

The Bible during Prophet's Time: A Critical review of Sulṭān Paul's Views

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Abstract

Except for the Holy Quran, most of the Books of God were revealed to the children of Israel. In this regard, the Gospel (Injīl) which was revealed to Jesus the son of Mary was the last book of Israel. The scripture that is inside the church today is called the Bible which is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the events of the Prophets before the advent of Jesus which is called the Old Testament. While the second one is known as the New Testament. The Gospel is a part of the New Testament. Bible is considered the divine book of Christianity. The Christians believe the Bible as a truly Godly scripture, whereas the Qur'ān was penned by the Holy Prophet himself (ﷺ). They argue that the Bible existed before the Qur'ān, during the Prophet's time and even these days it exists to verify this assertion. The genuine status of the Bible during Qur'ān revelation has been divulged, and the directives of the Holy Prophet Himself (ﷺ) have also acknowledged the Bible as a truly inspired book. Sulṭān Paul is one of the authors who claimed that throughout the prophet's age, the Bible was utterly correct and complete, with no errors. This study aims at a critical assessment in order to check the fact and claims of Sulṭān's idea.

Keywords: Bible distortion, Sulṭān Paul's views, the Qur'ān's claim, Prophet's sayings and the Bible, Reality behind the Bible

Introduction to Sulṭān Paul

Sulṭān Paul was born in 1881 in Kabul to an Afghan army colonel. His father was imprisoned by Amīr 'Abdul Raḥmān Khān (1880-1901), with family members. Some of them were executed rest of them were deported. Sulṭān Paul and his mother immigrated to India and settled in Delhi, where he received Islamic education at Fateh Pūrī Madrassa, a well-known Muslim seminary in the city. He acquired logic from Maulānā 'Abdul Jalīl and Maulānā Fateḥ Muḥammad Khān in addition to Ḥadīth and Tafsīr.¹ He was an Arabic professor at Forman Christian College in Lahore.

During his early seminary years, Sulṭān Paul began debating with Christian theologians. The clergy preached Christianity in public places and squares, openly attacking Islam, and Christians in the Sub-continent were allowed to be missionaries at the legislative level. Sulṭān began to participate in these debates regularly, and as the discussions advanced, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) established a library for him. Sulṭān, on the other hand, founded Nadwat ul Mutakallimīn (ندوة المتكلمين), a Muslim debating organization whose major goal was to equip Muslim debaters against Christianity. The organization used to host daily religious meetings where Christians and Hindus would make accusations against Islam, and Muslim debaters would respond. Sulṭān Paul held a debate with Munshī Mansūr Masīh, who objected to the Islamic notion of salvation and offered arguments on it, at a meeting arranged by the same organization. Even though Sulṭān responded to his arguments, he was dissatisfied

with his performance. As a result, he began his quest for salvation, which finally led to his apostasy. Thus, in 1903, he converted to Christianity and was baptized by Pastor Canon at a congregation in St. Paul's Church in Bombay.

Sulṭān held several discussions with Muslims, Qādiānīs, and Hindus after his conversion, and achieved a reputation as a Christian debater in the Sub-continent. He also wrote books defending Christianity and criticizing Islam. It has been said of his writings;

"اگر مسیحی مناد آپ کی جملہ تصانیف کی ایک ایک جلد اپنے پاس رکھیں تو ہر میدان میں ان کا نظریہ یاب اور کامران ہو جانا یقینی ہے۔"²

Christian preachers who preserve just one book of Sulṭān's works will be successful in every field.

The Bible during Prophet's time and Sulṭān's views (تصحیف التحریف)

To prove the Bible a true divine scripture, it is blamed by Sulṭān Paul that not a single verse in the Qur'ān rejects the present Bible. This allegation is written in the preface of his book *Taṣhīf al-Taḥrīf* (تصحیف التحریف). He writes, "Despite the Qur'ān's explicit words, there is a prevalent belief among Muslims today that the Torah and the Gospel were not in their original form at the time of the Qur'ān revelation and were perverted by Jewish and Christian intellectuals....However, there is no Qur'ānic verse or ḥadīth in *Ṣiḥāḥ e Sittah* that might support their assertion. The Qur'ān, on the other hand, emphasizes the divine texts' legitimacy and protection."³

