

## Biblical Versus Hadith - Questioning Interpretation Authority in The Quran: A Reformist Translation

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### Abstract:

*This paper explains Edip Yüksel's view of the Qur'an, the Bible and the Hadith. He set(s) up a hierarchy of authority of the holy scriptures as a land point. The Qur'an stands at the highest level of the hierarchy because it is the most authentic word of God; there is no contradiction within; it is revealed for all humanity; and is the Final Testament. The second rank is the Bible which is still be considered as God's authority over mankind, however with some contradictory messages. There is the Hadith in the last place, a level of manmade works, because it does not have Gods authority. Moreover, it is very contradictory. In an attempt to interpret the Quran, he propose(s) the realization of justice, unity and peace over mankind. For the sake of achieving those goals, the Christian scriptures are cross-referenced with the Qur'an either using direct, indirect, and referral method. The selected topics can be grouped into four kinds; theology, law, social issues, and stories. The functions of Biblical use in tafsir were to complement, to compare, and even to criticize the Bible itself. 'Critical,' is the right word to describe Edip's attitude toward the Bible.*

**Keywords:** Edip Yüksel, the Quran, the Bible, Interpretation Authority

### INTRODUCTION

Edip Yüksel is one of several modern interpreters who does not use hadith as a tool in interpreting the Qur'an, because he returns the authority of interpretation entirely only to the word of God, by carrying out the philosophy of "Quran alone". This means that the Qur'an is the sole authority for itself. However ironically, in the philosophy context of "Quran alone" (this), he offered the Bible as a "cross-reference".

This is very interesting given the Biblical strata which (might be) are not better than the hadith. Coupled with a simple logic, that although hadith is not used as a source of reference, it can actually also be used as a "cross-reference", because both the Bible and hadith are texts outside the Qur'an or external-reference. Why is that so? This question is what this paper will try to answer. In addition, the use of the Bible in interpretations is actually familiar, except that it is presented in different forms and ways, namely in the form of the history of *isrā'īliyyāt*.

The identification, criteria and procedures for the use of these histories in interpretations are discussed in the study of *ad-dakhil fī at-tafsīr*. *Ad-dakhil* itself is an external element that is included in the interpretation literature, so the Bible is included in that category. this paper will explore further how Edip's attitude towards *ad-dakhil*, and how its application in the Qur'an book: A Reformist Translation. However, before going

into the theme of the discussion I would like to remind the readers that hard work and reformation of the interpretation of the Qur'an by Edip reminds us that the spirit of the Qur'an, through its verses always accompany Muslims in particular and humanity in general; relevant to the problems that develop in the community; and open to be presented in a variety of ways for each generation.

Edip, in 1986, experienced "a paradigm shift" from Sunni becoming a "reformist" (Yüksel 2007: 4). I observed that there were at least three basic concepts that he held to confirm his new ideology. he always brings this principle to cover every interpretation (Yüksel 2007: 10); first, modern monotheism which underlies the philosophy of "Quran alone". consequently, the authority of the Prophet Muhammad and the hadith was disarmed, because it was possible that his utterances have been distorted.

Besides, Edip also considers that there are too many contradictions in Hadith till making the second source of Islam is not credible, and there is a strong suspicion that such contradictions are made only to strengthen the hegemony of each group, tribe, ideology, or class (Yüksel 2007: 473-475). however, he continues to acknowledge that Hadith remains useful as a reading material and no need to place it as a second source, or even align it with the Qur'an (Yüksel 2007: 12). In short, he tried to understand God's message purely through the signs he had given both in the Qur'an and in the universe.

Second, justice where the message of the Qur'an must be able to realize justice for all humanity regardless of gender, ethnicity, nation and state (Yüksel 2007: 11). Edip disarmed all the authority of the classic works of the previous scholars from various disciplines because they were considered to have established a patriarchal practice which was very entrenched and carried out hegemonic interpretations of the Qur'an by "truth claims". however, he continues to acknowledge that their works, still have value benefits to be used as historical and academic references.

