

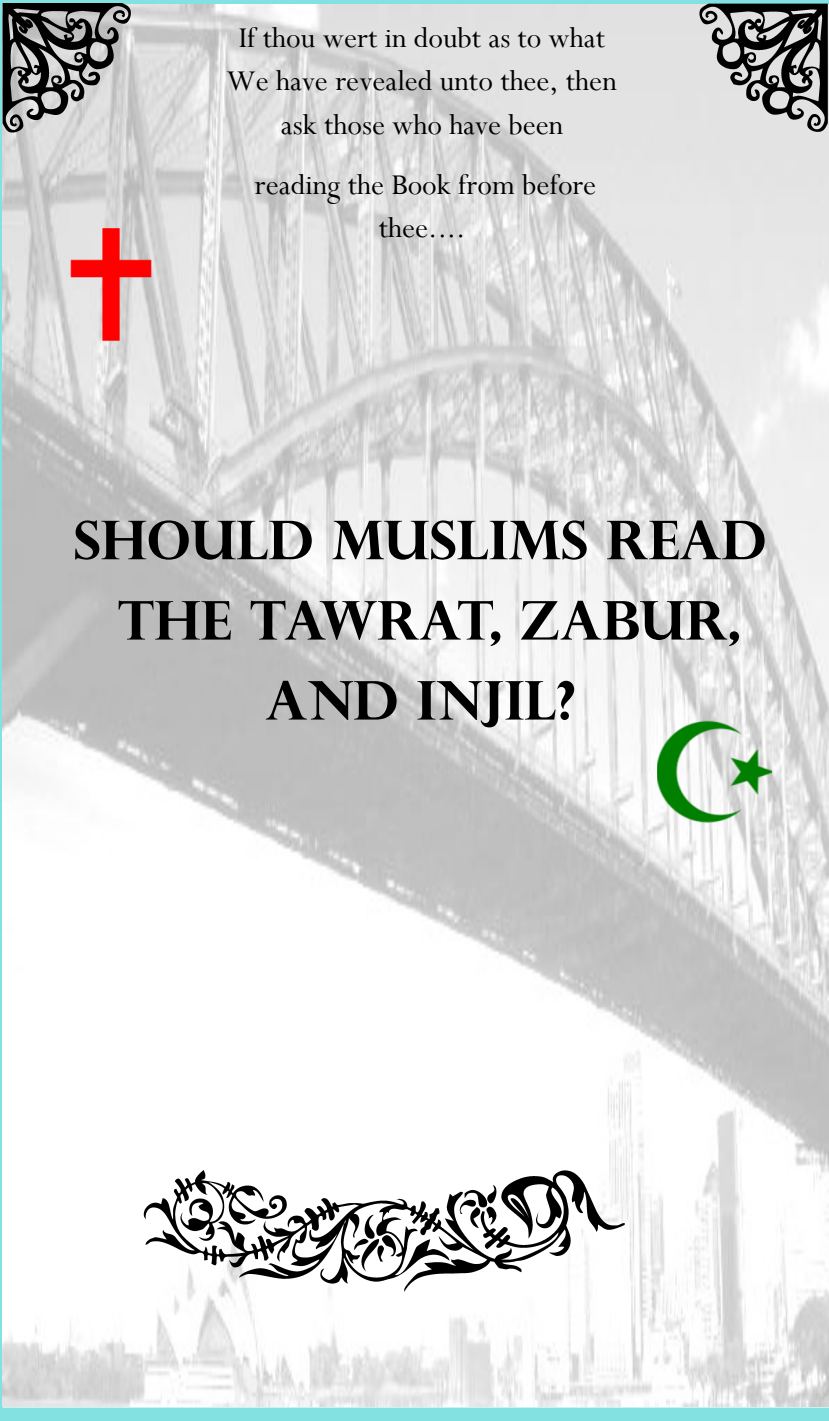



If thou wert in doubt as to what
We have revealed unto thee, then
ask those who have been
reading the Book from before
thee....



