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## **The Qur'an: Grammatical Errors**

Muslims believe that Allah revealed a book to each of Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus. "But the Book of the prophet Abraham was lost. The Books of David (the Psalms), Moses (the Torah), and Jesus (the Gospel) were changed." [1]

It is only the Qur'an that was revealed to Mohammad by the angel Gabriel that was preserved, and indeed "Not a single word of it has been changed or lost. It is found today exactly as it was revealed to the Prophet Mohammed." [2] As such it is not Mohammed's personal achievement. Rather it is a divine miracle. The prophethood of every prophet was attested to by divine miracles. It is believed that the Qur'an is God's miracle confirming the prophethood of Mohammed.

"The only miracle Mohammad claimed was the Qur'an ... The Qur'an is the only inspired scripture that has come down to us intact as revealed to the prophet. There has been no tampering of the text and the original purity of the language has stayed undefiled." [3]

Muslims do believe that the Qur'an is a literary miracle and that it is unmatched among any other literature. It is not a human masterpiece but a divine miracle, where every letter and dot was revealed from heaven, with no difference between what was revealed and what we have in our hands.

Masterpieces are the work of humans. Miracles are the work of God. A miracle, any miracle, is superior to the best of masterpieces. Also miracles cannot be "improved upon" by human efforts since that would be the same as acknowledging that the miracle, i.e. the work of God, was flawed.

A masterpiece surpasses other works in one particular area. For example, a masterpiece of engineering does not necessarily have to have an aesthetic appeal. Or a masterpiece in art doesn't have to conform to engineering standards. A masterpiece in flower arrangement does not necessarily have to smell good.

Muslims claim the Qur'an not just to be a human literary masterpiece, but a divine literary miracle. But this claim does not square with the facts. For the Qur'an which we have in our hands contains obvious grammatical errors which is plain to see for all who know Arabic.

### **The First Error**

In 5:69

"Surely they that believe, and those of Jewry, and the Sabaeans, and the Christians, whosoever believes in God and the Last Day, and works righteousness - no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow." (Arberry)  
"Innal-laziina 'aamanuu wal-laziina haaduu was-Saabi'uuna wan-Nasaaraa man 'aamana bilaahi wal-Yawmil-'Aakhiri wa 'amila saali-hanfalaa khaw-fun 'alay-him wa laa hum yah-zanuun."

There is a grammatical error in the above verse. The word *Saabi'uuna* has been declined wrongly.

In two other verses, the same word, in exactly the same grammatical setting was declined correctly.

2:62 "Innaḷ-laziina 'aamanuu waḷ-laziina haaduu wan-Nasaaraa was-Saabi'iina ..."

22:17 "Innaḷ-laziina 'aamanuu waḷ-laziina haaduu was-Saabi'iina wan-Nasaaraa ..."

You notice that the word was written *Saabi'uuna* in 5:69 and was written *Saabi'iina* in 2:62 and 22:17. In the last two verses the word was declined correctly because the word *inna* in the beginning of the sentence causes a form of declension called "nasb" (as in cases of accusative or subjunctive) and the "yeh" is the "sign of nasb". But the word *Saabi'uuna* in 5:69 was given the 'uu, waw which is the sign of "raf'a" (as in cases of nominative or indicative). This then is an obvious grammatical error.

### The Second Error

In 4:162

"But those of them that are firmly rooted in knowledge, and the believers believing in what has been sent down to thee, and what was sent down before thee, that perform the prayer and pay the alms, and those who believe in God and the Last Day - them We shall surely give a mighty wage." (Arberry)  
"Laakinir-Raasi-khuuna fil-'ilmi minhum waḷ-Mu'-minuuna yu'-minuuna bi-maaa 'unzila 'ilayka wa maaa 'unzila min-qablika waḷ-muqiimiin as-Salaata wal mu'-tuunaz-Zakaata waḷ-Mu'-mi-nuuna billaahi waḷ-Yawmil-'Aakhir: 'ulaaa 'ika sanu'-tii-him 'ajran 'aziimaa."

The word *muqiimiin* should be *muqiimuun*. The word should be declined by the "raf'a sign" like the other nouns in the sentence. Indeed the two nouns before it (*Raasi-khuun* and *Mu'-minuun*), and the noun after it (*mu'-tuun*) are declined correctly. Some have argued that this word was declined as such to distinguish and praise the act of praying, but the scholar Ibn al-Khatib says that this is a sick reasoning. (*al-Furqan* by Mohammad M. 'abd al-Latif Ibn al-Katib, Dar al-Kutub al-'elmiyah, Beirut, p.43). Such reasoning defies logic. Why would one distinguish prayer which is a branch of religion, and not faith which is the fundamental and root of religion? Besides can this logic apply to the error of declension in the previous verse? Do we conclude that the *Saabi'iin* are more distinguished than those who believe, and the People of the Book? And why do they get distinguished in one verse and not the other as we have seen? God is much higher than this sick logic. This again is an obvious grammatical error.

### The Third Error

In 20:63

"They communed secretly saying, 'These two men are sorcerers'." (Arberry)  
"Qaaluuu inna haazaani la-saahiraani ..."

The word *haazaani* should be *haazayn*.

The word *haazaani* was declined incorrectly because the word *inna* in the beginning of the nominal sentence causes a form of declension called "nasb" to the nominative and the "yeh" is the "sign of nasb". This is the third grammatical error.

### The Fourth Error

In 2:177

"It is not piety, that you turn your faces to the East and to the West. True piety is this: to believe in God, and the Last Day ... to give of one's substance ... and to ransom the slave, to perform the prayer, to pay the alms. And they who fulfil their covenant ... and endure with fortitude." (Arberry)

"Laysal-birra 'an-tuwalluu wujuuhakum qibala-Mashriqi wal-Maghrib wa laakinnal-birra man 'aamana billaahi wal-Yawmil-'Akhiri wal-malaaa-'ikati wal-Kitaabi wan-nabiyyiin: wa 'aatal-maala 'alaa hubbihii zawilqurbaa wal-yataamaa wal-masaakiina wabnas-sabiili was-saaa-'iliina wa fir-riqaab: wa'aqaamas-Salaata wa 'aataz-Zakaata; wal-muufuuna bi'ahdihim 'izaa 'aahaduu was-Saabiriina fil-ba'-saaa'i wazzarraa-'i ..."

In the above verse there are five grammatical errors. In four of them the wrong tense was used, as the sentence begins in the present tense with the verb *tuwalluu*, while the other four verbs were written in the past tense:

'aaman should be *tu'minuu*;  
'aata should be *tu'tuu*;  
'aqaama should be *tuqimuu*;  
'aata should be *tu'tuu*.

The above verse when translated into English as it appears in Arabic would be: "It is not righteousness that ye **turn** your faces to the East and the West; but righteousness is he who **believed** in Allah and the Last day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets; and **gave** his wealth, ... and **performed** prayer and **paid** the alms."

But the English translators have observed the tense, and the verbs "believed", "gave", "performed", and "paid" were corrected and written in the present tense. (For example see Arberry, Pickthall, Yusuf Ali and Rodwell's translations).

The fifth error is the wrong declension of the word *saabiriina*. It should be declined *saabiruuna* like the preceding word *muufuuna*.

### The Fifth Error

In 3:59

"the likeness of Jesus, in God's sight, is as Adam's likeness; He created him of dust, then said He unto him, 'Be,' and he was." (Arberry)

"Inna massala 'Isaa 'inda-laahi ka-masali 'Adam; khalaqahuu min-turaabin-sum-ma qaala lahuu kun fa-yakuun."

The above verse when translated into English as it appears in Arabic would be: "The likeness of Jesus with Allah is as the likeness of Adam. He created him of dust, then He said to him 'Be,' and he is." The above is Pickthall's translation. Please note that he translated *yakuun* (is) as it appears in Arabic, i.e. in the present tense.

The word *yakuun* ("is" in English) should be *kana* ("was") to be consistent with the past tense of the previous verb "said" as it was corrected by Arberry, Rodwell and Yusuf Ali in their translations of that verse. This is the fifth error.

### **The Sixth Error**

In 21:3

"The evildoers whisper one to another ..."

"Laahiyatan - quluubuhum. Wa 'asarrun-najwallaziin zalamuu..."

