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• EAST AFRICA •

CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM: The Essentials—PART 3

by

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This is an examination of Islam from a Christian perspective and a comparison of major Christian and Islamic doctrines. Part 3 includes discussions Yahweh and Allah and the Bible and the Qur'an. The text concludes by discussing ways to bridge the divide between Islam and the gospel, including using the Qur'an and Islamic practices to point Muslims to Jesus Christ. The Appendix lists the chronological order in which the Qur'an's surahs were given.

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4. YAHWEH AND ALLAH

I. Introduction

Q. 29:46 (Hilali-Khan) says, “*Our Ilah (God) and your Ilah (God) is One (i.e. Allah), and to Him we have submitted (as Muslims).*” Consequently, many people, for both religious and socio-political reasons, believe that the God of the Bible (Yahweh) and the God of the Qur’an (Allah) are the same. However, while there are many similarities between Allah and the God of the Bible, there are also profound differences. The differences are substantive enough that the only fair conclusion is that, while Christians and Muslims both worship one God, “our God and your God” are not the same.

II. Similarities between Yahweh and Allah

Since both Christianity and Islam hold that there is only one God who is sovereign over all, it is inevitable that many aspects of God and Allah may be the same even if they are not the same God.

A. Attributes

The Hadith reports, “Allah’s Messenger said, ‘Allah has ninety-nine Names, one-hundred less one.’” (al-Bukhari: 7392; see also 2736, 6410; Muslim: 2677a, b; at-Tirmidhi: 3506, 3508; Ibn Majah: 3860) The names essentially describe the attributes of Allah. Many of those names are consistent with attributes of Yahweh even though they are not the same God:

NAME OF ALLAH AND CITATION TO QUR’AN	SIMILAR BIBLICAL ATTRIBUTE OF YAHWEH
2 AR-RAHMAN - (The Beneficent [i.e., Gracious]): Q. 1:3; 17:110; 19:58	Gracious – Exod 22:27; 34:6; 1 Pet 2:3
3 AR-RAHIM - (The Merciful): Q. 2:163; 3:31; 4:100	Merciful – Exod 34:6; Deut 4:31 Luke 6:36
4 AL-MALIK - (The Sovereign Lord [or The King]): Q. 20:114; 23:116; 59:23	Sovereign – Ps 103:19; Isa 43:15
5 AL-QUDDUS - (The Holy): Q. 59:23; 62:1	Holy – Isa 6:3; 43:15; Rev 4:8
9 AL-AZIZ - (The Mighty): Q. 3:6; 4:158; 9:40	Mighty – Ps 50:1; 93:4; Luke 1:49
11 AL-MUTAKABBIR - (The Majestic): Q. 59:23	Majestic – Job 37:22; Ps 29:4; Heb 8:1
12 AL-KHALIQ - (The Creator): Q. 6:102; 13:16; 39:62	Creator – Gen 1:1; Eccl 12:1; Rom 1:25
15 AL-GHAFFAR - (The Forgiver): Q. 20:82; 38:66; 39:5	Forgiver – Exod 34:7; Dan 9:9; Eph 4:32
20 AL-ALIM - (The All-Knowing): Q. 2:158; 3:92; 4:35	All-Knowing – Job 11:11; Ps 44:21; Matt 6:8
27 AS-SAMI - (The All-Hearing): Q. 2:127; 8:17; 49:1	All-Hearing – Ps 34:17; 69:33; 1 John 5:14-15
28 AL-BASIR - (The All-Seeing): Q. 4:58; 17:1; 42:11	All-Seeing – Gen 16:13; 1 Sam 16:7; Matt 6:4
29 AL-HAKAM - (The Judge): Q. 22:69	Judge – Job 21:22; Ps 7:8; John 8:50
33 AL-HALIM - (The Forbearing One): Q. 2:255; 42:4	Forbearing – Rom 3:25
37 AL-ALI - (The Most High): Q. 2:255; 4:34; 31:30	Most High – Gen 14:18-20; Num 24:16; Acts 7:48
39 AL-HAFIZ - (The Preserver): Q. 11:57; 34:21; 42:6	Preserver – Ps 31:23; 36:6; 2 Pet 2:5
43 AL-KARIM - (The Generous One): Q. 27:40; 82:6	Generous – 1 Chron 29:14; Jas 1:5
47 AL-HAKEEM - (The Wise): Q. 2:129; 31:27; 46:2	Wise – Job 9:4; Isa 31:2; Rom 16:27
48 AL-WADUD - (The Loving): Q. 11:90; 85:14	Loving – Exod 34:6-7; 1 Chron 16:34; 1 John 4:7-8
49 AL-MAJEED - (The Most Glorious One): Q. 11:73	Glorious – Exod 24:16-17; Isa 3:8; 2 Cor 3:18
52 AL-HAQQ - (The Truth): Q. 6:62; 22:6; 23:116	Truth – Exod 34:6; 2 Sam 7:28; Rom 1:25
57 AL-HAMEED - (The Praiseworthy): Q. 14:1, 8; 31:12	Praiseworthy – Deut 10:21; Ps 150:1-6; Rom 15:11
63 AL-HAYEE - (The Alive): Q. 2:255; 25:58; 40:65	Living God – Ps 42:2; Jer 10:10; 1 Tim 3:15
68 AS-SAMAD - (The Eternal): Q. 112:2	Eternal – Gen 21:33; Deut 33:27; Rom 16:26
73 AL-AWWAL - (The First): Q. 57:3	The First – Isa 41:4; 44:6; Rev 1:8
74 AL-AAKHIR - (The Last): Q. 57:3	The Last – Isa 43:10; 44:6; Rev 1:8
78 AL-MUTA’ALI - (The Most Exalted): Q. 13:9	Most Exalted – Exod 15:1; Ps 97:9; Isa 6:1
81 AL-MUNTAQIM - (The Avenger): Q. 32:22; 43:41	Avenger – Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30
83 AR-RAOOF - (The Compassionate): Q. 3:30; 9:117	Compassionate – Exod 34:6; Deut 4:31; Joel 2:13
93 AN-NOOR - (The Light): Q. 24:35	Light – Ps 27:1; 2 Cor 4:6; 1 John 1:5

B. Actions

Since both Christianity and Islam hold that there is only one God who is sovereign over all it is inevitable that many of the acts of God and Allah may be the same even though they are not the same God. Some of the correspondences are the following:

- **He created the heavens and earth and all that is in them:** “*For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them*” (**Exod 20:11**); “*We created the heavens and the earth and all between them in Six Days*” (**Q. 50:38**).

- He created Adam and breathed life into him: “*The LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life*” (**Gen 2:7**); “*He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit*” (**Q. 32:9**).
- He has a plan for the end of the present cosmos: “*The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’*” (**Rev 6:14-17**); “*Then when the stars become dim; When the heaven is cleft asunder; When the mountains are scattered (to the winds) as dust; And when the messengers are (all) appointed a time (to collect);- For what Day are these (portents) deferred? For the Day of Sorting out. And what will explain to thee what is the Day of Sorting out? Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!*” (**Q. 77:8-15**).
- He will judge justly: “*He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity*” (**Ps 9:8**); “*The (final) Judgment is in the hands of God. He reveals the Truth and He is the best Judge.*” (**Q. 6:57**, Sarwar).

III. Differences between Yahweh and Allah

Despite the similarities between Yahweh and Allah, there are profound differences between them. These differences are fundamental and reveal that Yahweh and Allah are not the same God at all. Some of the more important differences are the following:

A. Yahweh and Allah: their names

God states his proper name in **Exod 3:13-15** as “*I AM WHO I AM.*” The “I AM” in Hebrew is YHWH, pronounced Yahweh, which is derived from the verb *hayah* (“to be” and “to become”). “It is a name that expresses the truth that God has always existed and will always exist” (Ndjerareou 2006: 91).

“Allah” was the proper name of a pagan god worshipped by pre-Islamic Arabs (see **Q. 29:61-65**; Gilchrist 1994: 4; Morey 1991: 45-53; Nehls and Eric 2009: 133; Shayesteh 2004: 36n.2; Schirmacher 2011: 11). Because of this, Sundiata maintains: “Even if the word ‘Allah’ were the only one that could describe the true God in Arabic, the fact that it had been debased by association with idolatry would make the true God reveal Himself in some other manner. . . . Can you imagine God sending Moses to the Israelites when they were in Egypt and allowing the name ‘Ra,’ the Egyptian sun god, for example, to be used for Him? But this is what Muhammad wants us to believe God did in this case. Muhammad wants us to believe that the one who sent him was the true God, but still allowed Himself to be called ‘Allah’ (which means ‘the god’)—after a pagan god.” (Sundiata 2006: 311-12)

On the other hand, “Allah” is Arabic for “the God” (Gilchrist 1994: 4; Prince 2011: 4-5; Schirmacher 2011: 11). According to Bible scholar and mission strategist Rick Brown, “the Arabic name *Allâh* is an adaptation of the Aramaic word for God, *Alâh* or *Alâhâ*” (Brown 2006d: 80). Ancient inscriptions reveal that Christians in pre-Islamic times used the term Allah, Christian Arabic translations of Scripture from the seventh century to today without exception use Allah, and “even today, Allah is the Arabic name for God that is commonly used by Jews and Christians” (Ibid.: 80-81; Fleenor 2005: 2-4; Greeson 2007: 110; Schirmacher 2011: 11; Thomas 2006: 171-74). Rick Brown reminds us, “The meaning of a word is a function of how people conventionally use it to refer to things, not how it was used in the past. . . . Any name that denotes God for someone will evoke that person’s concept of God. *What is required for reconceptualization is new information about God that will change the concept itself, and that is the task of the Bible.* . . . The problem is not their name for God but their concept of God. The concept of a holy, loving, consistent Trinitarian God comes from absorbing the worldview revealed in the Bible. It is the Word of God, with the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit and the testimony of the saints, that can lead Muslims to a fuller concept of God, regardless of the name they use for him.” (Brown 2006d: 81-82, *emph. in orig.*) Consequently, if a Muslim knows only the word “Allah” for God, a Christian should be able to use that term as long as the true nature of God, as revealed in the Bible, is made clear.¹

¹ Georges Housney cautions that “the use of Allah in Christian witness and Bible translation is a complex topic. . . . It is worthwhile to mention that even though Arabic-speaking Christians have no other word but Allah, that does not automatically mean that the word Allah should be used in other languages of Muslims. For instance, Iranians from Muslim background prefer *Khoda*, the Farsi word for God, because ‘Allah’ has strictly Islamic connotations for them.” (Housney

B. *Yahweh and Allah: their knowability*

The God of the Bible desires to be known. Jesus said, “*This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent*” (**John 17:3**; see also **Isa 11:9**; **Jer 9:23-24**; **24:7**; **Hab 2:14**). In the person of Jesus Christ God “*became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory*” (**John 1:14**; see also **Heb 1:1-2**).

Contrary to the God of the Bible, it is impossible to know Allah or even what is meant by his attributes. **Q. 6:103** says of Allah, “*No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things*” (see also **Q. 42:11**; **112:1-4**). The Research Division of Darussalam Publishers says, “We must believe in all the Attributes of Allah . . . without . . . likening them (giving resemblance) to any of the created things. . . . [Regarding **Q. 42:11**,] This noble Verse proves the attributes of hearing and sight for Allah without likening it (or giving resemblance) to any of the created things.” (Darussalam 2002a: 227-28) Athari quotes Imam Abu Hanifah as saying, “No one should say anything about the Essence of Allah, rather they should describe Him as He has described Himself. They should not speak of their own opinions concerning Him.” (al-Athari 2005: 87) Muhammad Asad similarly comments, “Any attempt at defining Him or His ‘attributes’ is a logical impossibility and, from the ethical point of view, a sin.” (Ibid.: Q. 6:100n.88) Athari adds that true Muslim believers “do not discuss how the attributes of Allah are, because He has not told us about that”; indeed, “It is not permissible at all *to try to imagine* how the Essence of Allah is, or how His attributes are” (al-Athari 2005: 77, 78n.3, *emph. added*).

Although Allah’s “99 names” describe various attributes of Allah, Islamic scholars emphasize that these attributes are *not like similar human attributes*. Thus, **Q. 16:74** (Hilali-Khan) says, “*So put not forward similitudes for Allah (as there is nothing similar to Him, nor He resembles anything). Truly! Allah knows and you know not.*” Shaikh Abdul-Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz similarly says that belief in Allah necessitates belief in his names and attributes but without “claiming that they resemble human attributes” (bin Baz 2002: 254-55) Athari adds that true Muslim believers “do not discuss how the attributes of Allah are, because He has not told us about that”; indeed, “It is not permissible at all *to try to imagine* how the Essence of Allah is, or how His attributes are” (al-Athari 2005: 77, 78n.3, *emph. added*). The only way to know what attributes such as mercy, love, forgiveness, and generosity are is by knowing what merciful, loving, forgiving, and generous people are like or what they do. However, the Qur’an and Islam strictly forbid that very thing in trying to understand what Allah and his attributes are like. Consequently, the attributes of Allah are nothing but meaningless words. For all any Muslim knows, Allah’s attributes mean the exact opposite of the meanings commonly understood by such words.² Muslim apologist Yahiya Emerick admits, “He [Allah] does not reveal Himself to people” (Emerick 2004: 49).

C. *Yahweh and Allah: their relationship with humanity*

Yahweh always has desired to be in personal relationship with people. Thus, a recurrent statement throughout the Bible (with some variations) is, “*I will be their God, and they will be my people*” (see **Gen 17:8**; **Exod 6:7**; **29:45**; **Lev 26:12**; **Jer 7:23**; **11:4**; **24:7**; **30:22**; **31:1, 33**; **32:38**; **Ezek 11:19-20**; **14:10-11**; **36:28**; **37:23, 27**; **Hos 2:23**; **Zech 8:8**; **13:9**; **2 Cor 6:16**; **Heb 8:10**; **Rev 21:3**). When Jesus returned to the Father in heaven, he guaranteed that God’s relationship with his people would be closer than ever, promising “*I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you*” (**John 14:18**). Therefore, he sent the Holy Spirit to actually *indwell* people and be with them forever (**John 14:16-17**; see **Acts 2:1-4**; **1 Cor 3:16**; **Gal 4:6**). Those who are united with Christ are now “*being led by the Spirit of God*” (**Rom 8:12-17**).

God does not deal with his people like a master to his slaves but establishes a direct, personal relationship with us (**1 Cor 1:9**; **1 John 1:3**). Jesus said, “*No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you*” (**John 15:15**). He even calls us his “children” and “sons” to indicate the depth of his relationship with us (see **Matt 5:9**; **John 1:12**; **11:52**; **Gal 3:26**; **1 John 3:1**). **Rom 8:15** adds, “*You have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’*” (see also **Gal 4:6**) “Abba” is an Aramaic word denoting close, personal, familial

2010: 86n.9) Lester Fleenor adds, “Millions of Christians of Arab origin do not have any problem with praying to God by His Arabic name, Allah. They agree wholeheartedly with the Moslem testimony that ‘there is no god but Allah,’ but they immediately add ‘in Christ.’” (Fleenor 2005: 4)

² Muslim commentator Muhammad Madani suggests this when he says, “none possesses any attributes like Him, nor does anything resemble Him *at all*. If any of His attributes is given for another being, the resemblance will be *only in the term used, not in the essence and true meaning of the attribute*. . . . There is nothing that can be compared to Allah *in any way*.” (Madani 2005: 4:492, *emph. added*)

affection. Slaves were not permitted to address the head of the family by this title (Vine, Unger, and White 1940: Abba). In other words, God takes slaves and adopts them as sons in a close, personal relationship of love (**Rom 8:23; Gal 4:1-7; Eph 1:5**). Since we are his children, God makes us heirs of all things (**Matt 25:34; Eph 1:11, 14, 18; Col 1:12; 3:24; Heb 9:15; Rev 21:7**).

In Islam, the situation is completely different. In the Qur'an, all people, including Jesus, Muhammad, and the other prophets, are called Allah's "slaves" (e.g., **Q. 2:23; 4:172; 14:31; 17:53; 25:63; 39:10, 53**). The only way anyone can approach Allah is as a slave: "*There is none in the heavens and the earth but comes unto the Most Beneficent (Allah) as a slave*" (**Q. 19:93**, Hilali-Khan). Lester Fleenor observes, "Many Moslems believe it is an honor to be called a slave of God, therefore, many of their names start with the word *Abd* which in Arabic means slave. . . . No matter how beautiful those names might sound, in reality a slave does not have rights like a son or daughter; and he has no rights of inheritance. . . . A father-son relationship is diametrically different from that of master and slave." (Fleenor 2005: 35-36)

Contrary to God's sending the Holy Spirit to indwell people so that he may have a direct, personal relationship with them, Muslim Isma'il Al-Faruqi says, "He [Allah] does not reveal Himself to anyone in any way. God reveals only his will." (Al-Faruqi 1982: 47-48, quoted in Geisler and Saleeb 2002: 142). Abdul-Wahhab says that "on account of Allah being Most High" he is "Unapproachable in His greatness" (Abdul-Wahhab 2002: 148). George Braswell puts it like this, "Islam teaches that one may have knowledge of God's law, but no one has personal or experiential knowledge of God. God reveals his law, but he does not reveal Himself." (Braswell 2000: 21)

Georges Housney summarizes this fundamental difference between the God of Christianity and Islam's Allah: "Islam and Christianity both acknowledge God's transcendence, omnipotence, and majestic qualities. Yet the Muslim concept of God lacks the most distinctive qualities of his immanence, his fatherhood, his love, and his active involvement in our daily lives. While we as Christians 'approach the throne of grace with confidence,' a Muslim comes with fear and trembling. This difference has consequences. While Christians aspire to fellowship and intimacy with God, Muslims have no such hope – or even the expectation that such a hope is possible. To a Muslim, the idea of that sort of relationship with Allah is not only incomprehensible, it is objectionable. It would imply that Allah would lower himself to relate directly with a human, which would lessen his glory. A Christian who asks a Muslim if he has a 'personal relationship' with God is asking about something that is not only impossible, but absurd." (Housney 2010: 85) This necessarily affects people's actions and, more importantly, the reason or motive for those actions. Former Muslim Daud Rahbar concludes, "In Christianity *Love* becomes the *essential* motive principle of virtuous conduct. Why? The answer is simple. In Christianity God is, before anything else, the Father. His love transcends His Justice. In Qur'anic thought Fear of God becomes the *essential* motive-principle of virtuous conduct. Why? . . . *The answer to why fear-motive prevails in the Qur'an is that Qur'an's God is, before anything else, a strict judge.* His justice is unrelaxing. He will forgive none but those who believe in Him and obey commandments. He will let men know on the Judgement Day what they have done." (Rahbar 1960: 179, *emph. in orig.*)

D. Yahweh and Allah: their trustworthiness

Jesus said, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life*" (**John 14:6**). He is the same "*yesterday and today and forever*" (**Heb 13:8**). In him "*all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form*" (**Col 2:9**), and he is "*the radiance of His [God's] glory and the exact representation of his nature*" (**Heb 1:3**). We know that he was always truthful because both the Bible and the Qur'an confirm that Jesus never sinned.³ Additionally, because God is Trinity, "we can be certain that the Holy Spirit will not tell us something that contradicts what the Father or Son know to be true and best for us" (Feinberg 2001: 442).

The same is not true of Allah. First, Allah "abrogates" various passages in the Qur'an by later "revelations." The Qur'an itself admits this (**Q. 2:106; 13:38-39; Q. 16:101**). A former Muslim, Farooq Ibrahim, discusses the practical effects of the doctrine of abrogation insofar as it relates to Allah's and the Qur'an's trustworthiness and credibility: "While a Muslim in the late 1980's, and seeking the truth within Islam, I was faced with a number of issues in defending my faith. One such issue was 'abrogation.' . . . I found that depending on the Muslim scholar, there were different lists of abrogated (*mansukh*) ayat, as well as those that replace it, the abrogating (*naskh*) ayat. . . . I reached a point where I could no longer defend the Quran as we have it today as the true and complete revelation of Allah. This cast doubts on the credibility of the current Arabic Quran's claim that it is the perfect and final revelation of Allah." (Ibrahim n.d.: n.p.)

