Notes and Responses related to the Noble Quran

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The Introduction:

I wrote an Arabic book (36# in the library site) with the title: Issues in the allegations of the Orientalists. This article is just a brief translation of some of its main topics.

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1# Textual Contradictions vs Understanding Contradictions:

Contradiction happens when two clear-cut statements cannot both be true.

However, the word "clear-cut" is not really clear; I might see a statement as clear-cut while others not. So, I am going here to breakdown contradictions into two: "textual contradictions" and "understanding contradictions".

"Textual contradictions" are much "closer" to certainty as the contradictions are in the text, while "understanding contradictions" are "probably" a bit far from certainty as they depend on the interpretations.

For example: a statement in a report says: the project finished in 6 days. Another statement in this exact report says: the project finished in 8 days. There is here a clear "textual contradiction".

However, if the second statement says: there were three phases in this project: the first took 2 days the second took 2 days and the third took 4 days, then there is no "textual contradiction" here, but there is an "understanding contradiction": We "interpret" the second statement to be 8 days in total which contradict with the first statement. But if we realized that the second and third phases were conducted in parallel then the project took 6 days in total.

Textual contradictions are almost like mathematics: we can clearly agree if the contradiction is in the text or in the interpretation. Furthermore, textual contradictions in any book are limited. Understanding contradictions (that are identified based on objective and homeworking efforts) are fluctuated (up and down) due to the new emergent understandings through time.

However, if some people really hated a book and they based their conclusions on non-objective non-homeworking efforts then the textual contradictions will continue to be limited but their highlighted "understanding contradictions" for this book will become "infinite" as this type of contradictions have a subjective element in it.

My understanding is that there are no textual contradictions in the Quran. The contradictions in the internet are "understanding contradictions", and most of it are based on non-homeworking non-academic efforts as most of these contradictions have been discussed and reconciled 1200 years ago in the main Quranic commentary books.

However, new objective "understanding contradictions" will continue to appear due to the new understandings that will continue to emerge through time, and as in the past, there will continue to be efforts to reconcile them.

However, understanding contradictions do have a subjective element in it, while textual contradictions don't. Another name for the "understanding contradiction" is the "interpretation difference", as the difference might likely be within the interpretation itself.

Just to give a comparison: There are many "textual contradictions" in the "New Testament" and the "Old Testament", along with many other "understanding

contradictions". But still, the main contradictions that are highlighted in the literature are the "textual contradictions". However, I am claiming here that: there are no "textual contradictions" in the Quran, and all the highlighted contradictions in the literature are "understanding contradictions", which most of them are very subjective.

2# A response to the claim that Uthman burned the Quran:

One of the arguments against the Quran is the issue of Uthman (the third Islamic ruler) burning the Quran.

But Uthman wasn't a dictator and he didn't burn people on the stick to enforce his opinions or decisions. This should let us ask how the people accepted his decision of burning the Quran! But the fact is that he didn't burn the Quran; because the Quran is an <u>oral recited book</u>.

However, each Arabian tribe at that time wrote in different spelling scripts, exactly the same for some different spellings between the UK and the USA. But the reciting is still the same. Note that the Arabian Peninsula (and the middle-east) were never united by its own people for the past 6000 years (at least), therefore, there were differences between different tribes.

Many people noticed the problem for writing the Quran with different spelling scripts (and not just only Uthman), and they decided to standardize the "spellings". So, it wasn't about burning the Quran; because the Quran is an oral recited book. The burning was for the copies of the written Quran that didn't follow the standardized spelling script.

3# A response to the claim of multiple versions of the Quran:

There is a claim that there are multiple versions of the Quran, and the Quran is not just one single book. This claim is half the truth, and we will clarify this subject here.

There are about 10 versions (i.e. readings or recitations) of the Quran. The most famous are two: The Aasim reading (which is the dominant reading in the middle east) and Nafia' reading (which is the dominant reading in north Africa). There are differences between all of these readings, but these differences don't exceed 2000 words. These differences are not news, they were well known to the ancient Muslims scholars, and they have spoken about it. All of these differences are complementary and not contradictory (as we will discuss later). As there are 77,437 words in the Quran, therefore, the differences here <u>are less than 3%</u>.

Now ... the Sana'a manuscript (which is one of the oldest Quranic manuscripts) contains two manuscripts: the old erased manuscript, and the new one which was written at the top of the old one. With current technology, Scholars were able to read the old manuscript. Both of these two manuscripts (the old and new) are very old, and both of them can be dated to less than about 100 years after the death of the Prophet.

Looking at the old Sana'a manuscript and according to the study of Sadeghi & Goudarzi, they are 60 points of differences between the old manuscript and Aasim reading.

Reference: Behnam Sadeghi and Mohsen Goudarzi, San'ā' and the Origins of the Qur'ān (2012) Der Islam Bd. 87, S. 1–129. Walter de Gruyter.

It should be noted that Aasim reading has been regarded here as a reference for counting differences, not because it is the best reading, but because it is the most widely recognized.

Most of the 60 points contain only one-word difference, some of the points contain two words differences, and in few occasions, the point might contain three words differences.

To be in the safe side, we decided to regard all points to have 3 words differences. Therefore, there are 180 words differences with Aasim reading. The readable text in the old manuscript has about 10,259 words. Therefore, there are about 1.75% differences, which is much less than the previous estimate of 3% differences.

Also, the differences between the new Sana'a manuscript with Aasim reading are very minimal. Furthermore, the differences between the Birmingham manuscript (which is probably the oldest Quranic manuscript available) and Aasim reading is also very minimal.

All of these differences are complementary and not contradictory. Just to give a comparison here:

> There are many ancient manuscripts of the New Testament that have been recovered, and there are about 400,000 differences between them.
>
> > Reference: Wallace, Daniel, Aren't there 400,000 Variants or Errors in the New Testament? (I), Ehrman Project, https://ehrmanproject.com/arent-there-400000-variants-or-errors-in-the-new-testament-i
>
> This raised the well-known comment that there are differences in the New Testament that are more than the number of words in it (which is about 179,000 words). most of these differences are insignificant. This would include scriber errors, different words with equivalent meanings, missing words that doesn't change the meaning, etc. But there are few differences that are serious, contradictory and very significant.