Third, peace and unifying both in the Muslims community inside and outside. it means that Edip tries to embrace all groups, ideologies, sects, followers of religion, and even those atheists to jointly maintain unity in order to create peace, because in fact the Qur'an is the final revelation (the Final Testament) which was revealed for the whole humanity (Yüksel 2007: 10, 263, 406). on this basis, he tries to present the Bible as a cross-reference to readers primarily of Christians so that shared-information between the two scriptures can be understood by both parties in truth.

The question is "why don't choose hadits but bible?" This is all because of the problem of God's authority. Edip argues that the Qur'an itself gives authority to Zabur, Torah, and the Gospel by mentioning the names of the books, or stating that what is written in the Qur'an can also be found in the previous books. Therefore, the content of the original message of God is still stored in some of the Biblical verses, even though some others have undergone changes — also through information obtained from the Qur'an — whether intentional or not, done by humans in the process of oral transmission, gathering writing, duplication, translation, and revision. Afterwards how do we identify the original message from what has been distorted? this identification can be done in two ways; first by reading the Bible from the perspective of the Qur'an; and second by criticizing the text, as did Bart Ehrman and Bruce Metzger (Yüksel 2007: 60). this is different from the Hadith whose authority is not directly legitimized by the Qur'an, even the Qur'an itself forbids awaiting the arrival of Hadith and tells it (Yüksel 2007: 279-80, 299, 361, 469). He also analogues Hadith with the Talmud because they have similarities. in the Talmud there is a Mishna containing narrations, Gemara which contains a collection of comments on the

Torah, and Halakha which contains the shari'a of the Jews. Both Hadith and Talmud are also used as complement to interpret their respective scriptures (Yüksel 2007: 66). this was Edip's logic, which placed the Qur'an in the highest position, followed by the Bible, only after that the other books included Hadith, tafseer, fiqh, and many others.

## DISCUSSION

### **Biblical application in the Quran: A Reformist Translation**

Edip internally uses the analysis of language as the main tool in interpreting the Qur'an (Yüksel 2007: 11, 13). On the external side, he uses Bibles, philosophical arguments, and science and technology to strengthen and justify his interpretation (Yüksel 2007: 5, 40, 57-9). the use of the three external references is known as ad-dakhil.

On the technical writing, Edip put out the results of language analysis on the part of the interpretation or translation at the core. if it is deemed necessary to add or record, he affixed the verse referred to as an asterisk (\*) and presents the explanation in the endnote section (Yüksel 2007: 9). in this section ad-dakhil or external materials are used. In the Quran book: A Reformist Translation, ad-dakhil application specifically in the form of Bibles can be grouped into three categories.

### **Based on method**

Based on the method, the use of the Bible in Edip's work can be classified into three groups; first, in the form of a direct quote. for example when interpreting QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 31, he cites the entire Biblical text to explain wa 'allama ādamal asmā`a kullahā and reaffirms the relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible. Look at the Biblical verse below:

"And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found any help meet for him" (Genesis 2:19-20).

The verse basically explains that after the Prophet Adam was created, various animals were later created. Prophet Adam then named the animals. so after being taught various kinds of knowledge by God, Prophet Adam then showed the results (in the presence of angels) with images like those in the Bible. The verse is quoted directly by Edip because, in my opinion, the verse in question is quite short and is the only one in the Bible that makes it possible or even must be quoted as a whole. the model of this quote is the least found in the book *Quran: A Reformist Translation*.

Second, in the form of indirect quotes. An example is when Edip interprets QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 219 which discusses the prohibition of khamr, he only concludes the core message of various Biblical texts contained in various books. the Hebrew language is equivalent to the Qur'anic language (QS. al-Nahl [16]: 57, QS. al-Nisā` [4]: 43) is Shekar (liquor) and criticized by the Old Testament (Leviticus 10 : 9; Judges 13: 4, Isaiah 28: 7; Isaiah 5:11; 24: 9; 29: 9; 56:12; Joel 3: 3; Amos 6: 6; Pr 20: 1; 31: 6; Micah 2:11). wine is not good for health, reduces decision-making ability, and weakens memory (1 Samuel 25:37; Hosea 4:11; Peter 31: 4-5), erodes patience (Isaiah 5:11), leads to sadness, causes conflict , ending remorse (Peter 23: 29-32). wine also makes God and humans happy (Judges 9:13; Zechariah 9:17; Psalms 104: 15; Esther 1:10; Ecclesiastes 10:19), and strengthens the body (2 Samuel 16: 2; Song 2: 5) (Yüksel 2007 : 71). in my opinion, if written directly, besides

requiring many pages, it is not necessarily the core message of the text that can be appropriately captured, or even worried that the reader will be different in perception with him, thus hampering the realization of his reformist goals. he often uses indirect quotes on verses related to theology, law, justice, and social issues.