Second, the issue of Allah's trustworthiness is deeper than his inconsistency in abrogating various

³ **2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5; Q. 19:19, 31.**

verses of the Qur'an. The issue goes to Allah's essential character itself. Allah calls himself a "deceiver." **Q. 3:54** says, "And (the unbelievers) plotted and planned, and Allah too planned, and the best of planners is Allah" Pickthall translates that last portion of **Q. 3:54** as "Allah is the best of schemers"; Arberry translates it as "the best of devisers." The root word is *makr*, based on the root letters Miim-Kaf-Ra. According to the "Study Qur'an" Islamic website (which provides several lexicons for the word) Miim-Kaf-Ra means, "To practice deceit or guile or circumvention, practice evasion or elusion, to plot, to exercise art or craft or cunning, practice with policy, practice strategem" (Study Quran n.d.: Miim-Kaf-Ra). This is not the only verse where Allah deceives: "And he whom Allah has made to go astray, you will never find for him any way (of guidance)" (**Q. 4:88**, Hilali-Khan); "Of no profit will be my counsel to you, much as I desire to give you (good) counsel, if it be that Allah willeth to leave you astray" (**Q. 11:34**); "Allah misleads whom He wills and guides whom He wills" (**Q. 14:4**, Hilali-Khan); "[Iblis (Satan)] said: "O my Lord! Because you misled me, I shall indeed adorn the path of error for them (mankind) on the earth, and I shall mislead them all" (**Q. 15:39**, Hilali-Khan); "They are devising guile, and I am devising guile" (**Q. 86:15-16**, Arberry; see also **Q. 4:142; 7:16, 99; 8:30, 43-44; 9:115** (Hilali-Khan); **13:42; 27:50; 68:45**). **Q. 8:30** says, "Remember how the Unbelievers plotted against thee, to keep thee in bonds, or slay thee, or get thee out (of thy home). They plot and plan, and Allah too plans; but the best of planners is Allah." Ibn Ishaq, Muhammad's early biographer, pointed out that what Allah was really saying is, "I deceived them with My firm guile" (Ibn Ishaq 1955: 323).

Muhammad recognized Allah's deceptiveness, as a hadith reports, "The Prophet used to supplicate, saying: "My Lord, aid me and do not aid against me, and grant me victory and do not grant victory over me, *plot* for me and do not *plot* against me" (at-Tirmidhi: 3551 [the words for "plot" are *wamkur* and *tamkur* from the same root discussed above]). Jochen Katz makes the obvious conclusion: "If deceptiveness belongs to the character of the God of the Qur'an, how can a Muslim have any confidence that Muhammad and the Qur'an was not another 'great deception' by Allah (the greatest of the deceivers) for the purpose of leading astray billions of people—the Muslims? . . . On what basis can a Muslim have any confidence that what Allah tells him in the Qur'an is true—if the Qur'an comes from Allah at all?" (Katz, "Above all" n.d.: n.p.) The situation is different for the God of the Bible. Jesus called himself "*the way, the truth, and the life*" (**John 14:6**). He demonstrated that by the character and integrity of his entire life. He never abrogated; he never deceived. He can be trusted because, unlike Allah, he is "*the same yesterday and today and forever*" (**Heb 13:8**).

E. Yahweh and Allah: their characters

The Bible portrays God as the sole creator (**Gen 1:1; Isa 40:26**) and ruler (**Dan 4:34-35**) of all things, who is "*highly exalted*" (**Exod 15:1, 21; Ps 47:9**; see also **Neh 9:5; Job 36:22; 37:23; Ps 57:5, 11; 89:13, 24; 97:9; 99:2; 118:16; 148:13; Isa 6:1; 12:4; 33:5; 57:15**). However, there is another equally important aspect of God's nature and identity. Yahweh's supreme self-disclosure came in the person of Jesus Christ who is "*the exact representation of His nature*" (**Heb 1:3**). **Phil 2:5-11** describes how Christ was God (**2:5-6**) but emptied Himself to become a man, even a slave (**2:7**), and was obedient to the point of death on a cross (**2:8**); therefore, God highly exalted him such that everyone will worship him as Lord of all (**2:9-11**; see also **John 3:14-15; 8:28; 12:23, 32-34; 13:31-32; Rev 4:2-5:14**).

God is able to manifest himself in these seemingly opposite ways because "*God is love*" (**1 John 4:8, 16**). By its very nature, love is giving. The supreme manifestation of that love is recorded in **John 3:16**: "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life*" (see also **1 John 4:9-10**). God-in-Christ's love for us transcends even that because, as **Rom 5:7-8** reminds us, "*For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" As Timothy Keller puts it, "Here we see the ultimate strength—a God who is strong enough to voluntarily become weak and plunge himself into vulnerability and darkness out of love for us. And here we see the greatest possible glory—the willingness to lay aside all his glory out of love for us." (Keller 2013: 120) There is no other religion in the world with a God like this. Indeed, "There is no other religion that even conceives of such a thing" (Ibid.).

Allah is not like that. Allah would never lower himself to become a man because, as **Q. 19:92** says, "*it is not consonant with the majesty of (Allah) Most Gracious that He should beget a son*" (see also **Q. 2:116; 10:68; 17:111; 18:4-5; 19:35, 88-89** [such an idea is "monstrous"]; **23:91-92; 39:4** [*"He is above such things"*]; **43:81-82**). To Islam, "it is beneath the majesty" of Allah to become a man, suffer, and die for the sins of the world as God did in the person of Jesus (Emerick 2004: 46-47). While one of Allah's 99 names is "AL-WADUD" ("The Loving"; see **Q. 11:90; 85:14**), Allah's "love" is conditional; it is not self-sacrificial as is God's love through Christ. After studying every passage in the Qur'an pertaining to Allah's "love," Daud

Rahbar concluded, “Unqualified Divine Love for mankind is an idea completely alien to the Qur’an. . . . Nowhere do we find the idea that God loves mankind. God’s love is conditional.” (Rahbar 1960: 172)⁴ Thus, nowhere does the Qur’an say that “Allah is love” like the Bible says “God is love.”

The antithesis between the basic natures or characters of Yahweh and Allah is equally apparent when one looks at their commands regarding human love. Jesus was asked, “*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?*” And He said to him, *‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.’*” (Matt 22:36-40; see also Mark 12:28-31) Jesus said that people even are to “*love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*” (Matt 5:44). The Bible makes clear that love for God and love for others are intimately related (see 1 John 4:7-21). The Allah of the Qur’an and his commands are virtually opposite of what Jesus called the two “greatest commands.” First, “The Qur’an never enjoins love for God. This is because God himself loves only the strictly pious [i.e., those who believe and perfectly obey Allah’s commands]” (Rahbar 1960: 180). In fact, since Allah is unknowable “then loving him is out of the question, because it is not possible to love something or someone you cannot know” (Sundiata 2006: 427). Second, nowhere does Allah tell people to “love your neighbor as yourself,” let alone to “love your enemies.” Instead, Allah commands Muslims *not* to take nonbelievers, even their own family members, as friends (Q. 3:28, 118; 4:89, 144; 5:51; 9:23). Muslims are to be “*severe against disbelievers, and merciful among themselves*” (Q. 48:29, Hilali-Khan; see also Q. 5:54; 66:9) and to wage war and kill their enemies and non-Muslims in general (Q. 2:191; 4:89; 9:5, 29, 123, 193). The unconditional nature and absolute centrality of love to Yahweh and the virtually opposite set of values exhibited and commanded by Allah necessitate the conclusion that Yahweh and Allah have two radically different characters. Therefore, they are not and cannot be the same God.

IV. The Trinity

Perhaps the greatest difference between the God of the Bible and Allah of the Qur’an is the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, i.e., that there is only one God, but he consists of three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Qur’an explicitly denies the Trinity. Muslims believe that the idea of the Trinity is a form of adding “partners” to God; hence, it amounts to a form of *shirk* or polytheism, i.e., tri-theism (three gods). Q. 4:171 says, “*O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His messengers. Say not ‘Trinity’: desist: it will be better for you: for Allah is one Allah: Glory be to Him.*”

Alhaj A. D. Ajijola is typical of Muslim apologists who attack the idea of the Trinity when he states, “Jesus was subject to and sought the fulfillment of human needs. Finally, as the Christian version goes, enemies nailed him to death. Can a person of the limited dimensions and characteristics that the Holy Bible itself has shown Jesus to be, be the True God?” (Ajijola 1972: 27) In fact, because God is Trinity, God in the person of the Son (Jesus) could indeed become incarnate and limited as a man and yet continue to exist as God. Similarly, Jesus could die as a man yet continue to exist as God (who cannot die). Death does not mean that a person ceases to exist; rather, it effects a separation of the spirit from the body. Sam Shamoun states, “The one true God always exists as three distinct Persons even during the entombment of Christ’s physical body. And, even as his body lay buried, Christ was alive and sovereignly sustaining the universe along with the Father and the Holy Spirit.” (Shamoun, “If Jesus,” n.d.: n.p.) As we previously discussed, only this mysterious union of God and man in the person of Jesus enabled God both to inflict and endure the spiritual punishment of humanity’s sins on the cross.

A. *Islam correctly rejects the “false trinity” of Allah, Jesus, and Mary*

Q. 5:116-17 describes the “Trinity” as consisting of Allah, Jesus, and Mary: “*And behold! Allah will say: ‘O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah?’ He will say: ‘Glory to Thee! never could I say what I had no right (to say).’*” This indicates that Muhammad and the Qur’an do not correctly understand what Christian belief in the Trinity entails. Since the Qur’an errs in describing a fundamental tenet of Christian belief, the Qur’an cannot be of divine origin (since if Allah were God, he would at least know and correctly state what Christians truly believe). To the extent that the

⁴ Rahbar also points out that the translation “‘to love’ is a phrase too strong to convey the idea of *ahabba* [the primary word translated as “love” in the Qur’an] which can be rendered equally well as ‘to like or to approve’” (Rahbar 1960: 172). He adds that, in the 99 names of Allah, “the epithet ‘the loving’ is very probably a term signifying God’s love for the virtuous believers” (Ibid.: 175).

Qur'an condemns the worship of Mary as a god or as a person in the Trinity, all orthodox Christians join in that condemnation since that never has been part of orthodox Christian belief.

B. Islamic misrepresentations of the Trinity

The basic Muslim position is not limited to attacking the “false trinity” of God, Jesus, and Mary, but attacks the doctrine of the Trinity in any form (see **Q. 4:171; 5:72-73**). Dirks says that the basic Islamic confession that Allah is the “one God” means “not only that Allah is One without equal and without peer. He is also One in His unity. His unity admits and allows no partners or associates. His unity allows no room for any triune conceptualization of the deity.” (Dirks 2008: 180) Islam misrepresents the (true) Trinity of Christianity in essentially two ways:

- *The Qur'an is incorrect when it alleges that Christians say, “Allah is Christ.”* **Q. 5:72** says, “*They do blaspheme who say: ‘Allah is Christ the son of Mary’*” (see also **Q. 5:17**). As we saw above, “the great majority of Arabic-speaking Christians—with Muslim as well as Christian background—use ‘Allah’ as the term for God” (Schirrmacher 2011: 11; see also Fleenor 2005: 2-4). Consequently, as Sundiata points out, “in the Christian understanding, Allah would be the equivalent of the ‘Trinity’ or the Triune God, not Christ. It is therefore wrong for the Qur'an to claim that Christians believe that ‘Allah is Jesus the son of Mary’—we do not.” (Sundiata 2006: 184; see also Reynolds 2018: 194 [“The declaration (v. 17; cf. 5:72) ‘God is the Messiah’ would not have been said by Christians (who would say ‘Christ is God’ but not ‘God is Christ’).”])
- *The Qur'an is incorrect when it alleges that the Trinity amounts to “worshipping three gods” or “joining other gods or partners to Allah.”* **Q. 5:72-73** says, “*Whoever joins other gods with Allah, - Allah will forbid him the garden, and the Fire will be his abode. . . . They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One Allah.*” The Qur'an misrepresents Christians as “joining other gods to Allah” and as worshipping Allah as one of three gods, i.e., tri-theism. Those statements are based on a false premise. The doctrine of the Trinity existed for centuries before Muhammad and has never changed. Christians *do not now and never have* believed in three gods. Both the OT and NT emphatically and repeatedly assert that there is only one God (**Deut 4:35, 39; 6:4; 32:39; 1 Kgs 8:59-60; Ps 86:10; Isa 43:10-13; 44:6; 45:14, 18, 21-22; 46:9; Mark 12:29, 32; John 17:3; Rom 3:29-30; 1 Cor 8:4; Eph 4:3-6; 1 Tim 2:5; Jas 2:19**).

The Trinity is *not* an assertion that there are three gods or that the one God has two partners; rather, the Trinity is an assertion of God's *oneness*—but a oneness that is far richer and more complex than Islam's simplistic notion of Allah's oneness: “the God of the Bible is NOT a part of a trinity, as the Qur'an wrongly indicates; rather, God Himself is Trinity, which is a description of the complexity of God's existence at His divine level. The Qur'anic error here is very clear. It is this blunder that makes it impossible for Muslims to distinguish between tri-theism and the Trinity doctrine.” (Sundiata 2006: 183-84)⁵

Islam's inability to consider the Trinity as anything other than tri-theism stems from two related reasons: (1) its view of Christ as being only a human being; and (2) its simplistic view of the “oneness” of Allah. These views result in the false conclusion that the Christian concept of the Trinity must equate to “adding partners to God.”

- *Islam's false view of Christ results in the false conclusion that the Trinity amounts to “adding partners to God.”* Muslims view Christ only as a human being; they then claim that Christians elevate him to godhood alongside Allah (similar to the heretical notion mentioned in **Q. 5:116-17** that Mary was elevated to godhood). The notion that Christ is *only* a human being is false. Christians do not “elevate him to godhood”; rather, he is and always has been God. Since Christ is and always has been God and there is only one God, the Christian worship of Christ does not amount to “adding partners to God.”
- *Islam's simplistic notion of God's “oneness” results in the false conclusion that the Trinity equates to “three gods.”* Given their simplistic view of God's “oneness,” Muslims sometimes make statements like, “while even an elementary school child knows that $1+1+1=3$, Christians would, by the Trinity, have us believe that $1+1+1=1$ ” (Sundiata 2006: 195). That mathematical equation is a *false comparison* with the Trinity. It *assumes in advance* that the three persons of the Trinity are three gods (or one god with two partners). It does not take into account that “*God is Spirit*” (**John 4:24**), and Spirit cannot be divided into parts. “Why must their elementary school problem be stated as $1+1+1$ rather than $1 \times 1 \times 1$ [or, for that matter, $1 \div 1 \div 1$]? Why must it be an addition instead of a summation? Furthermore, why should the numerical figure one (1) be the expression in mathematics that represents God? If any

⁵ Sundiata observes, “If the Qur'an were what Muslims claim it to be, then it would at least have made a factually accurate presentation of what Christians believe about God before condemning it. How can Islam claim to be an improvement over Christianity when it cannot even state a central doctrine of Christianity correctly?” (Sundiata 2006: 185)

mathematical expression could represent the Christian concept of God, it would be infinity! And as far as we know, infinity x infinity x infinity = infinity, and infinity + infinity + infinity = infinity, just like God x God x God = God, and God + God + God = God.” (Ibid.: 196) W. A. Pratney adds, “The unity of the Godhead is not a simple unity but an interdependent unity. Expressed mathematically it would never be $1 + 1 + 1 = 1$, for independent unity never gives true equality; but $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$, for interdependent unity gives an exact correspondence of equality, and the omission of one part of such an interdependent unity leads to the loss of the entire product ($1 \times 1 \times 0 = 0$).” (Pratney 1988: 261)

C. The doctrine of the Trinity described

God is a complex being unlike anything else and unlike anything that could have been dreamed up by finite humans. The doctrine of the Trinity is an attempt to understand or describe the nature of God who by his very nature is unique and beyond our finite ability to fully understand and describe. “Christians have always believed, in accordance with their Scriptures, that God exists as a triune God. This is not something that Christians invented or adopted from other sources—it is a doctrine we hold onto as the result of divine disclosure. It would be easier to go along with the Islamic idea of Allah as a solitary invisible being (which has its roots in Arabic paganism) than it is to articulate the Trinity doctrine. But an ‘easy concept’ that is untrue is not only worthless but dangerous, because it would generate the wrong view of God, his creation, its purposes, and human destiny. If it is easy to imagine your god, then it is likely that you or your ancestors created that god.” (Sundiata 2006: 181)

“Briefly stated, the doctrine of the Trinity claims that God is one as to essence [Greek = *ousia*] and three as to persons [Greek = *hypostasis*]” (Feinberg 2001: 437). Ghabril explains, “God’s essence is not material but spiritual. Spirit does not, under any circumstances, permit division. Thus the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are in respect to their hypostasis of the same essence. Each of them enjoys the essence of one deity without division or separation. In our language there is no equivalent to the meaning of hypostasis in order to be able to describe the Holy Trinity more easily.” (Ghabril 2003: 39) Cornelius Van Till adds, “In God the one and the many are equally ultimate. Unity in God is no more fundamental than diversity, and diversity in God is no more fundamental than unity. The persons of the Trinity are mutually exhaustive of one another. The Son and the Spirit are ontologically [i.e., in the nature of their existence or being] on par with the Father.” (Van Til 1979: 25) Elsewhere he says, “When Scripture ascribes certain works specifically to the Father, others specifically to the Son, and still others specifically to the Holy Spirit, we are compelled to presuppose a genuine distinction within the Godhead back of that ascription. On the other hand, the work ascribed to any of the persons is the work of one absolute person.” (Van Til 1974: 228)

As to this last point, John Feinberg explains: “Since there is only one divine essence shared equally by all three persons, there is a sense in which all three persons ‘do’ whatever any of them does. On the other hand, insofar as it makes any sense to speak of distinct persons, i.e., distinct ways in which that divine essence is manifest, it also makes sense to attribute specific actions to only one of the three members. Hence, it is the second member of the Godhead (not the others) who becomes incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. If it was the divine essence alone (and we didn’t designate that essence as subsisting in a particular person of the Godhead) that became incarnate as Jesus Christ, then we would have to say that all three members of the Godhead became incarnate in Christ.” (Feinberg 2001: *emph. in orig.*)

D. The doctrine of the Trinity necessarily arises from the data given us in the Bible

Lester Fleenor points out, “Just as the Moslem word ‘Tawheed’ (which describes the doctrine of the Oneness of God) is not found in the Quran, so also the Christian word ‘Trinity’ (which describes the doctrine of the triune nature of the One God) is not found in the Bible. The concept of Tawheed is based on the teachings of the Quran not on the word ‘Tawheed;’ and the concept of the Trinity is based on the teachings found throughout the Bible, but not on the word ‘Trinity.’” (Fleenor 2005: 174)

We have previously discussed that the Bible clearly and repeatedly affirms that there is only “one God.” However, as W. A. Pratney points out, “There are two kinds of unity or ‘oneness’ in both English and Hebrew; an *absolute unity* and *compound unity*. Absolute unity is that of singularity; I give you one apple, and you get a single apple. But if you ask for ‘one’ bunch of grapes, you don’t simply get one grape! ‘One’ in this case is a word of compound unity, the many in the one.” (Pratney 1988: 258-59) This is significant, because there are multiple indications in the OT that the Godhead, Yahweh, is a plural form of unity, not a simplistic form of unity. Hence, the OT is consistent with the Trinity in that it describes God using terms that indicate unity in plurality and plurality in unity. The NT makes this clear and direct by revealing that the unity in plurality and plurality in unity are found in the three persons of the Trinity: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

1. The Hebrew word for “one” used to describe God. Pratney notes: “*Yachad* is the OT word used for absolute unity; a mathematical or numerical one. It is used about 12 times in the OT, but never to describe the unity of God (Gen. 22:2, 12; Zech. 12:10). *Echad* however speaks of a compound or collective unity. In marriage ‘the two shall be one flesh’ (Gen. 2:24); a crowd can gather ‘as one’ (Ezek. 3:1); or be of one mind or heart: ‘All the rest of Israel were of one heart to make David king’ (1 Chron. 12:38). This is the compound plural always used of God when He is call ‘one’ Lord.” (Pratney 1988: 259)

2. The Hebrew word for “God.” The typical OT word for God is *elohim*, which is a plural noun (Feinberg 2001: 448). It is used approximately 2500 times in the OT (Pratney 1988: 259). There are three interesting aspects of this. First, the singular of *elohim* is *eloah* which is occasionally used to refer to God. “Unless the intent is to make a point about plurality, why not just use the singular *eloah*?” (Feinberg 2001: 449) Second, while the plural *elohim* typically is used for God, it is most often used with a singular verb. Normally, nouns and verbs agree in number, so this is grammatically unusual. Occasionally, however, “a plural verb is used with *elohim* to refer to Israel’s God [Gen 20:13; 35:7; 2 Sam 7:23]” (Ibid.). Third, while generally singular pronouns (e.g., “I,” “He,” “My”) are used to refer to God, sometimes *plural* pronouns are used, which “seem to suggest plurality of some sort in the Godhead” (Ibid.). For example, in **Gen 1:26** (“*Let us make man in our image*”) “the verb ‘make (*na’aseh*) is plural, and so is ‘our’” (Ibid.: 450; see also **Gen 3:22; 11:7; Isa 6:8**).

