

SURAH 6 (AL-AN'AM)

FAITH: Islam | TEXT: The Holy Qur'an | VOLUME: The Meaning of the Holy Quran | AUTHOR: Rashad Khalifa (Translator)

OVERVIEW

Surah 6, titled 'The Cattle' (Al-An'am), is a pivotal Meccan text that establishes the Islamic doctrine of Tawhid (the absolute Oneness of God) in direct opposition to Meccan polytheism and Christian Trinitarianism. Through the translation of Rashad Khalifa, the text presents a God who is the sole Creator, Sustainer, and Judge, explicitly rejecting the idea that God could have a son or a partner (6:101). The text employs rational arguments drawn from the natural world—stars, seeds, rain, and livestock—to prove God's sovereignty. It details the spiritual history of humanity through the lens of previous prophets, including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, positioning Muhammad as the continuation and confirmation of their message. The text imposes a rigorous ethical code, dietary laws, and the requirement of 'Contact Prayers' (Salat). Theologically, it asserts that salvation is attained through submission (Islam) and the accumulation of righteous deeds, explicitly stating that no soul can bear the burden of another, thereby rejecting the Christian doctrine of substitutionary atonement.

KEY FIGURES

GOD (Allah), The Messenger (Muhammad), Abraham, The Polytheists (Meccans), Moses, Jesus, Satan (Iblis)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. ABSOLUTE MONOTHEISM (TAWHID)

Assertion: God is singular, has no partners, no mate, and no son; He is the sole Creator and Judge.

"The Initiator of the heavens and the earth. How can He have a son, when He never had a mate? (6:101)"

Evangelical Comparison: While Evangelicalism holds to One God in Three Persons (Trinity), this text explicitly defines monotheism as the negation of plurality within the Godhead. Specifically, Surah 6:101 uses the physical impossibility of a 'mate' to argue against the spiritual reality of the Sonship of Christ. This creates a fundamental incompatibility with the Nicene Creed and the biblical revelation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

2. MERIT-BASED SOTERIOLOGY

Assertion: Salvation is determined by the balance of good deeds versus bad deeds, with God multiplying the credit for good deeds.

"Whoever does a righteous work receives the reward for ten, and the one who commits a sin is requited for only one. (6:160)"

Evangelical Comparison: Evangelical theology teaches justification by faith alone, apart from works (Ephesians 2:8-9), where Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer. In contrast, Surah 6:160 establishes a transactional system where human effort is the primary currency. While God is described as merciful, that mercy is accessed through the performance of 'righteous work' and the avoidance of sin, rather than received as a free gift through the finished work of Christ.

3. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY (ANTI-ATONEMENT)

Assertion: No individual can carry the sins of another; vicarious atonement is impossible.

"No soul benefits except from its own works, and none bears the burden of another. (6:164)"

Evangelical Comparison: The core of the Gospel is that Christ 'bore our sins in his body on the tree' (1 Peter 2:24). Surah 6:164 explicitly negates this possibility, asserting that spiritual debt is non-transferable. This doctrine locks the adherent into a system of self-redemption, as they are denied the possibility of a Savior who can take their place under divine judgment.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the solution to the problem of sin. In Surah 6, sin is a behavioral error balanced by good deeds (6:160) or forgiven by a sovereign act of will without satisfaction of justice. In Evangelicalism, sin is a state of death requiring a new life and a debt requiring payment (Romans 6:23). Surah 6:101's denial of God's Sonship removes the Mediator between God and man. Without the God-Man, there is no infinite sacrifice to absorb infinite wrath; thus, the adherent is left to bear their own burden (6:164), which the Bible claims is impossible (Psalm 49:7-8).

Shared Values:

Monotheism (existence of one Creator); Objective Morality (murder, theft, and dishonesty are wrong); Care for the vulnerable (orphans, poor); Resurrection and Final Judgment; Creation ex nihilo

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Theology Proper (Trinity) – Explicit denial of God having a son or partners (6:101).
2. [Critical] Sola Fide (Faith Alone) – Establishment of a 10-to-1 merit system for works (6:160).
3. [Critical] Christology (Atonement) – Denial of vicarious liability/substitution (6:164).

Semantic Warnings:

"Believer"

In Text: One who accepts the Quran, rejects the Trinity/Idols, and performs the Contact Prayers.

Evangelical: One who trusts solely in the finished work of Christ for salvation.