The word *'asarru* should be *'asarra*. The above is a verbal sentence, and the rule for such a sentence, where the verb comes before the (masculine) subject, is that the verb must be in the third (masculine) singular form, if the active subject of the verbal sentence is stated in the sentence. (The same rule holds for substituting the two mentionings of "masculine" by "feminine".) But the verb in the above Qur'anic verse came in the plural form. See how the above rule was observed in the following Qur'anic verses: 3:52, 10:2, 16:27, 16:35, 3:42, 49:14.

### **The Seventh Error**

In 22:19

"These are two disputants who have disputed concerning their Lord."

(Arberry)

"haazaani Khismani 'ikhtasamuu fi rabbihim ..."

In Arabic, like English words are declined or conjugated with respect to number. In English there are two numbers: singular and plural. So in English two men are treated as plural. But in Arabic there are three numbers: singular, dual, and plural. So in Arabic the verbs and nouns are treated according to the singular or the dual or the plural. The verb in that verse was conjugated as if the subject is more than two. But the verse speaks only of two. So the rules of the dual should be followed and the word *'ikhtasamuu* should be *'ikhtasamaa*. So this is yet another error.

### **The Eighth Error**

In 49:9

"If two parties of believers fight, put things right between them." (Arberry)

"wa 'in-taaa-'ifataani mi-nal-Mu'-miniinaq-tatalu fa-'aslihuu baynahumaa."

This error in this verse is like the previous one. The number again is dual but the verb was conjugated as if the subject is plural. So the verb *'eq-tatalu* should be *'eqtatalata*.

### **The Ninth Error**

In 63:10

"O my Lord, if only Thou wouldst defer me unto a near term, so that I may make freewill offering, and so I may become one of the righteous." (Arberry)  
"... Rabbi law laaa 'akhartaniii 'ilaaa 'ajalin-qariibin-fa-'assaddaqa wa 'akum-minas-salihiin."

The verb '*akun* was incorrectly conjugated. It should be '*akuuna*, i.e. the last consonant must have the vowel "a", instead of being vowelless, because the verb '*akun*, is in the subjunctive. Indeed the previous verb ('*assaddaqa*) has been correctly conjugated and is in the subjunctive. The reason is that in Arabic the present tense is placed in the subjunctive mood if it is preceeded by certain words (huruf nasebah). One of such words is the "causative fa".

### **The Tenth Error**

In 91:5

"By the heaven and that which built it." (Arberry)  
"was-samaaa-'i wa maa ba-naahaa."

The word *ma* in the Arabic language is used for the impersonal. But the subject of the above verse is God. So the word which should be used is the Arabic word *man* (meaning "him who"). Arberry translated that verse as follows: "By the heaven and that which built it" meaning God. Pickthall however corrected the impersonal (*ma*, that which) and translated the verse as follows: "By the heaven and Him Who built it."

Indeed Pickthall also corrected the two verses that follow:

And the earth and Him Who spread it. Q. 91:6.  
And a soul and Him Who perfected it. Q. 91:7.

Yusuf Ali, to get out of the problem, translated the above verse as follows: "By the firmament and its wonderful structure". So the subject 'God' does not appear at all in his translation of that verse. He gives his reason for his translation in a footnote saying: The *ma masdariya* in Arabic, in this and the subsequent clauses, is best translated in English by nouns." But the word *bana* in *banaha* is not a noun but a verb in the past tense as translated correctly by Arberry and Pickthall. The word *ma* should have been *man* (meaning "who") and in that context it should have been "Who" with a capital W.

### **The Eleventh Error**

In 41:11

"Then He lifted Himself to heaven when it was smoke, and said to it and to the earth, 'come willingly, or unwillingly!' They said, 'we come willingly.'"  
"... faqal laha wa lel-Arad 'iteya taw'aan aw karha qalata atayna ta'e'een."

Heaven and earth in Arabic are feminine nouns, the verb said in "they said" is accordingly feminine and dual (*qalata*), but the adjective "willing" at the end of the verse is masculine and plural (*ta'e'een*), being at variance with the rule that the

adjectives should match their nouns in number in gender, thus *ta'e'een* which is used for plural, should be *ta'e'atain* which is used for feminine dual.

### **The Twelfth Error**

In 7:56

"The mercy of God is near."

"... inna rahmata Allahi qaribun min al-mohseneen."

The above verse is a nominal clause. In such a clause the predicate should match the subject (*rahmata*) of the nominal clause in gender. The word *qaribun* (meaning "near") is the predicate of *rahmata Allahi* ("mercy of Allah"), they should match each other in gender. But this is not the case in the Arabic text. *Rahmata* is feminine in Arabic and so the word *qaribun* (which is masculine) should instead be *qaribah* (its feminine form).

This rule was correctly observed in other Qur'anic verses. For example, in 9:40 we read: "Kalemat ul-llah heya al-'ulya." Here both *Kalemat* and *heya* are feminine. To say instead: "Kalemat ul-llah howa al-'a'la" would never be correct. That would be just as wrong as saying: "... inna rahmata Allahi qaribun min ..."

### **Error 13**

In 7:160

"We divided them into twelve tribes."

"wa qata'nahom 'ethnata 'ashrata asbatan."

Instead of *asbatan* it should read *sebtan*.

In the Arabic it literally says "twelve tribes". That is correct in English but not correct in Arabic. In Arabic it should say twelve tribe because the noun that is counted by a number above ten should be singular. This rule is observed correctly for example in 7:142, 2:60, 5:12, 9:36, 12:4.

The Qor'an contains sentences which are incomplete and not fully intelligible without the aid of commentaries; foreign words, unfamiliar Arabic words, and words used with other than the normal meaning; adjectives and verbs inflected without observance of the concords of gender and number; illogically and ungrammatically applied pronouns which sometimes have no referent; and predicates which in rhymed passages are often remote from the subjects ... To sum up, more than one hundred Qor'anic aberrations from the normal rules and structures have been noted... ('Ali Dashti, *23 Years: A Study of the Prophetic Career of Mohammad*, Mazda Publishers, Costa Mesa, California, 1994, pages 48,50)

Hence, the above are just a small sample and more are to come.

Some of the above errors are not a new discovery by modern critics. They were known from the first century of Islam by the closest followers of Mohammad. It is reported that 'Uthman, after viewing the first standard copy of the Qur'an, said, 'I see

grammatical errors in it, and the Arabs will read it correctly with their tongues.'[4] The Muslim scholar Ibn al-Khatib who quoted the above report in his book *al-Furqan*, went on to mention another report on the authority of 'Aa'isha, one of Mohammad's wives, saying, "There are three grammatical errors in the Book of Allah, they are the fault of the scribe:

In 20:63

"Qaaluuu inna haazaani la-saahiraani ..."

And in 5:69

"Inna-l-laziina 'aamanuu wa-l-laziina haaduu was-Saabi'uuna wan-Nasaaraa man 'aamana bilaahi wa-l-Yawmil-'Aakhiri wa 'amila saali-hanfalaah khaw-fun 'alay-him wa laa hum yah-zanuun."

And in 4:162

"Laakinir-Raasi-khuuna fil-'ilmi minhum wa-l-Mu'-minuuna yu'-minuuna bi-maaa 'unzila 'ilayka wa maaa 'unzila min-qablika wa-l-muqiimiin as-Salaata wal mu'-tuunaz-Zakaata wa-l-Mu'-mi-nuuna billaahi wa-l-Yawmil-'Aakhir: 'ulaaa 'ika sanu'-tii-him 'ajran 'aziimaa.'"[5]

Two comments need to be made.

**First:** Muslims claim that the Qur'an we have in our hands today is what was originally revealed to Mohammed, with no change to even one letter. However, there are grammatical errors in today's Qur'an. In facing these errors, we must decide between one of two choices. Either, the original Qur'an was revealed containing these errors, or the errors resulted from mistakes by human scribes as they were copying the Qur'an. There exist no other possibilities. As the first choice is unthinkable, the second is the only logical explanation. But that also means that it is not true that the Qur'an we have in our hands is the "only inspired scripture that has come down to us intact as revealed to the prophet. There has been no tampering of the text and the original purity of the language has stayed undefiled."

**Second:** If the above errors were found in an article to be published, these errors would be corrected. The article, with these errors remaining in it, could not be hailed as a masterpiece.

The Qur'an, because of these errors, is not even a masterpiece. If, humanly speaking, the Qur'an cannot be called a masterpiece, can anyone honestly call it a divine literary miracle?

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The following notice accompanied a very respectable piece of Islamic software called the Alim, 1992.

NOTICE!!!

The Arabic Qur'an has some errors which will be remedied very shortly in a maintenance release.

....

NOTICE !!!