3. With the full revelation of the NT, the Bible makes clear that God is Trinity, consisting of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Bible does this by attributing the same names, titles, and attributes of Godhood to each one of them. In the following table, ^{x,y} indicate direct quotes.

Name/Title/Attribute	God the Father	God the Son	God the Holy Spirit
God	Ps 45:6-7^x; 1 Cor 8:6	Heb 1:8-9^x; John 1:1, 14, 18; 20:28	Acts 5:3-4
Lord	Isa 40:3^x; 45:23-24^y	Mark 1:2-4^x; Phil 2:10-11^y	2 Cor 3:17-18
Eternal	Ps 90:2; Isa 43:10, 13	Mic 5:2	Heb 9:14
Creator	Gen 1:1; Ps 102:25-27^x	John 1:10; Col 1:16; Heb 1:10-12^x	Gen 1:2; Job 33:4; Ps 104:30
Omniscient	Job 21:22; Ps 33:13-15	John 16:30; 21:17	John 16:13; 1 Cor 2:10-11
Omnipotent	Isa 46:9-11; Nah 1:3-6	Eph 1:20-22; Heb 1:3	Luke 1:35
Omnipresent	Prov 15:3; Jer 23:24	Matt 18:20; 28:20; Eph 4:10	Ps 139:7-10
Does miraculous signs	Exod 14:22; Dan 3:23-27	Mark 6:45-52; John 20:30	Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 12:7-11
Raised Jesus from the dead	Gal 1:1; Eph 1:17, 20	John 2:19	Rom 8:11
Has his own Will	Matt 26:39; Eph 1:11	Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22	1 Cor 12:11
Is True	John 7:28	John 14:6	1 John 5:6
Is Holy	1 Sam 2:2; John 17:11	Acts 3:14; Heb 7:26	John 14:26
Is Good	Ps 34:8	John 10:11	Ps 143:10
Gives spiritual life	Eph 2:4-5	John 1:4; 5:21	John 3:8; Rom 8:10
Strengthens people	Ps 28:7-8; 46:1-2; 133:3	Phil 4:13	Eph 3:16
Indwells believers	2 Cor 6:16	Eph 3:17; Col 1:27	John 14:17; Rom 8:9
Fellowships with believers	1 John 1:3	1 John 1:3	2 Cor 13:14
Sanctifies believers	John 17:17	Eph 5:26; Heb 10:10	1 Pet 1:2
Speaks to people	Matt 3:17; Luke 9:35	John 12:48-50; 16:1, 4, 19-25	John 16:13; Acts 8:29; 13:2
May be grieved	Gen 6:6; Ps 78:40	Isa 53:3; Mark 3:5	Isa 63:10; Acts 4:30

Note that the last eleven of these attributes are personal and relational. This indicates that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are “persons,” not just “forces” or attributes of a remote or impersonal god.

4. All three Persons in the Godhead are referred to and linked together in various passages.

- **Isa 61:1:** “*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me.*”⁶
- **Matt 28:19:** “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*”
- **Luke 3:21-22:** “*Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, ‘You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased’*” (see also **Matt 3:16-17; Mark 1:10-11**).
- **John 14:26:** “*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.*”

⁶ Jesus quoted **Isa 61:1-2** in **Luke 4:18-21** as specifically applying to himself (i.e., he is the “me” referred to).

- **John 15:26:** “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father. He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”
- **Rom 8:8-9:** “And those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”
- **Eph 4:4-6:** “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”
- **Titus 3:4-6:** “But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.”
- **Jude 20-21:** “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.”

E. Although it may not be fully understandable, the Trinity is not illogical and is reasonably explicable

The doctrine of the Trinity is neither incoherent (i.e., internally self-contradictory) nor illogical. The late Coptic Pope Shenuda III began the explanation of how the triune God does not involve separation into three gods with this example: “As Christ said in the Gospel of John, ‘I and the Father are one.’ (John 10:30) The Son comes from the Father without leaving Him. He comes out of Him and yet remains in Him, which leads to the enquiry, how? I shall explain to you with the help of an example: When you think and your thought emerges as sound, that thought reaches the ears of people, yet thought is still in your mind. It is also possible for the thought to leave your mind and enter a book which is distributed in America where many read it. In that sense the thought came out from you and yet remains with you.” (Shenuda 2010: 4)

Various analogies may make the nature of the Trinity more understandable:⁷

1. The number of airline passengers and persons. An airline passenger Smith takes three trips on the same airline to the same place in three separate months: “Smith counts as three separate *passengers*, but of course, in each case it is the same *person*. So there are three if we count *passengers*, but only one if we tally *persons*. . . . In the case of the airline traveler, every passenger on each flight is a person, but when the same person takes several flights, the number of *persons* doesn’t increase but the *passenger* count does. Similarly, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (all Divine Persons) are God, but that doesn’t mean there are as many gods as divine persons. It is the same God manifested in three distinct persons, just as it is the same person ‘manifested’ on three separate passenger lists and flights.” (Feinberg 2001: 497-98, *emph. in orig.*)
2. A marble statue that is used as a pillar in a building. A building contractor creates a marble statue that is to be used as a pillar in the building: “The statue and the pillar are one and the same material object, not two. And yet they are distinct. Surface erosion will destroy the statue without destroying the pillar. Internal corruption that preserves the surface but undermines the statue’s capacity to support the weight of a building will destroy the pillar but (if the statue is removed from its position as a load-bearing structure) will not destroy the statue. Thus, what we want to say is that the statue and the pillar are the *same material object*, even though they are *not identical*. . . . By now the relevance of all this to the Trinity should be clear: . . . Each divine person . . . is distinct from the other [so modalism is avoided]. But they are nevertheless the *same* substance. . . . Since

⁷ No analogy is perfect. That is particularly true when trying to describe the infinite God! Brower and Rea discuss the limitations and problems of some popular analogies: “Among the most popular analogies for the Trinity, two in particular stand out; and most of the others resemble one of them. These two analogies are the ‘water’ analogy and the ‘egg’ analogy. According to the first, just as water takes three forms (liquid, vapor, and ice), so too God takes the form of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. According to the second, just as an egg consists of three things (shell, yolk, and albumen), so God consists of three Persons. The problem with both analogies is that instead of explaining the orthodox view, they actually lead us away from it. Liquid, vapor, and ice are three *states* or *manifestations* of a single substance, water; thus to say that the Persons of God are like them is to fall into modalism [the view that God is not three persons but is only one person who appears in different “modes” at different times]. However, at its “triple point” the “water” analogy can be brought into very close harmony with the Trinity. This will be discussed in the text. On the other hand, shell, yolk, and albumen are three *parts* of an egg; but neither shell, yolk, nor albumen *is* an egg. So this analogy suggests that neither Father, Son, nor Holy Spirit is God—they are merely parts of God.” (Brower and Rea 2005: 4) Despite the inherent limitation of analogies, the analogies in the text at minimum help us see that the biblical concept of one God consisting of three persons is neither incoherent nor irrational.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit count, on this view, as numerically the same substance despite their distinctness . . . the problem of the Trinity is solved.” (Rea 2009: 712-15, *emph. in orig.*)

3. A liquid solution. A solution is two or more different elements or compounds that are mixed together but are not chemically bonded. Examples would be saltwater and lemon tea. In saltwater, salt is dissolved in the water. Both the water and the dissolved salt cannot be separated and fill the entire area containing the saltwater, yet both are distinct. Similarly, lemon tea consists of water, tea, and lemon juice. Each of the three fills the entire cup. They cannot be separated; nevertheless, they are distinct. All three are necessary; to remove one of them means that lemon tea no longer exists. Thus, there is only one cup of tea, but it consists of three distinct elements, each of which permeates the entire cup, and each of which plays a unique role in making the lemon tea what it is.

4. A three-note musical chord or polyphonic musical piece. Musicologist Victor Zuckerkandl describes a musical chord: “Three tones sound. . . . None of them is in a place; or better, they are all in the same place, namely, everywhere. Different places, juxtaposition [i.e., different things located next to each other], are out of the question. Yet there is order here, unmistakable and undeniable: a triad. Order of simultaneous sensations involving space, order that we hear, not merely think: spatial order without different places, without juxtaposition. . . . The first tone, as it sounds, spreads through all space. Joining the first, the second tone, however much it might wish to, could find no room to take a place beside it: all available space is already occupied by the first. Nevertheless, it is not covered by the first: the first turns out to be, as it were, transparent for it. The second tone is and remains audible *through the first*. The same is true of the third tone: the tones connected in the triad sound *through one another*. Or let us say they interpenetrate one another.” (Zuckerkandl 1956: 297, 299, *emph. in orig.*; see also Williams 2012: Trinitarian Analogies)

5. The nature of space: the difference between one, two, and three dimensional objects. For any three-dimensional object, each of the three dimensions—length, height, and width—is not just a “part” of the object but pervades the entire whole. Even though we can speak of and measure length, height, and width as if they were separate entities, if any one is removed from the object you do not get a smaller object; rather, the object ceases to exist entirely. To determine the space of any three dimensional object you do not add height + length + width; rather you multiply them (height x length x width): “Until you have the three dimensions, multiplied by each other, you have no space. . . . In $1 + 1 + 1$ each is a part of the whole. Each is one-third of the whole. *But in $1 \times 1 \times 1$ each is the whole!* For in such multiplication each unit multiplies and permeates every part of the whole.” (Wood 1978: 175-76, *emph. in orig.*)

6. The nature of the universe. “The created universe is actually a tri-universe of Space, Matter, and Time, each permeating and representing the whole. However, the universe is not partly composed of space, partly of matter, and partly of time . . . but a tri-unity, with each part comprising the whole, yet all three required to make the whole. Thus, the universe is all Space, all Time, and all Matter (including energy as a form of matter). . . . Furthermore, note the parallels between the divine trinity and the tri-universe in terms of the logical order of its three components. Space is the invisible, omnipresent background of everything in the universe. Matter-and-Energy reveal the reality of the universe. Time makes the universe understandable in the events occurring in it. Note that exactly the same sentence will apply if the words Father, Son, and Holy Spirit replace the words, Space, Matter, and Time.” (Morris 2005: n.p.) Sundiata adds, “None of these entities formed the others or exists apart from the rest. . . . Yet time is not the same thing as space, which is in turn not the same as matter [i.e., matter/energy]. . . . We cannot separate these three or make any one more or less than the others or a progenitor and still have a universe. However, for our convenience, we treat time, for example, as independent of space and of matter. We even measure time, space, and matter separately. Indeed, the Triune God has left evidence of His unique manner of existence in the fundamental structures of His creation—as a sign that His is not a simple solitary existence.” (Sundiata 2006: 194; see also Wood 1978: 48-49)

7. Light. Although light appears simple, colorless, and the same to us, it actually consists of three types of spectra: a *continuous spectrum* (or continuum emission), an *emission line spectrum*, and an *absorption line spectrum* depending on the source of the light (Evans 2013). One manifestation of this is that a prism disperses a beam of transparent or “white” light into a rainbow of colors that were present in the light all along.

Additionally, “Light behaves as both particles and waves at the same time, and scientists have been able to observe this duality in action using an ultrafast electron microscope. . . . Waves are very distinct phenomena in our universe, as are particles. And we have different sets of mathematics to describe each of them. . . . A particle is, as best as I can put it, a thing. It's a small, single, finite object. . . . On the other hand, waves are almost completely different. They're not localized.” (Sutter 2019: n.p.) In other words, light mirrors the Trinity in that God could act both as a “particle” (a finite object, i.e., the man Jesus Christ) and yet *at the*

same time act as a “wave” (i.e., Spirit).⁸

8. The triple point of water. The “triple point” is “the point where the solid, liquid, and gaseous forms of a substance coexist in equilibrium. . . . This means that coexistence of ice, steam, and water can occur only at one specific temperature and one specific pressure.” (Bozack 1987: 39). Further, “the triple point shows how one substance can exist in three fundamental forms concurrently, each fully the same in nature yet clearly distinct to the extent of having a real interaction with each other, different properties, and different applications” (Bozack 1993: 67).

9. Molecular resonance. “The building block of every physical object is an atom, a positively charged nucleus orbited by tiny, negatively charged electrons. Atoms bond to one another by sharing their electrons, forming a molecule. Different arrangements of the electrons in certain molecules are called ‘resonance structures.’ Some molecules, like water, have no resonance while others have three resonance structures or more, like [nitrate].” (Qureshi 2016: 194) “The nitrate ion can be viewed *as if* it resonates between . . . three different structures. . . . The hypothetical switching from one resonance structure to another is called *resonance*. . . . It is important to stress that the nitrate ion is not really changing from one resonance structure to another. . . . In actuality, the ion behaves as if it were a blend of the three resonance structures.” (“Resonance” n.d.: n.p.) In other words, resonating molecules exist in multiple forms simultaneously, each form having the same chemical composition. Thus, nitrate has three resonance structures and exists in all of these forms simultaneously. This is the phenomenon that caused then Muslim Nabel Qureshi to see that the idea of the Trinity was plausible. He wrote, “One molecule of nitrate is all three resonance structures all the time and never just one of them. The three are separate but all the same, and they are one. They are three in one. That’s when it clicked: if there are things in this world that can be three in one, even incomprehensively so, then why cannot God?” (Qureshi 2016: 195-96)

10. Triune patterns of reality. The three persons of the Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), although sharing the same essence with each other, manifest different roles, particularly in their interaction with the world and with people, e.g., the Father sent the Son to be the savior of the world (**1 John 4:14**), the Son became incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ (**Phil 2:5-8**), and the Holy Spirit comes to indwell and guide believers (**John 14:16-17, 26**).⁹ Because God is triune, it is not surprising that virtually every aspect of reality in some way reflects a triune pattern—in many ways mirroring the roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Examples include:

a. *The Sun.* The sun consists of fire (technically, plasma), light, and heat. All three pervade the entire sun, yet each is distinct. Without any one of them the sun would cease to exist.

b. *Matter*

- Energy—Universal, unseen source, potentiality.
- Motion—Particular embodiment of that energy.
- Phenomena—Particular motion in contact with other existences.

“It is the nature of energy to beget motion. As for motion, it cannot exist without energy back of it. Neither can it take place without phenomena inevitably issuing from it. It can hardly be motion without different *kinds* of motion, and that means phenomena. And in turn phenomena cannot exist without motion, and back of the motion the energy, from which the phenomena issue. . . . Each of the three is inevitable with the others. None of the three can be without the others. No two can exist without the third.” (Wood 1978: 35)

c. *Time*

- Future—Universal Source, potentiality of events.
- Present—Particular embodiment, realization of future things we know and touch.
- Past—The present after it has related itself to others.

“No one of the three can exist without the other two. No two of the three can exist without the third. For time cannot exist at all without all three. If there is no past, time has never existed until this instant, and a little later this instant also never will have existed. If there is no present, there will never be any instant in which time exists. If there is no future, time ceases now, and indeed ceased long ago. . . . It is an absolute threeness.” (Wood 1978: 41) Further, “*All of Time is or has been future.* The future includes it

⁸ Bozack lists seven points of similarity between the hypostatic union of Christ’s divine and human natures and the dual nature of waves and particles (Bozack 1993: 72-76).

⁹ This is something like a man who can be a father, a son, and a husband at the same time. There is only one man. He is not partly father, partly son, and partly husband. All of him is father, all of him is son, and all of him is husband all of the time. Nevertheless, his roles, particularly in their interaction with the world and with people, differ as father, son, and husband.

all. *All of Time is or has been or will be present.* The present includes it all. *All of Time is or will be past.* The past will include it all. At the beginning all Time is future. Between, all Time is present. At the end, all Time is past. Each one is the whole. They are as wholly one as that one is wholly three. It is an absolute triunity.” (Ibid., *emph. in orig.*)

d. *A human person*

- Soul—The person’s unique non-physical nature (mind, emotions, personality).
- Body—The person’s unique physical nature (form, sex, DNA).
- Spirit—That which enables the person to relate to God.

Each aspect is intimately related to and influences the others. All three must co-exist or the “humanity” of the person ceases to exist (inanimate objects have only a body; animals have only a body and a soul; only humans consist of body, soul, and spirit). Nevertheless, they constitute only one person, not three people.

The pattern of the Trinity appears to be designed into the universe and human life in ways that the simplistic solitary nature of Allah is not. That is not by accident. The Bible says, “*The heavens declare the glory of God*” (Ps 19:1, ESV). The nature of reality does this by reflecting the nature of God. Granted, there is a mysterious element to this; but “Mystery is not the absence of meaning, but the presence of more meaning than we can comprehend” (Yancey 2000: 96). When we begin to grasp the idea of the Trinity, “we are then, for the first time in our lives, getting some positive idea, however faint, of something supra-personal—something more than a person” (Lewis 1996: 143). That “something” is the true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: one God in three persons.

F. Implications

That the God of the Bible is Trinity has important implications, including the following:

1. Because he is Trinity, God alone, unlike Allah, is self-sufficient. If God were a simplistic singularity like the Islamic conception of Allah and not a Trinity, he would not be self-sufficient. If God were a simplistic singularity he would have *needed* to create other beings in order to have relationship. However, because God is Trinity, he did not need to create anything (see Acts 17:24-26). It necessarily means that Allah is an *insufficient being who is dependent upon creation*. In other words, the fact that Allah is only a “bare unity” that lacks intrinsic plurality necessarily means that he “cannot function without the supplementation supplied by the plurality of the world” (Frame 1995: 64; see also Schaeffer 1982: 289 [Allah “needed to create in order to love and communicate”; consequently, Allah “needed the universe as much as the universe needed [him]”). Of necessity, therefore, Allah is less than Yahweh; hence, Allah cannot be the true God over the universe.

There is an ironic implication of this. Because Allah cannot express or experience a whole range of attributes (e.g., love, joy, communication) unless and until the external world comes into existence, it is *Islam’s own doctrine of God*, not Christianity’s, that *of necessity* “joins a partner” to Allah. That “partner” is the external world itself. It is only the God of the Bible who has no need of “partners”—precisely because he is Trinity.

2. Because he is Trinity, God alone, unlike Allah, is personal and relational at the core of his being. The Bible (unlike the Qur’an) tells us that “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8). That stems from the fact that God is Trinity and for all eternity had a perfect love relationship among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Because he is Trinity, God is by nature a *personal* God; in other words, all of God’s “personal” or “relational” attributes derive from and are an intrinsic part of his very nature. On the other hand, Allah did not and, because of his simplistic unitary nature, *could not have any relationship* until he created other beings with whom he could then be in relationship; he could not *experience or express* any “personal” or “relational” attribute unless and until he created the world. Consequently, none of the “personal” or “relational” attributes *are, or could be, an intrinsic part* of Allah’s being. This means that, in and of himself, Allah is an *impersonal* being (like a force or a force-field), not a personal one.

However, personality cannot come from impersonality. A force or force-field or any impersonal entity *cannot create, relate to, or have relationship with “personality” or “personal” beings*. Therefore, Allah cannot account for the personality of human beings, since human beings are “personal” beings. The Islamic teaching that Allah is unknowable is a reflection of his impersonal nature.