According to Islamic teachings, the Qur'ān is not the Holy Prophet's word, nor has he ever claimed it, rather, it is a divine message that God sent to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) through an angel, and the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) saved it through his companions, and even God Himself declared its protection. Whereas the Bible is not a single book written by a single person but a collection of writings by various personalities. Sulṭān's argument that the Bible was in its original format during the Prophet's time and that there was no distortion in it, and that the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth make no reference to any Bible distortion, is founded on a misconception. The Qur'ān asserted at the time of its revelation the previous scriptures had altered and lost their divine status, and that the Qur'ān was now the only divine word to be believed. Apart from the Qur'ān, it is also said in ḥadīth literature that the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) pronounced the prior books to be perverted and stated that the Qur'ān is the only source of guidance for humanity and that no other books are required. In this case, Qur'ānic verses, the Prophet's sayings, and a summary of some of Sulṭān's points are recorded. A few arguments of Sulṭān in support of his allegation are as follows:

Statement of Bahāī Faith

Sulṭān presented the first argument to support his claim that the Bahāī religion believes the texts of the Prophet's time were uncorrupted. He writes referring the Bahāī book *Īqān*:

"اس مقام میں تحریف کا وہ مطلب نہیں جو عوام الناس نے سمجھ لیا ہے۔۔۔ کیا یہ ممکن ہے؟ کہ ایک شخص جو ایک کتاب کا معتقد ہو اور اسے خدا کی طرف سے ماننا ہو پھر اسے مٹا ڈالے۔ علاوہ برائیں تورات تمام جہان میں موجود تھی۔ صرف مکہ و مدینہ تک محدود نہ تھی جو اس میں تغیر و تبدل کر سکیں۔"⁴

Some claim that Jewish and Christian scholars removed verses from the Bible that dealt with Muhammad's (ﷺ) attributes and instead wrote against him. This is completely worthless and without foundation. Is it conceivable for someone who believes in a book and accepts it as a gift from God to then destroy it? Furthermore, the Torah was found throughout the world. It wasn't just Makkah and Madīnah who had the power to modify it. Here are some answers to this argument;

1. First and foremost, Muslims reject any reference or reasoning from the Bahāī faith. The Bahāī faith, like every other religion, is considered non-Islamic by Islam.
2. Second, Sulṭān Paul himself wrote in the same chapter, referring to the same Bahāī author, that the People of the Book used to misinterpret the lines indicating the coming

of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) at their own choice and this statement is testifying in favor of Islam that the Jewish scholars used to change the meaning of the verses according to their own desires and abandon God's intention so their very was accused of distortion.⁵

3. The Bible was out of reach for the average person, and the people had no right to read it and try to figure out what was going on. Anyone who did so was severely punished, as Hypatia (350-415) and Galileo's death proved this reality.^{6,7}

Arguments from the Qur'ān

Sultān Paul presents several verses from the Qur'ān to prove his case solid. Some of them are the following:

“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 Allah and your Allah is one; and it is to Him we bow [in Islam].”^{8,9}

If we had no scripture, this verse did not declare us the people of the Book, according to Sultān's statement. So this verse accepts Jewish scripture as a divine book. Here are a few answers to this argument.

1. The approach of discussion is taught in this verse. If someone needs to discuss with the people of the Book, remind them that the holy prophet (ﷺ) preached the same message of Monotheism that their prophets delivered. Allah revealed the Qur'ān to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) in the same way that books and scriptures were revealed to their prophets, and we regard the earlier scriptures as the word of God just as we believe in the Qur'ān.

2. The above verse raises a challenge for Christians. Muslims respect the earlier scriptures and accept their divine status by considering them to be God's revealed message, then why do the People of the Book reject the Qur'ān?

3. God detects that we (the Muslims) do believe in their books, not in them. And their scriptures state that you and we both have the same one God, yet how did you create Trinity?

