



Comparative Analysis of Approaches of Synoptic Gospels and Koran Regarding Crucifixion

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Abstract

Chalipa is a Persian ancient name for English Cross. We aimed to investigate different interpretations and approaches from Islamic sources on the concept of Jesus ascension into heaven. To investigate degree of genuineness of the verses and compare/contrast with Christianity approaches in order to clarify the controversial traditions. The research method in this study focused on a wide range of book-reviews research and analyzing aftermath events, we left no stone unturned regarding available Islamic traditions of hadiths. At first glance, the results indicated that the concept of ascension of Jesus, peace be upon him, comparable to the allegorical verses of Quran. However, the late Mohammadhosein Tabatabai introduced a comprehensive vision to resolve the past interpreted problems. Adopting some of his results, it is concluded that esoteric interpretations and comparative methods of studies of verses seems the most rational criteria of the subject matter. Ultimately to provide a new understanding on the subject of Christian Theology. To accomplish that the following goal was adopted: the similarity of synoptic Gospels and Koran. Considering this vision, Islamic mysticism is comparable with Gospel of John and Pauline epistles.

Keywords: *Ascension of Jesus; Cross; Apostle; Christian Theology; Paul the Apostle; Synoptic Gospels*

1. Introduction

In the context of history, reviewing and considering various topics in the life of Jesus Christ, one of the most important things is his murder and the issue of the cross. Still has not a single agreement among Christians on the one hand while the Quran's perspective is different from Christian sources. But, what would it take to resolve the differences between the Biblical and the Quranic texts? In this study we are aimed to answer this question through wide library research.

2. Semantics and Symbolic

The equivalent of cross in English means: two sticks that are cut off from each other vertically and horizontally. Cross roots in Latin word (*crux*) which dates from Ker-in Proto - Aryans (Proto-Indo-European language) that means swirling and twirling. However, the most important and most sacred symbol of the Christian is cross or crucifix, which is currently reminder of the crucifixion of Jesus (see: Pokorny, 1989).

As far as Martin Luther wrote, "the cross alone is our theology." But it should be considered that during the first three centuries of the Christian symbol smoothest and doesn't have a strong role. (see: wa 5.176.32) the cross as a Christian symbol appeared in the fourth century and the century after that phrases such as "a sign of our server" and "Veterans of the Cross" which are being used in Christianity literature (Skarsaune, 2007, p: 715). However, picture of Jesus' crucifixion that is depicted goes back to sixth century (Stott, 2006, p: 27).

Today the Christian cross semiotic reminds Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

According to Christians and Jews belief because Adam sinned and was driven from Paradise, his children and descendants are accomplices in his sin and this feature is permanent (See: Epistle to the Galatians, 4:21 and Epistle to the Romans, 20:3, 7:7, 12:5)

Rene Guenon in his book (the symbolism of the cross) is of the opinion that crucifixion has horizontal and vertical expansion of being.

"That is, at a certain level or degree of existence, and vertically at the other, that is, in the hierarchical superimposition of all the degrees. Thus, the horizontal direction represents "amplitude", or integral extension of the individuality taken as basis for realization, and the vertical direction represents the hierarchy, likewise and a fortiori indefinite, of the multiple's states. Furthermore, the symbol of the cross can also be considered in two basic ways, so-called horizontal and vertical, as it appears in the double consideration of a first cross obtained, in the ecliptic plane by joining the equinoctial and solstice points, and a second cross, orthogonal to the first, defined by the equator and the line going through the poles. (Guenon, 1996, p: 10)

The other idea reads as follow:

The Sign Crucifix appears in the skies.

Why do you fear to take the cross which is the way to heaven? Jesus had been there with his cross even before you. You should be eager for the death with cross.

If you can carry forward the cross, the cross also carries you and carries you into the favorite targets until you are not in agony, pain and suffering even though pain and suffering are endless in this world. If you set off a cross surely will find another one which might be heavier.

Take up your cross, therefore, and follow Jesus, and you shall enter eternal life. (A Kempis, 1998, pp.: 105-8)

The same interpretations are sometimes being witnessed in Islamic mysticism. The description noted by Roozbahani (d.1209) says that sensuality must be combated and crucified like Jesus. (roozbahani, 1981, p:384)

In the Old Testament punishment was being stoned to death, but sometimes the bodies remained on the trees to be a serious warning for delinquents (Joshua 10:26, Deuteronomy 21:22-23)

Jews considered the death of these people as the God's damnation for their life (Galatians 3:13) Their bodies must be buried before sunset and night (Gospel of John 19:31). Crucifix corresponding references in the Old Testament reminds us that the tree was a symbol of condemnation and humiliation (Acts 5:30, 10:39, I Peter 2:24)

However, some researchers, such as those that are Jonar Samuelson believe that crucifixion in the Bible is only an ambiguous narrative and without description. We understand that today's event is based solely on the paintings that have been drawn in the past centuries.