SHOULD MUSLIMS READ THE TAWRAT, ZABUR, AND INJIL?



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²³ 'The Life of Muhammad (*Sirat Rasul Allah*). Translated by A. Guillaume. New York: Oxford University Press, 1955. p 250

²⁴ In Surah 19, Maryam, verse 12, Yahya, who lived at the time of Hazrat Isa was told 'to take hold of the Book, (the Torah).' Surah 3, Ali'Imran, verse 48 tells us that Jesus was also taught in the Torah.

²⁵ Surah 34, Saba, verse 31, Surah 35, Fatir, verse 31

²⁶ Surah 7, Al Araf, verse 159

²⁷ 'The meaning of the Quran', 12th Edt. 1992, S.A. Maududi, Isl. Publ., Pakistan

²⁸ 'The Life of Muhammad (*Sirat Rasul Allah*). Translated by A. Guillaume. New York: Oxford University Press, 1955. p 267

²⁹ (5:68, p 268).

³⁰ E.g. Imam Muhammad Ishmail al-Bukhari. He formed his opinion on the authority of Ibn Abbas. Ibn Mazar and Ibn Abi Hatim mentioned only the first type of corruption on the authority of Ibn Mu'niyah in the 'Tafsir Durr-i-Mansur'. The same opinion is also held by Shah Waliyu 'Ilah in 'Fauzu l Kabir' and by Imam Fakhru 'd-din. 'Dictionary of Islam', T.P. Hughes, Asia Publishing House, London 1988).

³¹ Surah 2, Al Baqarah, verse 85

³² <http://tafsir.com/default.asp?sid=3&tid=8586>

³³ 'The Life of Muhammad (*Sirat Rasul Allah*). Translated by A. Guillaume. New York: Oxford University Press, 1955. p 266-267

³⁴ Ibid. Ps 251, 253

³⁵ <http://bewley.virtualave.net/bukhari52.html>

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Surah 4, Al Nisa, verse 136
- ² Surah 5, Al Ma'ida, verses 47-48a
- ³ www.jewfaq.org/torah.htm accessed 17th June 2011
- ⁴ Compare John 10:34 with Psalm 82:6, 1 Corinthians 14:21 with Isaiah 28:11-12, Matthew 5:17-18, 7:12, Romans 3:10-19: quoting from the Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Isaiah, but not from the law in the narrow sense of the word, Acts 3:18, 21-22, Hebrews 1:1)
- ⁵ Surah 2, Al Baqarah, verse 136, also Surah 5, Al Ma'idah, verses 69-71)
- ⁶ 4:163, 2:102, 4:163, 21:85, 9:30.
- ⁷ Surah 3, Ali'Imran, verse 48
- ⁸ Talmud: Bava Basra 14b-15a, Rashi to Megillah 3a, 14a
- ⁹ Luke 24:44
- ¹⁰ Ignatius in, "ad Philad." 5 +6; "ad Smyrn." He was a disciple of John, one of Jesus' first followers.
- ¹¹ Surah 3, Ali'Imran, verses 3 and 65
- ¹² Surah 4, Al Nisa, verse 163
- ¹³ Mishkat Al-Masabih, English translation by Dr. James Robson vol. 2, p. 1237
- ¹⁴ Surah 57, Al-Hadid, verse 27
- ¹⁵ Mark 1:1, Romans 16:25,26, 1 Thess. 1:5
- ¹⁶ Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament, pg. 99
- ¹⁷ Schaff, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: First Series. vol. 8, pg. 7
- ¹⁸ "The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?" 1943, pg. 23.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p.25.
- ²⁰ The Confessions of St. Augustine, pg. 144.
- ²¹ "The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible", p. 413
- ²² *Tafsīr at-Tabarī*, Vol.1, p.253; see: [Aftab Alam Khan], *The Meaning of the Noble Qur'ân: Word-for-word English translation*, Volume -1 (Part 1-5) (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 2006), pp.11-12

SHOULD MUSLIMS READ THE TAWRAT, ZABUR, AND INJIL?