The Arabic Qur'an referred to in the above notice is the one provided in the Alim software package.

No doubt many learned people have gone over this Arabic Qur'an to check it for mistakes, like any good publisher would do. If even with the advanced technology they have, there are still errors in it, how can we have any confidence that the first edition of the Qur'an in a time when very few people can read and write Arabic, was written down error free? Mohammad himself said "we are a nation that does not know how to write or do accounting." And the Muslim in early Islam used to set free some Jews among their war captives if they would in turn teach a few Arabs how to read and write Arabic.

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### References:

1. Teaching of Islam, Islamic Council of New South Wales, p.15.
2. Teaching of Islam, Islamic Council of New South Wales, p.18.
3. Introduction to Pickthall's translation with transliteration, the Burney Academy, Hyderabad, p.xxiv.
4. Al-Furqan by Mohammad M. 'abd al-Latif Ibn al-Katib, Dar al-Kutub al-'elmiyah, Beirut, p.90
5. Al-Furqan by Mohammad M. 'abd al-Latif Ibn al-Katib, Dar al-Kutub al-'elmiyah, Beirut, p.91

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## Islamic Awareness

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### Responses To The Grammatical Errors In The Qur'ân

M S M Saifullah

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*Peace be upon those who follow the guidance:*

Newton and his buddy M. Rafiqul-Haqq published a list of grammatical errors in the Qur'ân in 1996. They can be viewed at

<http://debate.domini.org/newton/grammar.html>

Most of us are unaware that the famous orientalist of our times John Burton wrote a paper called the **Linguistic Errors In The Qur'ân** in the **Journal Of**

[Semitic Studies](#), Volume XXXIII/2, Autumn 1988. He dealt with the hadith of Ayesha<sup>(R)</sup> where she has supposed to have said that the ayahs 4:162, 5:69 and 20:63 are grammatically incorrect. Burton also dealt with the ayah 2:177 to show its grammatical inconsistency. These four verses are also dealt by Newton *et al.* in their homepage.

In 1992, M A S Abdel Haleem, a lecturer from [School of Oriental and African Studies](#), University of London, London (UK) published a paper called [Grammatical Shift For The Rhetorical Purposes: Itifat And Related Features In The Qur'ân](#), in the [Bulletin of School of Oriental and African Studies](#), Volume LV, Part 3. In this paper, he not only dealt with the so-called-linguistic (grammatical) errors published by John Burton, but also showed that people need to be thorough in classical Arabic before saying anything about the Qur'ân and its grammatical structure. Most of the discussion on *iltifat* below is taken from this paper.

To begin with: *Itifat* means to 'turn/turn one's face to'. It is an important part of *balagah* (Arabic rhetoric) where there is a sudden shift in the pronoun of the speaker or the person spoken about. Muslim literary critics over the centuries have greatly admired this technique. *Itifat* has been called by rhetoricians *shaja'at al-arabiyya* as it shows, in their opinion, the daring nature of the Arabic language. If any 'daring' is to be attached to it, it should above all be the daring of the language of the Qur'ân since it employs this feature far more extensively and in more variations than does Arabic poetry. Most of the authors who talk about *iltifat* use the examples from the Qur'ân. No one seems to quote references in prose other than from the Qur'ân: and indeed a sampling of hadith material found not a single instance.

The types of *iltifat* and related features are of following types:

1. Changes in person, between 1st, 2nd and 3rd person, which is the most common and is usually divided into six kinds. The four important examples that are found in the Qur'ân are:
  - Transition from the 3rd to 1st person. This is the most common type. Over 140 instances can be found in the Qur'ân.
  - From 1st to 3rd person - nearly 100 such instances can be found in the Qur'ân.
  - From 3rd to 2nd person - nearly 60 instances.
  - From 2nd to 3rd person - under 30 instances.
2. Change in the number, between singular, dual and plural.
3. Change in the addressee.
4. Change in the tense of the verb.

5. Change in the case marker.

6. Using noun in the place of pronoun.

Examples from the Qur'ân of the above mentioned cases can be seen in M A S Abdel Haleem's paper. The so-called-grammatical errors in ayahs 4:162, 5:69, 20:63 and 2:177 are already dealt by him. Interested persons can read his paper. The site which deals with *iltifat* and other grammatical constructions is at:

<http://www.islamic.org.uk/grammar.html>

Brother Muhammad Ghoneim from France had recently dealt with the issue of grammatical errors at Newton's website. He has dealt the issue by quoting the Islamic scholars. He has brought to our notice some very interesting points. His refutation can be viewed at:

<http://www.angelfire.com/mo/Alborhaan/Gram.html>

Apart from this, we also have the first refutation by Brother Wail Ibrahim which appeared on soc.religion.islam newsgroup that can be viewed at:

<http://idt.net/~balboa19/newton/grammar2.htm>

And Allah knows best.

### **There are grammar mistakes in the Qur'an!**

This is indeed a very strange allegation!

The grammar of the Arabic language is largely founded on the Qur'an and was not put down in writing until well over a hundred years after the Qur'an was revealed. The Classical Arabic language became a language we can talk about as having a fixed grammar largely because of the Qur'an. Dictionaries and grammar books were *first* written to preserve the language of the Qur'an and the hadiths from the changes to the Arabic language that were happening as a result of the sudden growth of the Islamic Caliphate into new populations stretching from (what is now) Pakistan to Portugal. My own pocket grammar book uses quotes from the Qur'an as its proofs for most of its 500 grammar rules.

One further thing I find strange is that this should come from Christians. The reason is that the New testament is all written in a form of slang Greek called "Demotic Greek". This was a corrupted popular form of classical Greek which paid little heed to the grammar rules. Any grammatical analysis of the bible would be hard pressed to find a sentence without a grammar deviation from the rules of classical Greek.

Nevertheless, the points raised may as well be explained:

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#### The First Error

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This change in case is similar to changes number and person and tense. All these are used in the Qur'an for rhetorical purposes in their contexts. This is a feature called **iltifaat**. Of which there are countless examples in Arabic. As for how these rhetorical measures are used in the Qur'an - they have been covered comprehensively in the largest book on Qur'anic sciences called Al-Burhan by Zarkashi.

#### The Second Error

In 4:162

"But those of them that are firmly rooted in knowledge, and the believers believing in what has been sent down to thee, and what was sent down before thee, that perform the prayer and pay the alms, and those who believe in God and the Last Day - them We shall surely give a mighty wage." (Arberry)

"Laakinir-Raasi-khuuna fil-'ilmi minhum wal-Mu'-minuuna yu'-minuuna bi-maaa 'unzila 'ilayka wa maaa 'unzila min-qablaka wal-muqiimiin as-Salaata wal mu'-tuunaz-Zakaata wal-Mu'-minuuna billaahi wal-Yawmil-'Aakhir: 'ulaaa 'ika sanu'-tii-him 'ajran 'aziimaa."

The word muqiimiin should be muqiimuun. The word should be declined by the "raf'a sign" like the other nouns in the sentence. Indeed the two nouns before it (Raasi-khuun and Mu'-minuun), and the noun after it (mu'-tuun) are declined correctly. Some have argued that this word was declined as such to distinguish and praise the act of praying, but the scholar Ibn al-Khatib says that this is a sick reasoning. (al-Furqan by Mohammad M. 'abd al-Latif Ibn al-Katib, Dar al-Kutub al-'elmiyah, Beirut, p.43). Such reasoning defies logic. Why would one distinguish prayer which is a branch of religion, and not faith which is the fundamental and root of religion? Besides can this logic apply to the error of declension in the previous verse? Do we conclude that the Saabi'iin are more distinguished than those who believe, and the People of the Book? And why do they get distinguished in one verse and not the other as we

have seen? God is much higher than this sick logic. This again is an obvious grammatical error.

This is the same feature which is covered by the answer to the first alleged error.

