahadeeth) are conversational, oratorical, and expository, of a kind the Arabs were already familiar with. By contrast, the style of the Quran is authoritative:

“We created the heavens and the earth...” (Quran 15:85, 44:38, 46:3, 50:38)

Also,

“Say...”¹

Also,

“... Had it (the Quran) been from any other than God, they would have found therein much discrepancy.” (Quran 4:82)

Also,

“... Say then: ‘Bring a chapter like it and call, if you can, on other than God...’” (Quran 10:38)

Also,

“... then bring a chapter like unto it... and if you can not — for surely you cannot, then...” (Quran 2:23-24)

Which fallible human being would write a book and challenge humanity to find discrepancies in it, as does the author of the Quran (Quran 4:82)? Would any sensible student after writing an exam paper add a note to the lecturer saying “Read my answers with care and find any discrepancies or mistakes in

¹ This is mentioned in too many places in the Quran to mention here. See. Quran 112,113,114 for an example (E).

it if you can!”? The style of the Quran is simply that of the All-Knowing Creator.

Furthermore, the Quran is a literary masterpiece of Arabic which was and remains unrivaled in its eloquence. Its rhythmic style, rhyme, near-haunting depth of expression, majesty, and “*inimitable symphony, the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy*”¹, shook the foundations of a society which had prided itself on its oratory skills.

Contests were held every year in Mecca for who could recite the longest and most eloquent pieces from memory. When the Quran was revealed, all such contests were brought to a halt, as there was no more competition.

Like the miracle of Moses’ stick turning into a real snake which outdid the ability of all the Pharaoh’s magicians at a time when the Egyptians were noted for their mastery of sorcery and magic, and the miracle of Jesus’ healing of the blind and bringing the dead back to life which outdid the ability of all the doctors at a time when the Jews were noted for their mastery of medicine, the Quran was the Prophet Muhammad’s own miracle.² How could such magnificent and unrivaled expressions emanate from a man who, for 40 years, was never known for any such ability?

Similarities and Discrepancies between the Quran and the Bible

The mere existence of similarities between any two books is insufficient to prove that one must have been copied from the other. Both could have drawn information from a third common source, thus accounting for some similarities between them.

This, in fact, is the argument of the Quran that God is the Source of all authentic revelation (Quran 4:47).

¹ Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran*, New York: The Muslim World League, 1977, p.vii.

² *Saheeh Al-Bukhari* Vol.6, Hadeeth No.504; *Saheeh Muslim* Vol.1, Hadeeth No.283.

Some scholars have noted that the only Christians the Prophet, may God praise him,, is recorded as having been personally introduced to prior to his mission did not spend long enough time with him to teach him of their scripture, and no other historical record mentions anyone who taught the Prophet from among the Jews and Christian.¹ Furthermore, the Arabs of his time were very eager to discredit him. Hence, if there was any secret teacher, he would most likely have been exposed by them then.

Furthermore, could the Quran have been copied from the Bible if they exhibit serious creedal differences? Regarding doctrines such as the concepts of God and prophethood, sin and forgiveness, the Quran differs significantly with the Bible. The Quran in fact addresses Jews and Christians directly when correcting what it states are corruptions in their own scriptures.

Interestingly, Quranic revelations of doctrinal problems with Christianity were sent largely in the Meccan period, prior to the Prophet's migration to Medina, where he would have encountered many more Jewish and Christian scholars.



Even in the case of narration common to both scriptures, vital discrepancies can be observed. For example, the Quran, unlike the Bible:

— does not blame women for the mistake committed by Adam and Eve (may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him) in disobeying God in the Garden of Eden. (Compare Genesis 3:12-17 with Quran 91:7-8 and 2:35-37);

— emphasizes that Adam and Eve repented to God (Quran 7:23) and were forgiven by Him (Quran 2:37);

¹ Bilal Phillips, *Usool at-Tafseer, Sharjah: Dar al-Fatah, 1997, p.127-128.*

— mentions that the eventual dwelling of Adam and Eve on Earth was already part of God's plan even before He created them (Quran 2:30), and not a sort of punishment (Genesis 3:17-19).

Other significant variations can be seen in the stories of Solomon¹, Abraham², Ishmael and Isaac, Lot, Noah³, Moses and Jesus⁴ (may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him).

The Quran also mentions a good amount of historical information about which the Bible is completely silent. From which portion of the Bible were the following copied?

- The stories of the people of 'Ad and Thamud, and their Prophets, Hud and Saleh.
- The dialogue between Prophet Noah and his son before the flood (Quran 11:42-43).
- The dialogue between Abraham and his father (Quran 6:74), as well as between he and a king (Quran 2:258), and between he and his people (Quran 22:70-102; 29:16-18; 37:83-98; 21:57).
- The mention of the city of Iram (Quran 89:7).

¹ eg. the Quran rejects that this Prophet was ever a worshipper of idols – compare Quran 2:102 with 1 Kings 11:4.

² eg. the Quran describes the account of the story of God's command to sacrifice his son as occurring in a dream with his son as a willing participant before being saved by God's intervention, while the Bible speaks of God speaking directly to him and his son as unaware of his plans - compare Quran 37:99-111 with Genesis 22:1-19

³ The Bible describes the Great Flood as covering the entire Earth whereas the Quran describes the flood as a local event only, a description which is more consistent with scientific evidence - compare Quran 25:37 with Genesis 7:23.

⁴ A critical difference is the Quran's insistence that Jesus was never truly crucified.

- The Pharaoh of the Exodus having drowned, with his body preserved as a sign for people of future generations (Quran 10:90-92).
- Jesus' miracles of speaking from the cradle (Quran 3:46), and his producing (by God's will) a bird from clay (Quran 3:49), etc.

For further examples, see the following references from the Quran: 21:69, 2:260, and 3:37.