4. In the very next verse, the Qur'ān indicates those who had common sense among the People of the Book had recognized the Qur'ān as God's word, while certain unfortunates denied this dignity. Why did they need to believe in the Qur'ān if the Bible was true? As it is stated;

وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ ۚ فَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۖ وَمِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ ۚ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الْكَافِرُونَ ۝¹⁰

“And thus [it is] that We have sent down the Book to thee. So the People of the Book believe therein, as also do some of these [pagan Arabs]: and none but Unbelievers reject our signs.”¹¹

The next argument by Sultān is based upon the following Qur'ānic verse:

لَيْسُوا سَوَاءً ۗ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ يَتَّبِعُونَ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ أَنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ ۝ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَأْتُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَأُولَئِكَ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ۝¹²

“Not all of them are alike: Of the People of the Book are a portion that stand [For the right]: They rehearse the Signs of Allah all night long, and they prostrate themselves in adoration. They believe in Allah and the Last Day; they enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten [in emulation] in [all] good works: They are in the ranks of the righteous.”¹³

According to Sultān, even then the People of the Book used to recite the Bible and how can one recite a false and fabricated writing in prostration at night. Therefore, this verse proves that the book was true and non-fabricated at that time. There are three main points in this verse to understand:

1. People of the Book cursed 'Abdullah b. Salām after he converted to Islam, called him the worst one. These verses were revealed in response to the people's denial and stated that while

not all People of the Book have rebelled against the truth, some will stick by it and accept it, and 'Abdullah b. Salām is one of them.

2. This verse does not refer to all of the People of the Book; rather, it refers to a certain group of people who followed the straight road and did not partake in the process of twisting the holy texts.

3. The virtue of this group is described in verse 114, in which they race towards kindness. As a result, when they learned the truth through the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), they rushed to this virtue and adopted Islam right away, while the rest of the People were denied this bliss.

Next Sulṭān presents the following verse:

وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ ۗ وَإَتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ ۗ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ
مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ۝¹⁴

“And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: Therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: A guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah.”¹⁵

Sulṭān writes that this verse testifies the Gospel contains guidance and light for the people and the people of the Gospel should deliver guidance according to what existed at that time. If the book was false then why is the Qur'ān commanding to guide through it? There are three answers to this verse;

1. According to this Qur'ānic verse, Jesus Christ was given the Gospel and he reaffirmed the Torah. If Christians were asked which Jesus affirmed, the entire and true Torah or the distorted one, they would undoubtedly respond that Jesus confirmed the complete and true Torah. Why did Jesus need to give the Gospel if the Torah before him was correct? And what if the Gospel changed any of the Torah's commandments? Then it means Torah is no longer mandatory practically for society; simply believing in it is adequate. Similarly, the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) did verification the previous books while also receiving the Qur'ān. These books are no longer required since the revelation of the Qur'ān.

2. Only the Torah was reaffirmed by Jesus Christ, according to this text. All other books of the Old Testament are now unacceptable in the light of this verse since Jesus did not confirm them and the Qur'ān did not reference them because they were fabricated.

3. Confirming is one thing, but the following is another. Although Jesus supported the Torah, he was not compelled to follow it because he had his book. Likewise, the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) has his book, which validates the earlier scriptures, but he and his Ummah are not bound by their teachings.

Arguments from Ḥadīth

In addition to Qur'ānic passages, Sulṭān Paul has presented arguments based on ḥadīth and has made every effort to prove the Bible as an unaltered text. He describes the following ḥadīth:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ، قَالَ : بَلِّغُوا عَنِّي وَلَوْ آيَةً وَحَدِّثُوا عَنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَا حَرَجَ¹⁶
“Narrated 'Abdullah b. 'Amr The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Convey (my teachings) to the people even if it were a single verse or a sentence (from the Qur'ān or As-Sunna) and tell others the stories of Banī Isrāīl (which have been taught to you), for it is not sinful to do so.”¹⁷

According to Sulṭān Paul ḥadīth very clearly permits to narrate from the Bible which means the book was not fabricated. Here are some meanings of this ḥadīth;

1. According to this ḥadīth, Israelite traditions that do not contradict Islamic teachings and core beliefs are permitted to be told, but false traditions are not allowed.

2. This permission is for learned scholars who can define the difference between truth and deception, and who have enough capacity to know the divine word's nature. When 'Abdullah b. 'Amr b. Al-'Āṣ received the scriptures on the occasion of the Yarmūk battle, he would not recount from them without the approval of the commentator, nor would he relate every word from them, and the general people were told not to confirm or refute.

