

Hi A:

How are you?

I like to say thank you for sending me a website, "Just Bible Stuff", which collects various criticisms of Bible. I have read several articles from that website; one of them is the article you sent me, "Turns Out The Original Bible Is Drastically Different From The Version You Grew Up With". The article is shown to be written by Jacob Shelton who does not have any academic credential but seems to be a liberal who denies any authority and is critical about Christianity. You may want to convince me that the Bible is corrupted as you have been educated by your superiors in your country. The article which you sent me has total 18 subtitles with each showing how the Bible is corrupted. Instead of commenting those 18 items, I like to review how Bible and Quran became Holy books of their religions and also discuss about the cultural difference between Christian and Muslim worlds. I hope my presentation below help you understand the truthfulness of Bible even if there have been numerous criticisms about the Bible.

Brief history of Quran:

Quran was believed to be verbally revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel gradually for 23 years. When Muhammad recited a message, the people around him memorized or recorded in various form. When many Muslims who knew Quran by their hearts were killed at the Battle by Musaylimah, the first caliph, Abu Bakr (634) decided to collect Quran in a written volume. In 656, the third Caliph Uthman ibn Affan began to notice different versions of Qurans which might cause conflict between Muslims later and he ordered the copy possessed by Abu Bakr as the standard copy of the Quran and destroyed other versions with fire. Since then, Muslims have not been allowed to do any critical study of Quran.

Brief history of Bible:

On the other hand, the Old Testament (OT) Bible is a Jewish history which consists of 39 books written by many authors in the span of about 1000 years. Many OT scholars believe that the last book of OT was written in about 430 BC and the OT was canonized at around 100 BC. Because of the long span of recording the Bible in the very ancient time, there have been a lot of disputes between Bible scholars about the authorship of each book, time of recording, and etc. Furthermore, as the books were originally written in old Hebrew language, it is very difficult to understand the books in the modern time and it is harder to translate into modern English (or other languages).

The New Testament (NT) Bible has similar problems. The NT consists of 27 books (Catholic has slightly more) written by various authors in AD 55 – AD 95. During early period of Christianity, the churches faced a lot of challenges from various heresy religious groups. Some religious sect taught that Jesus had only spirit and no physical body and some other sect insisted a book written after AD 110, which contains dubious stories, should be included in the Christian canons. But there was no control tower that regulated those heresies by force. The early churches had built up consensus about which books should be included as canons. The current 27 books in the NT were written before AD 100 mostly by the authors who were disciples of Jesus or close followers of them who witnessed Jesus' teaching, suffering on the cross, and resurrection. The 27 book were canonized in around 400 AD more than 200 years earlier than Quran. When early Christianity was spreading rapidly over the Roman Empire, the Christians were hand-copying the books to distribute to remote areas. In the copying process, some sentences might be omitted accidentally in some copy versions. Now the Bible has been translating into different languages to distribute to all over the world. In the process of translation, it is inevitable the original meaning of some words being altered slightly even with the translators' best effort.

Western culture:

The people in the western countries enjoy the freedom of express. Many liberal Biblical scholars have been dissecting the Bible (OT and NT) to criticize and discredit the Bible and Christianity for many centuries. Now in US, there are many liberals, atheists, and homosexual groups (and scholars) who openly assault Christianity through writing books, TV shows, and the social media. The website that you sent to me is one of them. There are also many religious organizations (for example Jehovah's Witness and Latter Day Saints (Molmon)), which use Bible as their bases but twisted it here and there to fit their needs. We Christians do not consider those religious groups as Christian groups.

Christian's view of Bible:

As I briefly reviewed above about the process of the Bible (OT and NT) reaching to our hands from the start of the Christianity 2000 years ago, the current Bibles have some omissions, additions, mistranslation, and etc. But the impact of those human errors on the truthfulness of Christianity is zero. As OT consists of Jewish history, poems, proverbs, and prophesy, any small misinterpretation and/or omission of some words never affect the messages the Bibles try to deliver. NT also consists of four Gospel books, one history book, 21 epistles of Jesus' disciples, and one revelation of the future. Again some small human errors never affect the truth of NT. Furthermore, those human errors are specified in the commentary of our Bibles so that all the readers are fully aware of. That is why so many people all over the world accept Jesus as their savior and their lives are drastically changed for good after they read the Bible even in this modern time.

Why Muslims think Bible is corrupted?

Why then do all the Muslims believe that the Bible is corrupted and so that it is not reliable?

First, they think the Bible was written in the same way as the Quran was written. As I mentioned above (and you know well), when Muhammad declared that a message of Allah was coming and recited some words, people around him listened and memorized the words as the words from Allah, which became Quran when the message was in a written form. As each message is believed to come directly from Allah, any alteration of the message is considered to be corrupting the words of Allah. Likewise, Muslims believe that any small alteration of Bible by human errors is the corruption of Bible. But Bible is different. Let's consider four Gospel books in NT as an example. The four Gospel books were written by four different authors with the guidance of Holy Spirit after doing research with many eye witnesses of Jesus. The authors of the four Gospel books have different objectives and different expressions even though they all wrote about Jesus teachings, his miracles, his suffering on the cross, and his resurrection. Therefore, any small alteration of the words in one book by human error does not corrupt the truth of the Bible.