Example: *In 6:82, 'those who believe' are those who do not mix faith with idolatry (shirk); in Acts 16:31, 'believe' is specific trust in the Lord Jesus.*

"Mercy"

In Text: God's decision to guide or forgive based on His will and the adherent's repentance/works.

Evangelical: God's withholding of deserved punishment, satisfied through the Cross.

Example: *In 6:16, mercy is 'being spared retribution' based on God's decree; in Titus 3:5, mercy is the basis for regeneration through the Holy Spirit.*

"Jesus"

In Text: A righteous human prophet in the line of Abraham, distinct from God.

Evangelical: The Eternal Son of God, Second Person of the Trinity.

Example: *6:85 lists Jesus alongside Zechariah and John as 'righteous' humans; John 1:1 identifies Him as God.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Being spared from retribution on the Day of Judgment and attaining God's mercy (6:16).

How Attained: By believing in the One God, rejecting idols, and accumulating righteous deeds (6:160).

Basis of Assurance: None guaranteed; dependent on God's will ('Whomever God wills, He sends astray' 6:39) and the final weighing of deeds.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Explicitly rejected. 6:158 states that belief is of no benefit if the soul did not 'reap the benefits of belief by leading a righteous life.' This fuses justification and sanctification, whereas Sola Fide distinguishes them.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Observe the Contact Prayers (Salat) (6:72)
2. Eat only food upon which God's name has been pronounced (6:118)
3. Do not eat food dedicated to other than God (6:121)
4. Honor parents (6:151)
5. Do not kill children due to poverty (6:151)
6. Give full weight and measure in trade (6:152)

7. Avoid gross sins, obvious or hidden (6:151)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Rejection of all cultural superstitions and idolatry
2. Acceptance of the Quran as the final authority over previous scriptures
3. Constant mindfulness of God's oneness

Ritual Requirements:

1. Pronouncing God's name over food/slaughter
2. Contact Prayers (Salat)
3. Alms giving on the day of harvest (6:141)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. Surah 6:164 says no one can bear the burden of another. How do you deal with the weight of your own sins if you have to carry them all yourself?
2. In 6:160, it speaks of a 10-fold reward for good deeds. Does this math give you peace that you have done enough, or do you still worry about the 'hidden sins' mentioned in 6:151?
3. Surah 6:101 asks how God can have a son without a mate. Do you think Christians believe God had a physical wife, or could 'Son of God' mean something spiritual and eternal, like God's Word?
4. If God leads astray whomever He wills (6:39), how can you be certain He is not leading you astray right now?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Hunger for the Ultimate – Just as Abraham realized created things cannot save, the human heart is restless until it finds rest in the Uncreated God. Jesus is the 'Son of Righteousness' who does not set. [Hebrews 11:8-10 (Abraham looking for the city built by God).]
2. The Missing Intercessor – The text uses the absence of an intercessor as a threat. The Gospel provides the solution to this terrifying vacuum: We *do* have an Advocate with the Father. [1 John 2:1, 1 Timothy 2:5]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Isolation/Lack of Mediation [Severe] – The believer stands alone before a terrifyingly powerful God without a Mediator. The text emphasizes that no intercessor will help (6:51), leaving the individual exposed to absolute judgment.
2. Performance Anxiety [Moderate] – The system of counting deeds (6:160) creates a perpetual psychological burden to ensure the 'good' column outweighs the 'bad,' with no assurance of when 'enough' is reached.
3. Fatalistic Uncertainty [Severe] – The repeated assertion that God guides or misguides whom He wills (6:39, 6:125) instills a fear that one's faith might be an illusion or that God has arbitrarily decided to seal their heart.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Revelation (The Quran) confirmed by Natural Theology (Signs in creation).

Verification Method: Adherents are instructed to observe the natural world (stars, crops, birth) as rational proofs of the text's claims (6:95-99).

Evangelical Contrast: While the Bible affirms general revelation (Psalm 19), this text relies on natural signs to prove a unitarian God, whereas Biblical epistemology centers on the specific revelation of God in Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2) and the Spirit-illuminated Word (1 Corinthians 2:12-14).

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: 7th Century AD (Traditional date of revelation). Translation: 1978.

Authorship: Attributed to God via the Angel Gabriel to Muhammad. Translator: Rashad Khalifa.

Textual Issues: Rashad Khalifa's translation is controversial within mainstream Islam for his 'Code 19' theory and rejection of Hadith. He translates 'Salat' as 'Contact Prayers' and emphasizes 'Submission' over 'Islam'.