3. It is instructed to obtain description from those People of the Book who converted to Islam, because they possessed knowledge of both sides of the books, not from everyone. People were allowed to relate from them, in the Qur'ān, because they had higher insight.¹⁸ Similarly, Ḥaḍrat 'Umar barred Ka'b al-Aḥbār from telling Israelite traditions, claiming if one believes that the Torah was delivered to Prophet Moses, one can read it at any time of day or night.¹⁹

It is important to remember not that all Israelite traditions are permitted to be conveyed. It is critical to comprehend the divide between Israelite traditions in this regard. Some traditions are consistent with Islam (for example, the penalty for adultery). Other customs that do not conform to Islam but do not contradict its spirit. Third, some traditions are hostile to Islam, which Islam does not embrace (like as influencing the People of the Book's beliefs about Monotheism and Prophethood). As a result, it is permitted to relate Islamic traditions wherever they exist, but anti-Islamic traditions are prohibited.

Sulṭān Paul's next argument is based upon Ḥaḍrat 'Umar's practice. He pens down that 'Umar used to go to the Jewish seminary and learn from their teachings:

"کیونکہ یہ امر تاریخ اسلام میں روشن ہے کہ حدیث اعراب بنی اسرائیل کی تعمیل پوری پوری اہل اسلام کرتے رہے۔ چنانچہ خود حضرت عمر کا طریقہ یہی رہا کہ وہ مدارس اہل کتاب میں جا کر استفادہ کرتے تھے۔"²⁰

Because it is apparent from Islamic history that the entire religion has followed the Children of Israel's narration. And it was Ḥaḍrat 'Umar himself used to pay a visit to the Jewish institution. (Tafsīr 'Azīzī).

Actually this narration appears in the exegesis of the following verses:

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَالَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ²¹

“ Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel-for he brings down the [revelation] to thy heart by Allah's will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe, Whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and messengers, to Gabriel and Michael,- Lo! Allah is an enemy to those who reject Faith.”²²

Commentators explain the context of this verse by stating once a delegation of Jews came to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and questioned him the following queries.

1. What kind of food did Ḥaḍrat Y'aqūb prevented for himself?
 2. What is man and woman's water (semen)?
 3. What is a Prophet's sleeping pattern?
 4. Who among the angels is your best friend?
- The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) answered;

1. Ḥaḍrat Y'aqūb had barred himself from eating camel meat.
2. The water of men is white and thick, but the water of women is thin and yellow.
3. A prophet's eyes asleep but his heart awakes.
4. 'Jibrāil' is my friend among the angels.

When the Jews heard the answers to all these questions, they answered, “If another angel were your mate, we would obey you and trust in you, but Jibrāil is our adversary since he brings war and hunger whenever he arrives, whereas Mīkāil is our friend who gives peace, prosperity, and plenty of grain.” So, neither you nor Jibrāil is welcomed. The commentators have described this commentary.^{23,24,25,26} In Tafsīr 'Azīzī, the identical commentary on this verse is written, and in this context, the incident of Ḥaḍrat

'Umar is elaborated, of which Sulṭān Paul just takes a few phrases to support his claim and ignores the rest. According to Tafsīr 'Azīzī, 'Umar would occasionally visit the seminary to learn about Torah and other ancient texts. When he arrived at the seminary one day, the Jewish intellectuals greeted him warmly, saying, "No one comes to our institution but you." Take a look at 'Umar's response;

"برای تحصیل زیادتی بصیرت در دین خود پیش شامی آمیم و آثار و علامات پیغمبر خود را از روی کتابهای شما معلوم میکنم----- لقد وافق ربک یا عمر یعنی موافق تقریر تو الزام داد حضرت حق تعالی یهودیان را و این آیات را تلاوت نمودند۔"²⁷

Rather, I've come to you to learn more about my faith. And, despite your knowing that you just do not believe in a great messenger, I recognize the signs of my prophet from your writings, and my faith is strong, and I wonder what is wrong with you. The Jews claim that we deviate from this tradition because we think Jibrāil to be our enemy. We would have believed Mīkāil if he had been the angel of revelation. 'Umar said, "since it is apparent from their rank that whoever is the rival of one will be the enemy of the other, whoever is the rival of both will be the enemy of Allah. On this occasion Jibrāil came with these verses.

These verses were then recited by the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). This was the genuine and whole incidence of Ḥaḍrat 'Umar in Tafsīr 'Azīzī, which was not related by Sulṭān Paul because if the audience knew the whole story, they would abandon Christianity. The most remarkable aspect of this episode is that Ḥaḍrat 'Umar himself describes going to the Jewish seminary to observe and read the signs of Prophethood of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). This means that the Bible at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) included signs of the Messenger's arrival, but the People of the Book concealed them.