What are the Tawrat, Zabur and Injil?

Muslims are commanded in the Quran¹ to believe in the books God revealed to the Jews and the Christians¹. A few such verses from the Quran confirm what the Bible teaches. They are here quoted because all truth belongs to God. This principle allows for referring to truth contained in any publications without giving them a status of perfection.

A. Tawrat

The Tawrat is the Arabic equivalent of the Hebrew word 'Torah'. It is normally understood as the law that was revealed to Hazrat Musa.² However, the Tawrat also includes the rest of the books that are found in today's, 21st century Bible, the Old Testament, for the following reasons:

1. The Jews themselves use the term, 'Tawrat' sometimes in a general sense to include Jewish Scriptures in its entirety.³

2. Jesus and his followers sometimes used the words, "law" and "prophets" interchangeably to refer to the whole Old Testament.⁴ When the Quran tells the Jews to follow the Tawrat, it must be doing so in the light of both, the narrow and the wider sense of how it was defined at that time by the Jews. If that was not the case it would have had to make it clear in order to not

mislead them.

3. The Quran mentions that Muslims also have to believe in, ‘...**that which the Prophets received from their Lord.**’⁵ Some of them are identified as Job, Solomon, Jonah, Ezekiel or possibly Isaiah and Ezra⁶. These are biblical prophets whose books are most likely referred to as **the Scripture** that were taught to Jesus.⁷ They are not lost but found in the Torah, sometimes defined in the wider sense as the Old Testament.

B. Zabur

1. ‘Zabur’ is the Arabic equivalent of the Hebrew word ‘zimra’, translated as ‘psalm.’ It has the meaning ‘song, music.’ When the Quran mentions the Zabur, it is probably a reference to the third division of the Hebrew Scriptures, known as ‘the Writings’, or ‘Kethubim’, beginning with the book of Psalms. The other two divisions are the Torah and the ‘Nevi'im’ (Prophets). They have been recognized by Jews since about 450 BC⁸ until today. Jesus⁹ and the early church fathers also refer to the same divisions.¹⁰

2. When the Quran mentions the revelations given to the people of the book, the Jews and the Christians¹¹, it normally refers to the Tawrat and the Injeel, not to the Zabur. That book, however, was also revealed by God to the Jewish prophet Hazrat Dawud¹². This indicates that it was included in the Tawrat as used in the wider sense of the word. Such a conclusion is supported by a hadith that tells of a similar occasion¹³. Ka'b al-Ahbar is reported as quoting the Tawrat with sayings that find their parallels in the book of Isaiah (chapter 42) rather than the books revealed to Hazrat Musa. Isaiah is part of the Nevi'im (Prophets) the second division of the Hebrew Bible.

The Quran makes it clear that the Tawrat, Zabur and Injl have not been changed before the time of Muhammad. Otherwise God would have demanded to believe in and follow Scriptures that were already corrupted. If we assume that changes were made during or after the prophet's time, we can simply compare a twenty first century copy with one that was written before the sixth century. The result will be that all the teaching remained the same! Muslims who say that the Bible is corrupted contradict their own book. Therefore, follow the advice of the Prophet of Islam when he said, ‘seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave’, by learning what the Torah and the Injeel says.