However, what we have in the "so-called" versions of the Quran is less than 3% differences, and these differences are complementary and not contradictory.

Therefore, we can say from the Scientific Historical Perspective that 100% of the meaning of the Quran is preserved, along with 97% of its exact wording. Therefore, we can say that the Quran has been preserved.

From the Islamic Metaphysical Perspective, all the words in the Quran has been preserved as per Quran 15:9 (translated by quran.com):

> It is certainly We Who have revealed the Reminder, and it is certainly We Who will preserve it.

It should be noted here that "the Reminder" is one of the recognized names of the Quran.

Therefore, Muslims believe (according to this verse) that all words in the Quran are preserved. Therefore, the 3% differences are legitimate.

But returning back to the Scientific Historical Perspective, 100% of the meaning of the Quran is preserved with 97% of its exact wording.

It should be noted that Muslims expanded through the continents and there were many civil wars between them, but still, the Quran continued to be preserved until today. Therefore, we can conclude that the Quran originated from one source.

According to the "Chain Oral Tradition" of the Muslims, this source is Muhammed (which he obtained it from God according to the Muslims). So, the difference between the believers and non-believers should be related to one question: From where did Muhammed get the Quran?

> This is actually a vital question: Muhammed was very busy building his State. He managed in 15 years from the starting point of this state in Yathrib (10 years by his efforts and 5 years by the efforts of his companions) to expand miraculously to the mainland of the Middle East. It should be noted that the Arabs in Hijaz (which includes Mecca and Yathrib) have never been united and have never been controlled for the past 6000 years (at least). The people of Hijaz know nothing about large-state management, large-state warfare, large-state laws, large-state social orders, etc. The people of Hijaz were just Arab tribes that were never united in the past.

> Nonetheless, Muhammed in 10 years managed to create a strong State and a strong nation starting from these people in Hijaz, and this nation still exist and still alive after 1400 years from the death of Muhammed. This is an extraordinary historical phenomenon that never happened before Muhammed and never happened after him.

> So, this extraordinary phenomenon can support the extraordinary claim of Muhammed that he is a prophet from God and the Quran is the word of God.

4# The four composing challenges in the Quran:

There are four composing challenges and one statement in the Quran:

The challenges are in two groups.

A# The first group contains three challenges that were given in different times:

- Quran 52:33-34 (translated by quran.com):
    > Or do they say, "He made this ˹Quran˺ up!"? In fact, they have no faith (33) Let them then produce something like it, if what they say is true (34).

- Quran 11:13 (translated by quran.com):

> Or do they say, "He has fabricated this ˹Quran˺!"? Say, ˹O Prophet,˺ "Produce ten fabricated <u>sûrahs</u> like it and seek help from whoever you can—other than Allah—if what you say is true!"

- Quran 10:38 (translated by quran.com):
  > Or do they claim, "He made it up!"? Tell them ˹O Prophet˺, "Produce one <u>sûrah</u> like it then, and seek help from whoever you can—other than Allah—if what you say is true!"

[Note that "Surah" means "Chapter"]

B# The second group contains one challenge:

- Quran 2:23 (translated by quran.com):
  > And if you are in doubt about what We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a <u>sûrah</u> like it and call your helpers other than Allah, if what you say is true.

C# The statement (which is not a challenge):

- Quran 17:88 (translated by quran.com):
  > Say, ˹O Prophet,˺ "If ˹all˺ humans and jinn were to come together to produce the equivalent of this Quran, they could not produce its equal, no matter how they supported each other."

The 3 challenges (i.e. A#) were only given to the Meccans (the people of Mecca). The 4th challenge (i.e. B#) was only given to the Yathribans (The people of Yathrib which became the city of Medina). These challenges were not given to the general Arabs, neither to the Jews, nor to the Christians, etc.

How do we know that?

Any challenge needs to have 4 elements:

- The one who challenge (i.e. the challenger, and we will call this one "Alpha")
- The one who is challenged (i.e. the challenged, and we will call this one "Beta").
- The challenge itself.
- Either a set of clear specifications about the challenge that could clarify if Beta was successful in meeting the challenge, or an accepted judge (or a panel of judges) that can decide if Beta was successful.

If we look at the 4 Quranic challenges (i.e. A# & B#) then God is the one who put the challenge, Beta are some people that we will define later. The challenge was to compose something similar to the Quran, <u>but there are no specifications and there are no judges</u>.

In this case, Alpha cannot be <u>the challenger and the judge</u> at the same time. Therefore, the judges here are the people who have been challenged. This is the reason that <u>Beta here cannot be all the people all the time</u>, but they need to be specific people at specific time.

So, God challenged the Meccans to compose something like the Quran and he let them be the Judges here.

But, how could this be? Why the Meccans couldn't just compose something and claim that this is exactly as the Quran?

The Meccans did have some clear set of morals that were essential to their trade: The Arab tribes were in constant clashes between themselves, however the Meccans managed by diplomacy to have good peace accords with most of the Arab tribes. This allowed them to pass unhindered through the territory of the Arabian tribes, and this substantially helped the Meccans in their trade. These peace accords started about 120 years before the Quran. So, during these 120 years, the Meccans formed some clear moral codes to enforce their position within the Arabian tribes. Among these moral codes were seriousness in their discussions, and faithfulness to their promises. These moral codes were essential for supporting their free passing trade.

So, it wasn't easy for the prominent Meccan figures to act childishly or to be caught in a clear lie.

This probably the main reason that God let the Meccans be the Judges in these challenges. But even if some of them acted childishly and claimed that they are able to compose something like the Quran, still, Muhammed was alive, and he would be able to show how wrong these people were. So, letting the Meccans to be the Judges in these 3 challenges wasn't a risk; it was under control.

However, the Meccans did convert to Islam at the end, and <u>Muhammed died</u> after establishing his state. These all are the reasons to conclude that these challenges were not for all the people all the time, but they were for specific people at specific time.