Sulṭān has recounted the following Qur'ānic verse, as well as the ḥadīth, which he has provided as proof;

وَكَتَبْنَا لَهُ فِي الْأَلْوَابِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْعِظَةً²⁸

"And We ordained laws for him in the tablets in all matters, both commanding and explaining all things."²⁹

Based on this verse, Sulṭān Paul says that to doubt the book which God wrote with his own hands and in which everything is described is tantamount to doubting God's writing. So he writes;

"شاید یہ وہم تم کو اس لئے پیدا ہو گیا کہ قرآن کو جبریل لائے اور لوگوں نے اپنے ہاتھ سے لکھا مگر توراہ کو خود خدا نے بلا توسط موسیٰ کو عطا کیا اور اپنے ہاتھ سے لکھ دیا۔ گویا کہ خود خدا پر آپ کو کلام ہے۔"³⁰

This illusion may have been produced when Jibrāil brought the Qur'ān, which the people penned with their own hands, whereas the Torah was handed to Moses by God Himself, who wrote it with His own hand. It was as if you have an objection to God.

Sulṭān describes the following ḥadīth to bolster his case:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى كَتَبَ التَّوْرَةَ بِيَدِهِ

No doubt! Allah wrote the Torah with His own hands.

Actually the full verse offered by Sulṭān is as follows;

وَكَتَبْنَا لَهُ فِي الْأَلْوَابِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْعِظَةً وَتَفْصِيلًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَحَذَّهَا بِقُوَّةٍ وَأْمَرَ قَوْمَكَ بِأَخْذِهَا بِحَسَنِيهَا ۚ سَأُرِيكُمْ دَارَ الْفَاسِقِينَ³¹

"And We ordained laws for him in the tablets in all matters, both commanding and explaining all things, [and said]: "Take and hold these with firmness, and enjoin thy people to hold fast by the best in the precepts: soon shall I show you the homes of the wicked, [How they lie desolate]."³²

How many tablets were there, and what was inscribed on them? These tablets were all the same ones that God handed to Moses at Mount Sināī. Moses brought seven tablets, according to Ibn Abī Ḥātim's interpretation, but as he saw the Israelites worshipping

the calf, he smashed them in rage. Six tablets were missing, with one remaining.³³ The biblical description in this case is more authentic for Sulṭān Paul. The Bible states that: And Moses turned and went down from the mount, and the two tablets of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables..... And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.”

Moses got two tablets, which he broke down upon a mountain, according to the Bible. Now all that's required is to prove which Sulṭān is using the Qur'ān to make incorrect arguments. By God's command, Moses made new tablets and took down the commandments on them. The Bible states: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.”³⁴

So, Moses rewrote the commandments at God's will which are in the Bible. The Ten Commandments were given by Moses to the Children of Israel. Moses remarked after teaching his people these commandments:

“These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice; and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.”³⁵

Moses received the tablets, according to the Qur'ānic passage, and according to the Bible, there were around two tablets then who authored the first five volumes of the Old Testament, Torah, today? The two tablets contained only the Ten Commandments, but the Torah now contains five books, 187 chapters, and 5852 verses. Furthermore, these five volumes contain no mention of the Torah. The term originally was used in 2 Kings. The Muslims would not have objected if it had been a matter of two tablets, but where did the 5852 verses of the Torah originate from? When did it become known to Moses? The Bible makes no mention of it. As a result, the Muslims complain about distortion, and it is recorded in the Old Testament that they were the two scrolls up until Solomon's reign. So, it is stated in 2 Chronicles;

“There was nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put therein at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.”³⁶

These two tablets are also mentioned in the first book of Kings.³⁷ No one has ever questioned that God penned the Torah with his own hands in Islamic history. The ḥadīth, presented by Sulṭān in support of the Qur'ānic verse is narrated by Imām Behqī, as follows:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى خَلَقَ ثَلَاثَةَ أَشْيَاءٍ بِيَدِهِ ، خَلَقَ آدَمَ بِيَدِهِ ، وَ كَتَبَ التَّوْرَةَ بِيَدِهِ ، وَ غَرَسَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ بِيَدِهِ ، ثُمَّ قَالَ وَعِزَّتِي لَا يَسْكُنُهَا مَدٌّ مِنْ خَمْرٍ وَ لَا دُبُوتٌ ، فَقَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَدْ عَرَفْنَا مَدَّ مِنَ الْخَمْرِ فَمَا الدُّبُوتُ؟ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ الَّذِي يُبَسِّرُ لِأَهْلِهِ السُّوءَ³⁸

