The Concept of Scripture and The Concept of Doctrine in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
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I. The Concept of Scripture

1. The Concept of Scripture in Judaism
(Prof. Dr. Isaac Kalimi, University of Mainz)

Unlike Christianity, the Jewish tradition considers the Hebrew Bible to be complete in and of itself. It is even regarded as the source of everything, "origin of all" (Arnold Ehrlich), and "crossroads of all national thought and feeling" (Chaim Nachman Bialik). It forms the undisputed common ground between all Jews and the bedrock for all Jewish thought. Its correct text has been carefully preserved down to individual letters and vowel signs, enabling Jewish scholars to find and attach significance to the exact middle of certain passages or of the entire Torah in terms of verses, words, and single letters.

The totality of interpretations of the Hebrew Bible or Written Torah produced after 70 CE are known as the Oral Torah and are also considered part of Jewish Scripture. While the Babylonian Talmud stresses that "Scripture never departs from its plain meaning," verses from the Torah are still given non-literal interpretations which are constantly being revised and developed. This is not seen to be a contradiction, since a Biblical verse can hold its plain meaning and several more hidden meanings at once – Numbers Rabbah speaks of the "seventy faces of the Torah."

Both the Written and the Oral Torah are held to be inextricably linked. Both are thought to have a divine origin, though only one was written down, and one cannot exist without the other. All its parts were revealed to Moses on Sinai, even though many of the more complex interpretations would not have been understandable to Moses himself, as the circumstances of life of the rabbis who made the interpretations are both legitimate factors in forming the interpretations and necessary for understanding them. Some rabbis even put the main emphasis on the study of the oral Torah, which was considered more authoritative in some cases, particularly on certain legal matters: Complex and far-reaching laws elaborated in the oral Torah are often based on very slim Biblical textual evidence. For this reason, the study of the Written Torah without the Oral Torah is sometimes regarded as undesirable.

The Septuagint and the commentaries on it by, for example, Philo of Alexandria were not mentioned in this paper because, as was explained in the discussion, the mainstream Jewish tradition has mostly concentrated on the Hebrew text. Similarly, the philosophical-hermeneutical approaches by such au-

thors as Philo and, later, Moses Maimonides, were directed outwards to an audience with an intellectual background shaped by Greek philosophy and were not accepted in mainstream Judaism until much later.

2. The Concept of Scripture in Christianity
(Prof. Dr. Assaad Elias Kattan, University of Münster)

In the New Testament, the holy books of the Jews are mentioned as ἡ γραφή or αἱ γραφαί ("Scripture" or "Scriptures"). Though at the time there was no consensus about which books were part of the Jewish canon, this expression, whether in the singular or the plural, refers to the Jewish Holy Scriptures. In the first century, they were also often called "Holy" (ἅγια) Scripture. Both γραφή and its Latin translation *scriptura* mean something written. However, it should be kept in mind that Scripture in this sense is essentially a secondary phenomenon preceded by an oral tradition.

The New Testament itself acquired the status of Scripture much later. In deciding which books were to be accepted as part of the canon, the extent to which the content of books was judged to go back to the Apostles was an important criterion. Moreover, it is likely that each of the four Gospels played a large role in one of four major centres of early Christianity (Rome, Antioch, Ephesus, and Alexandria), so that these books had a privileged role early on.

The canon of the New Testament is shared by all Christians, whereas for the Old Testament, Protestant churches use the Hebrew canon while the canon shared by the Catholic Church and the Eastern Churches is based on the Septuagint. However, this difference is not dogmatically divisive, though it has liturgical consequences.

Scripture has always had a critical and corrective function for the life of the Church, although this was brought to the centre of attention particularly by the Protestants during the Reformation. The Scriptures are held to contain an irreducible moment of timelessness, which gives them universal validity. This, however, cannot be accessed without interpretation. Regardless of the exegetical method, the centre of Scripture, from a Christian point of view, are the life and deeds of Christ, which form the main point of orientation for all other parts of Scripture and their interpretations. Even the Old Testament is read by Christians in Christological perspective, which leads to a vastly different interpretation of Hebrew Scripture than that arrived at by Jewish scholars. For example, beyond the tension between the interpretation of the Old Testament in the Epistles of St Paul which are part of the New Testament and modern exegetical approaches, what is common to both is that the lens through which Scripture is read is Christological. While this perspective can obviously not be applied to all passages in the Old Testament, the overall principle holds true for the macro-perspective if not all details. A similar process is followed by the Qur'ān, which also contains a re-reading of older scriptures, but with a new focus and a new perspective.

