

The Quran's Doctrine of Abrogation

Prepared by Abdullah Al Araby

In an attempt to polish Islam's image, Muslim activists usually quote verses from the Quran that were written in the early days of the Islamic movement while Mohammed lived in Mecca. Those passages make Islam appear loving and harmless because they call for love, peace and patience. Such is a deception. The activists fail to tell gullible people that such verses, though still in the Quran, were nullified, abrogated, rendered void by later passages that incite killing, decapitations, maiming, terrorism and religious intolerance. The latter verses were penned while Mohammed's headquarters was based in Medina.

When speaking with people of Christianized/Western societies, Muslim activists deliberately hide a major Islamic doctrine called "al-Nasikh wal-Mansoukh" ("The Abrogator and the Abrogated"). This simply means that in situations wherein verses contradict one another, the early verses are overridden by the latter verses. The chronological timing in which a verse was written determines its degree of authority to establish policies within Islam. Non-Muslims cannot afford to be ignorant about the full implications of *The Abrogator and the Abrogated* doctrine (*al-Nasikh wal-Mansoukh*). When Islamic spokesmen say that Islam is a religion of peace and that the Quran does not support such things as human rights infractions, gender bias and terrorism, they are lying. This means that the Western politicians and the liberal journalists, who continually spout that Islam is a noble religion of peace, are in reality propagating a deception that they have been deceived into parroting.

This presents problems for naive people who are not familiar with Islam and the Quran. They don't know that the surahs/chapters of the Quran are not arranged in chronological order in regard to the timing in which they were written. Therefore an activist who is out to deceive them can turn to various places throughout the Quran and read verses that sound peaceful, tolerant, reasonable and loving. The impression is that the entire Quran promotes peace, love, equality and tolerance for all. That is far from the truth. Most Muslims fully understand that the few Quranic verses that seemingly permit equality, peace and justice are more often than not overridden/nullified by later verses that validate such things as terrorism and legalistic restrictions on routine human and women's rights.

The Doctrine of the Abrogator and the Abrogated in the Quran (Al Nashikh Wal Mansoukh)

This doctrine is based on two verses that Allah allegedly instructed Mohammed to put into the Quran.

"None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar: Knowest thou not that Allah Hath power over all things?" Surah 2:106

"When We substitute one revelation for another, and Allah knows best what He reveals (in stages), they say, 'Thou art but a forger': but most of them understand not." Surah 16:101

The documentation for the information that I am offering in this piece is found in one of Islam's classical reference books in the Arabic language. It is titled *"al-Nasikh wal-Mansoukh: (The Abrogator and the Abrogated)"* and was authored by the revered Muslim scholar *Abil-Kasim Habat-Allah Ibn-Salama Abi-Nasr*. The book goes through every Surah (chapter) in the Quran. The author goes into great detail in citing every older verse that was cancelled-out/overridden by particular verses that were written later. The author noted that out of 114 Surahs (chapters) of the Quran, there are only 43 Surahs that were not affected by this concept. The implications are very revealing. It means that those who would be inclined to accept the Quran as reliable can take only 43 chapters of the Quran at face value. The majority of its chapters cannot be taken at face value. The cancelled verses are mixed in with the authoritative verses and only a schooled Islamist knows which is which.

The following are English translation excerpts from the reference book's original Arabic.

THREE KINDS OF ABROGATION:

1) Verses in which both the wording and application were abrogated/nullified.

There is an example of this found in a narration by Ans Ibn Abdel Malik. He said that during the life of Mohammed, they used to read a Surah that was equal in size to that of Surah 9 (the repentance). He further stated that he only remembered one verse from that Surah/chapter.--"If the son of Adam has two valleys of gold he would covet to have a third one, if he has three he would covet to have a fourth one. Nothing would fill the belly of the son of Adam except dirt, and Allah would accept the repentance of those who repent."

Another example is the narration of Ibn Abdullah Ibn Massoud. He said that Mohammed recited a verse for him that he memorized and wrote in his Quran. When he checked his Quran the following day, he discovered that the verse had disappeared. Mohammed explained what had happened to Ibn Massoud. he told him that the verse had been lifted during the previous day.

2) Verses in which the wording was abrogated (nullified) but the application was not.

These are verses wherein the wording was nullified, but the inferences/possible applications of those words remained intact.

There is an example of this form in a narration about Omar Ibn Al Khattab. He said, "If I didn't hate that people would say we added to the Quran which was not part of it, I would have insisted in including the verse of stoning. By God we have recited it by the Apostle of God."

3) Verses in which the application was abrogated (nullified), but the wording was not.

These are verses wherein the wording remained the same, but the authority to consider such in the formation of Islamic policies were nullified.

There are sixty-three Surahs/chapters in the Quran that mention such things as praying in the direction of Jerusalem, regulations about fasting and the forgiveness that is available to polytheists.