God Almighty created Adam with His Hand, penned the Torah with His Hand, and created Paradise with His Hand, after all He declared, 'By My Might, there is no tide of wine or cuckolds.' They (the companions) responded to the Messenger of God, 'O Messenger of God, we have witnessed a tide of wine, so what is a cuckold?' He who permits wickedness for God said the Messenger of God (ﷺ). Ibn Khuzaimah has also narrated this ḥadīth.³⁹ Imām Behqī has described this ḥadīth as Mursil Ḍa'if al-Asnād.⁴⁰ That is, the narration chain is very poor and there is a gap in it, which is unacceptable. As a result, no belief can be developed from such a narration based on ḥadīth principle, and the entire subject is resolved with the verse offered by Sulṭān.

Proof of Bible Distortion in the Qur'ān

The Bible during Prophet's Time: A Critical review of Sulṭān Paul's Views

Sulṭān tried to argue that the Qur'ān verifies the current Bible using the verses above, but he overlooked the verses that reveal the Bible's distortion. A few of these verses are included here to show that the Qur'ān does not support the current Bible in any way. It is stated in Al-Baqarah;

أَفَتَطْمَعُونَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ٤١

“Can ye [o ye men of Faith] entertain the hope that they will believe in you? Seeing that a party of them heard the Word of Allah, and perverted it knowingly after they understood it.”⁴²

In the next verses the Qur'ān states;

فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۖ فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِّمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِّمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ ٤٣

“Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: "This is from Allah," to traffic with it for miserable price! Woe to them for what their hands do write, and for the gain they make thereby.”⁴⁴

Furthermore, it is expressly rejected the People of the Book's self-made ideas, demonstrating they are not divine and that the Qur'ān does not support them. It is stated;

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عُزَيْرٌ ۚ ابْنُ اللَّهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ ۗ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ يُضَاهَهُنَّ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ قَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ ۗ أَتَى يُؤْفَكُونَ ۝ اخْتَدُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا ۗ لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۗ سُبْحَانَهُ ۚ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ٤٥

“The Jews call 'Uzair a son of Allah, and the Christians call Christ the son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouth; [in 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! They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of Allah, and [they take as their Lord] Christ the son of Mary; yet they were commanded to worship but One Allah: there is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him: [Far is He] from having the partners they associate [with Him].”⁴⁶

The Qur'ān declares that Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but a Muslim and only Muslims fully follow his teachings.

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُّسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۝ إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ لَلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ٤٧

“Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian; but he was true in Faith, and bowed his will to Allah's [Which is Islam], and he joined not gods with Allah. Without doubt, among men, the nearest of kin to Abraham, are those who follow him, as are also this Prophet and those who believe: And Allah is the Protector of those who have faith.”⁴⁸

What was the source of the conflict with Najrān's Christians? This debate arose because Christianity was not the actual religion that Jesus Christ preached to the world.⁴⁹ During the Prophet's time, the essential doctrines of Christianity grew, and the Qur'ān directly condemned them, declaring these biblical teachings to be perverted. The Qur'ān would not have refuted the Bible and would not have debated with the Najrān delegation if the Bible's doctrines and beliefs had not been perverted during the Prophet's time. So, Sulṭān's argument that the Qur'ān does not claim Bible distortion is entirely false. God, on the other hand, invites the Children of Israel to believe in the Qur'ān and not to change truth with falsehood. The Qur'ān describes;

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي أَوْفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونِ ۝ وَأَمِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَكُمْ وَلَا تَكُونُوا أَوَّلَ كَافِرٍ بِهِ ۖ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا وَإِيَّايَ فَاتَّقُونِ ۝ وَلَا تَلْبَسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ٥٠

“O Children of Israel! call to mind the [special] favour which I bestowed upon you, and fulfil your covenant with Me as I fulfil My Covenant with you, and fear none but Me. And believe in what I reveal, confirming the revelation which is with you, and be not the first to reject Faith therein, nor sell My Signs for a small price; and fear Me, and Me alone. And cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when ye know [what it is].”⁵¹

