

QS 37 Q 46:7–12

46.7 And when Our revelations are recited to them, plain and clear, they who renounced the Truth when it came to them, say: “This is manifest sorcery.”

46.8 Or do they say: “He fabricated it?”

Say: “If I have fabricated it, you can do me no good at all against God. He knows best your constant haranguing concerning it. Let it suffice as witness between me and you.” He is All-Forgiving, Compassionate to each.

46.9 Say: “I am not a novelty among Messengers. I know not what is to be done to me or you. I merely follow what is inspired to me. I am nothing but a manifest warner.”

46.10 Say: “Consider if it be from God and you blasphemed against it; and then someone from the Children of Israel witnesses to its like, and believes, while you stand on your pride.” God guides not wrongdoers.

46.11 The blasphemers say to the believers: “Had it been anything good, they would not have preceded us to it.” But since they have not gained guidance from it, they say: “This is an age-old falsehood.”

46.12 Before it there was the Book of Moses, a guide and a mercy; and this is a Book that confirms it, in the Arabic tongue, to warn the wicked and bring glad tidings to the righteous.

46.7. Et quand on leur récite Nos versets bien clairs, ceux qui ont mécru disent à propos de la vérité, une fois venue à eux: «C'est de la magie manifeste».

46.8. Ou bien ils disent: «Il l'a inventé!» Dis: «Si je l'ai inventé alors vous ne pourrez rien pour moi contre [la punition] d'Allah. Il sait parfaitement ce que vous propagez (en calomnies contre le Coran): Allah est suffisant comme témoin entre moi et vous. Et c'est Lui le Pardonneur, le Très Miséricordieux».

46.9. Dis: «Je ne suis pas une innovation parmi les messagers; et je ne sais pas ce que l'on fera de moi, ni de vous. Je ne fais que suivre ce qui m'est révélé; et je ne suis qu'un avertisseur clair».

46.10. Dis: «Que direz-vous si [cette révélation s'avère] venir d'Allah et que vous n'y croyez pas qu'un témoin parmi les fils d'Israël en atteste la conformité [au Pentateuque] et y croit pendant que vous, vous le repoussez avec orgueil... En vérité Allah ne guide pas les gens injustes!»

46.11. Et ceux qui ont mécru dirent à ceux qui ont cru: «Si ceci était un bien, ils (les pauvres) ne nous y auraient pas devancés». Et comme ils ne se seront pas laissés guider par lui ils diront: «Ce n'est qu'un vieux mensonge!»

46.12. Et avant lui, il y avait le Livre de Moïse, comme guide et comme miséricorde. Et ceci est [un Livre] confirmateur, en langue arabe, pour avertir ceux qui font du tort et pour faire la bonne annonce aux bienfaisants

سورة الأحقاف

وَإِذَا تُلِيٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ (7) أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ إِنْ افْتَرَيْتُهُ فَلَا تَمْلِكُونَ لِي مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ كَفَىٰ بِهِ شَهِيدًا نَّبِيًّا وَنَبِيَّتُمْ وَهُوَ الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (8) قُلْ مَا كُنْتُ بِدْعًا مِّنَ الرَّسْلِ وَمَا أَدْرِي مَا يَفْعَلُ بِي وَلَا بِكُمْ إِنْ أَتَيْتُمْ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (9) قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَكَفَرْتُمْ بِهِ وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَىٰ مِثْلِهِ فَأَمَنَ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ ثُمَّ إِنْ لَّا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (10) وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا مَا سَبَقُونَا إِلَيْهِ وَإِذْ لَمْ يَهْتَدُوا بِهِ فَسَيَقُولُونَ هَذَا إِفْكٌ قَدِيمٌ (11) وَمِن قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَىٰ إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّسَانِ عَرَبِيًّا لِّيُنذِرَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَيُبَشِّرَ لِلْمُحْسِنِينَ (12)