The last challenge (i.e. B#) was given to the Yathribans. At that time, the most prominent people in Yathrib did convert to Islam. However, there were some people that were still in doubt. So, this verse (i.e. B#) came for them. As in the previous challenges, there was no risk for letting the Yathribans themselves to be the judges; because if some of them start to act childishly then many will confront them. Also (as a last resort), Muhammed was still alive, and he can clearly show how wrong these people were.

However, from the "Chain Oral Tradition" (which we will discuss later), no one from the Meccans or Yathribans did ever claim that he could compose something like the Quran, and all the Meccans and Yathribans have converted later to Islam. Therefore, these challenges have been given and they haven't been met, and all "the challenged" have converted later to Islam. Therefore, these challenges are no longer on the table, especially after the death of the Prophet.

Notice here that Muhammed started alone, and he built the state by the people who followed him and fought and died for this religion. So, credibility was vital to Muhammed success. Therefore, if the Meccans and Yathribans (and any Arabs who were able to help them) were able to create something like the Quran, then this would have a serious negative effect on Muhammed ... But this didn't happen.

Now .... the only thing that is still on the table is the C# statement (i.e. Quran 17:88), which says that no one will ever be able to bring something like the Quran. This is a statement, not a challenge.

However, there are some questions that people might ask, which we will cover them here:

4.1# How the Meccans couldn't be able to produce something like the Quran?

<u>The Answer</u>: Let us imagine the following theoretical scenario:

The Rap songs started about 1970AD. As in any skill and talent, it started immature and went into a specific learning curve until it became mature about 2000AD.

Let us select the best Rap singer ever, and let us call him Z. Let us suppose that there was a man named Y born in 1900AD for a famous musical family, and somehow he was very talented in Rap songs (which was completely unknow at the time), and his skills were equivalent to Z or even much better (<u>note that we are just establishing a theoretical scenario</u>).

Therefore, we can conclude that: no one at the time of Y will be able to match him in this talent; because the ability to match him requires passing the needed learning curve, which requires time. So, we can say that: no one will be able to match Y for a long time.

This might be a proper <u>theoretical</u> analogy to try and explain how the Meccans couldn't match the Quran: The Quran was a very impressive new style of literature that the Arabs never seen before. Therefore (at least from a theoretical perspective), they wouldn't be able to match it without passing the needed learning curve, which would require sufficient time.

So, the question here would be: can the people today (after more than 1400 years) be able to match the Quran?

The answer is <u>NO</u>; because there are some elements in the Quran that were not known before, and they cannot be matched, which are the "Miracles in the Quran".

> [I truly don't like the phrase "Miracles in the Quran" as the word "miracle" does imply (in Arabic at least) a challenge, and these "miracles" are not implying any challenges. It seems to me that the best phrase would be "the Wonders in the Quran" because it would create the feeling of wonder].

There are plenty of sites in the internet and many books speaking about these Miracles. Some of them might be exaggerated but most are very accurate and impressive.

These Miracles (Wonders) cannot be matched. Therefore, no one will be able to match the Quran as it was stated in the C# statement.

But let us rephrase the previous question and ask: if we can put the Miracles of the Quran aside, and just focus on the literature as though we are dealing with the same

situation that the Meccans were challenged with. Then can someone today compose something similar to the Quran in regard to the literature only?

<u>The Answer:</u> From a theoretical perspective it is possible, but I truly don't know. What I truly know is that the 4 challenges have been set and no one was able to fulfill them, and the people who have been challenged have all converted later to Islam. These challenges are no longer on the table as it was given to specific people at specific time. The only thing that we have today is the C# statement, which state that no one will be able to compose something like the Quran, and we know that this statement is accurate for many reasons including the Miracles (Wonders) in the Quran that could not be matched.

4.2# The third challenge (in Quran 10:38) was about composing one surah (chapter) similar to the Quran. However, there is a chapter in the Quran that is very short: 3 verses with only 13 words in total. So, a question might arise: how the Meccans couldn't be able to compose a chapter similar to this 13 words in the Quran?

We need to consider the logic of context (i.e. the contextual logic).

For example:

> A manager wants to sign a contract. As he is about to do so, he found that his pen is not working. So, he asked his assistant to bring him a pen.

> Now .... the manager request is general, but from the context of this event, the assistant should know that the manager doesn't want a red pen or a yellow pen or a green pen. The manager wants a pen that is suitable for signing contracts.

The conclusion of the assistant here is based on the "contextual logic", which is the logic that is derived from the context of the event or from the context of the background.

So, let us have another example: suppose we have a team and one of them (Peter) said that he is better than Picasso. So, the team asked him to prove it. So, he brought his best drawing and compared with the simplest drawing for Picasso.

I would assume here that this team will accuse Peter to be childish, because this is not the way for proving equality or surpassing. To do so, Peter need to compare his best drawing with a drawing for Picasso that people think it is the best.

This is similar to the objection in the question: The challenge was to compose a chapter similar to the Quran, but by the contextual logic: Meccans cannot just take the simplest chapter and say: yes we have composed something similar to the Quran; that would be childish. The serious attempt is to compose a chapter that is similar to a chapter in the Quran that the people think it is the best.

As we have said before, the Meccans over the past 120 years have formed clear moral codes that were essential to sustain their trade. One of these morals is to be serious and not to act childishly.

5# The general methodology for analyzing metaphysical subjects:

5.1# This section has been taken from a previous article (#54.02), and we included it here with slight modification as it is related to the current article.

I do have two clear approaches when analyzing a metaphysical subject:

- The metaphysical analysis of the texts in the scripture (Quran and Hadith) related to the subject.
- The scientific analysis of this subject.

Now ... the gap between the two approaches can be very valuable as it might draw the attention to some textual different meanings in the first approach, or it might draw the attention to some hidden areas in the second approach.

By the definition of "Scientific Method", no metaphysical input is allowed to enter the "scientific analysis". However, the "scientific conclusions" can be used as inputs in the "metaphysical analysis". For example, if there are many legitimate interpretations to a metaphysical text, then the scientific conclusion can support one interpretation over the other.

