

The Emigrants blamed the Meccans for their migration from Mecca and for their humiliating economic circumstances in the foreign City of Medina. The Qur'an 9:14-15 reveals the degree of this hatred in the

hearts of the Emigrants: *"Fight them, and God will chastise them at your hands and degrade them, and He will help you against them, and bring healing to the breasts of a people who believe, and He will remove the rage within their hearts; and God turns towards whomsoever He will; God is All-Knowing, All-Wise"*. These verses state that God's punishment will be administered by the hands of the Muslims themselves on their enemies, and, in the process, God will remove, by this act of revenge, all hatred and distress from the faithful people (Muslims).

This transformation of the Emigrants from law-abiding merchants into predatory raiders marks a major turning point in the history of the Arabian Peninsula. For these early Muslims, this transformation created the beginning nucleus of a military force, which would eventually grow in size and power to enable Muhammad to unify all of Arabia into one religious polity in AD 632. However, the means of this military development by the Emigrants-the raiding, looting, and killing-introduced a decline in the moral values (e.g., religious tolerance) the Muslims had advocated and held up to the pagan Arabs to denounce their polytheistic and sinful religious and social practices.

This transformation has undoubtedly been reflected in the text of the Qur'an and its "revealed" verses. One can now explain the

existence in the one and same Qur'an of verses that gives freedom of religion like The Qur'an 2:256 *"There is no compulsion in religion"*, and verses that call for fighting against Christians and Jews who don't surrender to Islam, like The Qur'an 9:29: *"Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued"*. The "Jizya" is a special tax imposed on Jews and Christians who reject to become Muslims when living in an Islamic state.

**Conclusions:** The crucial doctrine of abrogation in the Qur'an does explain the existence in it of verses that seem to contradict each other. Abrogation means that earlier peaceful and tolerant "revealed" verses have been replaced, in their ruling, by later violent and intolerant ones.

***If you want to know about the Bible and the Person of Jesus Christ, you may visit the following site:***

**[www.mylanguage.net.au](http://www.mylanguage.net.au)**

## **The Doctrine of Abrogation in the Qur'an**



***"مَا نَنْسَخُ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِئُهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ" (البقرة 106)***

One of the most famous verses in the Qur'an is called the "Sword Verse". It is the verse that commands Muslims to kill non-Muslims: *"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; but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practise regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful"* (The Qur'an 9:5).

The thoughtful reader of the Qur'an will probably pause in confusion, for how does one reconcile this verse with tens of other verses that call for tolerance, such as The Qur'an 2: 256 *"There is no compulsion in religion..."*. The baffled reader encounters two contrasting spirits. A kind of schizophrenia seems incarnated in the Qur'an

with its verses of peace and its verses of violence. The reader is left to ponder these questions: Why does the Qur'an's text present a double personality? How can a Muslim take the Qur'an as the guide for living one's life when it has two contrasting spirits? Which should the Muslim follow: the peaceful verses or the violent ones?

Muslim scholars don't see the Qur'an as a book with two opposing positions. Rather, they state that the Qur'an consists of abrogating and abrogated verses. Abrogated verses are verses that have been annulled or overridden by another verse or verses that were "revealed" later in time.

The doctrine of abrogation is stated in, at least, three verses in the Qur'an. *"None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar: Don't you know that Allah has power over all things"* (The Qur'an 2:106); *"When We substitute one revelation for another,- and Allah knows best what He reveals (in stages),- they say, "You are but a forger": but most of them understand not"* (The Qur'an 16:101), and *"Allah does blot out or confirm what He pleases: with Him is the Mother of the Book"* (The Qur'an 13:39).

According to the Qur'anic scholar al-Zarkashi, most Islamic sources state that the "Sword Verse" (The Qur'an 9:5), itself has abrogated, or nullified 114 verses that call for making peace with non-Muslims and to leave them alone (Al-Zarkashi, M., Al-burhan fi ulum al-Qur'an, Beirut, Lebanon, 1972, p. 354).

According to the Islamic commentators, whenever there are two contrasting texts, such as The Qur'an 2:256 *"No compulsion is there in religion..."* and The Qur'an 9:5 *"Slay the idolaters wherever you find them..."*, the Muslim should follow the ruling in the

verse that was revealed later to Muhammad, the founder and Prophet of Islam. In this case, The Qur'an 9:5 abrogates The Qur'an 2:256, because The Qur'an 9:5 came later. In fact, Chapter 9 in the Qur'an is the last, or the second last, Chapter "revealed" to Muhammad. Since, virtually, all the pacifist texts were revealed earlier than the warlike verses, they have been abrogated by them.

In this way, the process of abrogation thus resolves what seems to be a conflict between these two types of verses and forces the tenor and attitude of the Qur'an's verses to change over time-and with it, Muhammad's actions-from tolerance to fanaticism, from tongue to sword, and from peace to war.

The doctrine of abrogation is so crucial in the understanding of the Qur'an that Ali ibn abi-Taleb, the fourth Islamic Caliph that succeeded Muhammad, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law as well, described as "perishing" and "causing others to perish" an imam, a Muslim preacher, who didn't know and teach that doctrine (Al-Nasikh wa Al-Mansoukh, Ibn Salama, Al-Maousowa Al-Shamela, <http://www.alwarraq.com>).

In order to better understand the reasons for the existence of the doctrine of abrogation in the Qur'an, one has to study the historicity of the development of its text over the 23 years during which it was "revealed" to Muhammad.

According to Islamic traditions, Muhammad received his first Qur'anic revelation in AD 610 and continued to receive more revelations for the next 23 years until shortly before his death. Throughout these years, Muhammad experienced many political and social changes, which are echoed in the Qur'an and reflect the circumstances of his call in Mecca and Medina, which represent two periods of revelations. Those two periods are markedly different, with the later Medinan

verses and Muhammad's followers increasingly more violent in tone, attitude, and action.

The Meccan period (AD 610-622) was dominated by the death of Khadija, Muhammad's first wife, first convert and his psychological and financial supporter; as well as Abu Talib Ibn Abd al-Muttalib, Muhammad's uncle and shield in the face of any Quraysh threat. Quraysh was Muhammad's tribe, who rejected his claims as a Prophet. After failing to win Quraysh to his religion, Muhammad struggled to preach Mecca's visitors, offering his religion to various Arab tribes.

After being rejected in Mecca, Muhammad met the people of Medina (known as Yathrib before Islam, 338 km north of Mecca, Saudi Arabia), who agreed to receive Muslims into their city. It is at this point, according to Islamic sources, that the first verse to state a declaration of war against the enemies of Islam was "revealed" to Muhammad: *"Leave is given to those who fight because they were wronged-surely God is able to help them"* (The Qur'an 22:39) (Tarikh Al-Tabari, 16:574, 576). The timing and tone of this verse indicate that the change of Muhammad's political circumstances provided him with the opportunity to switch his strategies to advance his religion.

In Medina, to which Muhammad and his small band of followers migrated in AD 622, Muslims couldn't adequately contribute to their own subsistence creating a burden on the City. As time passed and the Emigrants failed to integrate themselves within the Medinan economy, having come from a trading-based economy, they decided to form raiding parties to rob passing Meccan caravans, because of their economic destitution and their hatred for the people of Mecca.