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God had ordered something else. It is they to whom God refers. Thus God blamed them for what they were doing, He having in the Torah prohibited them from shedding each other's blood and charged them to redeem their prisoners ... they [two Jewish tribes] shed each other's blood **while the Torah was in their hands by which they knew what was allowed and what was forbidden them** ... When the war came to an end they ransomed their prisoners in accordance with the Torah ... God said in blaming them for that: 'Will you believe in a part of the scripture and disbelieve in another part?' [2:85] i.e. would you redeem him in accordance with the Torah and kill him when the Torah forbids you to do so ... ³⁴(2:83-86)

4. Surah 4, Al Nisa, verse 46

The Jews are accused of changing, writing down wrongly, what Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said. This is confirmed by the following hadith collected by Bukhari:

...No one removes the works of one of the Books of Allah Almighty, but they twist them, interpreting them improperly....³⁵

CONCLUSION

In Surah 5, Al Ma'idah, verse 48, the Quran is spoken of as confirming the Scripture that was before it and as a watcher over it. The Arabic meaning of the word "watch" (Muhaimin) can also be rendered "one who safeguards", "stands witness", "preserves" and "upholds". This clearly contradicts the view that the revelations given to the prophet of Islam allegedly abrogated the Bible! If this were the case there would be no need to confirm the Torah and the Gospel or even to watch over them in such a determined way.

C. Injil

The Injil is the Arabic equivalent of the Greek word 'euaggelion'. It is normally understood as the Gospel of Hazrat Isa¹⁴ written in Greek, the trade language of that part of the Roman Empire in the first century AD. However, the Injil also includes the rest of the books that are found in today's, 21st century New Testament of the Bible for the following reasons:

1. "Injil" or, "Gospel" occurs about 77 times in the New Testament. The message in it, whether spoken or written, is called "the Gospel"¹⁵. Hazrat Isa committed his Injil into the hands of his followers to publish throughout the world. Various historical documents clearly show that the early church used the word "Gospel" as a title for all or part of the New Testament before Islam arrived.

2. Toward the end of the second century, Irenaeus wrote: "The Word gave to us the Gospel in a fourfold shape, but held together by one Spirit"¹⁶. In the fourth century AD, Chrysostom wrote, "We assert, therefore, that, although a thousand Gospels were written, if the contents of all were the same, they would still be one, and their unity no wise infringed by the number of writers. -- Whence it is clear that the four Gospels are one Gospel; for, as the four say the same thing, its oneness is preserved by the harmony of the contents, and not impaired by the difference of persons"¹⁷

3. F.F Bruce, Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at the University of Manchester, England, wrote: "At a very early date it appears that the four Gospels were united in one collection. They must have been brought together very soon after the writing of the Gospel according to John. This

fourfold collection was originally known as "The Gospel" in the singular, not "The Gospels" in the plural; there was only one Gospel... Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, refers to "The Gospel" as an authoritative writing, and as he knew more than one of the four "Gospels" it may well be that by "The Gospel" sans phrase he means the fourfold collection which went by that name."¹⁸

About other books in the New Testament Bruce writes: "The corpus Paulinum, or collection of Paul's writings, was brought together about the same time as the collecting of the fourfold Gospel. As the Gospel collection was designated by the Greek word Euangelion, so the Pauline collection was designated by the one word Apostolos..."¹⁹

Augustine, one of the most famous early church fathers wrote in the fourth century, "For I ask them, is it good to take pleasure in reading the Apostle? or good to take pleasure in a sober Psalm? or good to discourse on the Gospel? They will answer to each, 'It is good'."²⁰

4. A Hadith of great reliability shows that the prophet of Islam credited wahi (Divine Inspiration) to one of the Apostle Paul's writings: "Abu Huraira told that after God's messenger had stated that **God most high** has said, "I have prepared for my upright servants what eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of man," he added, "Recite, if you wish, 'No soul knows what comfort has been concealed for them'." (Bukhari and Muslim)

This is close to what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:9, a book that is part of today's New Testament: 'But as it is written,

"Woe to you Jews! What has induced you to abandon the judgment of God which you hold in your hands?" They answered: "The sentence used to be carried out until a man of royal birth and noble origin committed adultery and the King refused to allow him to be stoned. Later another man committed adultery and the king wanted him to be stoned but they said No, not until you stone so-and-so. And when they said that to him they agreed to arrange the matter by tajbih and they did away with all mention of stoning." The apostle said: "I am the first to revive the order of God and His book and to practice it." They were duly stoned ...³³

Furthermore, the phrase about changing the word from its right places confirms the Torah that was available at that time to have been correct. To know the difference between right and wrong words of God presupposes to have the right version in one's possession. Hence the Jews only changed the wording of it when dealing with Muslims or Muhammad.