Now ... there are some gaps between the two approaches that are acceptable to us. For example, if there is a clear-expressed miracle in the approved metaphysical text then this will be an accepted gap between the metaphysics and science. However, if the miracle is not clearly expressed or there are some illogical issues then the gap needs to be resolved.

Therefore, the only accepted gaps between the metaphysics and science are those that have clear expressed information. All other gaps need to be resolved.

For example, parting the sea for Moses is clearly expressed in the Quran, therefore, it is accepted by the Muslims. But the way that Moses managed to protect himself from the Pharaoh is not clearly expressed, therefore, we cannot just invent or assume a miracle for that, and we need to find here a logical explanation.

Also, there are some gaps between the metaphysics and science that are due to insufficient information. Some of them might never be resolved; as the metaphysical texts aren't in details and science doesn't have all the data. But if the gap between them is shrinking overtime then this would be satisfactory.

So, in a nutshell, creating a pure scientific model for the metaphysical event is necessary (even if it wasn't acceptable) as it can act like a gap gauge to warn us if we went too far in our metaphysical conclusions.

Furthermore, creating pure scientific models for the metaphysical events can be a good starting point for discussion between different theological parties.

Now ... History cannot be put into testing and experimentation; therefore, it cannot be analyzed scientifically. But we can use "Science" as a filter for historical records: If a historical record contradicts with the scientific laws of nature then we can reject this record for the analysis of the second approach.

I would like here to stress that I am not content with the academic definition of "History". "History" is an ancient word that existed before academia. Metaphysical understandings have been part of the recorded history of almost every civilization. I don't think it is really right for the Academics in the 20/21th century to take the word "History" from the standard dictionary and redefine it according to their views.

However, this matter can be resolved by adding one word: "Scientific History". So, history should include all data related to an event (Metaphysical or none-Metaphysical), while "Scientific History" is a special branch of history that only deals with none-Metaphysical data.

Now .... "Scientific History" might be a meaningless combination of words, so let us define it. "Scientific History" is a special branch of history in which we only select records that don't contradict with the scientific laws of nature. Then these selected records will be under robust historical analysis to determine their level of accuracy.

In this regard, the body of knowledge that historians refer to as "The Historical Jesus" should actually be "The Scientific Historical Jesus", which means: the history of Jesus based only on records that don't contradict with the scientific laws of nature.

I do acknowledge that adding words in names is a bit problematic. However, this subject is sensitive to many religious people as many of them regard the metaphysics as an integral part of the history of Jesus. Therefore, clarity is more important here than the number of words in the name.

So, my methodology for analyzing a metaphysical event in history can be summarized as follows:

- Conduct the metaphysical analysis based on the approved metaphysical text (i.e. Quran and Hadith) related to the event in question.
- Conduct the scientific historical analysis for this event.
- Identify the gaps between the previous two analyses and analyze them to form the overall metaphysical conclusion.

5.2# There are many differences between the Quranic metaphysics and Science. These are not textual contradictions, but it can be grouped under the "understanding contractions" (i.e. interpretation differences); as the interpretation of the Quranic text is not certain and the scientific conclusions are also not certain.

However, we have used the above methodology (in 5.1#) to provide many propositions for reconciling the Science with the Quranic metaphysics, or (at least) to reduce the gap between them. Some of these propositions have been written in English as the following articles:

5.2.1# A proposed suggestion that Ramesses VI (died 1136 BC) is the pharaoh of the exodus, and Ramesses III (died 1155 BC) is the pharaoh of the oppression (article #55 in the library site).

This article aligns Quran 26:52-59 with the historical records to conclude the proposition in the above title.

<u>5.2.2#</u> Reducing the gap between the Quranic Metaphysics and Science regarding the 6 days creation (article #56 in the library site).

This article aligns Quran 71:15-16 to conclude that the 6 days creation in the Quran is not about the Universe and it is not related to the "big bang" event. It is about the creation of Earth and the atmosphere. The day (in the 6 days creation) doesn't necessary means 24 atomic-clock hours. It means: the rotation of Earth around itself relative to the sun, and we can say that this rotation at the start of the creation of Earth was very slow.

<u>5.2.3#</u> Reducing the gap between the Quranic Metaphysics and Science regarding the Origin of Humans (article #57 in the library site).

In this article, we assured that there are no Quranic verses that reject the notion that elephants and rats descended from a shared common ancestor. The only objection in the Quran is related to Humans; as it is clearly mentioned in the Quran that the first human was created from mud. However, Humans are one among one billion species, therefore, the gap between the Quranic metaphysics and the theory of evolution is just "<u>one over billion</u>".

However, we tried to further reduce this gap by aligning the Quranic verse 2:30 with the current scientific data. This provided the following hypothesis:

Homo-Erectus descended from apes. However, their mental abilities have developed much faster that their humanity. Therefore, they started to become a serious threat to the living creatures around them. Therefore, they were wiped from the three continents about 300,000 years ago. After about 150,000 years from this event, God created from mud a successor (Kha-lee-fa) for the Homo-Erectus with a DNA almost identical to the Homo-Erectus, but with 4 main differences in the Skull, and the abstract thinking.

6# Clarifying some of the "understanding contradictions" in the Quran:

6.1# In Quran 10:94 (translated by quran.com):

> If you ˹O Prophet˺ are in doubt <u>about ˹these stories˺ that We have revealed to you</u>, then ask <u>those who read the Scripture before you</u>. The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord, so do not be one of those who doubt.

> The translation here is based on interpretation. The words "<u>about these stories that We have revealed to you</u>" are not the direct translation, the direct translation word by word is: "about what we brought down to you".

There are no textual contradictions in this verse with any other verses in the Quran. But there might be some questions which could lead to the so-called "understanding contradictions", as: Was the Prophet in doubt? Has the Prophet been instructed to ask the Jews and Christens about Islam? Etc.

Now ... one of the Arabic styles in poems is to direct the talk toward someone but the intention is for someone else. This style can be seen today when the talk is directed to

the president of a country and the intention is actually toward the people of that country.

In the previous verse, the talk was directed toward the Prophet, but the intention was for some other people. The people here are the one who are convinced that Islam is the right faith, but they have the "last doubt" and they cannot do the "jump". The advice here for them is to speak with the Jews and Christians who converted to Islam.