Third, in the form of a reference where Edip only reminds and advises the reader to refer to a verse or article in a particular book without displaying the text in question, for example when he interprets QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 36 which explains the process of expelling Adam and Eve from heaven, he tries to present the positive side of the woman in the Bible, by referring to one of them; "See Genesis 3: 1-24" (Yüksel 2007: 62). there are a total of 24 verses that Edip refers to in explaining the verse, and it seems to be too much if quoted directly. he only gave references to the readers in the context of writing efficiency, but before that he had given several important points regarding the position of women in the Bible. this method was the most widely used method of Edip, especially when he discussed the story of the previous Prophets.

### **Based on topic**

Based on the topic, the use of the Bible in the Koran book: A Reformist Translation can be grouped into four topics; first, verses related to theology. Take note when Edip interprets QS. āli 'Imrān [3]: 45-7, QS. al-Nisā` [4]: 71 and QS. al-Mā`idah [5]: 72-6 which discusses the Prophet Isa and Christian theology that developed during the time of the Prophet Muhammad. he at length displays the contradictions of the Biblical verses where one verse — Matthew 28:19 and John 1: 1 — and others — Mark 13:32 and Deuteronomy 6: 4 — contradict each other. he concludes, by referring to a textual criticism of the Bible, that the verses that support the theology of the trinity are the result of manipulation by the Christian clergy themselves, while the verses that emphasize the side of monotheism are authentic Biblical texts (Yüksel 2007: 87-8, 110- 2, 121). if seen more closely, he wants the main readers of Christians to get the real information on the contradictions in the Bible that they may not even know. uniquely, he does not even quote the Qur'anic verses to justify his opinion; which he described only Biblical interpretations with the Bible. however, what was read from Edip's writings tended to potentially spark even greater hostility, even though in his concept of interpretation he carried out the principle of peace and unity for all humanity.

Second, verses that discuss the law. For example, the law of polygamy in QS. al-Nisā` [4]: 3. Edip argues that only for widows who have children is polygamy allowed, in order to provide psychological, social and economic support to them. After explaining the Qur'anic verse message, he began to describe the polygamy law in the Bible by quoting a number of verses from Genesis which explain that seven generations after Habil practiced polygamy. however, the practice of polygamy is not justified in Deutoronomy to the extent that the Prophet Solomon, who according to the Bible has 700 wives and 300 concubines is very hated in Christian circles (Yüksel 2007: 101-2). Another example we can see in 5:38 regarding the law of cutting hands for thieves. After explaining three choices of punishment for thieves there are; first, cut hands; second, label or mark hands; and third, cut off the access of the perpetrator to return to the act of committing theft, Edip referred to 3 Biblical verses which explained the punishment for thieves; first, paying compensation (Exodus 22: 1-8; Samuel 12: 6); second, if they cannot afford compensation, they will be sold to a master to be able to pay; and third, beaten or tortured to death.

Third, verses that raise social issues. Let's see Edip's explanation in QS. al-Nisā` [4]: 34 where he puts a woman in a noble position. he explained that established interpretations in society which seemed to place women under men were influenced by the misogynistic culture promoted by Saint Paul in the Christian tradition. Women must be quiet while in church, because they are not allowed to speak ... (I Corinthians 14:34). ... Women come from men, and not vice versa. Women are created for men, but men are not created for women '(I Corinthians 11: 6-9). 'Women are considered dirty for one week after giving birth to a boy, but are considered dirty for two weeks if they give birth to a baby girl (Leviticus 12: 1-5), and many more. in cases such as menstruation, the Qur'an forbids men from having sex with their wives not because they are dirty, but because menstruation is sick, and the purpose is to protect women's health (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 222). another case with the Bible that considers menstruation is something that is despicable, isolation, even punishment for women.