#### *The Third Error*

*In 20:63*

*"They communed secretly saying, 'These two men are sorcerers'." (Arberry)*

*"Qaaluuu in haazaani la-saahiraani ..."*

*The word saahiraan should be saahirayn. The word saahiraan was declined incorrectly because the word in in the beginning of the nominal sentence causes a form of declension called "nasb" to the nominative and the "yeh" is the "sign of nasb". This is the third grammatical error.*

This is another rhetorical feature and has been exhaustively dealt with by Arab linguists. For example T Hasan in his book *Al-Huḡha Al-'arabiyyah....*

#### *The Fourth Error*

*In 2:177*

*"It is not piety, that you turn your faces to the East and to the West. True piety is this: to believe in God, and the Last Day ... to give of one's substance ... and to ransom the slave, to perform the prayer, to pay the alms. And they who fulfil their covenant ... and endure with fortitude." (Arberry)*

*"Laysal-birra 'an-tuwalluu wujuuhakum qibalal-Mashriqi wal-Maghrib wa laakinnal-birra man 'aamana billaahi wal-Yawmil-'Akhiri wal-malaaa-'ikati wal-Kitaabi wan-nabiyyiin: wa 'aatal-maala 'alaa hubbihii zawilqurbaa wal-yataamaa wal-masaakiina wabnas-sabiili was-saaa-'iliina wa fir-rigaab: wa'aqaamas-Salaata wa 'aataz-Zakaata; wal-muufuuna bi'ahdihim 'izaa 'aahaduu was-Saabiriina fil-ba'-saaa'i wazzarraaa-'i ..."*

*In the above verse there are five gramatical errors. In four of them the wrong tense was used, as the sentence begins in the present tense with the verb tuwalluu, while the other four verbs were written in the past tense:*

*'aaman should be tu'minuu;*

*'aata shoud be tu'tuu;*

*'aqaama should be tuqimuu;*

*'aata shoud be tu'tuu.*

*The above verse when translated into English as it appears in Arabic would be: "It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteousness is he who believed in Allah and the Last day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets; and gave his wealth, ... and performed prayer and paid the alms." But the English translators have observed the tense, and the verbs "believed", "gave", "performed", and "paid" were corrected and written in the present tense. (For example see Arberry, Pickthall, Yusuf Ali and Rodwell's translations).*

*The fifth error is the wrong declension of the word saabiriina. It should be declined saabiruuna like the preceeding word muufuuna.*

The first instance must be in present tense (like following the word 'to' in English - "I am going to eat" not "I am going to will eat" or "I have gone to ate". This is uncontentious as a rule of English grammar. Similar but different rules

apply to Arabic grammar. If English were literally translated including the tenses into Arabic it would be grammatically completely incorrect. This alleged error is a basic misunderstanding of Arabic grammar. As for saabiuna - see the response to the first alleged error.

#### *The Fifth Error*

*In 3:59*

*"the likeness of Jesus, in God's sight, is as Adam's likeness; He created him of dust, then said He unto him, 'Be,' and he was." (Arberry)*

*"Inna massala 'Isaa 'indal-laahi ka-masali 'Adam; khalaqahuu min-turaabin-sum-ma qaala lahuu kun fa-yakuun."*

*The above verse when translated into English as it appears in Arabic would be: "The likeness of Jesus with Allah is as the likeness of Adam. He created him of dust, then He said to him 'Be,' and he is." The above is Pickthall's translation. Please note that he translated yakuun (is) as it appears in Arabic, i.e. in the present tense.*

*The word yakuun ("is" in English) should be kana ("was") to be consistent with the past tense of the previous verb "said" as it was corrected by Arberry, Rodwell and Yusuf Ali in their translations of that verse. This is the fifth error.*

This a grammatical concept with an identifiable name in Arabic "Al-Hikaya" where you take a block and present it as it is without changing any part of it just as you don't change any part of an idiom to suit the different gender or number or tense. For example, when I presume to teach my school teacher some mathematics he may reply "don't teach your grandmother to suck eggs". He is not a grandmother and no eggs are being sucked. Is this a grammatical error on his part? No - you couldn't even change the idiom to "...suck **an** egg".

#### *The Sixth Error*

*In 21:3*

*"The evildoers whisper one to another ..."*

*"Laahiyatan - quluubuhum. Wa 'asarrun-najwallaziin zalamuu..."*

*The word 'asarru should be 'asarra. The above is a verbal sentence, and the rule for such a sentence, where the verb comes before the (masculine) subject, is that the verb must be in the third (masculine) singular form, if the active subject of the verbal sentence is stated in the sentence. (The same rule holds for substituting the two mentionings of "masculine" by "feminine".) But the verb in the above Qur'anic verse came in the plural form. See how the above rule was observed in the following Qur'anic verses: 3:52, 10:2, 16:27, 16:35, 3:42, 49:14.*

There are equally valid answers to this:

1, You can take "allaziin zalamuu" as 'in apposition' to the plural pronoun to condemn them for their wickedness and declare that it was their wickedness that led them to the act.

2, This is a recognised acceptable dialectical variation in classical Arabic, known in all grammar texts as 'lughat akaluni al-baraghith' where we have the plural pronoun (not singular) followed by the subject as in the verse above. Perfectly acceptable usage of classical Arabic.

### *The Seventh Error*

*In 22:19*

*"These are two disputants who have disputed concerning their Lord." (Arberry)*

*"haazaani Khismani 'ikhtasamuu fi rabbihim ..."*

*In Arabic, like English words are declined or conjugated with respect to number. In English there are two numbers: singular and plural. So in English two men are treated as plural. But in Arabic there are three numbers: singular, dual, and plural. So in Arabic the verbs and nouns are treated according to the singular or the dual or the plural. The verb in that verse was conjugated as if the subject is more than two. But the verse speaks only of two. So the rules of the dual should be followed and the word 'ikhtasamuu should be 'ikhtasamaa. So this is yet another error.*

The dual refers to the two entities - the believers and the unbelievers and then the plural is referring to the plurality of the numerous individuals in each camp. In English we might say "It is German government who wants to ban British beef which they say they is dangerous." Government is both single and hence "it wants" and plural because the government has many people in it hence "they say".

### *The Eighth Error*

*In 49:9*

*"If two parties of believers fight, put things right between them." (Arberry)*

*"wa 'in-taaa-'ifataani mi-nal-Mu'-miniinaq-tatalu fa-'aslihuu baynahumaa."*

*This error in this verse is like the previous one. The number again is dual but the verb was conjugated as if the subject is plural. So the verb 'eq-tatalu should be 'eqtatalata.*

This is exactly the same as the previous alleged error.

### *The Ninth Error*

*In 63:10*

*"O my Lord, if only Thou wouldst defer me unto a near term, so that I may make freewill offering, and so I may become one of the righteous." (Arberry)*

*"... Rabbi law laaa 'akhartanii 'ilaaa 'ajalin-qariibin-fa-'assaddaqa wa 'akum-minas-salihiin."*

*The verb 'akun was incorrectly conjugated. It should be 'akuuna, i.e. the last consonant must have the vowel "a", instead of being vowelless, because the verb 'akun, is in the subjunctive. Indeed the previous verb ('assaddaqa) has been correctly conjugated and is in the subjunctive. The reason is that in Arabic the present tense is placed in the subjunctive mood if it is preceded by certain words (huruf nasebah). One of such words is the "causative fa".*

Firstly there is a valid reading (one of the standard seven readings) in which this is "akuuna".

The explanation of this reading is that it is in conjunction with the mahall of 'assaddaqa which is jazm in the sense "if you delay me, I will give in charity and be of the righteous". 'atf 'ala al-mahall is a well known feature of Arabic grammar.

### *The Tenth Error*

*In 91:5*

*"By the heaven and that which built it." (Arberry)*

*"was-samaaa-'i wa maa ba-naahaa."*

*The word ma in the Arabic language is used for the impersonal. But the subject of the above verse is God. So the word which should be used is the Arabic word man (meaning "him who"). Arberry translated that verse as follows: "By the heaven and that which built it" meaning God. Pickthall however corrected the impersonal (ma, that which) and translated the verse as follows: "By the heaven and Him Who built it."*

*Indeed Pickthall also corrected the two verses that follow:*

*And the earth and Him Who spread it. Q. 91:6.*

*And a soul and Him Who perfected it. Q. 91:7.*

*Yusuf Ali, to get out of the problem, translated the above verse as follows: "By the firmament and its wonderful structure". So the subject 'God' does not appear at all in his translation of that verse. He gives his reason for his translation in a footnote saying: The ma masdariya in Arabic, in this and the subsequent clauses, is best translated in English by nouns." But the word bana in banaha is not a noun but a verb in the past tense as translated correctly by Arberry and Pickthall. The word ma should have been man (meaning "who") and in that context it should have been "Who" with a capital W.*

"ma" in this verse is not a relative pronoun referring to God but "masdariyya" meaning "the building of it" not he who built it. Yusuf Ali having been brought up on the madrasa tradition knows better Arabic than either Arberry or Pickthall.

