147330 - There is no contradiction in the Qur’an about changes in the words of Allah and there being no change in them

the question

Some of the Christians say that there are verses in the Qur’an that contradict one another – is that true? There are the verses (interpretation of the meaning): “For them are glad tidings, in the life of the present world (i.e. righteous dream seen by the person himself or shown to others), and in the Hereafter. No change can there be in the Words of Allah, this is indeed the supreme success” [Yoonus 10:64]

“And recite what has been revealed to you (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) of the Book (the Quran) of your Lord (i.e. recite it, understand and follow its teachings and act on its orders and preach it to men). None can change His Words, and none will you find as a refuge other than Him” [al-Kahf 18:27].

[They say that] these verses are contradicted by other verses in Soorat an-Nahl, Soorat ar-Ra‘d and Soorat al-Baqarah, in which it says (interpretation of the meaning): “And when We change a Verse (of the Quran, i.e. cancel (abrogate) its order) in place of another, and Allah knows the best of what He sends down, they (the disbelievers) say: "You (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) are but a Muftari! (forger, liar)." Nay, but most of them know not” [an-Nahl 16:101]

“Allah blots out what He wills and confirms (what He wills). And with Him is the Mother of the Book (Al-Lawh Al-Mahfooz)” [ar-Ra‘d 13:39]

“Whatever a Verse (revelation) do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring a better one or similar to it.

Know you not that Allah is able to do all things?” [al-Baqarah 2:106].

They say that the verses quoted above represent contradiction in the Qur’an. Do these verses really contradict one another, or what?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The Holy Qur’an is the word of Allah, may He be exalted, and there cannot be any contradiction or discrepancy in it. Rather contradictions arise if the speaker is someone who may make mistakes, but Allah, may He be exalted, is far above that. Allah, may He be glorified, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Do they not then consider the Quran carefully? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much contradiction”

[an-Nisa’ 4:82].

Hence there were discrepancies and contradictions in the Gospels that the Christians have, because they were written by people, who were not infallible. The great Indian scholar Rahmatullah Kairanawi highlighted in his book Izhaar al-Haqq the existence of 125 discrepancies and contradictions in their holy Book.

The specious argument that you mentioned is an extremely weak argument, which may be answered by noting two points:

Firstly:

With regard to the verses which say that there is no change in the words of Allah, such as the verses in which He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“For them are glad tidings, in the life of the present world (i.e. righteous dream seen by the person himself or shown to others), and in the Hereafter. No change can there be in the Words of Allah, this is indeed the supreme success”

[Yoonus 10:64]

“And recite what has been revealed to you (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) of the Book (the Quran) of your Lord (i.e. recite it, understand and follow its teachings and act on its orders and preach it to men). None can change His Words, and none will you find as a refuge other than Him”

[al-Kahf 18:27],

what is meant is that no one can change the words of Allah. As for Allah Himself, may He be exalted, He may replace one verse with another, which is known as naskh (abrogation). Allah, may He be glorified, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And when We change a Verse (of the Quran, i.e. cancel (abrogate) its order) in place of another, and Allah knows the best of what He sends down, they (the disbelievers) say: "You (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) are but a Muftari! (forger, liar)." Nay, but most of them know not”

[an-Nahl 16:101]

“Whatever a Verse (revelation) do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring a better one or similar to it. Know you not that Allah is able to do all things?”

[al-Baqarah 2:106].

With regard to the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “Allah blots out what He wills and confirms (what He wills). And with Him is the Mother of the Book (Al-Lawh Al-Mahfooz)” [ar-Ra‘d 13:39], what is meant is blotting out and confirmation in the records of the angels. Please see the answer to question no. 43021.

Secondly:

What is meant by the words of Allah that cannot be changed is the words of His divine decree, such as His ways of dealing with His creation, and what He has told us about rewarding those who are obedient to Him and punishing those who are disobedient, and the admittance of the people of

Paradise to Paradise and of the people of Hell to Hell. No one can change the way in which Allah deals with His creation or change the words of His divine decree. Hence it says at the beginning of the verse (interpretation of the meaning): “For them are glad tidings, in the life of the present world (i.e. righteous dream seen by the person himself or shown to others), and in the Hereafter. No change can there be in the Words of Allah, this is indeed the supreme success” [Yoonus 10:64]. The way of Allah and the word of His divine decree here is that for the pious believers who fear Him, there are glad tidings in this life and after death, and who can change that?

With regard to the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “And recite what has been revealed to you (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) of the Book (the Quran) of your Lord (i.e. recite it, understand and follow its teachings and act on its orders and preach it to men). None can change His Words, and none will you find as a refuge other than Him” [al-Kahf 18:27], if this is understood as referring to the words of the divine decree, then it is like the previous example. If it is understood as referring to His religious decree namely the Holy Qur’an which He revealed to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), then no one can change this Qur’an, for Allah, may He be glorified, has guaranteed to preserve it.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to the words (interpretation of the meaning): “And recite what has been revealed to you (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) of the Book (the Qur’an) of your Lord (i.e. recite it, understand and follow its teachings and act on its orders and preach it to men). None can change His Words” [al-Kahf 18:27],

the phrase “what has been revealed to you” refers to the Qur’an and the revelation cannot be anything but words, so it is not created.

“of the Book (the Qur’an) of your Lord” – it is attributed to Him, may He be glorified and exalted, because He is the one who uttered it and sent it down to Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) via Jibreel the Trustworthy.

“None can change His Words” i.e., no one can change the words of Allah. As for Allah Himself, may He be glorified and exalted, He may replace one verse with another, as He, may He be exalted, says elsewhere (interpretation of the meaning):

“And when We change a Verse (of the Quran, i.e. cancel (abrogate) its order) in place of another, and Allah knows the best of what He sends down, they (the disbelievers) say: ‘You (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) are but a Muftari! (forger, liar).’ Nay, but most of them know not”

[an-Nahl 16:101].

The phrase “None can change His Words” includes both the words of His divine decree and the words of His religious decree.

·With regard to His divine decree, there is no exception from that at all. It is not possible for anyone to change the words of Allah’s divine decree:

If Allah decrees death for a person, no one can change it.

If Allah decrees poverty for a person, no one can change it.

If Allah decrees drought for a person, no one can change it.

All of the things that happen in the universe happen by His word and His decree, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily, His Command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it, ‘Be!’ and it is”

[Yaa-Seen 36:82].

With regard to His religious decree, it may be changed by the disbelievers and hypocrites, so they would change the words either in terms of the meaning or in terms of the wording itself, if they could, or they would do both.

End quote from Majmoo‘ Fataawa Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (8/370)

Conclusion:

The words of Allah’s divine will and decree cannot be changed by anybody. The same applies to the words of His religious decree that He guaranteed to protect, namely the Holy Qur’an. This does not contradict the fact that Allah, may He be exalted, may abrogate of it whatever He wills, and may send down one verse to replace another if He so wills, because He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Know you not that Allah is able to do all things?”

[al-Baqarah 2:106].

And Allah knows best.