3. Because God is Trinity, we can have assurance of our salvation. Earlier we saw that all Muslims—including Muhammad himself—have no assurance, *and can have no assurance*, that they will be saved. With Christianity, the situation is completely different. According to the Bible, because of human sin and guilt before God, the penalty to atone for sin is eternal death. No human being can atone even for his own sins because of his or her inherent sinfulness. But God in Christ chose to do for us what we could not do for ourselves: to live the life we should have lived, die the death we should have died, and pay the price for sin that otherwise we would

have to pay but could not. In this regard, not only is the doctrine of the Trinity important, it is absolutely necessary: “If Jesus is less than God (above humans and even above angels, but still not equal with the Father and the Spirit), how can he serve as the atoning sacrifice for all? . . . As to the Holy Spirit, if he is not fully God, the implications for salvation are again serious. Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit regenerates believers and indwells and fills them, but if the Holy Spirit is a lesser God or no God at all, how can we be sure that he can do any of these things? . . . The doctrine of the Trinity safeguards against all of these devastating possibilities. The one who dies on the cross is fully God as well as fully human. Salvation is not merely his idea, an idea of whose merit he must convince the Father; it is the plan and work of the whole Godhead. The Holy Spirit does have the power to regenerate, and in the indwelling of believers he brings the very presence of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) into our lives.” (Feinberg 2001: 440-41)

4. The Trinity alone provides the answer to the ultimate questions of existence and of humanity. The universe includes both non-living and living matter, impersonal beings and personality (i.e., beings that have consciousness, perception, self-awareness). Additionally, unity (with an underlying rationality that can be perceived and studied) and diversity (particularity, individuation) are found at all levels of the universe. That is true for living and non-living beings and from the atomic level to the largest star systems in the universe. To account for existence as it is, consisting of unity and diversity along with personality, the cause must be at least as great as the universe and its components (Wood 1978: 22-23). As Francis Schaeffer puts it, in order to have a cause sufficient to account for existence, “we need two things. We need a personal-infinite God (or an infinite-personal God), and we need a personal unity and diversity in God” (Schaeffer 1982: 286).

Allah as a simplistic singularity can account for unity within the universe but is inconsistent with diversity. Further, because at his essence Allah is impersonal, Allah is inconsistent with personality. On the other hand, “the Judeo-Christian content to the word *God* as given in the Old and New Testaments does meet the need of what exists—the existence of the universe in its complexity and of man as man. And what is that content? It relates to an infinite-personal God, who is personal unity and diversity on the high order of Trinity. . . . Without the high order of personal unity and diversity as given in the Trinity, *there are no answers.*” (Schaeffer 1982: 287-88, *emph. in orig.*) Only the triune God of the Bible is an adequate cause for and explanation of existence as it is, including its unity, diversity, and personality.

V. Yahweh and Allah: Conclusion

While Yahweh and Allah are both “one God” who have no “partners,” Allah’s oneness is a solitary oneness whereas Yahweh’s oneness is the oneness of Trinity. Allah is, essentially, a one dimensional god—a god who catered to Muhammad’s every whim but who Muhammad could only fear and could not know personally. The God of the Bible, on the other hand, is a “three dimensional” God who can be known personally. In sum, contrary to **Q. 29:46**, the God of the Bible and the Allah of the Qur’an are not the same God and are not even close to being the same God.

5. THE BIBLE AND THE QUR’AN

I. Introduction

The Bible is the holy book of Christianity. The Qur’an is the holy book of Islam. Both are considered to be the very Word of God or Allah. The Bible says nothing about the Qur’an. However, the Qur’an refers to various books, people, and stories of the Bible. Virtually every prophet named in the Qur’an is a figure from the Bible (Emerick 2004: 16-18). The third article of Islamic belief is that Muslims are not to believe only in the Qur’an but in all “the Books” from Allah (**Q. 2:285; 3:84; 4:136; 29:46**). Thus, Muslims cannot ignore the Bible. The problem for Muslims arises when they try to deal with the many obvious contradictions between the Bible and the Qur’an.

II. The Development of the Bible

Although the Bible is usually thought of as one large book, it actually is a small library consisting of 66 “books”: 39 in the OT (i.e., the Hebrew Bible; the sacred Scriptures of the Jews) and 27 in the NT. “The English word ‘Bible’ is derived from the Greek word *biblia* (neuter plural), which means simply ‘books.’ As the collections of Jewish and Christian texts came increasingly to be considered as one unit, the same plural term in medieval Latin began to be understood in popular usage as feminine singular, no longer denoting ‘The Books’ but ‘The Book’” (Metzger 1993: 78-79). The books of the Bible were written by approximately 40 authors over a period of approximately 1500 years (the OT being written from approximately 1450 BC to 430 BC and the NT from approximately AD 50-95). While much has been written about how the particular writings that constitute

the OT and NT were recognized as being from God and collected into one book, for our purposes the most important fact is that the entire Bible was recognized, collected, available, and used long before Muhammad was born and long before the Qur'an came into existence.

The Hebrew Bible (OT) and some related texts were translated from Hebrew into Greek, a translation known as the Septuagint (LXX), beginning in the 3rd century BC and completed by 132 BC (“Septuagint” 2019: History; see also Bruce 1988: 43). Even Muslims concede that the OT canon was established before Josephus wrote at the end of the first century AD (Dirks 2008: 41-42).

To be included in the NT, books were required to meet a number of criteria: (1) *Apostolic authority*: either apostolic authorship or, if not, “some form of apostolic authority” had to be established (Bruce 1988: 258; see also Carson and Moo 2005: 736; Sproul 1992: 23). (2) *Antiquity*: “If a writing was the work of an apostle or of someone closely associated with an apostle, it must belong to the apostolic age. Writings of later date, whatever their merit, could not be included among the apostolic or canonical books.” (Bruce 1988: 259) (3) *Orthodoxy*: the writings had to be consistent with “the faith set forth in the undoubted apostolic writings and maintained in the churches which had been founded by apostles” (Bruce 1988: 260; see also Carson and Moo 2005: 736). (4) *Catholicity*: “Scarcely less important a criterion is a document’s widespread and continuous acceptance and usage by churches everywhere” (Carson and Moo 2005: 737). On the other hand, “A work which enjoyed only local recognition was not likely to be acknowledged as part of the canon of the catholic church [i.e., the universal church, not the modern Roman Catholic Church].” (Bruce 1988: 261; see also Sproul 1992: 23). “The fact that substantially the whole church came to recognize the same twenty-seven books as canonical is remarkable when it is remembered that the result was not contrived. . . . When consideration is given to the diversity in cultural backgrounds and in orientation to the essentials of the Christian faith within the churches, their common agreement about which books belonged to the New Testament serves to suggest that this final decision did not originate solely at the human level.” (Barker, Lane, and Michaels 1969: 29) Later, in response to the rise of various issues and heresies, the NT canon “was ratified at the Council of Hippo in 393 CE, the Synod of Carthage in 397 CE, and the Carthaginian Council in 419 CE” (Dirks 2008: 43). “Ratified” is the operative word because, as Sproul notes, “The church recognized, acknowledged, received, and submitted to the canon of Scripture. The term the church used in Council was *recipimus*, ‘We receive.’” (Sproul 1992: 23)

III. The Islamic View of the Bible

Jerald Dirks describes the standard Muslim view of the Bible as follows: “The *Qur’an* notes five such books of revelation: the book given to Abraham; the book (*Torah* or Law) given to Moses; the book (*Zabur* or Psalms) given to David; the book (*Injil* or Gospel) given to Jesus;¹⁰ and the book (*Qur’an*) given to Muhammad. Muslims believe that all these books, as they were delivered in their original form to the messengers who then imparted them to mankind, were the actual, literal words of Allah. However, the operative phrase is ‘as they were delivered in their original form’ The book of Abraham is no longer known to exist, and no trace of such a book has been left to modern man. . . . As regards the book of Moses, the ‘received *Torah*’, as found in the current Biblical books of *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*, is a far cry from the original *Torah*, although traces and elements of the original *Torah* may continue to be found, scattered here and there in the ‘received *Torah*’ Likewise, the current Biblical book of *Psalms* is a poor resemblance of the original *Psalms* of David, although occasional chapters or verses in the ‘received Psalms’ may be part of the original *Psalms*. . . . Finally, it must be noted that the original gospel of Jesus can nowhere be found in the corpus of the *Bible*, although various sayings attributed to Jesus in the *Bible* may represent perverted fragments from the original gospel or *Injil*.” (Dirks 2008: 189; see also A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 3:4n.2) Suhaym maintains that “the contents of most of these Books have been lost and have become extinct, and interpolation and alterations have entered them” (As-Suhaym 2006: 153-54).

How, when, where, why, and by whom did this happen? Muslims do not say. All Emerick can do is to liken the situation to “the game in which one person whispers a message to another and we then see how the message comes out with the last person. Now multiply this by centuries of transmission and you will see how legends and new rituals can become part of a faith, although without any authority from the original messenger.”

¹⁰ The Islamic idea that the “gospel” is a book given to Jesus has no basis either in history or in Scripture. First, as Robert Spencer points out, “There is no indication that such a book ever existed at all: there is no textual evidence whatsoever from a pre-Islamic Christian text that reflected Islamic beliefs about Jesus or the Biblical prophets. Christianity, of course, regards ‘the Gospel’ as the message of Christ, not a book.” (Spencer 2009: 150) Even Muslim apologist Dr. Muhammad bin Abdullah As-Suhaym admits “There is no known historical authority for the ancient books” that Muslims allege were the “books” given to Moses, David, and Jesus (As-Suhaym 2006: 183). Second, the Qur’an does *not* explicitly say that the gospel was a book given to Jesus.

(Emerick 2004: 88) Suhaym attributes this corruption to ignorance and resorts to name-calling, “As for the Jews and Christians, the Books that were revealed to their Prophets have been lost as a result of their ignorance of what was in their Books; their taking men as gods beside Allah and the long time that had passed between them and their acquaintance with these Books. So their priests wrote some books which they claimed were from Allah while they were not from Allah but only wrong assumptions of liars and distortions of fanatics.” (As-Suhaym 2006: 78)

IV. Responses to the Islamic View of the Bible

The Qur’an does not specifically use the word “Bible” but refers to “the Book” (see Q. 2:113; 6:20, 89, 114, 156; 10:94; 28:52; 37:117) and calls it “Scripture” (Q. 2:113, 144-46; 3:19-20, 23, 65; 4:47, 51, 131, 136; 5:48, 57; 6:20, 114; 17:2; 23:49; 28:43, 52; 29:46-47; 32:23; 37:117; 40:53; 41:45; 46:12, Hilali-Khan). It acknowledges that the Bible was “revealed,” “sent down,” or “given” from God in heaven to Christians and Jews (Q. 3:3, 19-20, 23, 65, 100, 187; 4:44, 47, 131, 136; 5:57; 6:20, 89, 91, 114, 156-57; 11:110; 13:36; 17:2; 23:49; 28:43, 52; 29:47; 32:23; 37:117; 40:53; 41:45, Hilali-Khan) Significantly, according to the Qur’an the Bible was “revealed,” “sent down,” or “given” from God *in the same manner* that the Qur’an was “revealed,” “sent down,” or “given” (“Quran Dictionary” 2009-2017: Q. 4:136, *nazzala*; Adelphi and Hahn 1993: pt.1.2). The Qur’an adds that the people who received the Bible were “inspired” or given God’s “revelation” in the same manner that Muhammad received the Qur’an (“Quran Dictionary” 2009-2017: Q. 42:3, *yūhī*; Adelphi and Hahn 1993: pt.1.2).

The Qur’an calls Jews and Christians “people of the Book” (Q. 3:23, 65, 69, 72, 75, 98, 99, 110, 113, 187, 199; 4:47, 123, 131, 153, 159, 171; 5:5, 15, 19, 59, 65, 68, 77; 29:46). In fact, Q. 6:156 (Hilali-Khan) explicitly says, “*The Book was only sent down to two sects before us (the Jews and the Christians).*” Since “the Book” is singular and includes the definite article (“the”), this can *only* be a reference to the Bible as a whole. “The Arabic term used for the Bible is the very same used in the Quran, *al-Kitab al-Muqaddas*, the Holy Book. Hence, the *Kitab* referred to in the Quran is the very *Kitab* used by Arab Christians during and after the time of Muhammad.” (Shamoun, “Quranic Witness,” n.d.: n.p.) Indeed, Sarwar’s translation of the Qur’an Q. 2:146 specifically identifies “the Book” as “the Bible” (Q. 2:146; 3:3, 78; 4:136; 5:41, 48; 6:114; 10:37; 57:16, 29, Sarwar). Muhammad Asad’s translation of the Qur’an does likewise (Q. 3:78; 5:15, 19, 64-65, 68, Asad).

The Qur’an also makes multiple references to the “Torah” (*Taurat*, Q. 2:87; 3:3, 65; 5:44; 53:36; 87:19) and the “Gospel” (*Injil*, Q. 3:3, 45-48, 65; 5:46, 110; 57:27). The terms “Torah” and “Gospel” early-on were used to designate not portions of the OT and NT but the OT and NT as a whole. Concerning the Torah and the OT, Muslim scholar Dr. Muhammad Laylah states, “The Jewish sacred books are mentioned in the Qur’an generally under the title of the Torah; this constituted the five books of Moses, the so-called Pentateuch or the law, which is the origin or cornerstone of the Hebrew Bible. However, Ibn Taymiyah states that the Jews use the title Torah to refer to the whole of their Bible. This is an important possibility. . . . Nevertheless, the Qur’an does not exactly limit the Jewish Torah and in particular does not deny the possibility.” (Laylah 2005: 101-02)

By the time of Muhammad, the term “Gospel” (Arabic = *Injil*) had come to designate the entire NT much like the term “Torah” was used by Jews to designate the entire OT. Muslim author Muhammad Abu Laylah acknowledges that the word *Injil* probably came from Syria or Ethiopia, “and it was probably in widespread use in Arabia before Muhammad’s time” (Laylah 2005: 102-03). Sundiata adds, “The words Torah and Injil existed before Islam and were used without redefinition in the Qur’an. They can therefore only be defined according to those from whom they were borrowed. . . . The Qur’anic references to these words can therefore only be in their Jewish and Christian contexts—rather than references to some phantom books which no longer exist. The Qur’an does not say that it is referring to some texts that were extinct before Muhammad’s time.” (Sundiata 2006: 70). Walter Eric concludes, “Throughout the Qur’an the Taurat [Torah] is spoken of as the Jewish scripture and the Injil [Gospel] as the Christian scripture, and both scriptures are simply accepted as coming from God” (Eric 2011: 14).

The Muslim allegation that the Bible was lost or corrupted by the Jews and Christians is similar to the Muslim allegation that Jesus Christ was neither crucified nor resurrected—it is an allegation that is without any historical or factual basis but is made solely for theological reasons, because the statements, facts, and theology of the Bible contradict the Qur’an. This is seen in a number of ways:

A. The Bible could not have been lost or corrupted before the time of Muhammad because the Qur’an affirms its availability, its authenticity, and its reliability

The standard Muslim view that the “original” Word of Allah—the Bible—has been lost or corrupted is *contrary to the Qur’an itself*. Multiple statements in the Qur’an are based on the premise that the Bible is a true

revelation from Allah and has not been “corrupted.”

1. Muslims are commanded to believe in the Bible. **Q. 3:3** states that both the OT (*Taurat*) and the NT (*Injil*) were not limited to the Jews and Christians but were sent down “as a guide to mankind” (see also **Q. 3:187; 6:92; 28:43**). **Q. 4:136** commands all Muslims to believe in the Scriptures which *preceded* the Qur’an: “O ye who believe! Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and the scripture which He hath sent to His Messenger and the scripture which He sent to those before (him). Any who denieth Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Day of Judgment, hath gone far, far astray” (see also **Q. 2:136; 2:285; 4:136**). That command is in the present tense (i.e., when the Qur’an itself was being revealed to Muhammad). It only makes sense if the Bible was then in existence and was uncorrupted.

Q. 29:46 addresses Muslims who have disputes with Christians and Jews: “*And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say, ‘We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you’*” (see also **Q. 2:4; 3:3-4, 119; 5:59; 42:15**). Note that disputes are to be civil precisely because Christians and Jews have “the Book” which was revealed by Allah. Second, Muslims are to “*believe in that revelation . . . which came down to you.*” None of those statements could have been made if the Bible was no longer in existence or had been corrupted.

2. The Qur’an acknowledges that the Bible was in existence and was being studied. **Q. 2:44** says, “*Do ye enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (To practise it) yourselves, and yet ye study the Scripture?*” (see also **Q. 7:169-70**) **Q. 2:113** affirmatively states that the Bible was in existence in Muhammad’s time and was being read and studied by Jews and Christians: “*The Jews say: ‘The Christians have naught (to stand) upon’; and the Christians say: ‘The Jews have naught (To stand) upon.’ Yet they (Profess to) study the (same) Book.*”

Regarding Jews, **Q. 5:43** (Hilali-Khan) says, “*But how do they come to you for decision while they have the Taurat (Torah), in which is the (plain) Decision of Allah; yet even after that, they turn away. For they are not (really) believers.*” The same argument is made regarding Christians in **Q. 5:47** (Hilali-Khan): “*Let the people of the Injeel (Gospel) judge by what Allah has revealed therein. And whosoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed (then) such (people) are the Fasiqun (the rebellious i.e. disobedient (of a lesser degree) to Allah.*” Adelphi and Hahn summarize the significance of these verses: “*Within the same verses we are reminded that the Jew does have the genuine Tawrat in his possession (‘indahum’); that the Christian also has the genuine Gospel in his possession. Again there is no hint that the Christian has distorted the Injil by way of interpretation, omission or other changes within the written text itself. If, on the other hand, we assume the text of the Tawrat and Injil to be corrupted, abrogated or no longer present on earth in their purity, does this not render preposterous the judgement of the Qur’an that the Jews are to judge themselves according to the Tawrat and that ‘the People of Gospel judge by that which Allah hath revealed therein’? How are they to judge themselves by abrogated or corrupted Scriptures? And how can they be declared ‘evil-livers’ (fasiqun), if they do not judge by what they do not have?’* (Adelphi and Hahn 1993: pt.1.10)

3. The Qur’an states that the Bible is guidance from Allah and is to be followed. **Q. 5:68** states, “*Say: ‘O People of the Book! ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord.’*” To “stand fast” means “observing them [the Torah and the Gospel] honestly and making them the law of life” (A’La Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 5:68n.97). *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* says, “*O People of the Scripture, you have no basis, in religion, on which to rely, until you observe the Torah and the Gospel and what was revealed to you from your Lord, by implementing what is therein*” (Jalal 2017: Q. 5:68, comment; see also Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, n.d.: Q. 5:68, comment). The admonition of this verse only makes sense if the Torah and Gospel were available in an uncorrupted state to be read and acted upon. Significantly, surah 5 is considered one of the final revelations of the Qur’an (see **APPENDIX A—CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF SURAHS**).

Q. 5:44 says the Torah is “*Allah’s book*” and is the judge of the Jews: “*It was We who revealed the law (to Moses): therein was guidance and light. By its standard have been judged the Jews, by the prophets who bowed (as in Islam) to Allah’s will, by the rabbis and the doctors of law: for to them was entrusted the protection of Allah’s book, and they were witnesses thereto: therefore fear not men, but fear me, and sell not my signs for a miserable price. If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) Unbelievers.*” (See also **Q. 11:17; 17:2; 19:12; 21:48; 28:43; 32:23-24; 40:53-54; 66:12**) Ali comments, “*They [the rabbis] were living witnesses to the truth of Scripture, and could testify that they had made it known to the people*” (Ali 2006: Q. 5:44n.752).

Likewise, the Qur’an accredits the Gospel. **Q. 5:46-47** tells Christians to judge matters by the Gospel itself: “*And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We*

sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah. Let the people of the Gospel judge by what Allah hath revealed therein. If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) those who rebel.” Q. 3:187 goes further and states that the Bible was not just to be limited to Jews and Christians, but was to be spread to all mankind: “And remember Allah took a covenant from the People of the Book, to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it” (see also **Q. 3:3-4; 28:43**).