Azaiez

Passage marqué par une succession de contre-discours et de ripostes coraniques. Arrêtons-nous sur le contre-discours v.8 et l'expression *iftara*. Le terme apparaît

dans un contre-discours à 7 reprises dans l'ensemble du Coran (Q 10:38; 11:13, 15; 21:5 ; 25:4; 42:24; 46:8). L'intérêt est ici de comparer pour un même contre-discours (l'accusation de forger un Coran) les différentes ripostes que le Coran engage dans cette polémique. On découvre ainsi trois formes de réponses (on laissera ici les évolutions thématiques) : l'injonction donnée aux adversaires de produire un même discours, l'intervention de l'allocutaire qui prend la parole, l'intervention exclusive du locuteur coranique qui s'adresse en premier lieu à son allocutaire pour le consoler et le rassurer sur sa mission. Ces trois formes conduisent à définir différentes stratégies de communication dans le cadre de la polémique que l'on peut (rapidement) définir par trois mots clés : contre -argumenter (face à l'adversaire), justifier (le discours coranique) et soutenir (l'allocutaire). Cf. Azaiez 2012.

Dye

Sur ce passage très concis, et passablement obscur, on peut avoir plus de questions que de réponses.

Qui sont exactement les protagonistes ? S'agit-il de polémiques réelles, remontant par exemple à la prédication du Prophète, et si oui, de quand datent-elles (le v. 10 semble impliquer un conflit avec les Juifs) ? Ou ne s'agirait-il pas plutôt de la *mise en scène*, par les rédacteurs du Coran, de la figure d'un prophète, d'un avertisseur, en butte à l'incroyance de certains ? Dans ce dernier cas, est-il possible (je crains que non) de faire le départ entre ce qui relève d'une mise en scène rhétorique et littéraire, et ce qui relève de débats ayant eu lieu effectivement, du vivant du Prophète, ou éventuellement après les conquêtes, entre les conquérants et les populations conquises ?

Vv. 7–8 : il est remarquable que les deux objections adressées au messenger (magie, invention) ne reçoivent pas de réponse satisfaisante – absence de réponse pure et simple dans le cas de la magie, et manœuvre dilatoire dans le cas de l'invention.

V. 9 : l'idée que ce que doit dire le destinataire du message (Muḥammad, selon la lecture la plus naturelle) est la même chose que ce qui a été dit par les messagers précédents se retrouve par exemple en Q 41:43. Par ailleurs, on trouve dans le Coran l'idée qu'il ne convient pas de faire de distinction ou de hiérarchie entre les messagers (Q 2:136, 285). Comme le note Wansbrough (1977: 55–56), cette position est contredite par d'autres passages coraniques, notamment Q 17:21, 55. Est-il possible de réconcilier ces thèses apparemment divergentes ?

V. 10 : que désigne exactement *kitāb* ici ? Les sourates dites al-Ḥawāmīm (Q 40–46) sont axées, dans leurs versets liminaires, sur la révélation (*tanzīl*, *kitāb*) que reçoit le destinataire du message. Que *kitāb* doive être identifié au *muṣḥaf* coranique – autrement dit, que le Coran soit, purement et simplement, un texte autoréférentiel – ne va nullement de soi (sauf à considérer que ces versets sont contemporains de la composition-collecte du Coran, auquel cas la thèse de l'autoréférentialité est plus plausible) : *kitāb* pourrait-il simplement désigner « les révélations » reçues par le

Prophète (sans que l'on sache clairement l'étendue des révélations concernées, ni si elles ont déjà été mises par écrit) ?

El-Badawi

This passage illustrates the dispute over the authenticity of revelation, where v. 8 accuses the prophet (Muḥammad) of “fabrication” (*iftirā'*). He replies, “I am not a novelty (*bid'*) among messengers...[but rather] a clear warner” (v. 9). The prophet supports his claim by referencing—without any detail—an episode concerning the “Children of Israel” (vv. 10–11). In this episode the rebels/unbelievers denounce the truth (cf. *al-ḥaqq* in v. 7) as “old reversion” (*ifk qadīm*; cf. J.B. Aram/Syr. *a-p-k*), i. e., “going back to the old ways.” These old ways were none other than the Scripture (Law?) of Moses (*kitāb mūsā*). Now there is a new scripture (or law?) “confirming” (*muṣaddiq*) earlier scripture (v. 12).

The use of the words “novelty” (*bid'*) and “confirming” (*muṣaddiq*) echo “We matched” (*qafaynā*) and “they perverted” (*ibtada'ūhā*) in Q 57:26–27, which I believe illustrate the passage’s condemnation of the Church once it freed itself from the Law of Moses. Could Q 46:7–12, similarly, be directed to a doubting Christian audience, reluctant to observe the outdated Jewish Law?