3. Surah 2, Al Baqarah, verses 75-85

Here is what Ibn Ishaq, the earliest biographer of Muhammad had to say about the passage:

Verse 75: "who listen to the word of God ... the Torah" [refers to the event mentioned in verse 55 where some Jewish leaders told Moses they wanted to hear God when He spoke to him. Moses took them up on to the mountain and they heard and understood God's voice]. Then he went back with them to the Children of Israel and when he came to them **a party of them changed the commandments they had been given**; and when Moses said to the Children of Israel, 'God has ordered you to do so and so,' they contradicted him and said

NO LETTER IN THEM WAS REMOVED. However, the people misguide others by addition and false interpretation, relying on books that they wrote themselves." Then, *they say*: "*This is from Allah, but it is not from Allah; As for Allah's books, THEY ARE STILL PRESERVED AND CANNOT BE CHANGED.*" Ibn Abi Hatim recorded this statement...³²

2. Surah 5, Al Ma'idah, verse 13

'But because of their breach of their Covenant, We cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard: They change the words from their (right) places and forget a good part of the Message that was sent...

The meaning of the phrase, 'They change the words from their (right) places,' occurs also in Surah 5:41 and is explained by Ibn Ishaq:

‘[A Jewish couple were caught in adultery. Some rabbis sent them and other Jews to Muhammad saying, if he prescribes *tajbih* (a lesser form of punishment) he is a king and follow him, but if he prescribes stoning he is a prophet. The apostle then went to the rabbis and asked them to bring out their learned men. He then asked] Abdullah b. Suriya, ... the most learned man living in the Torah ... as to whether the Torah did not prescribe stoning for adulterers. "Yes," he said, Then he [Muhammad] said: "They change words from their places, saying, If this be given to you receive it, and if it is not given to you, i.e. the stoning, beware of it, ..."

When the apostle gave judgment about them he asked for a Torah. **A rabbi sat there reading it having put his hand over the verse of stoning.** `Abdullah b. Salam struck the rabbi's hand, saying, "This, O prophet of God, is the verse of stoning which he refuses to read to you." The apostle said,

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.'

Christian theologian B.B. Warfield sums up the whole topic under discussion well when he writes: "The earliest name given to this new section of Scripture was framed on the model of the name by which what we know as the Old Testament was then known. Just as it was called "The Law and the Prophets and the Psalms" (or "the Hagiographa"), or more briefly "The Law and the Prophets," or even more briefly still "The Law"; so the enlarged Bible was called "The Law and the Prophets, with The Gospels and the Apostles" (so Clement of Alexandria, "Strom." vi. 11, 88; Tertullian, "De Præs. Hær." 36), or most briefly "**The Law and the Gospel**" (so Claudius Apolinaris, Irenæus); while the new books apart were called "The Gospel and the Apostles," or most briefly of all "**The Gospel.**" This earliest name for the new Bible, with all that it involves as to its relation to the old and briefer Bible, is traceable as far back as Ignatius (A.D. 115), who makes use of it repeatedly (e.g., "ad Philad." 5; "ad Smyrn." 7).²¹

Have the Tawrat, Zabur and Injil been corrupted?

If a corruption of the texts had occurred one needs to ask the questions, '**when should it have happened, how and by whom? What exactly has been distorted and why?**' There must be a reason behind such a deception. What would be the advantage or benefit from it? Muslims best look up their Quran to find out what it says about such serious charges.