3. The Concept of Scripture in Islam
(Prof. Dr. Joseph E. B. Lumbard, American University of Sharjah)

In the classical tradition, the concept of Scripture is only discussed in relation to the Qur'ān, not as a general phenomenon. The main issues of such reflections are the nature of the Qur'ān as revealed scripture, and how it is that it corrects other scriptures. The concept of Scripture is closely linked with that of revelation, as its divine origin is central to what Scripture means to Muslims. The relationship to these revealed books is part of what defines humanity, as all Scriptures are reminders of the original covenant that all mankind entered into with God (cf. Q 7:172). The Qur'ān conceptualises itself as confirming other scriptures and protecting (*muhaymin ʿalā*) their function, i.e. clarifying their correct interpretation; however, judging between communities with regard to how far they follow their original scripture is not a task humans can fulfil.

The word most often used in the Qur'ān for "book" or "scripture," *kitāb*, does not necessarily refer to the Qur'ān itself, but can refer to the divine "urtext," of which any manifestation in time and in a particular human language is only one possible elaboration (*tafṣīl*). This also gives rise to the question of which sense of kitāb is being used when Jews and Christians are described as "ahl al-kitāb": this phrase could mean a community with access to some manifestation to the "urtext" or the holders of some particular scripture. Such elaborations are found both in revealed scripture and in nature: Everything in scripture, everything that is given to the prophets, and everything in nature are signs (*āyāt*) of God.

While this type of natural theology is not an invention of Islam (one older example is Ps 104), it is much more prevalent in the Qur'ān than it is in the Bible and much more central to the Qur'ānic understanding of revelation. This may be regarded as a case where the Qur'ān confirms something already present in older scriptures, although the degree of emphasis on it is adapted to the needs of the community at the time. The older scriptures mentioned in the Qur'ān are not necessarily identical with what we know as the Christian and Jewish corpora. The only Scriptures mentioned are the Torah, the Psalms, and the Gospels (*al-inğīl*), although in the case of the latter it is not certain whether it actually denotes the four canonical Gospels that we know today. Insofar as it re-reads Jewish and Christian Scriptures just as the New Testament is a re-reading of the Hebrew Bible, the Qur'ān could be conceptualised as a "third testament." However, that leads to questions about more recent religious text such as the scriptures of the Bahā'ī or the Mormons, thus requiring answers to more general questions about how scriptures of newer religions are to be treated, which both Christians and Muslims have yet to discuss in more detail.

4. Concluding Discussion

Hermeneutic approaches, both historical and current, should be covered in all three projected articles, as the topic is relevant to all three traditions. Moreover, the issue of revelation as well as that of plurality or diversity should be mentioned in relation to the formation of Scripture, as should reactions to other religious groups in the conceptualisation of Scripture.

The Jewish tradition recognised a plurality of meanings in Scripture early on, but in the case of legal decisions, rabbinic rulings are authoritative. Moreover, plurality does not affect certain fundamental principles in mainstream Judaism, such as the belief that the Torah is "from the heavens." The Torah (Pentateuch) itself was canonised already by the 5th century BCE, whereas other books became canonical only later. There was some debate on the inclusion of certain books, such as Qohelet and the Song of Songs, which was eventually settled in the late 1st century CE. This definition of the canon was partially motivated by the deracination of the Jewish community after the destruction of the temple, the newly fixed corpus providing a centre and focus after Jerusalem had been lost as the community's focal point.

The projected article on Christianity will elaborate more than the presentation on the issue of canon, which was fluid in early centuries. Even today, various parts of Scripture have a different status and liturgical role in different denominations. It may also be asked if Scripture can be equated with canon, since, for example, even apocryphal Gospels were received by some Christians in popular piety if not official dogma, raising the question whether these should be included under the concept of Scripture.

The concept of Scripture is also influenced by contact and comparison with other religions. For example, we can ask if Scripture is as central in the Christian context as it is in the Islamic one, given the significance of Jesus as the medium of God's revelation, whereas in Islam that role is assumed by the Qur'ān. On the other hand, many Protestant groups have placed Scripture at the centre of religious thought. Still, the relation of revelation to Scripture is conceptualised fundamentally different in Christianity than it is in Islam and Judaism, as in the last two, it is scripture itself that is revealed, whereas for Christians the main locus of revelation is the person of Jesus Christ, so that Scripture, even if divinely inspired, is in a sense derivative. On the other hand, the Qur'ān also calls Jesus "kalimat Allāh" (word of God).

In the projected article on Scripture in Islam, the concept of *taḥrīf* (the corruption of older scriptures, which the Qur'ān claims to correct) should be addressed in addition to the issues mentioned in the paper. On the one hand, the older religions' Scriptures were thought to have been corrupted over time, requiring correction by the Qur'ānic message, but at the same time, Jews and Christians are asked to "judge in accord with their books", clearly implying that these books do still contain enough truth to allow for a good life if they are followed. Later Muslim discussion on the concept of Scripture mainly

focused on the Qur'ān and its status as created (*muʿtazila*) or uncreated, eternal, word of God, with the ʿIbadīyya maintaining an intermediate position claiming that there is an uncreated Qur'ān but what we have in this world is a created instantiation of it.