Second, Muslim scholars notice that Quran contains all the prophets in the Bible including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus but the descriptions about the prophets are different from those in the Bible. To justify the discrepancy between Quran and Bible, the Muslim scholars claim that Bible is corrupted. For example, Quran describes that Allah commanded Abraham to sacrifice Ismael, not Isaac, but Bible says that God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (Note that the OT Bible was written 2000 year earlier than Quran). According to Quran, Allah chose Ismael over Isaac and Prophet Muhammad is the only descendant of Ismael. But on the other hand, all other prophets in Quran are descendants of Isaac including Moses and Jesus whom Quran regards them very highly. I believe Muslim scholars have hard time to understand why Quran is different from the Bible about Abraham and why all the prophets in Quran are descendants of Isaac if Allah chose Ismael over Isaac.

Another example of discrepancy between Quran and Bible is about Jesus. Quran denies Jesus death on the cross (4:156-158): Allah took him to heaven before he was killed and Jesus will return to the earth at the last day.

Quran also says that Jesus was born from Virgin Mary and performed a lot of miracles but denies Jesus deity (5:17-18, 5:116, 5:72-75). But Bible says that Jesus was God incarnated to save us from our sins by being born from Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, died on the cross, resurrected, and ascended to Heaven and will return at the last day. I believe Muslim scholars have hard time to understand how Jesus has stayed in heaven for more than 2000 years and will return at the last day as a human being with flesh. They also have hard time to understand why it will be Jesus (a descendant of Isaac), not Prophet Muhammad (a descendant of Ismael), who will return to the world to kill Satan if Muhammad is the last and the best prophet of Allah. An easy solution for these questions is to deny the truthfulness of the Bible by saying that the Bible is corrupted.

Inconsistency of Quran if Bible is corrupted:

However, we should note that if Muslim scholars claim that Bible is corrupted, they are contradicted to Quran's teaching about Bible. Qurans 29:46, 3:84, 5:46, and 3:84 teach that Quran and Bible are all revelations of Allah, implying that both Holy books are true and so Bible is not corrupted. If the discrepancy of the Quran to the Bible regarding Abraham and Jesus is due to the corruption of Bible, Qurans 29:46, 3:84, 5:46, and 3:84 are not true so that the Qurans are not words of Allah. Some Muslims argue that the Bible in the Muhammad time was not corrupted but is corrupted now. But as I mentioned above, the Bible was established in AD 400 in the current form, more than 200 years earlier than Quran. Any differences between the current Bible and the Bible in Muhammad time are due to translation from one language to another. The stories about Abraham and Jesus were not changed at all. The discrepancy of the Quran to the Bible regarding Abraham and Jesus shows the inconsistency of Quran's teaching: If Qurans 29:46, 3:84, 5:46, and 3:84 are true, then Quran's teachings about Abraham and Jesus are not true. If Quran's teachings about Abraham and Jesus are true, the Qurans 29:46, 3:84, 5:46, and 3:84 are not true. The inconsistency is significant as Abraham and Jesus are major figures in both Holy books.

Quran's teachings show another inconsistency. Quran 29:46 teaches that Muslims and Christians believe same Allah and Quran 2:62 teaches that Muslims, Jew, and Christians all go to heaven. But Quran 9:29 commands Muslims to fight against Jews and Christians until they surrender. Quran 9:29 is clearly contradicted with 29:46 as well as 2:62. Muslim scholars may use the doctrine of abrogation, saying that newer Qurans abrogate older Qurans, to justify the internal contradiction. That means we must believe Allah changed his mind later.

I have briefly mentioned the inconsistency of Quran's teachings regarding Bible and Christianity, which might be one of the reasons why Muslim scholars claimed that Bible is corrupted and all Muslims in Muslim countries are discouraged to do critical study of Quran.

Suggestion:

Before I became a Christian, I was an atheist (raised in Buddhist culture in Korea) and was very critical to the Bible. But I became a Christian after I read the Bible in very critical manner. Even though my children were born from Christian parents they were not born as Christians. They could choose different religions. But after they went to college and studied Bible, they decided to be Christians. But you were Muslim even before you were born in your country and you should stay as a Muslim regardless of your will. If not, you may be killed. You learned your religion not by doing critical study of Quran and Prophet Muhammad by yourself but by your superiors' well wrapped materials. You learned Christianity from Islamic educational institutes and so have very distorted view on Christianity. But you live in US where you enjoy the freedom of expression. It is good chance for you to learn the Christianity from real Christians (like InFocus) and to do critical study of your religion (Quran and Muhammad). I hope the email conversations between you and I promote objective study of Islam and Christianity in a constructive way.