Hawting

Another passage that gives some insight into the views and arguments of the opponents, although the precise meaning of some of it is difficult. The opponents accuse the Qur’ānic messenger of sorcery (*sihr*) and of forgery (*iftirā'*), both accusations familiar from other passages in the Qur’ān. The former accusation echoes the distinction made in the Bible between the true prophets of Israel and the pseudo-prophets of other nations, who are merely soothsayers, augurs and sorcerers (e. g., Deut 18:10–11). The charge of forgery may imply the claim that material plagiarized from other human beings is revelation from God (cf., e. g., Q 25: 4–6). The messenger’s defence against the charge of forgery is hard to understand: it seems to mean that it would have been such a serious matter that, had he committed it, nobody could avert God’s punishment of him (cf. Q 11: 35 where Noah is told to defend himself against the same accusation by saying, “If I had forged it, the offence would be mine (*ini ftaray-tuhu fa-'alayya iḡrāmī*).” The remainder of the messenger’s reply is familiar from other passages in the Qur’ān: he is a messenger like previous ones, he does not claim to know the unknown (“what will be done with me and with you”), he merely follows what has come to him as *wahy*, and he is merely a warner.

Vv. 10–12 then repeat the familiar idea that what the messenger brings (called a *kitāb* in v. 12) is similar to, and confirms, the earlier revelation to the children of Israel, but there are allusions to some less familiar arguments. In v. 10 the authenticity of the message is supported by the fact that a witness from the children of Israel has testified to its similarity (*'alā miṭlihi*), presumably to their own scripture, “and has

believed.” That seems to imply that the messenger is claiming contemporary Jewish support for him and his message, and is difficult to reconcile with the traditional view that this is a Meccan passage. The unbelievers’ arrogance (*istikbār*), however, means that the messenger’s claim has had quite the opposite result to what was intended: the opponents reply that if it (the message?) were good, they (the believers, or the children of Israel?) would not have accepted it ahead of the unbelievers (*mā sabaqūnā ilayhi*) – thus they will call it an old falsehood. That echoes, in an inverted form, several New Testament passages that say that the message was offered first to the Jews and, only after they had rejected it, to the Gentiles. Nevertheless, the passage concludes, this is a confirmation in Arabic of the book of Moses, in order to warn the wicked and give good tidings to the righteous.

The passage is clearly hard to reconcile with the traditional idea that these opponents were idolatrous polytheists. The messenger assumes that they might be persuaded by references to the children of Israel and the book of Moses, and he attributes their refusal to be persuaded to their pride and feeling of superiority over those who have accepted the messenger.

Hilali

There is an opposition in this passage between the authentic character of the sacred text and its apocryphal character. Both sides don’t depend on the text but seem to be exterior to it. The authenticity of the text depends on the *šahāda* (testimony) of God and of Banū Isrā’īl. The Prophet is represented in the negative way *ma kuntu bid’an* (I’m not a novelty...); *mā adrī mā yuḥḥalu bī wa-lā bikum* (I don’t know what will be done...). When he is described in the positive way, his mission as *intermediary* is highlighted and he only *follows* what is revealed to him *in atba’u illā mā yūḥḥa ilayya* (I only follow what is revealed to me). My second remark concerns the verb *talā* (to recite) v. 7. Neither the subject of the verb nor its object is determined except the vague notion of *āyāt* (signs). Frederick Denny shows in his study of the religious expressions that the *tilāwa* (recitation) as reading in a loud voice concerns in the beginning of Islam not only the Qur’ān but the scriptures of “the People of the Book,” meaning among others the Jews and Christians (Denny, “Qur’ān Recitation: A Tradition of Oral Performance and Transmission,” *Oral Tradition* 4/1–2 (1989): 5–26). The text referred to as object of *tilāwa* (recitation) in (v. 7) could be identified to writings other than the Qur’ān. The difference of the designation of the sacred writings between v. 7 and v. 12 reinforce the idea that v. 7 may refer to a text other than the Qur’ān.