Michael and McAlister summarize that from the above verses “we see that the Qur’an acknowledges that Allah proclaimed the Torah to be guidance and light for his people, and that Allah sent Isa (Jesus) to confirm the Law that came before him. The Qur’an also considers the Gospel to be guidance and light, and whoever fails to believe in the Torah and the Gospel is considered a rebel. In historical perspective this means that according to the Qur’an, the Torah and the Gospel were still authoritative texts, uncorrupted by man, at approximately AD 624 when the Qur’an was being revealed to Muhammad. Therefore, a Muslim who claims that the Bible was corrupted before the Qur’an was revealed needs to examine closely what the Qur’an says about the Bible and not build his or her beliefs on oral traditions and the various opinions of Muslim leaders.” (Michael and McAlister 2010: 132)

Additionally, Muhammad himself was told to follow the guidance of the Bible. **Q. 6:84-88** discusses the prophets in the Bible, from Noah through Jesus. **Q. 6:89-90** then say, “These were the men to whom We gave the Book, and authority, and prophethood: if these (their descendants) reject them, Behold! We shall entrust their charge to a new people who reject them not. Those were the (prophets) who received Allah’s guidance: Copy the guidance they received.” The only “Book” that can possibly refer to is the Bible. What Allah is telling Muhammad is that if the descendants of the people of biblical times reject following the Bible, then Allah will entrust it to people who do not reject it—so Muhammad should be among the latter and follow the guidance of earlier generations of faithful people. Thus, Muhammad himself was instructed to follow the guidance of the Bible that had been given to the faithful people who came before him. Those statements and that command to Muhammad only make sense if the Bible was still in existence and was available and uncorrupted, so that it could be followed as guidance (which was, in fact, the case).

4. The Qur’an calls the Bible Allah’s Book and His Word which cannot be changed. **Q. 5:44** says the Torah is “Allah’s book” (see also **Q. 2:75; 3:23**). In commenting on **Q. 3:23**, Mawdudi maintains, “They are asked to acknowledge the Book of God as the final arbiter in all matters, and to submit to its judgement, accepting as right whatever this Book holds to be right, and as wrong whatever it holds to be wrong. *The Book of God referred to here is the Torah and the Injil*, while the expression ‘those who have been given a portion of the Book’ refers to the Jewish and Christian religious scholars.” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 3:23n.22, emph. added)

This is important because **Q. 18:27** states that no one can alter or corrupt the words of God in his Book: “And recite (and teach) what has been revealed to thee of the Book of thy Lord: none can change His Words, and none wilt thou find as a refuge other than Him.” **Q. 15:9** is to the same effect: “We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption).” **Q. 6:34** says, “There is none that can alter the words (and decrees) of Allah.” (see also **Q. 6:115; 10:64**) In other words, Allah’s promise to preserve his words from corruption is not limited to the Qur’an but includes the Bible as well. “Consequently, if the Torah and the Injil were corrupted, then the Qur’an would be lying when it said, ‘the word of Allah cannot be changed’” (Sundiata 2006: 61).

5. The Qur’an claims to confirm and safely guard the Bible. Multiple Qur’anic passages state that Muhammad and the Qur’an confirm the previous revelation of the Bible (see **Q. 2:41, 89, 97; 3:3; 4:47; 5:15, 48; 6:90, 92; 10:37; 12:111; 35:31; 41:43; 46:9, 12, 30**). Mawdudi states, “God did not reveal any of the Books in order to repudiate the previous ones; each confirmed and supported the preceding ones” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 5:46n.76). **Q. 5:48** concludes by saying, “To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee.” If the Bible had been altered or corrupted, then the Qur’an either lied or failed in its task of confirming and being the guardian of the Book. Is any Muslim prepared to admit either of those possibilities? Adelphi and Hahn summarize, “The reader can only conclude from these passages that the Qur’an considers previous revelations granted to the People of the Book to be in their possession and at their disposal. There is no indication that these Scriptures have been taken to heaven, that they have been abrogated or textually corrupted. On the contrary, the existence of the Scriptures is not only presumed; it is explicitly stated. In fact, the Qur’an not only confirms these Scriptures; it is the protector, watcher, custodian of previous Scriptures (5:48), not the abrogator of previous Scriptures.” (Adelphi and Hahn 1993: pt.1.6)

6. Muhammad himself was told to consult the Bible. **Q. 10:94** tells Muhammad himself, “If thou wert in

doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee.” **Q. 21:7** (Hilali-Khan) adds, “*And We sent not before you (O Muhammad SAW) but men to whom We inspired, so ask the people of the Reminder [Scriptures - the Taurat (Torah), the Injeel (Gospel)] if you do not know*” (see also **Q. 3:93; 16:43**). None of these statements could have been made if the Bible had been corrupted.

Given the above statements in the Qur’an, for Muslims to claim that the Bible has been lost or corrupted amounts to an attack upon God (Allah) and on the integrity of the Qur’an itself. Sundiata concludes, “They are in effect saying that Allah is irresponsible, inconsistent, unfaithful, and cares nothing for what happens to his revelations or that he lacks the power and resolve to protect them[.] Does it not occur to them that they are making Allah a liar, since it was he who said in the Qur’an that his words could not be corrupted? If Allah took the time to raise prophets and caused them to write his revelations only to allow such revelations the ignominy of corruption, then Muslims have no business worshipping him.” (Sundiata 2006: 68)

B. The Bible could not have been lost or corrupted before the time of Muhammad because Muhammad affirmed its authenticity and its reliability

Muhammad himself recognized the uncorrupted nature of the Bible and acted on that fact. **Q. 3:23** (Hilali-Khan) states, “*Have you not seen those who have been given a portion of the Scripture? They are being invited to the Book of Allah to settle their dispute, then a party of them turn away, and they are averse.*” Muslim commentators state that this verse was handed down by Allah in connection with an incident in which two Jews had committed adultery and asked Muhammad to adjudicate the matter; Muhammad called for stoning the man and woman (Jalal 2017: Q. 3:23, comment; Ibn Abbas 2016: Q. 3:23, comment; Ali 2006: Q. 3:23n.367). Ibn Ishaq’s biography of Muhammad recounts the event. It says that, in reaching his judgment, Muhammad consulted with “the most learned man living in the Torah,” and “when the apostle gave judgment about them he asked for a Torah.” A rabbi read from the Torah but put his hand over the verse regarding stoning (**Lev 20:10**) until he was found out. (Ibn Ishaq 1955: 266-67) After this, Muhammad said, “I am the first to revive the order of God and His book and to practice it” (Ibid.: 267). Muhammad could not have done or said any of that if he had believed that the Bible had been “corrupted.” Instead, he specifically called it “His [God’s] book.” This event is also recorded in the Hadith (al-Bukhari: 6841; see also 6819). Abi Dawud’s account of this contains a significant detail: “A group of Jews came and invited the Messenger of Allah to Quff. So he visited them in their school. They said: Abul Qasim, one of our men has committed fornication with a woman; so pronounce judgment upon them. They placed a cushion for the Messenger of Allah who sat on it and said: Bring the Torah. It was then brought. *He then withdrew the cushion from beneath him and placed the Torah on it saying: I believed in thee and in Him Who revealed thee.*” (Abi Dawud: 4449, emph. added) Sam Shamoun states, “Muhammad not only believes in the integrity of the Jewish Scripture, but respects it enough to place it on a cushion!” (Shamoun, “Quranic Witness,” n.d.: n.p.) Contemporary Muslims who allege that the Bible has been corrupted or altered by men are therefore contradicting Muhammad himself!

Muhammad also confirmed the authenticity and reliability of the Torah in **Q. 28:48-49** (Hilali-Khan): “*But when the truth (i.e. Muhammad SAW with his Message) has come to them from Us, they say: ‘Why is he not given the like of what was given to Musa (Moses)? Did they not disbelieve in that which was given to Musa (Moses) of old?’ They say: ‘Two kinds of magic [the Taurat (Torah) and the Quran] each helping the other!’ And they say: ‘Verily! In both we are disbelievers.’ Say (to them, O Muhammad SAW): ‘Then bring a Book from Allah, which is a better guide than these two [the Taurat (Torah) and the Quran], that I may follow it, if you are truthful.’*” In these verses, the Torah and the Qur’an are equated as “guides.” In **v. 49** Muhammad essentially is saying, “There are no better guides than the Torah and the Qur’an, and if there is, bring it and I will follow it.” He could only have said that the Torah was guidance for him if it was in existence and was uncorrupted.

C. Because Jesus is a “messenger of strong will” (Q. 46:35) and believed in the integrity of the OT, Muslims also are required to believe in the integrity of the OT

Jesus is one of only five “messengers of strong will” (**Q. 46:35**). Further, “Muslims believe that a prophet of God will never lie, since all the prophets of God are infallible” (Al-Kahtani 1996: 16). **Q. 4:150-52** also says that *all* the Messengers are to be believed and no distinctions are to be made between them (see also **Q. 2:136, 285; 3:84**). That is particularly true of Jesus since, as we saw earlier, Jesus is the one and only prophet who never sinned at all and himself *is* the “Word” of God (**John 1:1, 14; Q. 3:39, 45; 4:171**). Steve Moyise points out, “The four Gospels found in the New Testament present Jesus quoting from nearly 60 different verses of Scripture [i.e., the OT] and making at least twice that number of allusions and more general references” (Moyise 2010: 3-4). These quotes are from the entire corpus of the OT, including 26 quotations from the law, 16 from the writings, and 15 from the prophets (including one from Daniel who is among the prophets in the LXX

but among the writings in the Hebrew Bible) (Ibid.: 4). This is important because Jesus believed that the OT was the Word of God and that its words had not been corrupted. He called the OT “*the word of God*” (Mark 7:13) and “*the commandment of God*” (15:3). He said “*the Scripture cannot be broken*” (John 10:35) and that “*it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail*” (Luke 16:17; see also Matt 5:18). “The conclusion is simple. If a person believes in Jesus Christ [even as a prophet], he should be consistent and believe that the Old Testament and its accounts are correct. Many want to accept Jesus [as a prophet], but also want to reject a large portion of the Old Testament. This option is not available. Either Jesus knew what He was talking about or He did not. The evidence is clear that Jesus saw the Old Testament as being God’s Word; His attitude toward it was nothing less than total trust.” (McDowell and Stewart 1986: 31)

D. The Bible could not have been lost or corrupted before or after the time of Muhammad because multiple copies both before and after Muhammad’s time exist and show no changes

The original documents written by the OT and NT writers no longer exist, but multiple manuscripts attest to the accuracy of the Bible as we now have it and specifically to the fact that it was not altered or corrupted either before or after the time of Muhammad. The Masoretic Text is the authoritative Hebrew text of the Hebrew Bible (OT). “The MT was primarily copied, edited and distributed by a group of Jews known as the Masoretes between the 7th and 10th centuries CE” (“Masoretic Text” 2019: n.d.) The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in caves in the wilderness of Qumran near the Dead Sea, date back to the fifth-second centuries before Christ. Included among them is the Isaiah Scroll, which is “the largest (734 cm) and best preserved of all the biblical scrolls, and the only one that is almost complete. The 54 columns contain all 66 chapters of the Hebrew version of the biblical Book of Isaiah. Dating from ca. 125 BCE, it is also one of the oldest of the Dead Sea Scrolls, some one thousand years older than the oldest manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible known to us before the scrolls’ discovery.” (“The Great Isaiah Scroll” 2019: n.p.)

Geisler and Nix note that “with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, scholars have manuscripts one thousand years earlier than the great Masoretic Text manuscripts, enabling them to check on the fidelity of the Hebrew text. The result of comparative studies reveals that there is a word-for-word identity in more than 95 percent of the cases, and the 5 percent variation consists mostly of slips of the pen and spelling.” (Geisler and Nix 1986: 265) Josh McDowell and Don Stewart state, “The Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrated unequivocally the fact that the Jews were faithful in their transcription of biblical manuscripts” (McDowell and Stewart 1980: 26). Robert Wilson did a thorough examination of the OT manuscripts. He concluded, “An examination of the Hebrew manuscripts now in existence shows that in the whole Old Testament there are scarcely any variants supported by more than one manuscript out of 200 to 400, in which each book is found, except in the use of the full and defective writing of the vowels. This full, or defective, writing of the vowels has no effect either on the sound or the sense of the words.” (Wilson 1926: 69)

Far from Emerick’s “whispered message” theory of transmission or Suhaym’s corruption through “ignorance” and “fanaticism” view, Geisler and Nix point out, “With respect to the Jewish Scriptures, however, it was not scribal accuracy alone that guaranteed their product. Rather, it was their almost superstitious reverence for the Bible. According to the Talmud, there were regulations not only for the kind of skins to be used and the size of the columns, but there was even a religious ritual necessary for the scribe to perform before writing the name of God. Rules governed the kind of ink used, dictated the spacing of words, and prohibited writing anything from memory. If a manuscript was found to contain even one mistake, it was discarded and destroyed.” (Geisler and Nix 1986: 263-64) They conclude, “The thousands of Hebrew manuscripts, with their confirmation by the LXX [i.e., the Septuagint] and the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the numerous other crosschecks from outside and inside the text provide overwhelming support for the reliability of the Old Testament text” (Ibid.: 265).

Concerning the NT and the entire Bible, “The fidelity of the New Testament text . . . rests on a multitude of manuscript evidence. Counting Greek copies alone, the New Testament text is preserved in some 5,366 partial and complete manuscript portions that were copied by hand from the second through the fifteenth centuries. By way of contrast, most other books from the ancient world survive in only a few and late manuscript copies.” (Geisler and Nix 1986: 267) “No other ancient writings from the same era have such a mass of manuscript evidence as that for the Greek New Testament” (Gilchrist 2002: 19). Sam Shamoun observes: “There are nearly 25,000 whole or fragmentary copies of the individual books of the Bible in our possession today, with some dating back four, six, and even eight centuries before the compilation of the Quran. Due to the fact that everything was hand-copied, thousands of variants arose. Yet, textual critics, who are not necessarily Christians, have carefully examined these variants and have concluded that we have 98.33% of the original reading, with the 1.67% still remaining intact within the variants. Hence, we have virtually 100% of the original

reading faithfully preserved via the manuscript copies. Further, the critics have also established the fact that none of these variants affect any major doctrine, since most of them are nothing more than misspellings, numerical discrepancies, and scribal notes which were assumed to be part of the text by later scribes.” (Shamoun, “Quranic Witness,” n.d.: n.p.; see also Habermas and Licona 2004: 85)

In addition to the actual biblical manuscripts, “the works of early Christians like Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius, and Papias contain nearly every verse of the New Testament. This provides evidence that the New Testament of today was in existence at the time that those early Christians wrote. Those early Christians were born before the year AD 75, before the death of the apostle John—one of the twelve disciples of Jesus who wrote a part of the New Testament. So, the New Testament can be traced to the first century easily and corresponds with what we have today. It is the same New Testament which the Syrian Christians of Muhammad’s time called the Injil and the Qur’an hailed as authentic.” (Sundiata 2006: 74-75)

Not only do thousands of biblical manuscripts exist, but the entire Bible was compiled into book form long before the time of Muhammad. Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus, and Codex Alexandrinus, dating from approximately AD 325-440, include the entire or virtually the entire Bible (OT and NT) in Greek.¹¹ The Roman Catholic Church translated the entire Bible into Latin in the fourth century (the Latin Vulgate). The thousands of biblical manuscripts, letters of the church fathers quoting the NT, and the complete translations into Greek and Latin prove conclusively that the Bible has not been lost, changed, or corrupted either before or after Muhammad’s time.

E. No plausible persons, motives, abilities, or opportunities to corrupt the Bible have ever existed or have ever been claimed

Ancient Jewish historian Josephus articulated the view held by Jews concerning copying the books of the Hebrew Bible: “How firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation, is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it becomes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willing to die for them” (Josephus c.97: 1.8). Christians view the OT and the NT the same way. Sundiata states, “During the first three hundred years of Christianity, the followers of Christ were a despised minority in the ancient empire of Rome—they did not have the power to either write or rewrite history. Those tough and loving Christians had a list of books that they held as Scriptures. It is absurd to think that this group of determined survivors would allow anyone to add to or subtract from the texts that helped their survival for centuries.” (Sundiata 2006: 71-72)

Both Jews and Christians hold the Hebrew Bible (OT) in common and hold it to be the Word of God. They sharply disagree about whether or not Jesus Christ is the Messiah prophesied in it. Walter Eric points out, “Muslims must seriously think about this fact – the Old Testament is held to be the Word of God by two very different religions and has been scrupulously maintained by each one independently of the other. There is thus no possibility of a perversion of the text by either of the two faiths, for the very act of alteration by the one would have been immediately exposed by the other.” (Eric 2011: 9-10) Further, “By Muhammad’s time, the Jewish and Christian Scriptures were widely available. Jews and Christians were not in a small geographical area, where all of the copies of their Scriptures could be reached, altered, and standardized. . . . Therefore, even if some Judaists and Christians changed their Scriptures . . . the changes would be local and such faulty copies would be easy to identify. The thousands of copies and portions of the Bible recovered from diverse places have not turned up such copies.” (Sundiata 2006: 71)

The Muslim contention that the Bible has been altered and corrupted amounts to charging that Jews and Christians are dishonest and are deceivers of the people. Sultan Muhammad Khan points out, “This is a serious and unwarranted indictment. Christians believe in the Bible as the Word of God as Muslims do in the Qur’an. Thus, if no Muslim can change the text of the Qur’an, how is it that a Christian can change the text of the Book of the all-wise God, the Holy Bible? If a mischievous Muslim were to be so foolish as to change the text of any verse of the Qur’an, would not all Muslims consider him outside the pale of Islam and publish all the facts about him? In the same way, if some mischievous Christian were to change the text of any verse of Scripture, would not all other true Christians consider him outside the pale of their religion and make public the facts about him? Of course they would! From this you will see that the contention of Muslims that the text of God’s Word has been altered is absolutely without foundation and futile. I believe that this contention is held by Muslims who

¹¹ These books still exist. Codex Vaticanus is located in the Vatican Library; Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Alexandrinus are located in the British Library in London.

are generally quite ignorant of the Bible and of the faith and doctrines of Christians.” (Khan 1992: 6)

John Gilchrist says that one should challenge Muslims to produce historical evidence to substantiate their argument that the Bible has been changed: “What was it originally? What, precisely, was changed to make it the book it is today? Who made these changes? When were they made? Once you challenge any Muslim to identify the actual people who are supposed to have corrupted the Bible, at what time in history it took place, and precisely what textual changes were made to original manuscripts, you will find them entirely unable to do so. Such evidences quite simply do not exist.” (Gilchrist 2002: 20)

F. Conclusion

The Muslim allegation that the Bible was lost or corrupted by the Jews and Christians to whom it was given is without any historical or factual basis. That claim is made solely for theological reasons because the statements, facts, and theology of the Bible contradict the Qur’an. Some Muslim scholars recognize that. Mahmoud Ayoub admits, “Contrary to the general Islamic view, the Qur’an does not accuse Jews and Christians of altering the text of their scriptures, but rather of altering the truth which those scriptures contain. The people do this by concealing some of the sacred texts, by misapplying their precepts, or by ‘altering words from their right position [citing Q. 4:26; 5:13, 41; see also Q. 2:75].’ However, this refers more to interpretation than to actual addition or deletion of words from the sacred books.” (Ayoub 1986: 5)

V. Is Muhammad Prophesied in the Bible?

Q. 61:6 has Jesus saying “*O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you, confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving Glad Tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad.*” Hilali-Khan specifically identify the two primary prophecies which Muslims contend prophesy the coming of Muhammad by translating **Q. 7:157** as “*the Prophet who can neither read nor write (i.e. Muhammad SAW) whom they find written with them in the Taurat (Torah) (Deut. xviii, 15) and the Injeel (Gospel) (John xiv, 16).*”

A. *Is Muhammad the “prophet” referred to by Moses in Deut 18:15-19?*

In **Deut 18:15-19** Moses said, “¹⁵*The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen [lit. ‘brothers’], you shall listen to him.* ¹⁶*This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.’* ¹⁷*The LORD said to me, ‘They have spoken well.* ¹⁸*I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen [lit. ‘brothers’] like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.* ¹⁹*It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.’”*

The primary reason why Muslims contend this refers to Muhammad is the “from your/their brothers” language of **vv. 15, 18**. Laylah concludes from this, “‘Among their brethren’ is important – this means from brothers of the Jews, but not from the Jews themselves” (Laylah 2005: 42; see also Abdul-Mohsin 2006: 93, 210-11). Secondarily, Muslims draw various contrasts between Jesus and Moses and similarities between Muhammad and Moses, concluding that Jesus is not “a prophet *like me*” (i.e., not like Moses) but that Muhammad is. For example: “Moses had a father and mother, like Muhammad, but Jesus was born miraculously. Moses and Muhammad married and begot children, but Jesus remained a bachelor all his life. Muhammad and Moses were acknowledged as prophets by their own people during their lifetime. As for Jesus, ‘He came unto his own and they that were his own received him not’ (John 1:11). Moses and Muhammad were prophets as well as rulers, and they exercised their power in their lifetime. Jesus said that his kingdom was not of this world, and he refused to pass judgment. Moses and Muhammad brought new laws to their people. Jesus said that he came not to destroy the Torah but to fulfill it. Both Moses and Muhammad died natural deaths, while Jesus was crucified on a cross, according to the Christian belief, and ascended to heaven according to the Qur’an and the Muslim tradition, without crucifixion. God has not raised up a prophet among the brethren of the Children of Israel except Muhammad.” (Laylah 2005: 43-44; see also Abdul-Mohsin 2006: 93-94, 211-12) This Muslim use of the Bible is wrong on virtually every count.