This is understood by looking at the phrase "who read the Scripture before you". The Scripture (i.e. "the Book" in the Arabic Quranic text) is the Torah. The phrase "before you" does suggest that these people are no longer reading the Torah, which is a metaphoric expression that implies that these people became Muslims.

This advice can work for many other situations: If someone needs to make a sensitive surgery and many people have advised him to go for this specific qualified Surgent, and he is convinced that this Surgent is qualified, but he still has the "last doubt" and is unable to do the "jump", then the best approach to overcome this "last doubt" is to speak with other patients of this Surgent and ask them about him.

6.2# In Quran 5:47 (translated by quran.com):

> So let the people of the Gospel judge by what Allah has revealed in it. And those who do not judge by what Allah has revealed are ˹truly˺ the rebellious.

There are no textual contradictions in this verse with any other verses in the Quran, but there might be an "understanding contradiction" with Quran 3:85 (translated by quran.com):

> Whoever seeks a way other than Islam, it will never be accepted from them, and in the Hereafter they will be among the losers.

So, the last verse (3:85) can be interpreted as: people need to convert to Islam, while first verse (5:47) could be interpreted as: Christians need to follow the Gospels.

Therefore, we have here an "understanding contradiction (i.e. an interpretation difference).

However, this difference can be reconciled as follows: If the Christians are not convinced in Islam and there are saying that they believe in the Gospels, then they need to follow the Gospels, otherwise they will be hypocrites,, and in the Judgment-day they will be accountable for two things here: Rejecting Islam, and being hypocrite and disobedient to the things they said they believed in.

This is not only related to the Christians, but if some atheists say that they believe in democracy and human rights and they were hypocrite in these things, then they will be accountable in the judgment-day for two things here: rejecting Islam and being hypocrite of what they declared to be believing in.

This actually follow clear two verses in Quran 99:7-8 (translated by quran.com):

> So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it (7) And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it (8).

6.3# In Quran 5:43 (translated by quran.com):

> But why do they come to you for judgment when they ˹already˺ have the Torah <u>containing Allah's judgment</u>, then they turn away after all? They are not ˹true˺ believers.

Some have regarded this verse to be an evidence that the Torah is a legal authoritative book for the Muslims.

However, this claim is not clearly mentioned in the Quran, and it is not right to interpret a verse in the Quran that clearly contradict another verse. It is clearly mentioned in <u>Quran 5:48</u> that each nation (i.e. Jews, Christians, and Muslims) has their own laws and methods (translated by quran.com):

> .... To each of you We have ordained a code of law and a way of life ....

The interpretation of verse 5:43 is simple: The Jews regarded Muhammed to be a false prophet. Then they asked Muhammed to be a judge between them in a specific legal matter. This verse was criticizing their conduct: how did they ask Muhammed to judge between them (though they don't believe in him) and leave the Torah that they believed to be the book of God.

> [It is highly likely that this event happened before the Islamic expansion and control over the Jewish territories in Arabia].

Also, from a logical perspective: If we know that the author of a legal book is biased, and he did fabricate stories in the book, then this book couldn't be used as an authoritative reference. All Muslims regard the Torah to be originated from God, but they also regard that it has been corrupted over the years. And they don't know which verse is original and which is not. So, how could they use the Torah as a legal authoritative document!

Now ... Muslim historians did use the Torah and other Jewish books as sources for history, the same as they used the Greek and Persian books. But this is different than regarding the Torah to be a legal authoritative book.

It is useful here to discuss the Muslim's evidences for the corruption of the Torah:

- There are many similar stories in the Torah and the Quran, but most have many contradicting details. For example: the Quran clearly indicate that Aaron has nothing to do with making the golden calf, while the Torah put the responsibility of making the calf on Aaron. And there are many other contradicting details between similar stories in the Quran and the Torah. The Muslims regarded these similarities/differences to be an evidence that the Torah has been corrupted.

- Quran verse 2:79 has been regarded as an evidence for this matter (translated by quran.com):

> So woe1 to those who distort the Scripture with their own hands then say, "This is from Allah"—seeking a fleeting gain! So woe to them for

what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they have earned.

- Quran verse 4:46 has been understood to indicate either a corruption in the text or a corruption in the interpretation (translated by quran.com):

> Some Jews take words out of context and say, "We listen and we disobey," "Hear! May you never hear," and "Râ'ina!" [Herd us!]—playing with words and discrediting the faith. Had they said ˹courteously˺, "We hear and obey," "Listen to us," and "Unẕurna," [Tend to us!] it would have been better for them and more proper. Allah has condemned them for their disbelief, so they do not believe except for a few.

6.4# There is an objection from the Christians about the Gospels, which is an English translation of the Greek word "Εὐαγγέλιον", which pronounced as "Evangelion", which means in English the "Good Spells" (meaning the Good News), and it was later shortened to Gospels. The Evangelion is the origin of the Arabic word that is pronounced as "Enjeel".

The objection is that God didn't bring-down any book to Jesus, and all these Enjeel(s) (Gospels) are man-written books.

Now ... Most Muslims do believe that the Enjeel is a book that was brought-down to Jesus. But if we looked carefully, the Quranic verses never regarded the Enjeel to be a book!

This needs to be clarified: It is clearly mentioned in many verses in the Quran that the Torah is a book from God. It is also clearly mentioned in many verses in the Quran that the "Quran" is a book from God. But there is no verse in the Quran that describes the Enjeel to be a book from God. The Quran does say that the Enjeel was brough-down from God to Jesus, but there are no clarifications (similar to the Torah) about what the Enjeel is!

Most Muslims commentators thought that the Enjeel was a book. But that is not necessarily very accurate as there are no clarifications in the Quran about it.

My assumption is that the Enjeel was the "Wisdom and Knowledge" that were brought-down to Jesus at the start of his missionary. Probably Jesus did call this "wisdom and knowledge" the Evangelion (the good news), and some of this wisdom have been recorded in the Gospels. Note that Jesus probably did use many Greek words in his teaching; as Greek was widespread in Palestine at the time.