Evidence of Biblical distortion from Ḥadīth

Sulṭān’s contention that there is no legitimate ḥadīth to illustrate Biblical distortion is a big misunderstanding. There are several narrations in ḥadīth literature that challenge this allegation, but only two of them are given here. The following is recounted by ‘Abdullah b. ‘Abbās in Bukhārī;

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا ، قَالَ : يَا مَعْشَرَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ، كَيْفَ تَسْأَلُونَ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ ، وَكَيْفَ تَسْأَلُونَ الَّذِينَ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيَّ نَبِيِّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَحَدْتُ الْأَخْبَارَ بِاللَّهِ تَفَرُّوْنَهُ لَمْ يُشَبَّ ، وَقَدْ حَدَّثَكُمْ اللَّهُ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ بَدَّلُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ ، وَعَيَّرُوا بِأَيْدِيهِمُ الْكِتَابَ ، فَقَالُوا : هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ ، لِيَسْتَرْوُا بِهِ تَمَنَّا قَلِيلًا ، أَفَلَا يَنْهَأَكُمُ مَا جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ عَنْ مُسَاءَلَتِهِمْ ، وَلَا وَاللَّهِ مَا رَأَيْنَا مِنْهُمْ رَجُلًا قَطُّ يَسْأَلُكُمْ عَنِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ -⁵²

“Narrated ‘Ubaidullah bin ‘Abdullah bin ‘Utba: Ibn ‘Abbās 4, said, “O assembly of Muslims! How do you ask the people of the Scriptures, though your Book (i.e., the Qur‘ān) which was revealed to His Prophet is the most recent information from Allah and you recite it, (the Qur‘ān) that has not been distorted? Allah has informed you that the people of the Scriptures distorted and changed what was revealed to them, with their own hands and they said (as regards their changed Scriptures): ‘This is from Allah,’ in order to get some worldly benefit thereby.” Ibn ‘Abbās added, “Isn't the knowledge revealed to you sufficient to prevent you from asking them? By Allah, I have never seen any one of them asking you (Muslims) about what has been revealed to you.”⁵³

Imām Muslim also has narrated this topic.

حُمَيْدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ عَوْفٍ أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّ مَرْوَانَ قَالَ أَذْهَبَ يَا رَافِعُ لِيُؤَابِهَ إِلَى ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ فَقُلْنَا لَيْسَ كَانَ كُلُّ امْرِئٍ مِّنَّا فَرِحَ بِمَا آتَى وَأَحَبَّ أَنْ يُحْمَدَ بِمَا لَمْ يُفْعَلْ مُعَدَّبًا لَتُعَدَّبَنَّ أَجْمَعُونَ فَقَالَ ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ مَا لَكُمْ وَهَذِهِ الْآيَةُ إِنَّمَا أَنْزَلْتُ هَذِهِ الْآيَةَ فِي أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ ثُمَّ تَلَا ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ هَذِهِ الْآيَةُ وَتَلَا ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْرَحُونَ بِمَا آتَوْا وَيُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يُحْمَدُوا بِمَا لَمْ يُفْعَلُوا وَقَالَ ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ سَأَلْتُمُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنْ شَيْءٍ فَكْتُمْتُمُوهُ إِيَّاهُ وَأَخْبَرْتُمُوهُ بِعَيْرِهِ فَخَرَجُوا قَدْ أَرَوْهُ أَنَّ قَدْ أَخْبَرْتُمُوهُ بِمَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ عَنْهُ وَاسْتَحْمَدُوا بِذَلِكَ إِلَيْهِ وَفَرَحُوا بِمَا آتَوْا مِنْ كِتْمَانِهِمْ إِيَّاهُ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ عَنْهُ⁵⁴

Ḥumaid b. ‘Abdur-Raḥmān b. ‘Awf narrated that Marwān said to his gatekeeper: “Go - O Rāfi - to Ibn ‘Abbās, and say: ‘If every man among us who rejoices in what he has done, and loves to be praised for what he has not done is to be punished, then we will all be punished.’” Ibn ‘Abbās said: “What does this verse have to do with you? This Verse was revealed concerning the People of the Book.” Then Ibn ‘Abbās recited: ‘(And remember) when Allah took a covenant from those who were given the Scripture (Jews and Christians) to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it.... And Ibn ‘Abbās recited: ‘Think not that those who rejoice in what they have done (or brought about), and love to be praised for what they have not done. Then Ibn ‘Abbās said: "The Prophet asked them about something, and they concealed it, and told him something else, and they went out thinking that he thought they had told him what he had asked them about. So they praised themselves, and rejoiced over what they had done, by concealing from him what he had asked them about.”⁵⁵

Furthermore, all basic literature of Sīrah mentions the conversation of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) with Warqa b. Nawfal following the first revelation and European authors have also recorded this meeting.^{56,57,58,59} Listening to the words of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), Warqa b. Nawfal claimed that the same angel who delivered the message also came to Moses.