*The Eleventh Error*

*In 41:11*

*"Then He lifted Himself to heaven when it was smoke, and said to it and to the earth, 'come willingly, or unwillingly!' They said, 'we come willingly.'"*

*"... faqal laha wa lel-Arad 'iteya taw'aan aw karha qalata atayna ta'e'een."*

*Heaven and earth in Arabic are feminine nouns, the verb said in "they said" is accordingly feminine and dual (qalata), but the adjective "willing" at the end of the verse is masculine and plural (ta'e'een), being at variance with the rule that the adjectives should match their nouns in number in gender, thus ta'e'een which is used for plural, should be ta'e'atayna which is used for feminine dual.*

There are several Heavens and several Earths. In classical Arabic they can be referred to as masculine or feminine. What you are talking about is a change that has occurred in modern Arabic. You will be surprised for instance to know that in classical Arabic it is correct to say "qaala al-nisa' and qaalat ar-rijal" both of which sound incorrect in modern Arabic. See also the response to the 7th alleged error.

*The Twelfth Error*

*In 7:56*

*"The mercy of God is near."*

*"... inna rahmata Allahi qaribun min al-mohseneen."*

*The above verse is a nominal clause. In such a clause the predicate should match the subject (rahmata) of the nominal clause in gender. The word qaribun (meaning "near") is the predicate of rahmata Allahi ("mercy of Allah"), they should match each other in gender. But*

*this is not the case in the Arabic text. Rahmata is feminine in Arabic and so the word qaribun (which is masculine) should instead be qaribah (its feminine form).*

*This rule was correctly observed in other Qur'anic verses. For example, in 9:40 we read: "Kalamat ul-llah heya al-'ulya." Here both Kalamat and heya are feminine. To say instead: "Kalamat ul-llah howa al-'a'la" would never be correct. That would be just as wrong as saying: "... inna rahmata Allahi qaribun min ..."*

Such structure well known in classical Arabic and qaribun serves as an adverb rather than an adjective. This is another simplification of modern Arabic. Using modern Arabic grammar as your standard is like criticising Shakespeare because of his grammar differs from modern English!

*Error 13*

*In 7:160*

*"We divided them into twelve tribes."*

*"wa qata'nahom 'ethnata 'ashrata asbatan."*

*Instead of asbatan it should read sebtan.*

*In the Arabic it literally say "twelve tribes". That is correct in English but not correct in Arabic. In Arabic it should say twelve tribe because the noun that is counted by a number above ten should be singular. This rule is observed correctly for example in 7:142, 2:60, 5:12, 9:36, 12:4.*

If Allah had said "twelve tribe" he would have kept it in the singular. But He is talking about the numerous asbat within each tribe. "asbatan" means grandsons not tribes and these within each tribe. For further reference go to Zamakhshari's tafsir. He mentions the objection and answers it.

## **In the Name of God most Gracious most Merciful**

### **Some answers to the claimed grammatical errors in the Holy Quran**

The following material is meant to answer the false claims made on <http://debate.domini.org/newton/grammar.html> concerning the Holy Quran. After giving an answer off the cuff on my newsgroup soc.religion.islam on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June 1997, I have promised to give a detailed answer about this issue after checking my reference books. So, in the following article, I will be referring to two major interpretations of the Holy Quran which are :

- at-tafseer al-kabeer by the imam Al-fakhr Arraazi, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (referred to by the abbreviation TK)
- roo7 al-ma3aani by the mufti of Baghdad, Abul-faDI Shihaab ud-deen As-sayyed Ma7moud Al-aloooy (referred to by RM)

### **First claimed error :**

## Verse 5:69

**"Surely they that believe, and those of Jewry, and the Sabaeans, and the Christians, whosoever believes in God and the Last Day, and works righteousness - no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow."  
(Arberry)**

**"Innal-ladhiina aamanuu wal-ladhiina haaduu was-Saabi'uuna wan-Nasaaraa man aamana bilaahi wal Yawm il-'Aakhiri wa 3amila Saali7an falaa khawfun 3alayhim wa laa hum ya7zanuun."**

Concerning this verse the author of the criticism claims that the word Saabi'uuna should be declined Saabi'iina and that Saabi'uuna is definitely wrong (according to him). From a grammatical point of view, there are many arguments to put forward in support of the famous declension Sabi'uuna.

TK, chapter 12, page 51/52 :

1. According to Seebaweih and Al-Khaleel, Sabi'uuna is "mobtada" " (i.e. in the nominative case) while the " khabar " (the indicative name) is omitted. This is one of the cases of omission/eclipse (7adhf) that are frequently met in the Arabic language. The indicative part of the sentence is "kadhaalik" (as well or too). Consequently, the sentence before omission is "Surely they that believe, and those of Jewry, and the Sabaeans **as well**, and the Christians ... " This is the humble argument I stated on 26/06.
2. According to Al-Farraa', in this sentence, the word Inna is "weak" (in Arabic : "Da3eefah") for three reasons among which I cite : The effect of Inna appears on some names only, if the name that follows Inna does not change by declension, then its effect may or may not be transmitted to the following parts of the sentence. In our case, the word al-ladheena has one form only in all grammatical cases. So, the word Saabi'uuna admits two declensions : Saabi'uuna as in the famous reading and Sabi'iina as in the readings of Ubayy Ibn Ka3b, Ibn Mas3ood and Ibn Katheer (and as "suggested" by the author of the criticism). Another example taken from the Arabic heritage is saying : "*Inna haa'olaa'i wa ikhwatoka yokrimoonanaa.*" (These people and your brothers are generous with us). The word haa'olaa'i is invariable. Thus, we can say ikhwatoka or ikhwatika and both are correct. *Note: we can account for "ikhwatoka" using the first argument : These people, and your brothers **as well**, are generous with us.*

In conclusion, the mistake made by Mr. Newton is to claim that the declension Saabi'uuna is wrong and that the right declension is so and so. Maybe, he was not aware of some aspects of the Arabic language. In fact, a major characteristic of the Arabic language is that it is **elliptical**. Many linguistic sets like "shukran" ("Thank you.") or "3afwan" ("welcome") are examples of omission because the original sentences are "I thank you" and "You are welcome". While these examples are rather rare in English, they are a common place in Arabic and they are considered to be of better linguistic level. These omissions also account for the multiplicity of grammatical analysis for the same word in the same set as it appears many times in the Holy Qur'an. This also explains that grammarians can suggest different explanations for the same declension of a word as you may notice through this article. Of course, the existence of several explanations for the same verse does not mean it is erroneous. The only thing it means is that the verse can be understood in many **similar** ways and that the reader chooses the meaning depending on his sensitivity.

### **Second claimed error :**

#### **Verse 4:162**

**"But those of them that are firmly rooted in knowledge, and the believers believing in what has been sent down to thee, and what was sent down before thee, that perform the prayer and pay the alms, and those who believe in God and the Last Day - them We shall surely give a mighty wage." (Arberry)**

**"Laakin ir-raasikhuuna fil 3ilmi minhum wal Mu'minuuna yu'minuuna bimaa 'unzila 'ilayka wa maa 'unzila min qablika wal muqiimiin aS-Salaata wal mu'tuunaz Zakaata wal Mu'minuuna billaahi wal Yawmil 'Aakhiri 'ulaa'ika sanu'tiihim ajran 3adhiimaa."**

Once more, Mr. Newton claims that there is "an obvious error" in the word muqiimiin. But, once more, he makes hasty conclusions. In fact, many arguments were put forward about the correctness of the declension of muqiimiin.

RM, chapter 6, page 14/15:

1. According to Seebaweih and all the grammarians of Basrah, the cases of muqiimiin is **"naSb" (accusative)** because of an omitted verb such as I mean, or I specify or I point out or I praise those 'who perform the prayer'. This was what I previously qualified as "IkhtiSaaS" which is a currently used figure of style in Arabic.

2. Some grammarians like Al-Kisaa'i did not agree with this position. Al\_Kisaa'i proposed that the clause "that perform the prayer" (wal muqiimiin aS-Salaata) mentions the Prophets and that the waaw (English: and) gives muqiimiin the declension of the precedent word "maa" (what) which is in a "**jarr**" case (**prepositional?**). Of course, this case is fairly acceptable from a grammatical point of view and it does make sense as well. In this perspective, the meaning of the verse changes slightly: "But those of them that are firmly rooted in knowledge, and the believers believing in what has been sent down to thee, and what was sent down before thee, **and in those** who perform the prayer, and **that** pay the alms, and those who believe in God and the Last Day - to them We shall surely give a mighty wage." They justified their interpretation concerning the Prophets saying that according to verse 21:73 " And We made them leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command, and We inspired them to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to give Zakat; and they constantly served Us (and Us only).", all Prophets were ordered to perform a specific prayer.

