

Fast 23: Can non-Muslims preach their religions to Muslims? (2)

- Several times where the Quran declares some belief held by others to be wrong, it asks them to present evidence to support it:

“And they say: None shall enter the Garden except he who is a Jew, or the Christians. These are their vain desires. Say: **Bring your proof**, if you are truthful.” (2:111)

وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا
أَوْ نَصْرَىٰ ۗ تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ ۗ قُلْ هَاتُوا
بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١١١﴾

“Or, have they taken gods besides Him? Say: **Bring your proof.**” (21:24)

أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهًا ۗ قُلْ هَاتُوا
بُرْهَانَكُمْ ۗ

“Is there a god with Allah? Say: **Bring your proof**, if you are truthful.” (27:64)

ءَالِهَةٌ مَعَ اللَّهِ ۗ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن
كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

In the first verse, Jews and Christians are each asked to provide evidence in support of their claim — made by each for its religion — that only they will receive salvation in the life hereafter. These are, says the Quran, mere unproven claims based on their desires. It goes on to say in 2:112 (not quoted above) that to receive salvation you have to submit to God with all your powers and faculties, and be a doer of good to people. It cannot be attained by merely holding some belief or belonging to some group. The Quran is requiring them to place before Muslims the reasons and grounds for their claim of salvation. How can then Islam at the same time prohibit them from presenting their religions to Muslims?

Similarly, in the other two verses quoted above, those who believe in gods alongside the One God, for example idol-worshippers, are asked to provide evidence of their beliefs. To present it, they would have to say something in support of their beliefs!

- It is also well known that the Quran challenges those deny that it is a revelation from God **to produce or create a writing to match it**. The claim of the Quran is that no human writing can approach or equal it in terms of its power, truth, eloquence, disclosure of knowledge which was unknowable by humans, and its purifying effect on people. The challenge occurs four times in direct terms:

“And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا
فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ ۚ وَادْعُوا

and call on your helpers besides Allah if you are truthful.” (2:23)

شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

﴿٢٣﴾

“Or say they: He has forged it? Say: Then bring a chapter like it, and call upon whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful.” (10:38)

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

“Or say they: He has forged it. Say: Then bring ten forged chapters like it, and call upon whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful.” (11:13)

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُورٍ مِثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

“Say: If people and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Quran, they could not bring the like of it, though they helped one another.” (17:88)

قُلْ لَئِنْ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَ لَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا ﴿٨٨﴾

In view of the above challenges, Islam clearly **cannot** then prohibit other people from presenting to Muslims any writing which they consider as equalling or excelling the Quran, be it a writing of the past or one composed to meet this challenge. It would be absurd, in fact it would be the height of injustice as well as deceit, to issue a challenge and then impose a ban, wherever you have the power, on anyone who tries to answer the challenge. It would be like a competitor trying to win a race by prohibiting anyone else from taking part!

Regarding the above challenges, the earliest in time is 17:88, which says that no one can produce the “like of this Quran”, meaning the entire Quran as revealed up to that point. The next in time is verse 11:13. As more of the Quran had been revealed by this time, the challenge asks the deniers to produce ten chapters like it. And in the verses revealed last of all, 10:38 and then 2:23, the deniers are asked to produce just one chapter like it, since by this time the Quran itself was much larger than before.

Note that in all these challenges people are told that they may seek **the help and support of anyone they can find**. So the Prophet Muhammad’s challenge was to the whole of mankind, with its entire resources of knowledge, scholarship and penmanship.

In 17:88 those challenged are the “people and jinn”. By comparing this with the other three verses, we see that by “jinn” here are meant the helpers mentioned in those verses, i.e., their leaders and scholars.

Since the “people and jinn” are challenged **to combine to produce a book like the Quran**, it means that the “jinn” must be a group who can read and understand the Quran, know how to compose books (whether written or spoken), and can collaborate with people in producing a composition. Therefore these “jinn” cannot be some kind of creation different from human beings. There is no point in challenging a type of created beings to produce a literary composition who have no record of producing such a work which people have seen before! There is no point in asking “people and jinn” to combine together in this venture unless both of these parties are already meeting each other and are able to collaborate in tasks.