1. The Bible explicitly says that Jesus Christ is the prophet predicted in **Deut 18:15-19**. Since even **Q. 2:113** says that Jews and Christians “*study the (same) Book,*” clearly the best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself, i.e., the same Book. The NT, not once but four times, identifies Christ as the predicted prophet. In **John 1:45**, after meeting Jesus, Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “*We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.*” In **John 6:14**, after Jesus performed a miraculous sign, the people who witnessed the miracle said, “*This is truly the Prophet who is to*

come into the world.” The only “Prophet” that can be referring to is the prophet predicted in **Deut 18:15-19**. **Acts 3:22** and **Acts 7:37** both quote the prophecy as having been fulfilled by Jesus. Peter’s speech in **Acts 3:11-26** is about God raising up Jesus whom the Jews had killed (as also had been prophesied) and how Jesus fulfilled OT prophecy; consequently, the people needed to repent or they would be destroyed when Christ comes again. In **Acts 7**, Stephen reviewed the history of the Israelites for the Jewish leaders. After quoting the prophecy in Deuteronomy he concluded, “*You are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become.*” (**Acts 7:51-52**) The “Righteous One,” of course, is none other than Jesus who had been betrayed and murdered at the instigation of the Jewish leaders.

2. The “brothers” referred to are fellow Jews, not Arabs. **Deut 18:15-19** is all one prophecy. **Deut 18:15** makes clear that the “brothers” referred to are not Arabs, like Muhammad, but are fellow Jews, since it says that God will raise up a prophet “*from among you.*” Muslims concentrate on the word “brothers” (or “brethren”). What they apparently fail to realize is that “throughout the Old Testament, the expression ‘their brethren’ often occurs and in every case it refers to one of the tribes of Israel as distinct from the one actually mentioned” (Gilchrist 2002: 123-24). The whole context of **Deuteronomy 18** is Moses’s giving instructions concerning the Levites because they were the priestly tribe and the future conduct of Israel after they entered the land which God had promised them (see, e.g., **Deut 17:2, 14-15, 18, 20; 18:6, 9, 14; 19:1-3, 7-10, 12, 14**). In **Deut 18:15-19**, Moses was saying that God would raise up a prophet not from among the Levites but from among one of the other tribes of Israel. The prophecy applies to Jesus since he was from the tribe of Judah. In fact, consistent with the context of **Deuteronomy 18**, **Heb 7:11-16** contrasts the Levitical priesthood with the greater priesthood of Jesus.

While Jews and Arabs both trace their ancestry back to Abraham (the Arabs through Ishmael and the Jews through Isaac), the Bible never refers to the Jews and Arabs as “brothers.” In the biblical story of the selling of Joseph into slavery, “the sons of Jacob, after whom the twelve tribes of Israel were named, referred to themselves as ‘brothers’ and to the Arabs who bought Joseph as ‘Ishmaelites’” (Sundiata 2006: 262). In fact, Isaac and Ishmael themselves are never actually called “brothers” in the Bible even though they were both sons of the same father. That is confirmed in **Deut 17:14-15** which says, “*When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,’ you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, one from among your countrymen [lit. ‘brothers’] you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman [lit. ‘brother’].*” In the context of both **Deuteronomy 17** and **18**, the term “brothers” is applied exclusively to fellow Israelites, not to Arabs or other “foreigners.” Additionally, Muhammad could not possibly be the predicted prophet because he wasn’t even born until 500 years *after Israel had ceased to exist* as the Jewish homeland.

3. “A prophet like me”: only Jesus is like Moses in the most important senses. The comparisons and contrasts that Muslims make between Moses, Muhammad, and Jesus are actually rather foolish and elevate trivia over matters of substance. For example, Deborah, Samuel, David, and Solomon were all prophets, rulers (either judges or kings), married, were conceived in the normal way, died natural deaths, were acknowledged as prophets during their lifetimes, and brought the word of the Lord to the people. God spoke to them in a direct way (see **Judg 4:6-7; 1 Sam 3:10-14; 23:2, 4; 1 Kgs 3:5, 11-14**) as he had done with Moses (e.g., **Exod 33:12-23**) but unlike Muhammad (who only received Allah’s messages through Gabriel). Thus, their claims are stronger than Muhammad’s, especially since they are all from the covenantal line of Isaac.

More importantly, Muslims neglect to mention that Jesus called himself a “prophet” (**Luke 13:33**) and was considered to be a prophet by others (**Matt 21:11; Luke 7:16; 24:19; John 4:19; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17**). He also is a king (**Matt 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-40; John 1:49; 12:13; Rev 17:14; 19:16**). Jesus exercised the power of his kingdom and inaugurated his kingdom while he was on earth (**Matt 12:28; Luke 10:9; 11:20**); he is sitting on the throne and is reigning now (**Acts 2:29-36; Eph 1:21**). Jesus also is married: he is the bridegroom (**Mark 2:19**) and his people, the church, are his bride and wife (**Rev 19:7; 21:2, 9-10**). As we saw above in section 2.VIII.J. *Jesus, not Muhammad, taught with divine authority*, Muhammad said that he brought nothing new (**Q. 46:9**), but Jesus brought “the law of Christ” (**Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:8-13; 9:15**) and was able to change the law of God on his own authority (**Q. 3:50; Matt 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-34, 38-44; Mark 7:18-19**). He was able to do this because, unlike Muhammad who claimed to receive the Qur’an from an angel, everything Jesus said and did was only what the Father had him do (**John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10**) because he is “the Word of God” (**Q. 3:39, 45; 4:171; John 1:1, 14; Rev 19:13**).

Only Jesus can be the prophet predicted in **Deut 18:15-19** because not only does his life parallel the life of Moses, but he far surpasses Moses. **Hebrews** describes how Christ is like Moses, but greater than Moses

(Heb 3:1-6): Christ “*is worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house*” (**Heb 3:3**); and whereas “*Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant . . . Christ was faithful as a son over his house*” (**Heb 3:5-6**). We see these parallels from birth to death:

- *Moses was a precursor of the Messiah:* Moses was unique among the prophets, both for the mighty works he did and for the fact that God did not speak to him in visions and dreams but “*mouth to mouth*” and “*face to face*” (**Num 12:6-8; Deut 34:10-12; Q. 4:164**) as a man speaks to his friend (**Exod 33:11**). However, Jesus was far greater than Moses. Jesus *is* the Messiah (**Matt 1:1, 16-17; 2:4; John 1:41; 4:25-26; Q. 3:45; 4:157, 171-72; 5:72, 75; 9:30**). Jesus did greater miracles than Moses, including raising the dead and rising from the dead. Jesus surpasses Moses because he is the only one who has seen the Father, since he came from the Father (**John 6:46**) and is himself “*the exact representation*” of God (**Heb 1:3**). And Jesus did not just speak God’s words from time to time; instead, he did nothing on his own initiative, but *everything* he did and said was what the Father had him do (**John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10**). The reason is that Jesus did not just speak the words of God but was himself the very Word of God come to earth as a man (**John 1:1, 14; Rev 19:13; Q. 3:39, 45; 4:171**).
- *Attempts on their lives as infants:* There are clear parallels between the attempts of Pharaoh and Herod to kill the Hebrew children (**Exod 1:16; Matt 2:16**). Both Pharaoh and Herod were ungodly rulers who were afraid of the rise of a power who might oppose or supplant them (see **Exod 1:8-12; Matt 2:1-3**).
- *Return from Egypt:* Both Moses and Jesus escaped to another country (**Exod 2:15; Matt 2:13-15**). In both cases they were supernaturally told when to return, because those seeking to kill them were dead (**Exod 4:19-20; Matt 2:19-21**).
- *Freedom from slavery:* Moses led his people out of slavery in Egypt to a new life of freedom (**Exod 12:29-32**). Jesus led his people out of the far greater slavery to sin, death, Satan, and bondage to the law, so that “*if you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free*” (**John 8:30-31**).
- *Manna:* Just as the Lord provided manna while Moses led Israel in the wilderness (**Exod 16:1-21**), so Jesus said, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. . . . I am the bread of life.*” (**John 6:32, 35**) The manna was physical and temporary. The bread that Jesus gives (Himself) provides eternal life to anyone who eats it (**John 6:48-58**).
- *Water from the rock:* Moses struck the rock in the wilderness, and gave the people water (**Exod 17:6; Num 20:11; Ps 78:15**). In **1 Cor 10:4**, Paul points out that the Israelites really “*were drinking from a spiritual rock . . . and the rock was Christ.*” Although the water that came from the rock Moses struck in the wilderness gave physical life to the people, Jesus gives the “*living water*” of eternal life (**John 4:10-14; 7:36-39**). The typology does not end there. Moses was not allowed to lead his people into the promised land because he struck the rock a second time to get water rather than speaking to it as God had commanded him (**Num 20:8-12**). Not only was this disobedience to God, but it was misrepresenting the gospel. The reason is that, as the rock, Christ was “*struck*” with the rod of God’s justice only once, not twice: he made “*one sacrifice for sins for all time*” (**Heb 10:12**; see also **Heb 10:10, 14**).
- *God’s law on the mountain:* Just as God gave Moses the Law on the mountain (**Exod 19:20**), so Jesus gave his law on the mountain (**Matt 5:1-2**). Nevertheless, the two are qualitatively different, as the Apostle John says: “*The Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ*” (**John 1:17**).
- *Sacrifice and atonement:* Although Moses offered to make atonement and sacrifice himself for his people’s sin (**Exod 32:30-32**), Jesus actually made atonement and sacrificed himself for his people’s sin (**Rom 3:23-25; 5:6-8; Heb 9:26-28; 10: 11-12; 1 John 2:2**).
- *Shining faces:* Just as Moses’s face shone as he was coming down from Mt. Sinai after having received the Ten Commandments the second time (**Exod 34:29**), so Jesus’ face and garments shone on the mount of transfiguration (**Matt 17:2; Mark 9:2-3; Luke 9:29**). Luke reports that on the mount of transfiguration Jesus, Moses, and Elijah were discussing Jesus’ own “*exodus*” [the Greek term translated as “*departure*”] (**Luke 9:30-31**).
- *Mediators:* Just as Moses was a mediator between God and Israel (**Exod 20:19; Deut 5:5; Gal 3:19**), so Jesus is “*the one mediator between God and men*” (**1 Tim 2:5**).
- *The covenants:* At the Last Supper Jesus said “*this is My blood of the covenant*” (**Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24**). That echoes Moses’s words in **Exod 24:8**. However, Moses ratified God’s Mosaic covenant with the blood of animals (**Exod 24:8**), but Jesus surpasses Moses by ratifying the New covenant in his own blood (**Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20**; see **1 Cor 11:25; Heb 8:7-13; 9:11-14**), which rendered the

Mosaic covenant obsolete. Further, the Mosaic covenant did not forgive sins or give eternal life; the New covenant which Jesus inaugurated in his blood does forgive sins and give eternal life.

- *Salvation from death:* Jesus compared his death to Moses. Jesus said, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (**John 3:14**; see **Num 21:9**). To look to the bronze serpent in the wilderness spared a person from physical death; to look to Jesus gives one eternal life and saves a person from the second death.
- *Dead bodies:* The dead bodies of both Moses and Jesus cannot be found. **Deut 34:6** says that Moses was buried in the land of Moab, “but no man knows his burial place to this day.” Jesus also was buried, but his body also cannot be found because he is risen! As the angel told Mary Magdalene, “He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying” (**Matt 28:6**).

B. Is Muhammad the “Helper” referred to by Jesus in John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7?

In **John 14:16** Jesus said, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever.” In **John 14:26** Jesus said, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.” In **John 15:26**, he similarly said, “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me.” In **John 16:7** he added, “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.” The Greek word translated “Helper” is *Paraklētos* which means “one called alongside to help; or Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor” (NASB 1995: John 14:16n.1; see Danker 2000: *paraklētos*, 766; Zodhiates 1992: *paraklētos*, 1107). These verses are all part of a discourse that covers virtually all of **John 14-16**.

Yusuf Ali states the basic Muslim position: “In the New Testament as it now exists, Muhammad is foretold in the Gospel of St. John, 14:16, 15:26, and 16:7; the future Comforter cannot be the ‘Holy Spirit’ as understood by Christians, because the Holy Spirit already was present, helping and guiding Jesus. The Greek word translated ‘Comforter’ is ‘Paracletos’, which is an easy corruption from ‘Periclytos’, which is almost a literal translation of ‘Muhammad’ or ‘Ahmad.’” (Ali 2006: Q. 3:81n.416) Laylah gives the following reasons why Muslims contend that the “Paraclete” promised by Jesus is Muhammad, not the Holy Spirit: “The phrase ‘another paraclete’ implies that Jesus himself was a Paraclete sent by God. This is to say that the Paraclete is not the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God as the Christians wished it to be. The description and function given to the Paraclete in John’s Gospel are characteristically of a prophet, not of the Holy Spirit. If this be so, Jesus was a prophet, just as he is called a prophet once and again in the four gospels. Here I would like to emphasize that the word ‘another’ in Jesus’ statement cannot in any way apply to the Holy Spirit, since there is one Holy Spirit only, not two or more. Thus it is out of context to say that Jesus asked God to send another Holy Spirit. It is most important to point out that Jesus defined the activities of the coming Paraclete, a prophet, as being to teach his followers all things, to bring to their remembrance all that he said, and to bear witness of him. By definition Prophet Muhammad was the only prophet to come after Jesus and bear witness of him.” (Laylah 2005: 50-51; see also Abdul-Mohsin 2006: 202-07; Hilali and Khan 1998: 909-10; Emerick 2004: 224)

Again, every Muslim claim about these passages is incorrect.

1. The Bible explicitly identifies the “Helper” (“Comforter”; “Advocate”) as the Holy Spirit. **John 14:17, 26; 15:26; and 16:13** explicitly identify the “Helper” Jesus is promising to send as “*the Spirit of truth.*” This Spirit—the Helper—is himself further explicitly identified as “*the Holy Spirit*” in **John 14:26**. Muslims claim that since the Holy Spirit was already present and active in the world the promised Helper could not be the Holy Spirit. They are wrong because Jesus is promising that the Holy Spirit will be coming in a new way: He will now *indwell* believers which had never been true before. Jesus says in **John 14:17** regarding the Holy Spirit (i.e., “*the Spirit of truth*”), “*the world cannot receive [Him], because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.*”

In the past the people were guided primarily by external law, the Law of Moses; the Spirit had only come upon certain individuals to empower them for specific tasks but then had left. Now, Jesus is promising that the Spirit will actually permanently indwell and guide all those who are united with Christ by faith. That is why **Rom 8:14** says, “*For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.*”

2. Jesus’ mention of “another” Paraclete refers to the Holy Spirit. Laylah is correct to say, “The phrase ‘another paraclete’ implies that Jesus himself was a Paraclete sent by God” and “there is one Holy Spirit only, not two or more” (Laylah 2005: 50-51). However, he is completely incorrect in his conclusions. Jesus obviously was not claiming that he was the Holy Spirit; he is the Son. But just as Jesus is divine, so is the Spirit. As we saw in the discussion of the Trinity, all members of the Trinity have the same nature or essence; as Feinberg put it, “since there is only one divine essence shared equally by all three persons, there is a sense in which all three

persons ‘do’ whatever any of them does” (Feinberg 2001: 495). Thus, in the very passage where Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit (**John 14:17**), he also says, “*I will come to you*” (**John 14:18**). In that sense, the presence of Christ is the presence of the Spirit and *vice versa*. Additionally, Carson explains, “‘Another paraclete’ in the context of Jesus’ departure implies that the disciples already have one, the one who is departing. Although Jesus is never in the Fourth Gospel explicitly referred to as a *paraklētos*, the title is applied to him in 1 John 2:1.” (Carson 1991: 500) Zodhiates adds, “Christ designates the Holy Spirit as Paraclete (John 14:16), and calls him *allos*, another, which means another of equal quality and not *heteros*, another of a different quality. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is designated by Jesus Christ as equal with Himself, i.e., God (1 John 2:1). . . . The Holy Spirit is called a Paraclete because He undertakes Christ’s office in the world while Christ is not in the world as the God-Man in bodily form. In addition, the Holy Spirit is also called the Paraclete because He acts as Christ’s substitute on earth. When Christ in John 14:16 designates Himself as a paraclete, the same as the Holy Spirit, the word must not be understood as applying to Christ in the same sense as in 1 John 2:1 where it refers to our substitutionary Advocate who pleads our cause with the Father. It should rather be taken as He who pleads God’s cause with us (see John 14:7-9).” (Zodhiates 1992: *paraklētos*, 1107)

3. Jesus could only be describing the Paraclete as the Holy Spirit, not a prophet. Muslim contend that “Jesus defined the activities of the coming Paraclete, a prophet, as being to teach his followers all things, to bring to their remembrance all that he said, and to bear witness of him. By definition Prophet Muhammad was the only prophet to come after Jesus and bear witness of him.” (Laylah 2005: 51) The Paraclete could not be a prophet for the following reasons:

- First, while Jesus was a prophet he was more than a prophet—he was divine. His promise to send “another” Helper (“another of equal quality,” Zodhiates 1992: *paraklētos*, 1107) means that the Paraclete also must be divine.
- Second, Jesus told his disciples, “*I will send Him to you*” (**John 16:7**). He did not promise to send someone to Arabs 600 years later, which would have done the disciples (or any of the followers of Jesus) absolutely no good.
- Third, Jesus said that the Helper would “*be with you forever*” (**John 14:16**). No human prophet could be with people “forever”; only the everlasting God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, could possibly be with people forever.
- Fourth, Jesus told his disciples that “*you know Him because He abides with you*” (**John 14:17**). The Holy Spirit, in the person of Jesus, was indeed already “with” the disciples; but they did not and could not know Muhammad who would not be born until over 500 years later.
- Fifth, the Spirit “*will be in you.*” Muhammad could not actually indwell people.
- Sixth, Jesus said, “*The world cannot receive [the Paraclete], because it does not see Him or know Him*” (**John 14:17**). That could not possibly be referring to Muhammad or any human prophet because Muhammad was seen and known. But the world can neither see nor know the Paraclete because he “is not a human being; He is the Spirit of God who chooses who would know Him. Since the Comforter is Spirit, the world cannot see Him and, only those He indwells can know Him—not the world at large.” (Sundiata 2006: 274)
- Seventh, The promise of [**John 14:26**] has in view the Spirit’s role to the first generation of disciples, not to all subsequent Christians. John’s purpose in including this theme and this verse is . . . to explain to readers at the end of the first century how the first witnesses, the first disciples, came to an accurate and full understanding of the truth of Jesus Christ.” (Carson 1991: 505) Muhammad obviously could not do that because he was not even born until over 500 years later, and even after he became a prophet he never tried to do what Jesus said the Paraclete would do.
- Eighth, Jesus said that the Spirit “*will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you*” (**John 16:14**). “Jesus himself is the truth [**John 14:6**]; now the Spirit of truth leads the disciples into all the implications of the truth, the revelation, intrinsically bound up with Jesus Christ. There is no other locus of truth; this is *all truth*.” (Carson 1991: 539) Muhammad did none of this; his focus was not on magnifying Jesus but was on himself. Indeed, “when Muhammad finally arrived, he was no comforter to Jews and Christians alike: Muhammad brutalized them and urged his followers to carry on where he left off. Jesus was not a sadist—consequently, He could never have promised one like Muhammad to His Jewish disciples and called him ‘another Comforter.’” (Sundiata 2006: 274)