According to his point of view there is No evidence that the Romans 2,000 years ago pulled their prisoners to cross there.

Some evidence supports this claim, indicating that cross has become noteworthy by the time of the binding of church and government at the time of Constantine.

Christian symbols and polytheism and idolatry were the characteristic of the era of Constantine.

On one of the coins of Constantine, beneath the feet of sun God, rectangular icon is etched on the: the invincible sun outfit.

Discovery of the crucifix was at the time of Constantine and the Cross was discovered in Palestine. (Zibae Nejad, 1382, p:55)

To check where the Christian cross is originated, should have looked to the history of pre-Christian symbol of chelipa.

Cross-Previously has got a detailed history and in almost every part of the ancient world, from India, China, Syria, Iran and Egypt have seen numerous examples. (E.B, 1946, Vol. 6, p: 753)

Evangelical groups who first entered China surprisingly observed the cross on the breast statue of Buddha and while the Buddha was at least 600 years before Christ, Indian used to cherish this symbol. Holy shrine of the Buddha's footprint is called a cross, adorned with the symbol.

Amenhotep IV, a Pharaoh of Egypt, known as Akhenaten, the king, sent golden cross to the other countries as a peace treaty signed to prevent war. (Garnier, Gyan Books Pvt. Ltd, 1904, p: 226)

This symbol has ancient roots in the ancient Greek that gods and people are realized in the clothes which are adorned with variety cross. One of the roles of Apollo, god of sun and light, wearing garment adorned with the cross.

And the Phoenician and Punic had rarely imposed the death penalty by cross. Also, it is claimed that the cross has roots in Tammuz, the Babylonian god. (Lewis, 1892, pp: 237-8)

Muhammad al-Ṭāhir ibn 'Āshūr (d.1973)¹ writes about the cross that a famous usage of cross was the one a few people were tied up to a timber then they stoned him, finally speared him. It can be understood prior belief is wrong. (Ibn Ashur, 1420, vole 4, p: 306)

Tusi (d.1067)² writes that it was pharaoh who for the first-time crucified people on the cross, took branches of palm trees. (Tusi, p: 383) Carl Jung believed that cross is often seen as a tree but in the case of a devout Christian the symbol of the cross can be interpreted only in its Christian context but we cannot say that this symbol had the same meaning in all the times. The shape of the cross in all periods is not a concept (Jung, p: 80&96)

1. He was a writer and author on the subject of reforming Islamic education and jurisprudence. He is best remembered for his Qur'anic exegesis, *al-Tahrir wa'l-tanwir*

2. He was a prominent Persian scholar of the Twelver school of Shia Islam.

But late in the years, the cross symbols must be restored in Cross-Aryan civilizations in ancient Persia, and is ubiquitous in every place. (Orazio, 1908, p: 321)

That being said, Chlip is Arabic of salib (cross). Although it is certain that the word lightly is derived from Saliba (mother Cross Arabic).

But Dekhoda³ (d.1956) asserts that it is vice versa. The sound s (ص) of Arabic doesn't change to ch (چ) whereas ch in Farsi changes to s and sh in Arabic. Also, he has mentioned the Mining flag as well as Yulip (in Pahlavi), Zhulip in Hindi and Chlyp in Persian, and has used that symbol as the most important indicator of Mithraism. (bakhtiyari, 1340, P:130)

Also, the usage of this symbol in shahname⁴ as the indication of Keykavoos⁵ kingdom and charismatic is another example of this claim that the cross is indeed a Persian symbolism and has roots in Iran history. Also, the cross is seen as a punishment for the first time in ancient Persia.

Encyclopedia of Britannica points out in the entry of crosses for the first time about 519 BC. M. Darius, the Achaemenes Empire drew 3000 thousand of political opponents in by cross in Babylon. (See: Encyclopedia Britannica, crucifixion)

Herodotus ascribe the cross to Iranian as initiatory. But perhaps to the quantity of historical chronicle reports there is a doubt about the claims which enemies have attributed to Iranians, but this is the first time such a ritual in ancient Persia has been seen, cannot be easily denied.

Here the question arises that how the symbol of the cross-representing mercy and compassionate leads to horror, torture and murder?

I have studied this question in a discrete query, and soon I will disseminate report about it.