*Moreover, the muqiimiin/muqiimuun difference refers to the Science of Readings (3ilm al-qiraa'at). There is no acceptable claim about the falsehood of muqiimiin because it comes from a continuous trusted chain of transmitters up to the Prophet Muhammad (S). On the other hand, the declension muqiimuun is also transmitted by "tawaator" (continuity and trustfulness of the chain of narrators) as in the readings of 3abdullaah (Ibn Mas3ood) and Maalik Ibn Deenaar and Al\_Jo7dory and 3eesaa Ath-thaqafy. But of course, the author of the criticism is likely to ignore everything about readings. For more information about readings, you are kindly invited to check the following address <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Olympus/5603/hafs.html>*

### **The third claimed error:**

#### **Verse 20:63**

**"They communed secretly saying, 'These two men are sorcerers'."**  
(Arberry)

**"Qaalu inna haadhaani la-saa7iraani ..."**

For a mysterious reason, Mr. Newton fails to read this verse as it is in the Holy Quran! In fact, the verse is written: "Qaaluu in haadhaani la-saa7iraani ...", in and not inna. Many things were said about this verse:

RM, chapter 16, page 221 to 224

1. According to the grammarians of Kuufah, the word "in" is negative ("in" = "maa", called naafiah liljins), and "la" means "illaa" (means "but" and it marks exception). So, the conjunction of negation and exception implies restriction. Once these details are made clear, the verse can be translated by: "They communed secretly saying, 'These two men are nothing but sorcerers'." This is the meaning I understood while reading the Arabic text but the translation of Arberry does not give the same understanding of the verse. The various readings of the Holy Quran confirm this meaning...
2. Another grammatical explanation was given: the word "in" in this verse means "na3am" (confirmation). This was the position of the grammarians Muhammad Ibn Zayd Al-Mobarred and Al-'Akhfash AS-Sagheer.
3. Assuming that "in" derives from "inna" (it is qualified as "mokhaffafah" - or lightened), it is reported that Arab Tribes like Kinaanah, and Bani 3odhrah, and Khath3am, and Moraad, and some of Bani Rabee3ah, and Bel7aarith Ibn Ka3b, never declined dual words. (TK, chapter 24, page 74 to 80) Thus, in all the grammatical cases, dual words remain with an alef letter. Conclusion? Even if it was written with "inna", the verse "Qaaluu inna haadhaani la-saa7iraani ..." won't be wrong since it has a large support in the Arabic heritage.

### **The fourth claimed error:**

**Verse 2:177**

**"It is not piety, that you turn your faces to the East and to the West. True piety is this: to believe in God, and the Last Day ... to give of one's substance ... and to ransom the slave, to perform the prayer, to pay the alms. And they who fulfil their covenant ... and endure with fortitude." (Arberry)**

**"Laysal-birra an tuwalluu wujuuhakum qibalal-Mashriqi wal-Maghrib wa laakinnal-birra man aamana billaahi wal-yawmil 'aakhiri wal-malaa'ikati wal-Kitaabi wan-nabiyyiinna wa 'aatal-maala 3alaa 7ubbihi dhawil-qurbaa wal-yataamaa wal-masaakiina wabnas-sabiili was-saa'iliina wa fir-riqaab: wa 'aqaamaS-Salaata wa 'aataz-zakaata;**

**wal-muufuuna bi3ahdihim idhaa 3aahaduu waS-Saabiriina fil-ba'saa'i waDDarraa-'i ..."**

Concerning this verse, Mr. Newton does not hesitate to say that there are five errors, one concerning the declension of the word "Saabiriina" and four errors in the tense of the verbs "aamana, aata, aqaama, aata". Once more, in my humble opinion, Mr. Newton is either unaware of some aspects of the Arabic grammar (which is what I hope) or trying to deceive those who do not have a sound background in that field.

Here are the explanations given by major grammarians:

R.M, chapter 2, page 44 to 48 & T.K, chapter 5, page 34 to 45

1. According to the grammarians Al-farraa' and Az-zajaaj and Qotrob, it is common place to omit the first word ("moDaaf" - i.e. the possessed object) in a genitive construction when its meaning is obvious. For example, they cite famous phrases such as: "*Al-joodu 7aatim, Ash-shi3ru Zuhayr, wa Ash-shajaa3atu 3antarah*" which is translated word by word as "The generosity is 7aatim, the poetry is Zuhayr and the bravery is 3antarah". A better translation is: "The generosity is **the generosity of** 7aatim, the poetry is **the poetry of** Zuhayr and the bravery is **the bravery of** 3antarah". As one can see, in the Arabic version, it is better to omit the "moDaaf", but a good English translation has to state it. If the English translation of Arberry was more literal, the beginning of the verse would be: "It is not piety, that you turn your faces to the East and to the West. True piety is **those who believed** (aamana) in God, and the Last Day ... and **gave** (aata) of one's substance ... and to ransom the slave, and **performed** the prayer, and **paid** the alms. And **those** who fulfil their covenant ... and endure with fortitude." Let us fill in the blanks in the quotation of Mr. Newton to have the full meaning of the verse: "It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West; but it is **the righteousness of** those who believed in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; and spent of their substance, out of love for Him, for their kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; and were steadfast in prayer, and gave Zakat (regular charity); and those who fulfill the contracts which they have made; and those who are firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God fearing."

*Note that the pronoun used in the Arabic verse is "man" and not "an", if we had to follow the suggestion of Mr. Newton and change the*

*tenses of the four verbs from past to present, the sentence would be grammatically incorrect. This explains the reason of my opinion about his intention and/or his background.*

2. Another explanation put forward by the grammarians is that the infinitive ("maSdar") frequently substitutes the "actor noun" ("Ism alfaa3il"). Thus, the abstract noun "birr" (righteousness or piety) replaces the actor "baarr". So the translation of the verse becomes: "It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West; but **righteous people are** those who believed in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; and spent of their substance, out of love for Him, for their kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; and were steadfast in prayer, and gave Zakat (regular charity); and those who fulfill the contracts which they have made; and those who are firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God fearing." Many examples of the Arabic literature can be given.
3. The case of "Sabiriina" is exactly the same as the case of "muqiimiina" -in verse 4:162 - it is a case of "ikhtiSaaS". So the case of muqiimiina is "**nasb**" as an object of an omitted verb such as mention or point out or specify etc... This is the opinion of the grammarians Al-Farraa' and Abu 3ali Al-Faarecy.

### **The fifth claimed error:**

#### **Verse 3:59**

**"the likeness of Jesus, in God's sight, is as Adam's likeness; He created him of dust, then said He unto him, 'Be,' and he was." (Arberry)**

**"Inna mathala 3Isaa 3ind-Allaahi kamathali Aadama khalaqahu min turaabin thumma qaala lahu kun fayakuun."**

RM, chapter 3, page 186/187 & TK, chapter 7, page 74/75/76.

As I said in my preliminary answer on June the 26<sup>th</sup>, this verse raises interesting questions about God's will and how and when it is executed. The meaning of the verse is correctly translated: God said unto him, 'Be' and he was. What does the usage of the present tense in "yakuun" - instead of the past "kaana" - add to the meaning? Actually, the conjunction thumma (then) implies an elapsed time between the creation of the matrix/body of Adam and his coming to existence/life. And the present tense of the verb "yakuun", although the meaning is past, illustrates

this matter from the point of view of a spectator of the creation of Adam. When God ordered Adam to be, his existence was to take place in the future which is expressed by the delay (thumma) and the present tense. Of course, the same applies for the creation of Jesus whose existence was many centuries after God's order. It also means that whatever God orders to be will be, even if , sometimes, the spectator has to wait a while before it becomes.

### **The sixth claimed error:**

#### **Verse 21:3**

**"The evildoers whisper one to another ..."**

**"Laahiyatan quluubuhum. Wa 'asarru-~~nnajwa~~-lladhiina Dhalamuu..."**

The reader may refer to RM, chapter 17, page 8 & TK, chapter 22, page 141.