4. The Muslim claim that *Paraklētos* is a corruption of *Periclytos* is absolutely without foundation.

Muslims claim that “Parakletos is a corrupt reading for Periclytos [which means ‘Praised One’], and that in their original saying of Jesus there was a prophecy of our Prophet *Ahmad* [which also means ‘Praised One’] by name” (Ali 2006: Q. 61:6n.5488). That claim is totally baseless. Recall that there are many ancient manuscripts of the

NT in existence that long predate the time of Muhammad. Gilchrist points out, “There is no manuscript evidence whatsoever that the original word may have been *periklutos* [i.e., *periclytos*]. In fact the word nowhere appears in the Greek New Testament and is accordingly not a Biblical Word. The Muslim claim is based, not on any kind of concrete, factual testimony but purely on a supposition to suit themselves. . . . There is nothing in all four sayings of Jesus about the Comforter to support the contention that he was to be ‘the Praised One’. . . . The irony of this issue is that we have here clear evidence of a Muslim attempt to do what they have always wrongly accused the Christian world of doing, namely of trying to change the Bible to suit their own preferences!” (Gilchrist 2002: 129-30)

C. Conclusion

Although Muslims attempt to find Muhammad located elsewhere in the Bible, the above passages are the primary ones they look to. The issue has important implications. First, the Qur’anic claim that Muhammad was prophesied in the Bible is not merely a minor point of disagreement between Christians and Muslims but goes to the heart of who Jesus is and the irreconcilability of Christianity and Islam. The reason is that the entire Bible is the story of how, by means of a grand plan which involved calling Abraham and the nation of Israel, God prepared the way for his own coming to earth in the person of Jesus Christ to bring forgiveness of sin and restore fellowship with Him. Thus, the OT is the preparation of the gospel; the Gospels are the manifestation of the gospel; Acts is the expansion of the gospel; the Epistles are the explanation of the gospel; and Revelation is the consummation of the gospel. The central figure of the entire Bible—the one who is the active agent of creation, the means of redemption, and source and summation of the new creation—is Jesus Christ; indeed, the entire OT ultimately was testifying about Jesus (see **Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39-40, 46; Acts 3:18, 24; 10:43; 26:22-23; 2 Cor 1:20; Eph 1:9-10; Phil 2:6-11; Heb 1:1-3; 1 Pet 1:10-12**). One implication of this is that no one can come after Jesus—and he points to no one else—because Jesus himself is the consummation and fulfillment of the entire plan of God. To miss that is to miss the entire biblical storyline.

Second, the Muslim search to find Muhammad in the Bible undercuts the Islamic claim that the Bible has been corrupted. In searching and interpreting the Bible to find Muhammad prophesied there, Muslims are proceeding on the basis that the Bible has *not* been corrupted. In sum, the idea that Muhammad is prophesied in the Bible is not only untrue, but it is untrue in ways far more profound than the exegesis of particular biblical passages might suggest.

VI. The Development of the Qur’an

Qur’an means “recitation” or “reading.” The Qur’an is considered to be the very Word of Allah, eternally existing in on a tablet in heaven (**Q. 85:21-22**). According to Islamic belief, the Qur’an was recited, piece by piece, by the angel Gabriel to Muhammad over a period of 23 years (**Q. 17:106; 25:32**). “Muslims believe that he [Muhammad] made the arrangement of all chapters and verses under the direction of the archangel Gabriel” (Emerick 2004: 235). The actual facts tell a different story.

A. *Some passages in the Qur’an are from Umar bin Al-Khattab or Uthman bin Afan*

Although Muslims maintain that all the words in the Qur’an are the very words of Allah delivered by Gabriel, ahadith reveal that Muhammad’s close friend Umar bin Al-Khattab was the source of some passages and Uthman bin Afan’s intervention for a man about to be killed was the source of at least one.

- *Changing the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to the Kab’ah in Mecca (Q. 2:125)*. Umar was the source of this (al-Bukhari: 402; vol. 6, book 60, no. 10; Muslim: 2399)
- *Not offering funeral prayers for non-believers (Q. 9:84)*. Umar was the source of this (at-Tirmidhi: vol. 5, book 44, no. 3097)
- *Forgiveness for those who fought for Islam (Q. 16:110)*. Uthman was the source of this (an-Nasa’i: 4069)
- *The dress code for women (Q. 24:31; 33:59)*. Umar was the source of this (al-Bukhari: 146; see also 6240; vol. 6, book 60, no. 10; Muslim: 2399)
- *The call to prayer (Q. 62:9)*. Umar was the source of this (al-Bukhari: 604).
- *Muhammad’s threat to divorce his wives (Q. 66:5)*. Umar was the source of this (al-Bukhari: 402; see also vol. 6, book 60, no. 10, 438)

Gilchrist comments, “The irony of the situation is found in the timing of each respective revelation. Not only did Allah give Muhammad exactly the same advice as ‘Umar but he did so almost immediately after the close companion of the Prophet had spoken. His words ‘My Lord agreed with me in three things’ [al-Bukhari: 402 begins, ‘My Lord agreed with me in three things’ and then relates events 1, 4, 6, above] are striking and it seems

that his advices in each case struck Muhammad as being particularly sound and, in his own subjective way, he allowed them to crystallize in his mind in the same form as the other revelations were coming to him and accordingly they became part of the Qur'an text in a very short time." (Gilchrist 1994: 98)

B. Some passages in the Qur'an are rooted in pagan practices or myths

Contrary to the claim that everything in the Qur'an came unmediated from Allah to Muhammad via Gabriel, existing religions and religious practices in Arabia at the time of Muhammad clearly provided source material for the Qur'an (and for many Islamic beliefs and rituals). Those sources include the following:

1. Arab polytheism. The Kab'ah in Mecca is Islam's holiest site. The Qur'an contends that Abraham and Ishmael originally laid the foundation (**Q. 2:125-27**). **Q. 2:144, 149-50** require that Muslims face toward the Kab'ah in order to perform *salat*. However, the Ka'bah itself was the site of pagan idol worship long before Muhammad was born. Muhammad himself was involved in reconstructing it when he was 35 years old, i.e., five years *before* his call to be a prophet (Ibn Ishaq 1955: 84). Despite the idolatry of the Kab'ah and the fact that Allah himself was a pagan god worshipped at the Kab'ah, **Q. 106:3** (Hilali-Khan) commands Muslims to "*worship (Allah) the Lord of this House (the Ka'bah in Makkah)*." Pagan pilgrimages to the Kab'ah were being made at and before the time of Muhammad (Ibn Ishaq 1955: 87-88; A'la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 2:196n.213). Islam took over this practice (**Q. 2:158, 196**). In fact, one of the five pillars of Islamic faith is making a pilgrimage (*hajj*) to the Kab'ah (**Q. 3:97**).

2. Zoroastrianism. St. Clair-Tisdall observes, "Both in the time of Muhammad and previously, the Persians had constant intercourse with Arabia; and being incomparably more learned than its ignorant people, must have had an important influence on their religion, on their customs, and on their knowledge at large. Both history and Qur'anic commentaries shew that the tales and songs of Iran were spread abroad among the tribes of Arabia." (St. Clair-Tisdall 1901: 74-75) The narrow bridge, *sirat*, over which people must pass at the time of the judgment "is of Persian origin, and called by the ancient Zoroastrians *Chînavad*. . . . The meaning of the Persian name is 'the connecting link,' the Bridge being that which joins earth with Paradise." (Ibid.: 88) **Q. 42:17** says, "*It is Allah Who has sent down the Book in Truth, and the Balance (by which to weigh conduct)*." Gilchrist states that "the concept of a large Scale on the Last Day is apparently borrowed from foreign sources. In an old Persian Pahlavi book predating the Qur'an known as the *Rashnu* it is taught that the Angel of Justice and one of three judges of the dead holds the 'Balance' in which the deeds of men are to be weighed after death." (Gilchrist 1995: ch.4).

3. The OT, Jewish commentary, and Jewish mythology. Muslim scholar Mahmoud Ayoub admits, "Before Islam there were Jews in Yemen and Madîna who continued to play an important role in forming the Islamic faith and world view" and there was a "vast literature known as *Isrâ'îliyyât* (Israelite traditions) which entered Muslim tradition from Jewish converts" (Ayoub 1986: 3, 4). According to Muslim apologist Jerald Dirks, the Qur'an refers to the following OT characters the following number of times: Moses-177; Abraham-74; Noah-47; Joseph-34; Adam-25; Solomon-19; Jacob-18; Isaac-16; David-16; Ishmael-6 (Dirks 2008: 4).

The Qur'an also draws on several accounts contained in the OT, although it alters various aspects of them. Several of the more well-known accounts are:

- The creation of Adam, Eve, and the garden of Eden (**Gen 2:4-3:24**; compare **Q. 2:31; 7:19-25; 15:28-29; 32:7-9; 38:71-72; 55:14**);
- Cain and Abel (**Gen 4:1-16**; compare **Q. 5:27-30**);
- Joseph's dreams, his being sold into slavery, and his becoming ruler in Egypt (**Genesis 37, 39-45**; compare **Q. 12:3-101**);
- Moses in the bulrushes and killing the Egyptian (**Exod 2:1-14**; compare **Q. 20:36-40**);
- Moses and the burning bush (**Exod 3:1-4:9**; compare **Q. 20:9-35; 27:7-12**);
- Moses and Pharaoh, the plagues, and the exodus (**Exodus 7-14**; compare **Q. 20:41-79; 26:10-68; 51:38-40**);
- The golden calf (**Exodus 32**; compare **Q. 20:83-91**); the manna and quail in the wilderness (**Exod 16:1-21**; compare **Q. 20:80-81**);
- Moses and the promised land (**Num 13:1-14:38; Deut 1:19-40**; compare **Q. 5:20-26**);
- Jonah (**Jonah 1-4**; compare **Q. 37:139-48**);
- David and Goliath (**1 Sam 17:17-54**; compare **Q. 2:246-51** [the account of drinking from the river, **Q. 2:249**, clearly is drawn from the account of Gideon in **Judg 7:1-8**]);
- Nathan the prophet's confrontation with David after David's adultery with Bathsheba (**2 Sam 11:1-12:15**; compare **Q. 38:21-25** [the Qur'an omits reference to David's adultery with Bathsheba and omits

reference to Nathan, but its account is obviously based on the biblical account]).¹²

Q. 27:16-44 is a lengthy account of Solomon (who, according to the account, had the ability to understand the speech of birds). The Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon had been arranged by a hoopoe. Solomon wanted to convert her to Islam and devised various tests for her. **Q. 27:44** says, "*She was asked to enter the lofty Palace: but when she saw it, she thought it was a lake of water, and she (tucked up her skirts), uncovering her legs.*" *Tafsir al-Jalalayn's* comment on this verse says that Solomon "wanted to marry her but disliked the hair on her legs. So the devils made a [depilatory] lime mixture (nūra) and she removed it therewith." Robert Spencer comments, "This Koranic story is based on the *Targum of Esther* which, although differing from the Koran in some detail, contains all the principal elements of the story: the talking animals, including one reluctant animal (a rooster in the Jewish tradition, rather than a hoopoe), the letter to the Queen of Sheba, who is a pagan (worshipping the sea in the Jewish tale, rather than the sun in the Islamic version)—even the hairy legs" (Spencer 2009: 48; see also Reynolds 2018: 584-89).

4. The NT and Christian apocrypha. According to Dirks, the Qur'an refers to the following NT characters the following number of times: Jesus-37; John the Baptist-5 (Dirks 2008: 4). The Qur'an also draws on various accounts contained in the NT, although it alters certain aspects of them, including the birth of John the Baptist (**Luke 1:2-24, 57-66**; compare **Q. 3:38-41**); and the birth of Jesus (**Luke 1:26-38**; compare **Q. 3:42-48**). Several Qur'anic stories are based on heretical or apocryphal Christian stories. Among the apocryphal stories that found their way into the Qur'an are the following: **Q. 3:35-37, 44** suggest that Mary, the mother of Jesus, may have been from the tribe of Levi, that Allah miraculously provided her with sustenance, that lots were cast to see who would be entrusted with her care, and that she was placed under the care of Zechariah (see Dirks 2008: 12-13). Dirks acknowledges that these four points, which do not appear in the Bible, are indicated in the apocryphal writings *The Gospel of the Nativity of Mary* and *The Protoevangelium of James* (Ibid.: 13nn.24-27).¹³ **Q. 19:22-26** say that Mary gave birth under a palm tree and then was miraculously provided with water from beneath the tree and fruit from the tree. These stories are taken directly from chapter 20 of *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*.¹⁴ **Q. 3:49; 5:110; 19:29-34** say that Jesus spoke as a newborn, created birds out of clay, and gave them life. These stories were first told in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*.¹⁵

The above evidence has serious implications for Muhammad's and the Qur'an's truthfulness. St. Clair-Tisdall states that Islam contends that the Qur'an is "of eternal origin, recorded in heaven, and lying as it does there upon the 'Preserved Table' [**Q. 85:21**]. Thus God alone is held to be the 'Source' of Islam; and if so, then all effort to find a human origin for any part of it must be in vain. Now, if we can trace the teaching of any part of it, to an earthly Source, or to human systems existing previous to the Prophet's age, then Islam at once falls to the ground." (St. Clair-Tisdall 1901: 2)

C. Some passages in the Qur'an stem from issues in Muhammad's personal life

Many Qur'anic passages were related to issues in Muhammad's personal life and were specifically designed for his personal benefit with respect to money (**Q. 6:90; 8:1, 41; 59:7; 93:8**), sex and marriage (**Q. 4:3, 128; Q. 33:4, 37, 50-51; 66:1-2, 5**), and his personal whims (**Q. 24:62; Q. 33:53, 57; 49:2; 58:12**). Some of these were special "after the fact" revelations (see Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, n.d.: Q. 4:128, comment).

¹² Some Islamic commentators deny that this incident is related to Bathsheba and Uriah, but claim that it refers to David's rendering judgment based on hearing only one litigant's story (see Ali 2006: Q. 38:24n.4176-A, Q. 38:26n.4178). Others, including apparently the earliest commentators, relate this to the biblical account of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah. However, they deny that David actually committed adultery with Bathsheba but say only that David saw her, fell in love with her, and made sure that Uriah was killed in battle so that he could marry her. (See Asad 1980: Q. 38:21n.22; Jalal 2017: Q. 38:22, 24, comment)

¹³ *The Gospel of the Nativity of Mary* is "a forgery deliberately introduced into the service of the church about the 6th century, when the worship of Mary was specially promoted in the church" (Hutchinson 1939: sec.III.1.c). *The Protoevangelium of James* is a pseudepigraphical (i.e., the real author attributed it to a figure of the past) work that dates from approximately AD 145 ("Gospel of James" 1015: Authorship and date). Reynolds notes that the *Protoevangelium of James* "was translated into Syriac in the fifth century" (Reynolds 2018: 115).

¹⁴ *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* is "a forged correspondence between Jerome and two Italian bishops [from] not earlier than the 5th century" (Hutchinson 1939: sec.III.1.b).

¹⁵ *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas* is a pseudepigraphical story of the young Jesus, written approximately AD 140-170 (*Infancy Gospel of Thomas: Estimated Range of Dating*). Gilchrist 2015 documents how much of the Qur'an's depiction of Jesus is derived from apocryphal sources.

D. *The compilation, revision, and standardization of the Qur'an*

As with the Bible, the original writings that make up the Qur'an no longer exist.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Muslims maintain that the Qur'an exists today exactly as it was given by Gabriel to Muhammad 1400 years ago. They claim that "Allah has guaranteed to protect it from any distortion and alteration, and from having anything added or taken away, until the day when Allah will take it away (from this world), which will happen before the Day of Resurrection" (al-Athari 2005: 96). Ajjola states that it "has never been altered at the hands either of its friend or its enemies, by either the learned or the unlettered, the book that time does not wear out but which remains just as it was revealed by God to His Apostle, the last of all the Prophets" (Ajjola 1972: 158). The history of the Qur'an paints a different picture.

1. The Qur'an at the time of Muhammad. As Muhammad received his revelations, he recited them orally. Muslim Ahmad von Denffer acknowledges, "The Prophet Muhammad did not present to his Companions the revelation collected and arranged in a single written volume" (von Denffer 1981: 14; see also Karim 1939: 3:664 ["No complete written copy of the Quran existed at the time of the Holy Prophet"]). "The surahs of the Qur'an were not arranged chronologically as they were revealed." (Ali al Imam 1998: 38; see also von Denffer 1981:14 ["The ayat and suras were not always revealed in their final order, but were arranged later"]) That is confirmed in the Hadith which acknowledges that after Muhammad died there were only "fragmentary scripts" of portions of the Qur'an in writing (al-Bukhari: 4986, 7191; see also vol. 6, book 60, no. 201).