Khalfallah

Je m’arrête sur le v. 12 de ce passage, plus particulièrement sur le terme *kitāb* qui n’est pas, malgré sa clarté trompeuse, sans poser des difficultés sémantiques de taille. Il est communément admis que, tout au long de sa vie, Muḥammad n’a jamais procédé

à la compilation des sourates dans un seul livre. Au sens matériel, nul livre (*muṣḥaf*) n'a existé jusqu'au règne de 'Uṭmān. Les sourates inachevées et les versets séparés étaient appris par cœur et transmis par voie orale. Au moment de la révélation de ce verset, nul *kitāb*, au sens propre (livre matériel), n'existait. L'ambiguïté de ce terme réside dans le fait qu'il n'a pas de référent matériel. Pour dissiper cette difficulté, on a fait appel à la rhétorique pour forger la figure du *mağāz 'aqī*, trope fondé non sur la relation de similitude (comme c'est le cas de la métaphore, la comparaison et l'analogie), mais sur une autre relation logique. Le mot *kitāb* est alors considéré comme une image ; le rapport existant entre le sens propre et le sens figuré est appelé *i'tibārmāyakūn* (prise en considération du devenir du premier terme du trope). Ainsi, cette image anticipe l'état futur du Coran : à partir de son état oral, épars et non-écrit, on fera un livre. Ces rhétoriciens y voient même un miracle, puisque le Coran anticipe les événements futurs, en l'occurrence, sa recension, consignation et refonte en un livre écrit.

La deuxième thèse, plus polémique, défend qu'il s'agissait d'une comparaison avec le Livre des Juifs, la Torah, et pour certains ceux des Chrétiens. Deux récits historiques sont d'une importance capitale, mais peu examinés par les chercheurs : [1] Muḥammad qui regardait devant le Rabbin de Médine l'*iṣṭiwāna* (cylindre ?) de la Torah. [2] Muḥammad qui regardait la *mağalla* de Luqmān en disant que c'était bien. L'histoire de l'écrit et des écrits de cette époque est à revisiter...

Pregill

To my mind, this passage epitomizes the reformist ideology of Qur'anic discourse; here the revelation and the recipient's mission are concisely located in salvation history. The bearer of this revelation brings "clear signs" that are denied, likened to mere invention or witchcraft; the prophet is not an innovator among the prophets or one who claims to foresee the future, but rather only conveys what is revealed to him, a "clear warner."

Vv. 10 – 12 are critical: if one of Israel acknowledges it – that is, witnesses that it is like what came before, i.e. the Torah – but the audience continues to reject... That the suspension of the apodosis signals an unspoken threat is quite obvious. The objectors retort: if it was any good, they [Israel] would not accept it [optative, not perfect?] before us. Not being guided, they say: this is an old lie. No; this book confirms the law of Moses before it, but in Arabic (in a clear Arabic tongue); it is a warning to evildoers and a gospel (good news, glad tidings, evangelion) for men of good will.

In line with the view of Ohlig and others that the Qur'ān positions itself as an "Arabic Deuteronomy," I might surmise that the subtext here is that the revelation is similar to – a revival or rejuvenation of – the Torah, but in clear Arabic (and not Hebrew or Syriac) speech; a Jew would recognize it, and the audience should as well – but they deny it precisely because of the appeal to the potential role of Jews in confirming it, which seems like a very Christian move. The audience further objects: this attempt to bring a new/old scripture – or perhaps the whole message of

revival – is an *ifk qadīm*, an old lie – we’ve seen this sort of thing before. The passage closes with the strident assertion that this revelation’s authority should be manifestly clear; it is not only like the *kitāb Mūsā* (presumably of value to the audience) but also like the Gospel (*bušrā*, also of presumed worth to the audience). Again, the context seems to be one in which a new revelation that particularly draws on Torah, invoking the authority of Moses but also the revivalist/confirming mission of Jesus, is brought to people who have every reason to acknowledge and accept it, but they don’t – suggesting an at least superficially Christian discursive context.