He also pledged his support to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). He was the sole Christian scholar in Makkah at the time, and the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) visited him first. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) revealed the contents of the revelation to him, and Warqā's guarantee of assistance indicates that he will be the prophet in the future. Both Imām Bukhārī and Imām Muslim have detailed accounts of this conversation.^{60,61}

Conclusion

Sulṭān Paul and other Christians did not understand that the Qur'ān verifies the divine scriptures and urges its followers to trust in them. In this regard, there are a few things to keep in mind.

1. First, the Qur'ān instructs believers to believe in these writings but not abide by them. Only the Qur'ān will be the focus of the action as it is the final and definitive edition of all preceding divine scriptures.
2. Second, the Qur'ān makes no mention of believing in the current Bible; rather, it requires believers to believe in the scriptures that were delivered to the apostles centuries ago, such as Torah, Psalms, and the Gospel.⁶²
3. Third, the Qur'ān only mentions three of the previous books, whereas the Bible contains 66 books, 39 of which are in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament.
4. Fourth, Christians should remember that while the Qur'ān mentions the prior books' confirmation and faith, it only refers to three of them; all others are excluded from this requirement.
5. Fifth, the prior books are not attributed to any writer or person in the Qur'ān. The scriptures were referred to be God's message wherever they were cited. Even Christians are aware that the Bible is a compilation of texts by many individuals.

It can be observed that if these facts are taken into consideration while reciting the Qur'ān, Christian academics' perplexity can be erased.

There is also a question for Sulṭān Paul and other Christians like him where the Bible was in Prophet's time if it was complete and correct? According to Maurice Bucaille's research, Christians were prohibited to read and study the Bible for hundreds of years. Merely pastors were permitted to have a thorough understanding of the Bible, while the rest of the population was only permitted to hear it.⁶³ He claims that the Biblical text was amended for many centuries before. Even St. Augustine (430-354) rejected some Biblical teachings about God's ability to teach man that is not true. He presented the idea that any utterance that contradicts the truth cannot be godly and inspired on this basis. When it came to answering queries from Catholics, Father Rogue was cited as saying, "There can be no doubt that a comprehensive study of the Gospels is likely to distress Christians greatly."⁶⁴

Most importantly, Sulṭān concedes that the Gospel was not put down during the lifetime of Jesus Christ, but was assembled later. He writes:

"حضرت مسیح کوئی کتاب لئے نہیں پھرتے تھے نہ صفحہ جہان پر کوئی کتاب ایسی کبھی موجود تھی۔ ہاں یہ سچ ہے کہ مسیح کے زمانہ میں تعلیمات مسیح ہی کا نام انجیل تھا اور وہ تعلیمات زبانی تھیں جو ما بعد اناجیل اربعہ میں منضبط ہو گئیں۔"⁶⁵

There had never been a book in the world, nor did Jesus Christ wander around in searching for one. Christ's teachings were called the Gospel at that time, and they were oral teachings that were later codified in the four Gospels.

The Holy Qur'ān was penned under the direction of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), whenever it was revealed and was collected in one location by Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr. The Qur'ān has remained in the same state since the time many of the Companions memorized it verbally, but Sulṭān himself admitted that the Gospels were created after Jesus Christ and that there were no norms and laws for compiling it. They were all gathered solely from memory. Apart from the Gospel, the letters in the New Testament are in any case personal ideas and exhortations that have been elevated to the level of the inspired word. Only seven of these 13 letters were written by Paul, according to experts, while the remaining six are attributed to him but are not his. Furthermore, Paul's secretary wrote these seven letters, not he himself.^{66,67}



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- ³⁶ 2 Chronicles, 5:10
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- ³⁸ Behqī, Aḥmad b. Ḥussain, al-Asmā al-Ṣifāt, Maktabah al-Swādī, vol.2, Ḥadīth. 692, p:125
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