So, my assumption here is that the "wisdom" of Jesus has been named: the Evangelion. Then afterward, his followers managed to record some of this wisdom in their books, and they called it also the Evangelion. So, the Evangelion has two meanings: the "wisdom of Jesus" and the Gospels.

This is exactly how the Quran deals with the word "Enjeel":

In some verses, "Enjeel" means the "Wisdom and Knowledge" of Jesus. For example, Quran 3:3 (translated by quran.com):

> He has revealed to you ˹O Prophet˺ the Book in truth, confirming what came before it, as <u>He revealed the Torah and the Gospel</u>.

> The words underlined is an interpretation and they aren't the direct translation. The direct word by word translation: <u>he brought-down the Torah and the Enjeel</u>.

In other verses, "Enjeel" means the Christian Gospels. For example, Quran 7:157 (translated by quran.com):

> "˹They are˺ the ones who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whose description they find in their Torah and the <u>Gospel</u>.

So, my assumption here is as follows:

- There has been "wisdom and knowledge" that God brought-down to Jesus at the start of his missionary.
- This wisdom has been called (probably by Jesus) "the Evangelion", which was transformed into Arabic as the "Enjeel".
- People managed to record some of this wisdom in their books, and they also called these books "The Evangelion".
- Therefore, there are two meanings for the "Enjeel" in the Quran: the wisdom of Jesus and the Christian Gospels.

6.5# Quran 3:50 (translated by quran.com):

> And I will confirm the Torah revealed before me and <u>legalize some of what had been forbidden to you</u>. I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, so be mindful of Allah and obey me.

This verse state that Jesus wanted to relieve the Jews from some forbidden laws. So, the question here would be: what are these laws that Jesus relieved his followers from, and did Jesus break the laws of Moses?

We don't have any answer for these questions in the Quran, but we can find suitable answers in the Gospels: It is mentioned clearly in the Gospels (example: Mark 7:1) that the man-made laws of the "Pharisees" weren't from God, and it shouldn't be regarded from God, and these laws have nothing to do with the Laws of Moses. The Jewish followers of Jesus (which they called themselves the Nazarenes) did follow and obey the "Laws of Moses" to the letter but they didn't observe the man-made laws of the Pharisees.

> We need here to differentiate between two things: the tradition and the man-made laws. For example: there are no details in the Torah about how to do the circumcision, but this know-how knowledge has passed from one generation to the next, and this know-how is part of the tradition, and I don't think that the Nazarenes had a problem with it. The man-made laws are something different; To wash the hands in a specific structured way, or to have a specific

dress code are not part of the "Laws of Moses". The Pharisees decided that these laws should be enforced, and they regarded it to be equal to the Laws of Moses. This is the difference between the traditions that passed from one generation to the next, and the enforcement of the man-made laws.

7# The ignorance of the Western Scholars toward the "Chain Oral Tradition":

<u>Is it a professional act</u> from the "Western Scholars of Islamic Studies" to ignore the Islamic "Chain Oral Tradition" and to establish their conclusions without it!!

Most of the "Western Scholars of Islamic Studies" would highlight that Islamic stories have passed through "oral tradition", therefore, it is not reliable data. However, this is half the truth, and half the truth from Scholars are almost equal to dishonesty:

There are two types of Oral Tradition: Anonymous Oral Tradition (AOT) and Chain Oral Tradition (COT).

7.1# In the first type (Anonymous Oral Tradition) the stories are passed through the generations by anonymous sources. For example, you have a story of an event, and you probably remember who told you this story (let him be X), but you don't know who told X, and you don't know the sources between X to the original witness of this event.

Most historical events were documented through this type: So, we know the historians who wrote the stories of "Alexander the Great", but we don't know their sources, therefore, these stories depend on anonymous sources to us. The same is said for the history of the Greek, the Roman, the early Christians, etc.

7.2# In the second type (Chain Oral Tradition) the stories are passed through the generations by known sources up to the original witnesses. So, you have a story of an event, and you know who told you this story (let him be X), and you know who told X, and you know the chain of sources of this story between X to the original witness of this event.

The Muslims are probably the only civilization in history prior to 1900AD that large amount of their history (especially the ones that are related to the Prophet) have passed through this type of Oral Tradition. For example: In Al-Bukhari book you will find the narratives start with following structure:

> I have heard from A that B told him that C told him that D told him that he was a witness to an event.

We know Al-Bukhari, and we know A, B, C, and D. we know all of them, we know their parents, their teachers, where they born, and where they died. We know the opinion of the people about them. In a nutshell, we know them very well.

In the previous example, the event is regarded as the "Content" of this narrative, and chain of the narrative is the sources. Therefore, the chain here is: Al-Bukhari, A, B, C, and D.

Some events have only one single trusted chain. But there are many other events that have multiple unique trusted chains. These multiple trusted chains will highly increase the level of accuracy for these events.

So, this type of "oral tradition" is completely different than the normal standard type (i.e. the Anonymous Oral Tradition).

Now ... Islam is built on two foundations: the Quran and the Hadith. The hadith are the narratives (other than the Quran) that came from the Prophet. Anyone who want to study the hadith will start with studying the "Chain Oral Tradition" (in Arabic: **Al-Sanad**). This is the most important subject when studying the hadith; because the narrative that doesn't have a <u>trusted chain</u> will be rejected immediately (as we will be discussing in the next chapter).

This subject is so important that it is part of the curriculum in the elementary schools. Therefore, I have studied this subject (in brief format) when I was about 10 years old, in the elementary school.

So, the idea that the "Western Scholars of Islamic Studies" don't know about this subject is really bizarre, and their complete ignorance to this subject is really unprofessional. They should (at least) have acknowledged that the Muslims **claim** to have a special form of "Oral Tradition", then they should have studied this type of "oral tradition" to see if it can really provide accurate data. And then afterward, they can present their conclusions.

But for the "Western Scholars of Islamic Studies" to constantly claim that the Islamic stories have passed through "oral tradition", without clarifying the difference between the Islamic "chain oral tradition" and the "anonymous oral tradition" and to forward their conclusions with complete ignorance to this Islamic tradition, then I truly see this act to be unprofessional.