I have already given a detailed answer on June 26<sup>th</sup>, and I repeat it herein:

Mr. Newton said: *### The word 'asarru should be 'asarra. The above is a verbal sentence, and the rule for such a sentence, where the verb comes before the (masculine) subject, is that the verb must be in the third (masculine) singular form, if the active subject of the verbal sentence is stated in the sentence. (The same rule holds for substituting the two mentionings of "masculine" by "feminine".) But the verb in the above Qur'anic verse came in the plural form.##*

The answer is: Actually, the author thinks that "alladhiina" is the subject of the verb "assarru" and the subject being a masculine stated noun ... he concludes to an error. But, he is MISTAKEN. Any pupil in grade six can tell you the reason: the subject of "assarru" is a pronoun , an attached pronoun (or, in Arabic, "Dameer mottasil") it is the letter "u" at the end of "assarru".

Then you may ask what the case of "alladhiina" is since it is not the subject. Here you need to ask a student in the secondary school (let's say in grade 10) to have the answer: This is a case of "specification" (ikhtiSaaS in Arabic) and as you might know, in this form of style, the verb and the subject are eclipsed and only the object of the verb remains. Like when you use an apposition in English, you may say: "We, the Muslims, believe in one God" actually you can turn it otherwise: "We, (I mean or I point out or I specify) the Muslims, believe in God" and thus "the Muslims" are pointed out, they are the object of the verb point out, or mean, or specify. And notice that this

is a common place in the Arabic language to omit words of the sentences while the meaning is preserved...And that is the reason why translating an Arabic text (especially the Quran) into any other language is usually tough because one has to add a lot of words in order to communicate the full meaning. That's why many words in the foreign translations of the Quran are between brackets...The Arabic speaker understands the meaning without saying every word (because it will be redundant otherwise) while in other languages one has to give more details to have a correct construction.

Another answer was given according to the language of "akalooni-lbraagheeth": the reader can refer to the given references for more details. But the principle is the same: omission/7adhf.

### **The seventh & eighth claimed error:**

#### **Verse 22:19**

**"These are two disputants who have disputed concerning their Lord."  
(Arberry)**

**"haadhaani KhaSmaani 'ikhtaSamuu fi rabbihim ..."**

#### **Verse 49:9**

**"If two parties of believers fight, put things right between them."  
(Arberry)**

**"wa 'in-Taa'ifataani min almu'miniin-aqtataluu fa'aSli7uu baynahumaa."**

Concerning these verses, refer to RM, chapter 21, page 133 & TK, chapter 23, page 22 and RM, chapter 26, page 150 & TK, chapter 28, page 126/127.

Fortunately, the preliminary answer I have given is enough. Here it is:

Mr. Newton said: *## In Arabic, like English words are declined or conjugated with respect to number. In English there are two numbers: singular and plural. So in English two men are treated as plural. But in Arabic there are three numbers: singular, dual, and plural. So in Arabic the verbs and nouns are treated according to the singular or the dual or the plural. The verb in that verse was conjugated as if the subject is more than two. But the verse speaks only of two. So the rules of the dual should be followed and the word 'ikhtaSamuu should be 'ikhtaSamaa. So this is yet another error. ##*

The answer: In these two cases, Mr. Newton claims that the verbs "IkhtaSamuu" and "iqtataluu" should be in the dual form and not in the plural form as it is in the Quran. Everybody will admit that in both cases we are dealing with TWO antagonists, fine!! But each antagonist is a group of persons in reality. Concerning the 1<sup>st</sup> verse, we should read the following verses. We will realize that the two antagonists are, on one hand, those who deny their Lord and, on the other hand, the believers. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse, the Arabic word Taa'ifa means group or party. So, one can put the verb in the plural form since we are dealing with MORE THAN TWO persons (as it is in these verses) or put the verb in the dual form as Mr. Newton wishes since we are dealing with TWO groups. Both choices are grammatically correct and it is strange to claim it should be this way and not that way because it reflects either the ignorance of the author or his willing to fool people like you and me.

*NOTE: As I have stated previously, it is reported that Arab Tribes like Kinaanah, and Bani 3odhrah, and Khath3am, and Moraad, and some of Bani Rabee3ah, and Bel7aarith Ibn Ka3b, never declined dual words. (TK, chapter 24, page 74 to 80) Thus, in all the grammatical cases, dual words remain with an alef letter. 12Mr. Newton is a good student of Arabic grammar, he states many rules but he fails to take everything into consideration.*

### **The ninth claimed error:**

#### **Verse 63:10**

**"O my Lord, if only Thou wouldst defer me unto a near term, so that I may make freewill offering, and so I may become one of the righteous."  
(Arberry)**

**"... Rabbi lawlaa akhartanii ilaa ajalin qariibin fa'aSSaddaqa wa akun min aSSali7iin."**

First, let me remind the reader about "7uruf al3aTf" (coordination conjunctions). There are nine conjunctions: wa, fa, thumma, laakin, 7attaa, aw, am, bal and laa. These conjunctions usually appear between two nouns, or two verbs, or two clauses of the same nature. However, sometimes they do refer to the grammatical location of a noun, verb or clause and not to the noun, verb or clause themselves. This is what is called "3aTf 3alaa mawDi3".

RM, chapter 28, page 117/118 & TK, chapter 30, page 19.

According to the grammarians Az-zajjaaj and Abu 3ali Al-faarecy, the case of the verb akun is **jazm** because the coordination conjunction "wa" refers to the **location of the clause** "fa'aSSaddaqa" and not to the verb aSSaddaqa as claimed by Mr. Newton. So, only the verb "aSSaddaqa" takes the mark of the subjunctive as an effect of the causative "fa", the verb "akun" is not concerned. In the light of this explanation the English translation should be: "O my Lord, if only Thou wouldst defer me unto a near term, so that I may make freewill offering, and **so that** I may become one of the righteous." An illustration of "3aTf 3alaa mawDi3" is the verse of Seebaweih: "*Mo3aawi innanaa basharon fasja7 falasnaa b-iljibaali wa la 7adeedaa*" In this sentence, the case of the word "7adeedaa" is **naSb** (it ends with an "a" because it is in the same case of the clause "b-iljibaali". If we had to follow the argument of Mr. Newton "7adeed" would be in the case of **jarr** (it would end with an "i").

### **The tenth claimed error:**

#### **Verse 91:5**

**"By the heaven and that which built it." (Arberry)**

**"was-samaa-'i wa maa banaahaa."**

1. What is meant by "maa" is "man". But we prefer "maa" to "man" because it serves a descriptive purpose. "man" refers to God but "maa" besides referring to Him refers to His mighty attributes and so, it contains a form of praise to God. The same argument is valid for the verse 90:3 "wa waalidin wa maa walad" "And the begetter and that he begot;" what is meant is "And the begetter and **whom** he begot;" but "whom" means the person strictly while "that" includes all its faculties and attributes. (RM, chapter 30, page 142 & TK, chapter 31, page 190/191)
2. According to TK, chapter 31, page 190/191, "maa" can be used in place of "man" but not the other way round. Other examples of this usage can be given, but the first argument is better in the author's view.

*Note: In TK, chapter 31, page 190/191, the argument of "maa" being "maSdariyah" is refuted as well. So, it is not something new put forward by Mr. Newton. It has already been dealt with by scholars and grammarians centuries ago.*

### **The eleventh claimed error:**

#### **Verse 41:11**

**Then He lifted Himself to heaven when it was smoke, and said to it and to the earth, 'come willingly, or unwillingly!' They said, 'we come willingly.'"**

**"... faqaal lahaa wa lel'arDi i'teyaa taw3an aw karhan qaalataa ataynaa Taa'e3een."**

RM, chapter 24, page 103 & TK, chapter 27, page 106

In this verse, we have a reported speech. Let's rewrite it in the direct speech:

- God, speaking to the heaven and earth: 'come willingly, or unwillingly!'
- They reply: 'we come willingly.'

The criticism made by Mr. Newton can be divided into two parts: the number and the gender of Taa'e3een. Let's consider the gender. In Arabic, we distinguish two genders: masculine and feminine. But, feminine is divided into two sections: real feminine ("mo'annath 7aqeeqy") and metaphoric feminine ("mo'annath majaazy"). The real feminine is "whatever gives birth or lays an egg" (in Arabic: "kollo maa yalid aw yabeeD"). And the rule is that we have the choice between considering metaphoric feminine words as masculine or feminine. One can say: "ashraqa ashshamsu" ("The has risen", the verb ashraqa agrees with the masculine.) or "ashraqat ishshamsu" where the verb "ashraqat" takes a final "t" agreeing with the feminine. Both sentences are correct, because the sun is not a real feminine. Now, are the heaven and earth real feminine? NO. Consequently, merely from a grammatical point of view, it is correct that the heaven and earth speak about themselves using a masculine adjective. Somebody might say that the masculine is restricted on "wise" nouns (in Arabic: "al3aaqel") and that the heaven and earth are not "3aaqel". Then, we kindly remind them that, in this context, God speaks to the heaven and earth and they reply. So they are given the faculties of a 3aaqel object and consequently they are considered in this context as 3aaqel. Thus, they admit the masculine form. The fact that the verb of the reported speech "qaalataa" ("they said") is feminine does not imply feminine in the speech itself. Once more Mr. Newton makes wrong assertions.