FOUR DEGREES OF ABROGATION:

1) Surahs that were not influenced by applications of the doctrine of the Abrogator and the Abrogated. (43 Surahs)

Surahs 1, 12, 36, 49, 55, 57, 61, 62, 66, 67, 68, 69, 71, 72, 77, 78, 79, 82, 83, 84, 85, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 112, 113, and 114

2) Surahs that maintained the authority of the Abrogator, but their original wording was not abrogated/nullified. (6 Surahs)

Surahs 48, 59, 63, 64, 65, and 87

3) Surahs that had their wording abrogated/nullified, but maintained their authority for applications. (40 Surahs)

Surahs 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 51, 53, 54, 60, 68, 70, 74, 75, 76, 77, 80, 86, 88, and 109

4) Surahs that have had both their authority for applications and their wording abrogated. (24 Surahs)

Surahs 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 14, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 33, 34, 40, 42, 51, 52, 56, 58, 73, 103, and 108

THE VERSE OF THE SWORD

The verse that abrogated (nullified) the Peace Verses.

An example of the abrogation: There are 124 verses that call for tolerance and patience that have been cancelled and replaced by one single verse. This verse is called the verse of the sword:

"But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war)..." Surah 9:5

Verses that support the Verse of the Sword

- 1) "Fight them and Allah will punish them by your hands, cover them with shame, help you (to victory) over them, heal the breasts of believers" (Surah 9:14).
- 2) "O ye who believe! Truly the Pagans are unclean; so let them not, after this year of theirs, approach the Sacred Mosque" (Surah 9:28).
- 3) "The Jews call 'Uzayr a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the son of God. That is saying from their mouth; (is this) they but imitate what the Unbelievers of old used to say. Allah's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth!" (Surah 9:30).
- 4) "O Prophet! Strive hard against the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites, and be firm against them. Their abode is Hell--an evil refuge indeed" (Surah 9:73).
- 5) "O ye who believe! Fight the Unbelievers who gird you about, and let them find firmness in you: and know that Allah is with those who fear Him" (Surah 9:123).

Some of the verses abrogated by the Verse of the Sword:

- 1) "Those who believe (in the Qua'an), and the Christians and the Sabians -- any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve" (Surah 2:62).
- 2) "Quite a number of the People of the Book wish they could turn you (people) back to infidelity after ye have believed, from selfish envy, after the Truth hath become manifest unto them: but forgive and overlook, till Allah accomplish his purpose" (Surah 2:109).
- 3) "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 them, nor wilt thou cease to find them -- baring a few -- ever bent on (new) deceits: but forgive them, and overlook (their misdeeds): for Allah loveth those who are kind" (Surah 5:13).
- 4) "Leave alone those who take their religion to be mere play and amusement, and are deceived by the life of this world. But proclaim (to them) this (truth): That every soul delivers itself to ruin by its own acts: it will find for itself no protector or intercessor except Allah: if it offered every ransom, (or reparation), none will be accepted: such is (the end of) those who deliver themselves to ruin by their own acts: they will have for drink (only) boiling water, and for punishment, one most grievous: for they persisted in rejecting Allah" (Surah 6:70).
- 5) "But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah" (Surah 8:61).
- 6) "And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury); but say, 'We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; our God and your God is One; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)'" (Surah 29:46).

- 7) "And remember We took a covenant from the Children of Israel (to this effect): worship none but Allah" (Surah 2:83)
- 8) "Say: Will ye dispute with us about Allah, seeing that He is our Lord and your Lord; that we are responsible for our doings and ye for yours; and that we are sincere (in our faith) in Him?" (Surah 2:139).
- 9) "Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors" (Surah 2:190).
- 10) "But fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they (first) fight you there" (Surah 2:191).
- 11) "But if they cease, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (Surah 2:192).
- 12) "But there is no compulsion in religion" (Surah 2:256).
- 13) "So if they dispute with thee, say: 'I have submitted my whole self to Allah and so have those who follow me,' And say to the People of the Book and so to those who are unlearned: 'do you (also) submit yourself?' If they do, they are in right guidance, but if they turn back, thy duty is to convey the Message" (Surah 3:20).
- 14) "Let not the Believers take for friends or helpers unbelievers rather than believers; if any do that, in nothing will there be help from Allah: except by way of precaution, that ye may guard yourself from them" (Surah 3:28).
- 15) "Those men -- Allah knows what is in their hearts; so keep clear of them, but admonish them, and speak to them a word to reach their souls" (Surah 4:63).
- 16) "He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah: but if any turn away, we have not sent thee to watch over their (evil deeds)" (Surah 4:80).
- 17) "But Allah records their nightly (plots): so keep clear of them, and put thy trust in Allah" (Surah 4:81).
- 18) "Then fight in Allah's cause -- thou art held responsible only for thyself" (Surah 4:84).
- 19) "[Choose not friends nor helpers from among the hypocrites,] except those who join a group between whom and you there is a treaty (of peace), or those who approach you with hearts restraining them from fighting you as well as fighting their own people. If Allah had pleased, He could have given them power over you, and they would have fought you: therefore, if they withdraw from you but fight you not, and (instead) send you (guarantees of) peace, then Allah hath opened no way for you (to war against them)" (Surah 4:90).
- 20) "O ye who believe! Violate not the sanctity of the Symbols of Allah, nor of the Sacred Month" (Surah 5:2).

One cannot help but wonder, why was there a need for changes in the Quran, if it really contained God's words? If Allah is indeed all-powerful and all-knowing, why would he need to revise and correct himself so often?