3. Cross of Jesus of Nazareth

Different Traditions Regarding the Fate of Jesus

It is a major Christian tradition that Jesus was voluntarily on the cross and deemed to sacrifice himself. President Christians say the Jews killed Christ. Others believe otherwise that according to the gospel Judas Iscariot who passed instead of Jesus and was killed.

Pursuant to the gospel of Barnabas, Iscariot was crucified.

It is said that when Roman governor, Pilate, was asked about the crucified person, answered I have got no idea about that. Intellectual differences between people in this subject confirm the claim.

But Muslims believe that pursuant to the Koran Christ was not crucified, but it appeared so unto them. The main narration is that Judas, the traitor, as a miracle of God, shaped like Jesus and was caught in his own trap.

The canonical verses about crucifixion and ascension of Jesus at Quran are as below:

1.55, al Imran 2. 157, Nesae

Naser Makaremshrazi (a contemporary exegetic) far as it is concerned Quran emphasizes on Christ(pbuh)not being crucified although it seems a simple subject, but rebuts the belief of indemnity and prevents the Christ's to find the salvation in relation of their behaviors and not in shelter of crucifixion.

3. He was a prominent Iranian linguist.

4. It is a long epic poem written by the Persian poet Ferdowsi between c. 977 and 1010 CE and is the national epic of Greater Iran.

5. He is a mythological shah of Greater Iran and a character in the *Shāhnāme*.

He knows writing of gospels at next centuries and not at Jesus era, not like as written Quran at great prophet era, non-distinguishing of Christian and Jewish by soldiers at Jest Imani garden, right-arresting based on gospels narration, silence of prophet who was arrested in front of Pilatus (the governor) by considering that he was orator, the Christ complaint from God over the crucifix and opposite view point on gospel of Barnaba, all and all are reasons for denying this subject.(makarem shirazi, 1379, v4.p203)

Davarpanah⁶(d.2005), also tries to review the subject, at the same way, to deny misleading cases of Christian, according to following verse:

And their saying: Surely we have killed the Messiah, Isa son of Mariam, the messenger of Allah; and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so) looks like Isa (" And most surely those who differ therein are only in a doubt about it They have no knowledge respecting it, but only follow a conjecture and they killed him not for sure) (157-nesa)

, with a word interpretation *اول* *افتح* means to hang because of murder, as mentioned in 41 verse of Joseph chapter:

O two companions of prison, as for one of you, he will give drink to his master of wine; but as for the other, he will be crucified, and the birds will eat from his head. The matter has been decreed about which you both inquire."

And Also Says

on (said: You believe in him before I give you leave Most surely he is the chief of you who taught you enchantment Therefore I will certainly cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will certainly crucify you on the trunks of the palm trees, and certainly you will come to know which of us is the more severe and the more abiding in chastising)(71-taha)

Means, certainly, certainly, will hang you from date's palm.

Salb (crucify)and taslib (crucifixion) are both transitive and here are as exaggeration, but sometimes it is called as mentioned at discussed verse and in this verse non-murder and non- crucify of Christ is clear, by Jewish and there is no doubt, but as they said that the subject of crucifix among the Christians and hanging the Christ is the compensation of sin is not true, so Muslims with complete unawareness wrote and crucified with the Christ, when the verse says obviously: *did not kill him certainly* ,certainly hanging is an Islamic punishment although says in 33 verse of Maedeh chapter:

Indeed, the penalty for those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive upon earth [to cause] corruption is none but that they be killed or crucified or that their hands and feet be cut off from opposite sides or that they be exiled from the land. That is for them a disgrace in this world; and for them in the Hereafter is a great punishment (Maedeh- 33)

Of course, hanging is for warning people by seeing hung one. then considering the difference between tusi theory and ibn Edris (d.1201) from Hillah school (at the 6th century A.D) the author of al-saraer book who refined tusi theory, it is noticeable that crucifying before killing is not permitted in Islam but hanging is permitted.

Tusi theosophical interpretation is deliberately: the goal of promotion is not going up towards the sky, but being near and close to God and a particular life, like the birth of the Christ without a father that is far from human wisdom and when Gabriel presaged saint Maria for her son, the word: made (kon) caused the creation of the Christ which is considered as fa yakoon (to become).

6. His book named: anwar al- erfana fi tafsir al- Quran

So after sometimes saint Maria could get out of Jerusalem, then there Christ was born and his great epistle started, he informed and invited people to accept and pray God.