The criticism concerning number is more fallacious. In fact, in the same line of the "two disputants" in verses 22:19 & 49:9, the heaven and earth contain the whole creation and sometimes, the heavens are referred to with plural. So, even though 1 heaven + 1 earth = 2 entities, the fact that each entity contains many many creatures makes both the plural and dual acceptable. In conclusion, the word "Taa'e3een" put in plural and masculine form is a 100% correct.

## **The twelfth error:**

### **Verse 7:56**

**"The mercy of God is near."**

**"... inna ra7mata Allahi qariibun min almo7seneen."**

TK, chapter 14, page 127

1. The word "ra7mat" is a metaphoric feminine that's why it is legitimate to treat it as a masculine.
2. According to An-naDr Ibn Shomayl, "ra7mat" is an infinitive ("maSdar") and infinitives agree with the masculine unless they end with a "round t" ("marbooTah") in which case they can agree with both masculine and feminine.
3. Other arguments involving interpretation were put forward. It is up to the reader to check the source.

RM, chapter 8, page 141 to 144

1. There twelve reasons compiled by Ibn Hishaam concerning this verse. The reader is given the freedom to check and evaluate them.
2. The author's opinion is that the adjective "qariib" follows the scheme fa3eel that means faa3el (and not maf3ool as some people like Al-karmaani claimed). Moreover, the word "ra7mat" is "Sifatu dhaat" and so it is not proper to qualify it as "moqarrabah".
3. If we had to consider that fa3eel means maf3ool, we can cite an example quite similar to this verse from the Arabic literature of the time of the Qur'an: By the poet Jareer: "Atanfa3ok- al7ayaatu wa Ommu 3amrin qariibu la tazuuru wa laa tozaaru?" "Ommu 3amrin" is a lady, and the poet qualifies her with the masculine adjective "qariib"...

*Note: Concerning this verse, many opinions were given by specialists. These opinions are all the more difficult to translate in English that they are not easy to explain to beginners. So, if you are interested in all that has been said about this verse, please refer to the sources I have quoted.*

## **The thirteenth error:**

### **Verse 7:160**

**"We divided them into twelve tribes or nations."**

**"wa qaTTa3naahomu-thnatay 3ashrata asbaTan omamaan."**

R.M, chapter 9, page 87 & TK, chapter 15, page 32.

1. According to Az-zajjaaj, the word "asbaTan" is an epithet (na3t/Sifah in Arabic) of an omitted noun such as "firqah" (group). So that the sentence would be: " We divided them into twelve **groups in** tribes **and** nations". So, it is the omitted noun "firqatan" that should agree with the number (we call it "tamyiz" in Arabic) and not the epithet.
2. According to Abu 3ali Al-faarecy, "asbaTan" is not the "tamyiz" of the number twelve. It is rather a "substitute" ("badal" in Arabic) of the number itself. He argued that, from a linguistic position, "SebT" (singular of asbaaT) is a part or a section of something. In this view, the Sons of Israel (who are concerned in this verse) were divided in groups/sections each section being several tribes and nations which is confirmed by their history.

*Moreover, Mr. Newton, who tries to impress the readers by his grammatical seeming knowledge (actually, he states rules very well and finds up to five "errors" in one single verse!!), failed to highlight another issue in this verse. How does it come that the gender of the word "ithnatay" is feminine while -as he should have said- it has to be "ithnay" to agree with the gender of "asbaTan" which is masculine? May be he felt it unnecessary to point this issue out. :-) However, for the readers' information, the gender of the word "ithnatay" can agree with feminine and masculine without any preference for any of the two alternatives because there are two substitutes ("badal") which are "asbaTan" and "omaman". The first being masculine and the second feminine, the gender of the number can be either way. And this opinion is due to the grammarian Al-farraa'.*

Now that the technical part is solved, the following comments have to be done:

- **Mr. Newton said:** It is reported that 'Uthman, after viewing the first standard copy of the Qur'an, said, 'I see grammatical errors in it, and the Arabs will read it correctly with their tongues.' His reference is Al-Furqan by Mohammad M. 'abd al-Latif Ibn al-Katib, Dar al-Kutub al-'elmiyah, Beirut. In RM, chapter 6, page 14/15, regarding this report, the great scholar As-sakhaawy answered that this report is weak ("Da3eef"), its transmission ("isnaad") is broken/discontinuous and turbulent. He continues saying that the caliph 'Uthman was a

guide for the Ummah. How can we imagine that he could find an error in the Qur'an and leave it for the Arabs to correct it? How can we imagine that he does so while he has written many copies that differed only according to the different readings inherited from the Prophet Mohammad? Much more, if he took the trouble of compiling the Book who would be more worried about its correction than 'Uthmaan and the Companions who were named for the compilation?

- Mr. Newton said:**The Muslim scholar Ibn al-Khatib who quoted the above report in his book al-Furqan, went on to mention another report on the authority of 'Aa'isha, one of Mohammad's wives, saying, 'There are three grammatical errors in the Book of Allah, they are the fault of the scribe: In 20:63 "Qaaluuu inna haazaani la-saahiraani ..." And in 5:69 "Inna-laziina 'aamanuu wal-laziina haaduu was-Saabi'uuna wan-Nasaaraa man 'aamana bilaahi wal-Yawmil-'Aakhiri wa 'amila saali-hanfalaa khaw-fun 'alay-him wa laa hum yah-zanuun." And in 4:162 "Laakinir-Raasi-khuuna fil-'ilmi minhum wal-Mu'-minuuna yu'-minuuna bi-maaa 'unzila 'ilayka wa maaa 'unzila min-qablika wal-muqiimiin as-Salaata wal mu'-tuunaz-Zakaata wal-Mu'-mi-nuuna billaahi wal-Yawmil-'Aakhir: 'ulaaa 'ika sanu'-tii-him 'ajran 'aziimaa.'" Regarding these verses, the grammatical answers are given above. According to RM, chapter 16, page 221 to 224, according to the great scholar Jalaal ud-deen as-soyooTy, the "isnaad" of this report fulfils the criterion of "Ash-shaykhayn" ("the two scholars"). However, he goes on confirming the opinion of Ibn Ashtah concerning this report: what is meant by "the fault of the scribes" is that they ought to choose different readings to be standardized for the Ummah. 3aa'ishah didn't mean that they made mistakes in the report itself because mistakes are not acceptable in this regard and, by no means, they can be agreed upon by the whole Ummah. Moreover, according to Ibn Al'anbaary and others reporting from 3ikrimah, the isnaad of this report is weak, discontinuous and turbulent and its content cannot match what we know about 'Uthmaan. This opinion was confirmed by Ibn Jubaazah in his book "shar7 Ar-raa'iyyah". Much more, how can we think that the Companions could make language mistakes and especially mistakes in the Holy Book while they are known for the purity of their language? How can we think that they would make mistakes in the Qur'an while they had received it from the Prophet(ASWS) as it was revealed to him, they never spared any effort to learn it by heart and they sought scrupulously the correction of the words and the right performance in the recitation?
- The issue of the Alim software is not of great value, it only shows us why people with little knowledge about Arabic are able to make

many muslims doubt. The general ignorance of the Arabic language combined with the insufficient knowledge about Islam make muslims very vulnerable. I remember a report about a scholar who said: "The worst thing that make people disobey God is ignorance." He was asked: "Do you know anything worse than ignorance?". He replied: "The ignorance about one's ignorance!" It is high time muslims woke up and sought knowledge as it is taught by their religion, both religious and scientific knowledge are meant in this commandment.

- The first time I heard about grammatical errors in the Qur'an, I thought it was a joke. In fact, it is well known that the Holy Qur'an is the standard Arabic text from which the rules of Arabic grammar were deduced and set. The claim that it may contain errors while it is the standard is illogical. Moreover, it means that if the grammar happened to falter regarding a Qur'anic linguistic set, it does not prove any inconsistency in the Qur'an.