1. Surah 2, Al Bagaraah, verses 41-42, 44:

And believe in what I have sent down [= the Qur'ān], confirming

what is with you [= the *Tawrāt* (Torah) and the *Injīl* (Gospel)], and do not be the first to disbelieve in it, and do not buy with **My Verses** [= the *Tawrāt* (Torah) and the *Injīl* (Gospel)] a small price, and fear Me and Me Alone. And do not clothe **the truth** with falsehood, or hide **the truth** – and you know.... Do you order the people in righteousness and you yourselves forget? And are you **reciters of the Book**? Do you not understand?

According to *Tafsīr at-Tabarī*, “what is with you” is the *Tawrāt* [Torah] and the *Injīl* [Gospel].²²

“What is with you” is described as “My Verses”, the ones of Allāh Himself. It is not possible that the *Qur’ān* could be confirming as God’s Word (“My Verses”) a text which has been changed. Neither is it possible to hide the truth if one does not have it any longer, or to recite books they allegedly no longer have.

Ibn Isaaq, the earliest biographer of Muhammad comments on Verse 44: ‘... do not conceal the knowledge which you have about my apostle and what he has brought you when you will find it with you in what you know of **the books which are in your hands** would you forbid men to disbelieve in **the prophecy you have** ... you contradict what **you know to be in My book**.’²³

2. Surah 10, Yunus, verse 94:

'And if thou wert in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the book from before thee..'

‘Those who have been reading, ‘the book from before thee’ are

DOES QURAN SAY THE BIBLE HAS CHANGED?

The Quran nowhere explicitly states the Injil (Gospel) was changed! What about the Tawrat? History shows that whenever God revealed Himself, most of His people fell into disobedience after a period of time. So it was with the Jews. In spite of this sad fact states **there were always good Jews who remain true to the book God gave them:**

'Of the people of Moses there is a section who guide and do justice in the light of truth.'
God's word is truth and good Jews surely would never have changed the meaning or even the words of their Holy Book!
(*Surah 7, Al A'raf, verse 159*)

1. Surah 3, Ali 'Imran, verse 78

'There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues: (as they read) you would think it is a part of the Book, but it is no part of the Book; and they say, 'That is from Allah,' but it is not from Allah: It is they who tell a lie against Allah...'

In the verse quoted above the Jews are reading parts of their Book wrongly while **the written words remain unchanged**. This is confirmed by the Tafsir of Ibn Kathir:

‘Al-Bukhari reported that Ibn 'Abbas said that the *Ayah* means they alter and add **although none among Allah's creation CAN REMOVE THE WORDS OF ALLAH FROM HIS BOOKS, THEY ALTER AND DISTORT THEIR APPARENT MEANINGS**. Wahb bin Munabbih said, "**The Tawrah and Injil REMAIN AS ALLAH REVEALED THEM, AND**

8. Surah 10, Junus, verse 64

'No change can there be in the Words of Allah. This is indeed the supreme Felicity.'

Since the **Tawrat and the Injil are words of Allah** it is impossible for man to change them. God has the power to watch over His word and to preserve it.

9. Surah 2, Al Bagaraah, verse 1:

That is the book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, those who fear Allah.

The usual translation "This is the book,..." is wrong. The pronoun, 'dhālika' in Arabic points to a thing in some distance, not at hands. Consequently the Koran does not refer to itself, but to a book that came before it. That is the Bible.

WHAT ABOUT 'TAHRIF'?

The Arabic word used by Muslim scholars to describe the supposed corruption of the sacred Scriptures is 'Tahrif'. A distinction is made by them between a corruption of meaning or of words. All the most celebrated among the earliest commentators on the Quran speak only about the first corruption of meaning.³⁰ Contrary to these authorities modern Muslim commentators hold the view that only parts of the Bible remained unchanged. Faith is only put in those statements which are supposed to confirm one's own opinions. Some Jews did the same in the days of Muhammad. They were condemned for doing so.³¹ There is no reason why that judgement for such a view should not apply anymore today.