Reynolds

All of the *sūras* 40–46 begin with the letters *ḥā’ mīm* and continue with a reference to the divine “book” or divine revelation (Q 42 has additional letters in v. 2, and so the mention of revelation appears only in v. 3). In the passage at hand the revelation itself is presented as a distinctive proof of Muḥammad’s prophethood. The importance of the Qur’ān’s self-referentiality here is further apparent in light of a parallel with Q 61:6, where the Qur’ān has the Israelites explain away Jesus’ miracles (or signs: *bayyināt*) with the explanation: “This is plain magic.” Here (v. 7) the Qur’ān has the unbelievers explain away Muḥammad’s recitation of signs (*āyāt*) with the same words. Yet if the Prophet is not a miracle-maker but only a warner (v. 9), it matters to the Qur’ān that this warning is in Arabic (v. 21). With this “warning” the Arabic speakers have a prophet for themselves, who delivers God’s revelation in their own language.

Rippin

In v. 10, the reference to *šāhid min banī Isrā’īl* produces the expected range of speculation: the person is either the 7th century Hijazi, ‘Abd Allah ibn Salām, or the Biblical Moses. The passage is likely best taken as a part of the conversation that involves the Jews in general with the positive note that the person witnesses *‘alā l-miṭlihi*, with the “likeness” clearly being the message from God; those who reject God are those who are proud. That the reference is to Moses is reinforced in v. 12 with the *kitāb Mūsā* being “a guidance and a mercy” that confirms (*muṣaddiq*) the Arabic book.

Sirry

The shift of voices is so characteristic of the Qur’ānic discourses. In this passage we are presented with various layers of speakers. Assuming that *qul* is representing a divine voice, the addressee (the prophet) is ordered to refute the opponents’ view regarding the authenticity of revelation. In arguing against their rejection, the passage reminds its opponents of one witness of the children of Israel who acknowledges its similarity to the book of Moses. Does the passage refer to one of the children of Israel

who followed Muḥammad’s teaching, or does this reflect Muḥammad’s confidence that the Jews would accept it as similar to their own? The use of the term *banū isrāʾīl* rather than *yahūd* or *hūd* or *allaḏīna hādū* is intriguing. Is this ethnic reference to contrast with *lisānan ʿarabīyan*? Interestingly, the words *yahūd* or *hādū* are not used in the supposedly Meccan passages. The historical significance of the Qurʾānic uses of these different terms in referring to Jews needs to be explored.

Younes

In my comments on a number of passages (QS 14, 15, 22) I pointed out several instances in which the accusative case is found in violation of the standard rules of Arabic case assignment. V. 12 of this passage includes three such instances: *imāman*, *lisānan*, and *ʿarabīyan*, all of which should receive the nominative case according to these rules.

Zellentin

The logic of Q 46:11 is a powerful rhetorical trope still employed today: accusing a hostile audience of rejecting a good idea since it did not originate with them. How frustrating it must have been for the Prophet to have found what came from his mouth rejected *both* as “fabricated” (*ftarāh*, v. 8) apostolic innovation (*bidʿan min al-rusuli*, v. 9) and as “ancient lie” (*ifkun qadīmun*)! The Qurʾān subtly constructs the perceived accusation as self-defeating, as erroneously claiming that its wine is bad both because it is old and because it is new. Its intended audience is supposed to share the sense of the Gospel that nobody drinks old wine and then desires fresh wine, “for he says, the old is better” (*Diatessaron* 7:36). In truth, the Qurʾān counters, it confirms Jesus and the Gospel, just as the Gospel in turn confirms the Torah (all the while deferring the consumption of actual wine until the end of days, in line with Matt 26:29).

The Qurʾān’s claim that it “confirms” (*muṣaddiqun*) previous revelation, and especially the Torah and the Gospel, is a central notion (see my comments on QS 15). The continuous invocation of those Scriptures should guide a critical audience to see how much is at stake for the prophet had it been easy to falsify his claim to soundness with other traditions available at the time: a single rabbi, a single Christian elder in command of his Scripture could have easily swayed the audience should the Qurʾān’s understanding of Scripture not have matched that of the seventh century Hijaz. Paying close attention to the rhetoric and its socio-historical implications reinforces my sense that the text’s unique dual endorsement of the Torah and the Gospel, in theory and in practice, in religious symbolism and in ritual observance, made eminent sense to an audience that was familiar with both texts. As I suggested repeatedly, we can see this combination in practice throughout the Qurʾān. Many in the Syriac Church upheld its “Old Testament” at the same time as abrogating it; the one religious culture that would be familiar with the combination of these same

texts, symbols, and rituals is the Judaeo-Christian one that had produced the *Clementine Homilies* and the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (see my opening statement).