Fourth, verses containing the stories of the previous Prophet. For example in the interpretation of the story of Prophet Dawud and his opponent Jalut in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 251. there are two statements in the Bible that are opposite each other; first from the Book of Samuel 17: 4, 50-1 which explains that the one who killed Jalut was the Prophet Dawud; second from the Book of Samuel 21:19 which tells us that someone named Elhanan succeeded in killing Jalut. some Christian leaders try to give an explanation by saying that there are two individuals named Jalut, but ironically the name of the Prophet Dawud also appears in the story of Elhanan. Others believe that Biblical writing errors have occurred (Yüksel 2007: 251). there is something interesting about how Edip treats the story in the Qur'an, where on the one hand he uses Biblical records, but on the other hand he does not use the Bible at all even though in the literature of classical and also biblical interpretations the story gets portion which is quite a lot. let us consider the story of the Prophet Ayyub in the Quran: A Reformist Translation (Yüksel 2007: 226, 294), there is not a single record of the story even though the Bible itself dedicates the Book of Job to its interpretation of literature like at-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr and others. this is different from the stories of other Prophets such as Adam, Dawud and Sulaiman who are widely quoted.

A similar fate was experienced by the story of Prophet Yunus. His name is mentioned seven times in the Qur'an, but only in one verse is the Biblical text referred to, in QS. al-Dhāriyāt [51]: 54 (Yüksel 2007: 331). in fact, he actually explained the mathematical structure of the Qur'an from the nickname of Prophet Yunus, **Ṣaḥībul Ḥūt**, by analyzing the nūn letters (Yüksel 2007: 228, 364). From this I assume that Edip and his friends were not very interested in describing the details of the stories of the previous Prophets. this can be evidenced by his attitude to the story of another Prophet who, although repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'an, is only one or two verses which he intertextualizes with the Bible, or even completely unlike what happened in the case of the Prophet Ayyub. one or two verses chosen by Edip to be explained is that he is literally contradictory to the Biblical text as in the case of Prophet Dawud defeating Jalut. perhaps, he realized that many of these stories were too exaggerated without any benefit, or even twisted in such a way that the earlier Prophets became mockery, so he only took something that could provide benefits.

### **Based on function**

Based on its function, the use of the Bible in Edip's interpretation has three kinds of functions; first, as a complement to the Qur'an, by displaying a biblical text that is in

harmony with the Qur'an and placing it to complete the interpretation of the verse in question. for example when he explains the meaning of the metaphor of heaven and hell contained in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 25-6, he then quotes Matthew 13: 47-50 that the kingdom of heaven is like a net that throws into the sea to catch fish. if it is deemed sufficient to catch, the net will be opened on the coast to choose which fish are good and which fish are bad. like that, that when the apocalypse arrives, the Angels will separate the wicked among the good, then throw them into hell. They are scared and trembling (Edip 2007: 61). another example can be found in the interpretation in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 165 which prohibits someone from loving anything that exceeds his love for God. he took Matthew 7: 21-23 which explained that those who would be in heaven were not those who shouted Jesus, but those who carried out the commandments of the Father in heaven (Edip 2007: 69). the practice of completing the Qur'an and the Bible on the one hand is an effort to unite and reconcile the heavenly religious scriptures. But on the other hand he also uses the Bible as a justification tool.

Second, as a comparison or comparison with the Qur'an. This can be seen in the example of the comparison of the law between the Qur'an and the Bible in the case of the theft that I described earlier. Another example is when Edip compares the words used by QS. yūsuf [12]: 43 to tell the story of the Prophet Joseph, with the pharaoh word used by the Bible in Genesis 41:14, 25, 26 to tell it. from the scientific point of view of history and archaeological evidence, the Prophet Joseph lived around 1600 BC so that the title of pharaoh was not used by the kings of Egypt. The title was only used in the 18th Dynasty or approximately 100 years after the era of Prophet Yusuf (Yüksel 2007: 181-2). in addition, there are many examples of comparison between the Qur'an and the Bible found in Edip's book both implicitly as I have mentioned or explicitly mentioned in comparison with so many verses in the biblical book (Yüksel 2007: 87, 89 , 102 and others). he made this comparison when there were significant differences between the two which were usually related to non-theological issues.