Similarly, the Shīʿī point of view will be added in the article, as will the philosophical tradition with the approaches of ibn Rushd as well as Mullah Sadra. As the project is focused on dialogical moments, ibn Rushd will also be mentioned particularly in the epilogue along with the related approaches of Thomas Aquinas and Moses Maimonides. The natural theology based on the Qur'ān's idea of nature as revelation was very important in the medieval tradition: Even mathematical and scientific texts were often introduced as ways to understand God's *āyāt*; however, by contrast to the Jewish tradition, the idea of a scientific or mathematical interpretation of Scripture was not fully articulated.

II. The Concept of Doctrine

1. The Concept of Doctrine in Judaism
(Prof. Dr. Michah Gottlieb, New York University)

There is much debate about whether Judaism has anything that can be considered a binding doctrine, as there are no authoritative church councils to establish binding articles of faith. Affiliation to Judaism is determined in the first instance by birth, not by adherence to a creed. However, as early as the second century, there was a Mishnah excluding those Israelites from the world to come who deny certain articles of faith, such as that of resurrection or of the divine origin of the Torah. Much later, Moses Maimonides formulated 13 principles that a person must acknowledge to be regarded as a Jew. These had a wide influence and even entered some Jewish prayer books. The Jewish liturgy includes many common points of belief, most prominently of all the belief in one God. (Of course, in the broad sense of "dogma" as "opinion of a school of thought," the principle that there is no dogma is already a dogma; however, in the narrow sense that became dominant through developments in 19th century Catholicism, it is not.)

The debate over whether Judaism has binding dogmas was particularly lively in 19th century Germany, in the context of the debate over the granting of civil rights to the Jews, with Samson Hirsch arguing that as Judaism is a religion rather than a nation, Jews can be Germans with full civil rights. Moses Mendelssohn, for instance, maintained that as the Jewish law only mandates actions, not articles of faith, Judaism as a religion only depends on rationally accessible natural religion (e.g., belief in a creator). It can therefore reject any form of religious coercion, unlike Christianity which places great emphasis on what Mendelssohn called "revealed religion." Abraham Geiger argued that while Judaism is defined by specific beliefs, what these beliefs are constantly develops and evolves. It is therefore the historical connection to "Jewry" that makes a thought authentically Jewish, not its place in systematic doctrine.

The secession of orthodoxy from the Jewish community in response to reforms also show an aspect of this debate: Orthodox who secede on religious principles seem to recognise some doctrine as binding in Judaism, whereas local Jewish authorities who expected them to stay despite reforms saw membership in the local Jewish community as the primary religious duty, reducing doctrinal differences to a secondary matter. Varying views are possible on whether the difference between Jewish denominations is mostly a difference of doctrine or of practice. From the perspective of the history of ideas, their differences can be traced back to differing answers to the questions: "Is the Torah completely revealed, or also human?" and "Is the law to be accepted as a whole or only insofar as it serves its moral purpose?"

2. The Concept of Doctrine in Christianity
(Prof. Dr. Roman Siebenrock, University of Innsbruck)

A starting point for these reflections can be the Second Vatican Council, whose central question can be summarised as: Which doctrine is fruitful for dialogue with other worldviews? This openness takes several conditions without which there can be no respectful dialogue: one pre-theological condition is the acknowledgement of religious freedom and of human rights in general; a central theological condition is a view of God's word that is wider than just one's own tradition. Pragmatically, it is also necessary to admit the possibility that all people can and have contributed to mankind's understanding of the word of God, so that Christians must learn from others in order to have the whole picture. While doctrine is a central aspect of any religion constituted by conversion rather than birth, it is not the most important among Christian (religious) speech acts, which include prayer, liturgy, narrations… While the concept of doctrine remains vague in that it is unclear whether it is an instrument to organise faith, or simply its basic content, the basic form of doctrine can be specified as that of the confession of faith. In the narrow sense, doctrine consists of propositions by theologians, but it always also has a pragmatic aspect.