Jews and Christians! It would make no sense for Allah to command doubters to ask people for guidance whose Scriptures had been corrupted! Several verses in the Quran bear witness to the truth that **the Tawrat was unchanged at the time of Hazrat Isa.**²⁴

Numerous verses attest to the truth that **the Tawrat was uncorrupted in the time of Muhammad, the sixth century AD.**²⁵ The Arabic phrase 'bain yadaihi' which is used in these references to the Torah literally means 'between his hands.' This usually is an idiom for 'in his possession,' or 'at his disposal'. Some Jewish contemporaries of Muhammad are called 'those who guide and do justice in the light of truth,' besides many others whose reputation was not so favourable.²⁶ The very fact that they were commended so highly shows that they were in possession of the uncorrupted Torah.

3. Surah 3, Ali 'Imran, verse 93:

'...Say, 'Bring ye the Law and study it, if ye be men of truth.'

In this specific incident **the Jews are asked to bring their own Law, the Tawrat. They are commanded by God to study it in order to find the right answer to a particular question.**

4. Surah 5, Al Ma'idah, verse 43:

'But why do they come to thee for decision, when they have (their own) Law before them? -Therein is the (plain) command of Allah;....

Maududi comments on this verse: '...sometimes, when their

own law did not suit them, they would take their cases to the Holy Prophet in the hope that they might obtain a more favourable decree from him than they could from their own law.¹²⁷

This shows clearly that even corrupted Jews would never change the written Tawrat! They were only prepared to conceal the meaning of it. In spite of their wickedness, they did not dare to change the written form of the Tawrat! That is why, according to the Quran, Allah told them to look up their own law in which is the plain command of God!

5. Surah 5, Al Ma'idah, verse 47

'Let the People of the Gospel judge by what Allah hath revealed therein. If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) those who rebel.'

This command is given to Muhammad's contemporaries. It is written in the 'present' tense which in the Arabic language can also refer to the future! If the Gospel (Injil) was corrupted at that time then surely Allah would never have asked the people of the Gospel, the Christians, to believe in it!

How can the "People of the *Injīl*" be expected to "judge" by what Allāh had revealed in it if it had been changed before the provision of the *Qur'ān*?

Some might argue that only *some* of the *Injīl* is God's Word, but not all of it. However, this would still make it impossible for people to "judge" by it because they would not know *which* parts provide a reliable basis for judgment.

Ibn Ishaq tells us, that the prophet of Islam was delighted that

he abided by the Torah in making his decision when the Jews did not: "I am the first to revive the order of God and His Book and to practice it" ²⁸

6. Surah 5, Al Ma'idah, verse 69:

'If only they had stood fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that was sent to them from their Lord, they would have enjoyed happiness from every side. There is from among them a party on the right course...'

Ibn Ishaq comments: [Four Jews came to Muhammad and said]: "Do you not allege that you follow the religion of Abraham and believe in the Torah which we have and testify that it is the truth from God?" He replied, "Certainly, but you have sinned and broken the covenant contained therein and concealed what you were ordered to make plain to men, and I dissociate myself from your sin." They said, "We hold by what we have. We live according to the guidance and the truth and we do not believe in you and we will not follow you." So God sent down concerning them: "Say, O scripture folk, you have no standing until you observe the Torah and the Gospel and what has been sent down to you from your Lord"²⁹

Furthermore, the fact that there were Jews and Christians 'on the right course' in Muhammad's time confirms the Torah and the Gospel to be unchanged in the 6th century AD! Certainly, they could never have been described in such an honourable way if they had 'stood fast' by corrupted Holy Books!

7. Surah 5, Al Ma'idah, verse 68

'Say: O People of the Book! Ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Law, the Gospel and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord...'