Third, the Qur'an as a criticism of the Bible. this third function Edip uses is more often to give criticism of Christian theology as I have explained before, or to give criticism to Christians who are consciously willing to follow and practice the teachings made by Saint Paul. Jews or the Children of Israel (Bani Israil) also get criticism from the Qur'an. Example in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 93 which explains the agreement of God with the Children of Israel and their betrayal in the form of a violation of worshipping a cow. the Qur'an describes their condition with *wa ushribū fī qulūbimul 'ijla bi kufrihim*, which is a metaphor of negligence caused by liking something beyond love for God.' this is very different from the Bible which actually uses not only literal meaning, but changes according to their wishes. try to look at the Exodus 32:20 where the cows they have made, then roast them, pound them into powder, then mix them with water, and they drink them (Yüksel 2007: 67). So he criticizes the literalization of meaning in the metaphorical verse, and *taḥrīf* which they (always) do. Other criticisms by Edip of the Bible can also be seen when he interprets the word *rāinā* in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 104 which means "pastor us." bibles, for example Ezekiel 34:23, John 10:14, Psalms 78:52, do use the herding / sheep analogy to describe the relationship between the people and their leaders, or the people and the Prophet, but Saint Paul then develops various kinds of practices that are not sourced from the Bible with manipulating the main intent of the sheep / sheep relationship (Yüksel 2007: 67). Edip's attitude really showed his love for the Christian brothers who had been lied to, and tried to always bring them back to the right path.

### **Edip's attitude towards the Bible**

From the presentation of the Biblical application as cross-reference in the Quran: A Reformist Translation, it seems very clear that Edip used criteria similar to what was put forward by some commentary scholars such as Ibn Kathīr, where he in his book *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* dividing the *isrā'īliyyāt* into three groups; the first is in accordance with Islamic teachings where its use is permitted; second, which is not in accordance with Islamic teachings so that such a history should not be used; and third, which is not related to the teachings of Islam (*maskūt 'anhu*). such histories may be used and may be abandoned (Kathīr 1999: 9). The opinion expressed by Ibn Kathīr is similar to Edip's criticism of the Bible from the perspective of the Qur'an. it's just that in its application he also makes use of the results of textual criticism conducted by historians and Christian theology, so that he can easily distinguish in more detail which biblical texts are original and which are revised. finally, it can be concluded that Edip's attitude towards the Bible is a critical attitude, in the sense of being careful and careful in sorting, choosing and using the Bible. in other words, which one is in accordance with the Qur'an is used to support his opinion, and which is not appropriate or even contradicts the Qur'an then he is criticized. All of that, is entirely his own responsibility in front of God (Yüksel 2007: 11).

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the discussion presented in the previous chapters, conclusions can be taken as follows; The Qur'an is 1) God's authority; 2) God's instructions are revealed for the benefit of all humanity, not for certain groups. the biblical is 1) some still contains the authority of God, while some others are revised; 2) the part that contains the authority of God is an appropriate part of the Qur'an, so it is still worthy of being cross-reference. this is different from the Hadith where it is; 1) the results of the fabrication of patriarchal scholars; 2) Hadith occupies the same position as the revised Biblical, or Talmud in the Jewish tradition, which contains many contradictions so that it is not worthy of being used as a source of interpretation. Biblical applications in the Qur'an by Edip can be grouped into three categories; First, based on the method, it is divided into 1) direct quotation; 2) indirect quotes; and 3) references. Both based on the topic he divided into; 1) theology; 2) law; 3) social issues; and 4) story. third based on function, it is divided into; 1) complementary; 2) comparison; and 3) critics. from the results of the reading of the Biblical application in the Qur'an, it can be concluded that Edip's attitude towards the Bible is a critical attitude in which he; 1) only displays what is in accordance with the Qur'an; and 2) criticizing what is contrary to the Qur'an.

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