8# The Chain Analysis of the Hadith:

As we have mentioned in the previous chapter, Hadith are the narratives related to the Prophet, i.e. the saying (other than the Quran) of the Prophet. These narratives are analyzed through two sub-analyses: the chain (Sanad) analysis and the content analysis. If the hadith didn't pass the chain analysis, then the hadith will be rejected regardless of its content.

The rejection of the hadith means that we regard the Prophet didn't say this hadith, and it reached us by an error from one of the narrators in the chain.

For analyzing the chain in the hadith, we need to consider the following 4 entities: the Narrators, the Auditors, the Collectors, and the Investigators.

8.1# The Narrators:

Suppose you opened a book and the author of this book said that: he heard A that he heard B that he heard C that he heard D that he witnessed an event.

We can describe the following terminologies in this narrative:

- The described event in this narrative is the <u>Content</u>.
- The Author, A, B, C, and D are the <u>Narrators</u> in this narrative.
- These Narrators represent the "<u>Chain</u>" in this narrative.
- The Author of this book might be the <u>Auditor</u> or the <u>Collector</u>.

There is a clear classification for the Narrators, which we will summarize into the following 5 groups:

- Trusted, which means that the Narrator is regarded to have high level of morality with good strong memory.
- Accepted, which is lower than "Trusted", probably because the Narrator seems that he doesn't have a strong memory.
- Weak, which means that there are questions and concerns about the morality of the Narrator, or that the Narrator seems to have weak memory.
- Unknown, which means that the Narrator existed, but we know nothing about him.
- Rejected, which means that the Narrator has been regarded immoral.

Also, we can classify the status of a narrative as the following:

- The <u>Valid</u> Narrative (Saheeh), which means that all the Narrators are Trusted.

- The <u>Accepted</u> Narrative (Hasan), which means that this narrative is lower than "Valid"; because one or more of the Narrators are not Trusted but accepted.

- The <u>Rejected</u> Narrative, which means that the narrative is rejected because one (or more) of the Narrators is weak, unknown or rejected.

8.2# <u>The Auditors</u>:

The Auditors are trusted people who decided to collect the valid narratives (i.e. the narratives with trusted Narrators).

There are 7 well-recognized trusted Auditors who wrote 7 audited books with the collection of narratives that they thought they were Valid. These Auditors are Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu-Dawud, Ibn-Majah, Al-Nasā-ī, Al-Tirmidhi, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal.

Now, these books have been written after about 200 years from the death of the Prophet. However, it is wrong to say that these narratives haven't been written before; because many Narrators did write the narratives they hear. However, these writings were private notes. The first notes that were written as public books were the previous audited books.

Notice that it wasn't the job of the Auditors to do any <u>Content Analysis</u> to the narrative. Their job was to collect the narratives that are Valid. The Content Analysis was the job of the Law and Quranic Scholars.

8.3# The Collectors:

The Collectors are trusted people who decided to collect all the narratives regardless of its validity. There are many collected books available including "Al-Mu'jam" for Al-Tabarani, and "Kanz al-Ummal" for Al-Hindi.

As these Collectors didn't do any "Chain Analysis" to these narratives, then we can expect their collection to have huge amount of invalid (rejected) narratives. However, these collections (the valid and invalid ones) are very valuable from a historical perspective. But for Scripture interpretations and law making, then Scholars need to conduct the "Chain Analysis" for these narratives to make sure that they are valid.

8.4# The Investigators:

These are trusted people who investigated all known Narrators. So, every Auditor is an Investigator (as they investigate the status of the Narrator), but not every Investigator is an Auditor.

Now .... We might find a Narrator that is regarded to be trusted in the 7 audited books, but this Narrator might be regarded by later Investigators to be less than trusted for reasons that they would clarify in their judgment. This would be useful data when we need to reconcile between narratives.

8.5# The Classification of Trusted Narratives:

We already have clarified the classification of narratives as Trusted, Accepted or Rejected. However, there is also another classification for the "trusted narratives" in the audited books:

- Single-Chain Narratives:
  If the narrative has only one trusted chain, then it is called "Strange" (Ghareeb). But we will call it here "single-chain" narrative.

  As the Narrators in this chain are trusted then there is a good probability that the content in the narrative is accurate.

- Double-Chain Narratives:
  If the narrative has two trusted chains, then it is called "Honored" (A'zeez). But we will call it here "double-chain" narrative.

  A double-chain narrative means that we have an event with the following two chains:
  - A from B from C from D that he witnessed the event.
  - H from I from J From K that he witnessed the same exact event.

  As there are two separate trusted chains for this event then the probability of accuracy for this event will become much higher than the event in the single-chain narrative.

- Overflow Narratives:
  If the narrative has 3 to 7 trusted chains, then it is called "Overflow" (Mustafeedh).

- Numerous Narratives:

  If the narrative has more than 7 trusted chains, then it is called Numerous (Mutawater). Numerous narratives are regarded certain.

- Single-Sided Narratives:

  These narratives are somewhere between single-chain and double-chain. Let us see the following chains for an event:

  - A from B From C from D.
  - I from J from C from D.
  - Y from Z from C from D.

  So, the content (i.e. the event) passed by a "single chain" (D, C), then passed through multiple chains after C.

  Therefore, we have a narrative that starts as a single-chain then became a multiple-chain. These narratives can be called in Arabic (Khabar Aahad). But we will call it here single-sided narratives.

Notice in this section that we are only speaking about trusted narratives. If there are 100 chains for an event but the status for each chain is weak, then the narrative will continue to be weak regardless of the number of chains.

To repeat this again, this section only classifies the "Trusted Narratives" in the "audited books".

8.6# Ersal and Edlas in analyzing trusted chains:

Although the narrators in the 7 audited books are trusted, but there are two factors that won't affect the status of the Narrator, but it might have a negative effect on the narrative itself. These two factors are Ersal and Edlas.