Doctrine, in a Christian context, can be described as an attempt to understand what the revelation in Christ actually means. Since this process started with the Epistles of St Paul, doctrine can be said to be part of the beginning of Christianity as a religion, alongside narratives. Two important forms of doctrine in the history of Christianity were apologies ("ad extra"), i.e., the defence of the Christian faith before outsiders, and the internal cultivation of the understanding of the faith ("ad intra"). Both types found expression in various types of texts in the time of the Church Fathers. In the Western tradition after the Fathers, Christian thought developed in the separate scholastic and monastic traditions, the former answering to the challenge of Aristotelianism with its claim to a rational system of thought. Whether and in how far faith is built on or accessible through reason has been subject to much debate and answers have varied enormously. Particularly after the Reformation, doctrines were frequently established, elaborated or emphasised in order to clarify the identity of one denomination as distinct from the others. This has occasionally led to instances of "mimetic rivalry" within Christianity, as aspects that are neglected in one church are emphasised in another.

3. The Concept of Doctrine in Islam
(Prof. Dr. Waleed El-Ansary, Xavier University, Cincinnati)

The basic question for Islamic doctrine is: What are the consequences of *tawḥīd*? Following from this centre, the subject matter of Islamic dogmatic theology is often broken down in five components: God, the messengers, their books, the angels, and the Day of Judgment. These are agreed upon by all Muslims, but there is doctrinal debate about their interpretation. Moreover, basic Qur'ānic terms often have massive doctrinal implications. According to the Qur'ān, the intellect (*ʿaql*) is what binds humans

to belief in God. Thus, doctrines (ʿaqāʾid) can be accepted because they are connected to reality through ʿaql.

The word kalām, often translated as "theology," is a much narrower field than what Westerners understand by "theology." It refers to the defence and elaboration of the tenets of faith and could be translated as "dogmatics." All schools of kalām attempted to defend tawḥīd in different ways. Unlike kalām, Islamic philosophy seeks not merely to defend doctrines, but to develop them from natural reason, with no reference to religious authority. Although it adopted concepts from Greek philosophy, it is not merely Greek philosophy in Arabic but addresses genuinely Islamic concerns. Mysticism also constitutes an integral part of Islamic theology in the broader sense. There are also similarities between certain doctrinal debates in Islam and corresponding debates in Christianity, such as the debate on the createdness or otherwise of the Qurʾān and the debate about the dual nature of Christ. Islamic thought has continued to develop since the Middle Ages even after Islamic influence on Western thought came to an end.

4. Concluding Discussion

Closely connected to the concept of doctrine is the question whether convictions always need rational assent. Jewish tradition, for the most part, answers in the affirmative: convictions cannot be forced but must be arrived at rationally. The Catholic tradition acknowledges a rational element in religious convictions but also maintains that there are rationally impenetrable mysteries, thus strengthening the role of Church authority. While there can be no faith without reason, faith also cannot be completely explained by reason. The relationship between unforced beliefs, rationality, and faith requires further elaboration, as faith does not seem to be reducible to rationality. While many rabbis would disagree with this insofar as belief in propositions is concerned, they would acknowledge that faith (in the sense of emūnāh, i.e., trust or confidence) includes an emotional element. The Catholic Church recognises a similar tension between the inseparability of faith from free rational assent and adherence to the authority of the Church. John Henry Newman, for instance, emphasises conscience as the highest criterion to which ecclesiastical authority is secondary. The Islamic tradition, particularly the mystics, emphasises the need for direct experience (dhawq) rather than mere descriptions or statements. These experiences are regarded, e.g., by al-Ghazālī, not as irrational, but as a further stage beyond rationality. Direct personal experience also plays a role in the Jewish and Christian traditions (expressed, for instance, in some of the Psalms). While such experiences may not be explainable, they do form the basis for personal faith. All religions must take some stance on the relation between faith and reason, which in turn has implications for the relationship between doctrine and truth. At the least, rational explanations are necessary in the attempt to explain one's faith to outsiders.

One of the reasons dogma is so central in Catholicism is that it provides a basis for unity. Unlike Judaism, where unity is mainly constituted by birth, Catholicism (and Christianity in general) is open to all and therefore needs a defined creed as a foundation of unity between the believers. Thus, rigidly defined doctrines may be restrictive in some ways but can be pragmatically necessary. The fixation of doctrine also serves to define one's own identity against others, thus constituting a defensive or protective act. This mechanism can be seen, for example, in the development of Muslim *kalām*, which emerged in response to political pressure and to challenges by Christians. Attempts to counter this phenomenon are present in the form of various ecumenical movements; in the case of Islam the Common Word Initiative may be mentioned as an example.

In the Islamic tradition, the limitations of doctrine (*ʿaqīda*), which never exhausts the reality of religious experiences, was most famously recognised by al-Ghazālī. The Islamic claim to the finality of revelation is problematic as it implies an appropriation and integration of older religions into the Islamic worldview, which implies a certain interpretative control over others. One of the central concepts for Islamic doctrine is that of *tawḥīd*, so that the development of Islamic doctrine can be paradigmatically traced by following the different ways in which *tawḥīd* has been articulated in the different branches of Islamic thought.