Tabresi⁷ (d. 548) had a comprehensive view, looking at previous works, he exegetes the ascension of the Christ by considering the previous verse and accusations to saint Maria and goal of Jewish for killing the Christ who was narrated by Ibn abbas. (a companion of prophet Mohammad and Ali ibn abitaleb) (tabresi, 1372, v3,p:209)

Scholar Tabatabee (d. 1981) has a noticeable way:

The ascension was by soul and body and other probabilities are in correct. Therefore, this resolution is a type of release by God or is a life by permission of Allah which we do not know it.

Seyyed gotb (a contemporary Egyptian exegetist) suppose the verse motashabeh (allegorical).

He did not trust to the narrations, on the other hand, because of a gap between events and prescriptions of vulgate and summarizing of the ascension by Quran, that he believes the verse is not quite clear one, he prefers not to practice the subject. But the idea of Qotb (d.1966)⁸ can be discussed by Tabatabae reasons. so the verse 55, chapter Al imran can be interpreted.

2.3. Narration of Judas Iscariot and God`s moral

Jabaei,⁹ writes that is it permitted for God to show a person instead of the other one?

The answer is permitted because of the hardness and problem, as a magic.

Jabaei compares Shi'i opinion with his opinion.

Tabresi knows it permitted, as Gabriel descended on Prophet Mohammad in a figure of a human. (Ibid, tabresi, v3, p: 209)

This idea is not so compelling so we should give a right to Fakhre razi (d.1209) as he named imam almshakkekin between the Islamic interpreters (i.e. he always was skeptic) to discuss many suspicious questions such as:

- 1.If God is powerful to promote him, why let somebody to be killed instead of him?
- 2.Jewish thought the crucified is really the prophet so what is the benefit and is it against Gods wisdom.
- 3.Denying the crucifixion, is against the Christian idea and causes the neglect of Islam prophet by them.
- 4.Does the crucified said: I am not the Christ?

Anyway, he tries to answer the doubts of Fakhre razi as below:

According to gospels the crucified was killed after Ascension of Jesus

Imposture is a punishment for Jewish (fakhrrazi,1420, v:11, p:260-1)

This chronicle mystery that is complicated have been solved by Tabatabee as below:

Crucifixion is a type of punishment which is not always accompanied with killing. Therefore, it does not mean a common murder so. God says: and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, means that why did not mentioned one of two words? (I.e. killing and crucifying are mentioned in the verse)

7. His main work is *Majma' al-bayān*, a commentary (tafsir) of Qur'an.

8. Seyyed qotb- Ebrahim Husain shazeli, his book about Quran named: fi zilal al- Quran

9. one of the biggest Mu'tazila scholars at 3rd and 4th A.D,

Also, some points can be concluded by verse: murder, authenticated news, science, doubt.

Finally, Tabatabaee says that his protection in a strange way is not odd like as his birth and his life procedure.

Majlesi¹⁰ (d.1699) points in his collection of tradition (majlesi,1403, v.14, p:335)

Bihar al-Anwar is not an interpretation book, it is a collection of Hadith but it has unique points such as: The Ascension time, it is mentioned that it was the same day as martyr them of Imam Ali.

Last supper also is available in Muslims collections of Hadith. Likewise, the details of his whispering during the ascension is registered. So, Quran and Hadith exhibits a significant relationship to the biblical tradition. The scriptures of Christianity especially synoptic gospels echo themes more than Paul writings as evidenced by past passages of this articles. Imagination and trinity can be taken from Paul writings.

While respecting the faith perspective of Christian believers about the Paul but with a glance to gospel of Matthew the way of dialogue between civilizations can be generally admitted:

So, everybody confesses me in front of people, I will confess him in front of my father who is in the sky too. (Gospel of Matthew, 10-32)

Conceivably, father means a kind of kindness and friendship between human and god which results chronically from Yahweh a horror God in the old-testament.

So, after the era of passion and sorrow now is the term of kindness that instituted in the course of the Christ. (Soleimani ardestani, p: 105to 142)

Conclusion

At any rate, an effort has been made in this article to adduce indications as to their investigators to hold a highlight the importance of a suitable way for solving fundamental obstacles of dialogue between Islam and Christianity.

So, some points are confirmed:

I told you, after that you will see the son of human who is sitting on the right hand of power over sky. (Gospel of Matthew, 26:65)

Compare it with these verses of Quran:

The Mercy-giving who is [settled on the Throne.] 5-*alrahman*

And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision, and 169-*AL IMRAN*

The convergence is possible.

Qotb did not solve the question according to canonical verse of crucifixion in Quran, but Tabatabaee solved the problem professorial.

The challenge on pronoun reference is null because it refers to the Christ.

But during the Muslim history one of the best narrations is provided by the interpreter Tabresi.

10. He Iranian cleric, during the Safavid era.

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