Ersal (Er-Sal) happens when the Narrator fails to mention the person who he heard the narrative from. At the start of the Islamic civilization, some trusted Narrators didn't feel that it is very important to clarify the source of the narrative. These Narrators have been described with Ersal. This description will not affect the Narrator status, but it might negatively affect some of their narratives.

Edlas (Ed-las), which is a wrong word in regard to the Arabic standard structure. The right word in "the knowledge of Hadith" is "Tadlees", but this word might have an unintentional negative annotation to it. Therefore, I prefer to use the word "Edlas". Edlas happens when a teacher talks about some narratives, then at the middle of it, he interrupts the narratives to explain parts of it, then he returns back to the narratives. This style of teaching might confuse the students and they might unintentionally start mixing the narratives with some of the interrupted explanations.

This style of teaching doesn't affect the trust level of the teacher, but it might negatively affect some of their narratives.

8.7# <u>The level of Existence and the level of Clarity</u>:

Existence (Thuboot) & Clarity (Dalalah) are actually two main parameters that need to be analyzed for any data. For example: Suppose we have a witness account from "A" about an event.

Then the level of Existence of this account is about the probability of the account to be accurate, which means here: is "A" honest and did "A" really witnessed this event.

This probability can be classified into the following:

- Certain. Which means that "A" has certainly witnessed this event.
- Highly likely.
- Likely.
- Possible.
- unlikely.
- Highly unlikely.
- Impossible.

The level of clarity of this account is about the interpretations of this account, which can be classified into the following:

- Clear. Which means that the statement of "A" is clear, and it has only one interpretation.
- Multiple interpretations. Which means that the statement of "A" has multiple meanings.
- Ambiguous. Which means that the statement of "A" is not really clear, and we need extra information to determine the meaning of it.

Now ... the Quranic verses are regarded to be certain in its level of <u>existence</u> (see chapter 3 in this article). However, the Quranic verses can vary from clear to ambiguous.

For the level of <u>existence</u> for the hadith:
- The numerous trusted hadiths are regarded certain.
- Other trusted hadiths can vary from highly likely (as the overflow and double-chain) to likely (as the single-sided and single-chain).
- Non-trusted hadiths can vary from possible to impossible.

Also, the level of <u>clarity</u> for the <u>trusted hadiths</u> can vary from clear to ambiguous.

8.8# <u>The Content Analysis:</u>

<u>8.8.1#</u> The verses of the Quran and hadith cannot be analyzed singly. The content analysis needs to be for all related verses and narratives. Each verse and each narrative could highlight a specific angle in the subject, therefore, making a judgement based on only one single verse or narrative is completely inaccurate.

<u>8.8.2#</u> If there is a <u>clear contradiction</u> between a trusted narrative and a verse in the Quran then there need to be a serious effort to try and find a reconciliation between

them; because (as it has been seen many times) the contradiction might not be true. If it turned out that the contradiction between the trusted narrative and the verse cannot be reconciled, then we could "reject" the narrative. This means that we will regard that the Prophet didn't say this narrative, and it came to us by an error from one of the Narrators.

8.8.3# If there are no clear contradictions between a trusted narrative and other verses and narratives, but the narrative does seem to be abnormal (without any clarification for this abnormality), then this abnormality is not sufficient alone to reject the narrative.

For example:

> There is a single-chain hadith about Abraham that he circumcised himself using a chisel. Now ... There is an abnormality here; chisels are not normally used for surgical purposes. Also, there is no clarification for this abnormality. However, this abnormality is not sufficient "alone" to reject the narrative.

But if we found two reasons, then we might be able to consider rejecting the narrative. For example: If there was an abnormality in the narrative, and we found a weakness in the chain (as one of the Narrators is described with Edlas), then we might be able to reject this narrative.

If we found three reasons or more (the abnormality and two reasons or more in the chain) then we will be more confident in rejecting this narrative.

It should be noted here that Abu-Hurayra was in the chain of the previous narrative, and he was described with Ersal and Edlas. Abu-Hurayra is one of the well-recognized companions of the Prophet. Also, he was one of the first teachers in Islam after the Prophet, and he did learn a lot of the history of the Israelites. However, his teaching style was described with Ersal and Edlas. These two descriptions don't affect the trust status of Abu-Hurayra, but it might negatively affect some of his narratives.

For more information about this matter, check the bibliography of Abu-Hurayra in Ibn-Kathir book: Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya (i.e. The Beginning and the End), volume 8, 53h.

It should be noted here that the judgment regarding the narrative to be abnormal shouldn't be a mere "value judgment" [the "value judgment" is an opinion without sufficient supporting information]. If this is allowed, then everyone would have the legitimate right to decide which is normal and which is not: without any sufficient homework, without any depth analysis, and without any accepted logic,, just based on their moods and wants. But this is not accepted in any field of knowledge, and also, it is not accepted in the "Content Analysis" of the narratives.

8.9# The general methodology for analyzing narratives:

The methodology that I am following for analyzing the Hadith narratives is as the following:

- If someone (let us call him X) was using a narrative from one of <u>the collection books</u> (see 8.3#) then X himself (or someone else provided by X) need to do the chain analysis for this narrative before using it as an evidence. If X couldn't demonstrate that the chain in the narrative is trusted, then the narrative itself will be ignored.

- If X was arguing using a narrative from the 7 audited books and this narrative was numerous, overflow, double-chain or single-sided, then X can use this narrative without doing any chain analysis; as the chain has been clarified by the trusted Auditors.

  However, if I thought that this narrative might be rejected, then it is <u>my responsibility</u> to do the chain and content analysis, and I cannot suggest rejecting this narrative without doing <u>first</u> these analyses sufficiently.

- If X was arguing using a narrative from the 7 audited books, and it was a single-chain narrative, and it does seem to be abnormal, then this is a gray area. I cannot suggest rejecting this narrative without doing sufficient analysis, but I can raise my concerns about this narrative. Therefore, the narrative will be in the gray area until it is sufficiently analyzed.

9# The Conclusion:

There are a lot of misunderstandings among the "Western Scholars of Islamic Studies" regarding the Quran and Hadith, and I do hope that I managed to clarify some of these misunderstandings. Please note that the references have been inserted in their related paragraphs in this article.