Muhammad himself admitted that there were *seven different versions of the Quran*: "Narrated Umar bin Al-Khattab: I heard Hisham bin Hakim reciting Surat Al-Furqan during the lifetime of Allah's Messenger and I listened to his recitation and noticed that he recited in several different ways which Allah's Messenger had not taught me. I was about to jump over him during his prayer, but I controlled my temper, and when he had completed his prayer, I put his upper garment around his neck and seized him by it and said, 'Who taught you this Sura which I heard you reciting?' He replied, 'Allah's Messenger taught it to me.' I said, 'You have told a lie, for Allah's Messenger has taught it to me in a different way from yours.' So I dragged him to Allah's Messenger and said (to Allah's Messenger), 'I heard this person reciting Surat Al-Furqan in a way which you haven't taught me!' On that Allah's Apostle said, 'Release him, (O Umar!) Recite, O Hisham!' Then he recited in the same way as I heard him reciting. Then Allah's Messenger said, 'It was revealed in this way,' and added, 'Recite, O Umar!' I recited it as he had taught me. Allah's Messenger then said, 'It was revealed in this way. This Qur'an has been revealed to be recited in seven different ways, so recite of it whichever (way) is easier for you (or read as much of it as may be easy for you)." (al-Bukhari: 4992; see also 4991, 5041) These differences could not have been simply different dialects or pronunciations, but had to be textual (substantive) differences, or else Umar would not have become enraged and seized Hisham bin Hakim by the neck! Other ahadith report similar occurrences. For example, Ibn Mas'ud said, "I heard a person reciting a (Qur'anic) Verse in a certain way, and I had heard the Prophet reciting the same Verse in a different way. So I took him to the Prophet and informed him of that but I noticed the sign of disapproval on his face, and then he said, 'Both of you are correct, so don't differ, for the nations before you differed, so they were destroyed.'" (al-Bukhari: 3476; see also 5062; an-Nasa'i: 941)

The actual compilation, revision, and standardization of the Qur'an—which included the intentional destruction of existing complete and partial manuscripts of the Qur'an that had existed since the time of Muhammad—began after Muhammad's death. That process was as follows:

2. Initial collection of the Qur'an under Abu Bakr. Several of Muhammad's companions were reciters of the Qur'an; these men were known as *Qaris*. After Muhammad's death, one of the *Qaris*, Zaid bin Thabit, reports in a hadith, "Abu Bakr sent for me owing to the large number of casualties in the battle of Al-Yamama, while Umar was sitting with him. Abu Bakr said (to me), Umar has come to me and said, 'A great number of Qaris of the Holy Qur'an were killed on the day of the battle of Al-Yamama, and I am afraid that the casualties among the Qaris of the Qur'an may increase on other battle-fields whereby a large part of the Qur'an may be lost. Therefore I consider it advisable that you (Abu Bakr) should have the Qur'an collected.' I said, '*How dare I do something which Allah's Messenger did not do?*' Umar said, By Allah, it is something beneficial." (al-Bukhari: 7191, emph. added; see also 4986, vol. 6, book 60, no. 201) Zaid then reports what he did, "So I started looking for the Qur'an and collecting it from (what was written on) palmed stalks, thin white stones and also from the men who knew it by heart, till I found the last Verse of Surat at-Tauba (Repentance) with Abi

¹⁶ Muslim Ahmad von Denffer states, "Most of the early original Qur'an manuscripts, complete or in sizeable fragments, that are still available to us now, are not earlier than the second century after the Hijra. The earliest copy, which was exhibited in the British Museum during the 1976 World of Islam Festival, dated from the late second century. . . . However, there are also a number of odd fragments of Qur'anic papyri available, which date from the first century." (von Denffer 1981: 25)

Khuza'ima Al-Ansari, and I did not find it with anybody other than him. . . . Then the complete manuscripts (copy) of the Qur'an remained with Abu Bakr till he died, then with Umar till the end of his life, and then with Hafsa, the daughter of Umar." (al-Bukhari: 4986)

However, Zaid's search was not guaranteed to retrieve the entire Qur'an. "[A hadith] plainly states that portions of the Qur'an were irretrievably lost in the Battle of Yamama when many of the companions of Muhammad who had memorised the text had perished: 'Many (of the passages) of the Qur'an that were sent down were known by those who died on the day of Yamama ... but they were not known (by those who) survived them, nor were they written down, nor had Abu Bakr, Umar or Uthman (by that time) collected the Qur'an, nor were they found with even one (person) after them.' (Ibn Abi Dawud, *Kitab al-Masahif*, p.23). The negative impact of this passage can hardly be missed: *lam ya'alam* – 'not known', *lam yuktab* – 'not written down', *lam yuwjad* – 'not found', a threefold emphasis on the fact that these portions of the Qur'an which had gone down with the qurra who had died at Yamama had been lost forever and could not be recovered." (Gilchrist 1989: ch.1.3)

3. Uthman's revision of the Qur'an. Almost two decades after Muhammad's death: "Muslim general Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman led an expedition into northern Syria, drawing his troops partly from Syria and partly from Iraq. It was not long before disputes arose between them as to the correct reading of the Qur'an. They had come from Damascus and Hems, from Kufa and Basra, and in each centre the local Muslims had their own codex of the Qur'an." (Gilchrist 1989: ch.2.2) The situation was far worse than that. Ahmad Ali al Imam states, "By the time of Uthman, disputes among the readers became so heated that they were accusing each other of unbelief (*kufur*). Many complaints were brought before Uthman [the third caliph], urging him to take action to avert fighting and division among the Muslims. Such disputes occurred in many places: Madinah, Kufah, Basrah. Syria, and the military camps (*ajnad*)." (Ali al Imam 1998: 26)

Sunan al-Bukhari reports what then happened: "Hudhaifa was afraid of their (the people of Sham and Iraq) differences in the recitation of the Qur'an, so he said to Uthman, 'O chief of the Believers! Save this nation before they differ about the Book (Qur'an) as Jews and the Christians did before.' So Uthman sent a message to Hafsa saying, 'Send us the manuscripts of the Qur'an so that we may compile the Qur'anic materials in perfect copies and return the manuscripts to you.' . . . Uthman then ordered Zaid bin Thabit, Abdullah bin AzZubair, Said bin Al-As and AbdurRahman bin Harith bin Hisham to rewrite the manuscripts in perfect copies. Uthman said to the three Quraishi men, 'In case you disagree with Zaid bin Thabit on any point in the Qur'an, then write it in the dialect of Quraish, the Qur'an was revealed in their tongue.' They did so, and when they had written many copies . . . Uthman sent to every Muslim province one copy of what they had copied, *and ordered that all the other Qur'anic materials, whether written in fragmentary manuscripts or whole copies, be burnt.*" (al-Bukhari: 4987, *emph. added*)

"Muslims need to consider and ponder Uthman's action seriously. The Qur'an was believed to be the revealed Word of God. . . . *Uthman burnt and destroyed complete manuscripts of the whole Qur'an copied out by Muhammad's immediate companions.* . . . Only one explanation can account for this - there must have been so many serious variant readings between the texts themselves that the Caliph saw only one solution - the establishment of one of these as the official text for the whole Muslim community and the elimination of the others." (Gilchrist 1989: ch.2.2, *emph. in orig.*)

4. Different canonical versions of the Qur'an. Muslim scholar Cyril Glasse states, "After the definitive recension [editorial revision] of the Koran made at the command of Caliph Uthman, certain variant readings existed and, indeed, persisted and increased as the Companions who had memorized the text died, and because of the inchoate [not fully developed] Arabic script, lacking vowel signs and even the necessary diacriticals to distinguish between certain consonants was inadequate." (Glasse 2013: *Qira'ah*, 436) In other words, "when Uthman made his Qur'an the Arabic script did not include the vowel markings or the dots used to distinguish between certain letters. This ambiguity allowed words to be formed (vocalised or read) in different ways." (Green 2016: ch.11) Consequently, Abu Bakr Ibn Mujahid (AD 859-936) "decided to have recourse to 'readings' (*qira'at*) handed down from seven authoritative 'readers' (*qurra*'); in order, moreover, to ensure accuracy of transmission, two 'transmitters' (*rawi*, pl. *ruwah*) were accorded to each. There resulted from this seven basic texts (*al-qira'at as-sab'*, 'the Seven readings'), each having two transmitted versions (*riwayatan*) with only minor variations in phrasing, but all containing meticulous vowel-points and other necessary diacritical marks." (Glasse 2013: *Qira'ah*, 436)

The seven canonized "readings" each with two different "transmitters" (a total of 14 canonical versions of the Qur'an) in fact served to enshrine the different ways certain words were formed since, as Muslim writer Adil Salahi reports, each of those chosen by Ibn Mujahid had "a distinctive method which was widely reported by later scholars in most parts of the Muslim world" (Salahi 2001: n.p.). Hence, the 14 canonical versions of the

Arabic Qur'an are all different. Further, three additional readings, in addition to Ibn Mujahid's seven, also have generally been accepted as canonical, bringing the total to ten accepted readings of the Qur'an (Ali al Imam 1998: 128-29, 136-37). But that is not all. Muslim Dr. Muhammad Roy Purwanto states, "Actually, there are several schools of Qur'anic recitation, all of which teach possible pronunciations of the Uthmanic *rasm* [Arabic written script]: Seven reliable, three permissible and (at least) four uncanonical—in 8 sub-traditions each—making for 80 recitation variants altogether" (Purwanto 2013: 3, *emph. added*). What this means is that the Qur'an as it exists today has come from several different Arabic "readers" by way of different "transmitters." These transmitted versions *are not identical*. Different versions are predominant in different parts of the world. (See Green 2019: History; see also Salahi 2001: n.p.)

Even the two transmitters of a single reader result in hundreds of differences. Muslim writer Adil Salahi reports, "In order to understand the extent of these variations, we mention that Aassim ibn Abi An-Najood was one of the seven readers chosen by Ibn Mujahid. His method is reported as taught by his two students, Shubah and Hafsa. . . . These two reporters differ in no less than 520 instances. All are accurately attributed to Aassim and through him and his teachers to the Prophet himself. These are variations within the same method. Obviously, the differences between the seven methods are much more numerous." (Salahi 2001: n.p.) Samuel Green has compared two different Arabic versions: the most commonly used Qur'an, the 1924 Egyptian standard edition based on the of the transmitted version of Imam Hafsa, and Imam Warsh's transmitted version which is mainly used in North Africa. He considered four types of differences between the two Qur'ans—extra words, differences in letters, diacritical dots, and vowels—and found 1354 differences between them (Green 2019: The Number of Differences).

Although Muslims may contend that these differences are "only a matter of dialect, accent or pronunciation, and do not affect the meaning," Green points out that "this is clearly not the case. The examples given earlier show that the differences are far more significant: they change the subject of the sentence, whether the verb is active or passive, singular or plural, how the grammar of the sentence is to be understood." (Ibid.: The Extent to which the Differences Affect the Meaning) Muslim Dr. Muhammad Roy Purwanto confirms this. He gives examples of ten verses where "different qiraat [readings] in Koran can make different meaning of these verses. In its eventual, it makes different opinion in Islamic jurisprudence." (Purwanto 2013: 5) The extent of the problem is highlighted in that "Muhammad Fahd Khaaruun has collected accepted variant readings from among the Ten Accepted Readers and included them in the margin of the 1924 Egyptian standard edition of the Hafsa version of the Qur'an. These are not all the variants, there are other variants that could have been included, but the author has limited himself to the variants of the Ten Accepted Readers. . . . The total number of variants listed for all suras . . . are 10243 variants." (Green 2019: Comparing More Arabic Qur'ans)

5. Missing verses in the Qur'an. The Hadith reveals the specifics of several verses that were part of the Qur'an as given to Muhammad but are missing from the Qur'an as it exists today. In one hadith, Abu Yunus, a freed slave of Aisha, Muhammad's widow, stated, "Aisha ordered me to transcribe a copy of the Qur'an for her and said: When you reach this verse: 'Guard the prayers and the middle prayer' (ii. 238), inform me; so when I reached it, I informed her and she gave me dictation (like this): Guard the prayers and the middle prayer and the afternoon prayer, and stand up truly obedient to Allah. Aisha said: This is how I have heard from the Messenger of Allah." (Muslim: 629; see also Abi Dawud: 410; at-Tirmidhi: vol. 5, book 44, no. 2982)

Aisha related another verse from the Qur'an that is now missing: "Aisha (Allah be pleased with, her) reported that it had been revealed in the Holy Qur'an that ten clear sucklings make the marriage unlawful, then it was abrogated (and substituted) by five sucklings and Allah's Apostle died and it was before that time (found) in the Holy Qur'an (and recited by the Muslims)." (Muslim: 1444a) Gilchrist explains, "It is clearly stated that the Qur'an had originally contained a verse prescribing a prohibition on the marriage of two people who had been breastfed by the same woman at least ten times. This verse was then abrogated and another was substituted for it, restricting the number to five. Where is this verse in the Qur'an? It too is missing." (Gilchrist 1989: ch.4.4)

Entire surahs appear to be missing from the Qur'an. Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, one of the early authorities on the Qur'an text and a companion of Muhammad, is reported to have said to the reciters of Basra, "We used to recite a surah which resembled in length and severity to (Surah) Bara'at [i.e., surah 9]. I have, however, forgotten it with the exception of this which I remember out of it: 'If there were two valleys full of riches, for the son of Adam, he would long for a third valley, and nothing would fill the stomach of the son of Adam but dust.' And we used so recite a surah which resembled one of the surahs of Musabbihat, and I have forgotten it, but remember (this much) out of it: 'Oh people who believe, why do you say that which you do not practise' (Ixi 2.) and 'that is recorded in your necks as a witness (against you) and you would be asked about it on the Day of Resurrection' (xvii. 13)." (Muslim: 1050) Sam Shamoun, quoting from multiple Muslim sources, reports on other missing and incomplete verses, including the fact that surah 33 has only one quarter of the number of

verses it originally contained! (Shamoun, “Incomplete and Imperfect,” n.d.: n.p.; see al-Suyuti n.d.: Nasikh and Mansukh 13 [61/428]).

6. Textual variants in the Qur’an. At the time of Uthman’s revision of the Qur’an, several other collections of the Qur’an had been compiled by Muhammad’s companions. Abdullah bin Mas’ud had compiled the Qur’an that had become “accepted as the standard text of the Muslims at Kufa” (Gilchrist 1989: ch.3.1). Gilchrist notes that “Ibn Abi Dawud devotes no less than nineteen pages of his work on the compilation of the Qur’an manuscripts to the variant readings found between his [Mas’ud’s] text and that of Zaid which was ultimately the one standardised by Uthman” (Ibid., citing Ibn Abi Dawud, *Kitab al-Masahif*, pp. 54-73) Mas’ud’s compilation of the Qur’an was one of those destroyed by Uthman. Jefferey has 89 pages of variant readings between Mas’ud’s text and the Uthman revision (Jeffery 1937:25-113). Further, “there are no less than 149 cases in Surah 2 alone where his text differed from the others in circulation” (Gilchrist n.d.: ch.4, emph. in orig.). Indeed, the extent of the variant readings in the Qur’anic codices in existence at the time of Uthman’s revision fill up approximately 330 pages of Jeffery’s *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur’an*! It is no wonder why Uthman ordered all the others except his own to be destroyed.

Variations among the early Qur’anic manuscripts were well known to Muslim scholars. Abu al-Faraj Muhammad ibn Ishaq al-Nadim (d. AD 995) wrote his book *al-Fihrist* (The Catalogue) which is a compendium of the knowledge and literature of tenth-century Islam referencing approximately 10,000 books and 2,000 authors, together with biographical details and literary criticism. al-Nadim’s book has an entire section listing “Books Composed about Discrepancies of the [Qur’anic] Manuscripts.” That section lists the following books that were then in existence which documented thousands of discrepancies among the different versions of the Qur’an:

- The Discrepancies between the Manuscripts of the People of al-Madinah, al-Kufah, and al-Basrah according to al-*Kisa’i*;
- Book of *Khalaf*, Discrepancies of the Manuscripts;
- Discrepancies of the People of al-Kufah, al-Basrah, and Syria concerning the Manuscripts, by al-*Farra*;
- Discrepancies between the Manuscripts by Abu Da’ud al-*Sijistani*;
- Book of al-*Mada’ini* about the discrepancies between the manuscripts and the compiling of the Qur’an;
- Discrepancies between the Manuscripts of Syria, al-Hijaz, and al-Iraq, by Ibn *Amir* al-Yahsubi;
- Book of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman al-*Isbahani* about discrepancies of the manuscripts. al-Nadim 1970: 79)

The Muslim claim that the Qur’an has been preserved intact, exactly as it was revealed to Muhammad, is without any historical or factual basis. This has been demonstrated primarily from Islamic sources themselves. From the historical, Islamic sources we know that multiple, different Qur’ans existed at the time of Muhammad and following his death. Although Uthman tried to standardize the Qur’an, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. “The weak link in the chain of the textual history of the Qur’an is found right at this point where, in those crucial early days, different and differing codices of the Qur’an existed and other evidence was given that the text finally standardized as the best one was still far from being complete or in any way perfect.” (Gilchrist n.d.: ch.4) Finally, the ten recognized readings established by Ibn Mujahid establish that all Qur’ans in the world today are *not* the same. Instead, they contain thousands of variants, many of which affect the substance and meaning of the Qur’an itself.

VII. Contradictions and Errors in the Qur’an

Muslims contend that the Qur’an is from Allah and is free from all error (see, e.g., **Q. 15:9; 26:192-93; 56:77-80**). Faithful Muslims are to “regard as a *kafir* [unbeliever] the one who denies a single letter of it, or who adds anything to it or takes anything out of it” (al-Athari 2005: 97). The Qur’an itself says, “*Do they not then consider the Quran carefully? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much contradictions.*” (**Q. 4:82**, Hilali-Khan) “According to this verse, if ‘many contradictions’ can be shown to exist in the Qur’an, it will prove that it is *not* from God” (Sundiata 2006: 80-81, emph. in orig.). The Qur’an does in fact contain multiple contradictions and errors. The resource list “Contradictions in the Qur’an” (see Bibliography) lists over 120 internal contradictions alone, as well as multiple historical, scientific, factual, grammatical, and biblical errors. These include both small matters and large matters that go to the heart of Islam. A few, but by no means all, of these contradictions and errors are considered below.

A. *Contradictions*

There are multiple internal contradictions within the Qur’an. Some of these that deal with the Qur’an’s incoherent views of sin, salvation, judgment, and Allah’s nature have been discussed previously. A few others

that go to the heart of Islamic beliefs and ethics are the following:

- What is Satan? Satan is described as an angel in **Q. 2:34; 7:11; 15:28-31; 20:116; 38:71-74**. On the other hand, he is described as a jinn in **Q. 18:50**. Jinn are created from fire (**Q. 15:27; 55:15**), and Satan (Iblis) describes himself as having been created from fire (**Q. 7:12; 38:76**). If he is an angel, that would contradict **Q. 66:6** which says that angels “*flinch not (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah, but do (precisely) what they are commanded.*”
- Christians: friends or foes; good or bad? **Q. 5:82** says, “*Strongest among men in enmity to the believers wilt thou find the Jews and Pagans; and nearest among them in love to the believers wilt thou find those who say, ‘We are Christians’: because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant.*” **Q. 57:27** adds, “*We sent after them Jesus the son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel; and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him Compassion and Mercy.*” **Q. 3:55** says, “*Behold! Allah said: ‘O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to Myself and clear thee (of the falsehoods) of those who blaspheme; I will make those who follow thee superior to those who reject faith, to the Day of Resurrection.’*”

On the other hand, the opposite assessment of Christians is found in **Q. 5:51**: “*O ye who believe! take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors: They are but friends and protectors to each other.*” **Q. 98:6** (Hilali-Khan) goes so far as to say, “*Verily, those who disbelieve (in the religion of Islam, the Quran and Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) from among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) and Al-Mushrikun will abide in the Fire of Hell. They are the worst of creatures.*”

- Were messengers and warners sent to every people? **Q. 10:47** says, “*To every people (was sent) a messenger: when their messenger comes (before them), the matter will be judged between them with justice, and they will not be wronged.*” **Q. 35:24** adds, “*Verily We have sent thee in truth, as a bearer of glad tidings, and as a warner: and there never was a people, without a warner having lived among them (in the past).*” **Q. 19:54-55** specifically state that Ishmael was a messenger to his people (i.e., the Arabs). **Q. 2:125-29** even say that Abraham and Ishmael founded the Ka’bah!

Directly contradicting this, **Q. 28:46-47** tell Muhammad, “*Nor wast thou at the side of (the Mountain of) Tur when we called (to Moses). Yet (art thou sent) as Mercy from thy Lord, to give warning to a people to whom no warner had come before thee: in order that they may receive admonition. If (We had) not (sent thee to the Quraish),- in case a calamity should seize them for (the deeds) that their hands have sent forth, they might say: ‘Our Lord! why didst Thou not send us a messenger? We should then have followed Thy Signs and been amongst those who believe!’*” (see also **Q. 32:3; 36:3-6**)

- The food in Hell. **Q. 69:36** (Hilali-Khan) says of the people in Hell, “*Nor any food except filth from the washing of wounds.*” Contradicting that, **Q. 88:6** (Hilali-Khan) says, “*No food will there be for them but a poisonous thorny plant.*” Contradicting both of those verses, **Q. 37:62-68** (Hilali-Khan) say, “*Is that (Paradise) better entertainment or the tree of Zaqqum (a horrible tree in Hell)? Truly We have made it (as) a trail for the Zalimun (polytheists, disbelievers, wrong-doers, etc.). Verily, it is a tree that springs out of the bottom of Hell-fire, The shoots of its fruit-stalks are like the heads of Shayatin (devils); Truly, they will eat thereof and fill their bellies therewith. Then on the top of that they will be given boiling water to drink so that it becomes a mixture (of boiling water and Zaqqum in their bellies).*” (see also **Q. 56:52**)

- What was man created from? “*Read! In the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists), Has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood)*” (**Q. 96:1-2**, Hilali-Khan); “*He has created man from a sperm-drop*” (**Q. 16:4**); “*It is He Who has created man from water*” (**Q. 25:54**); “*We created man from sounding clay of altered black smooth mud*” (**Q. 15:26**, Hilali-Khan; see also **Q. 55:14**); “*Among His Signs in this, that He created you from dust; and then,- behold, ye are men scattered (far and wide)*” (**Q. 30:20**); “*But does not man call to mind that We created him before out of nothing*” (**Q. 19:67**). “There is no indication that these verses were giving ‘some of the ingredients only’. They do not read that way. They never say: ‘We created man from water among other things.’” (“Qur’an Contradiction” n.d.: n.p., bold emph. in orig.)

- Jonah: cast or not cast on the shore? **Q. 37:145** says of Jonah, “*But We cast him forth on the naked shore in a state of sickness.*” **Q. 68:49** contradicts this by saying, “*Had not Grace from his Lord reached him, he would indeed have been cast off on the naked shore, in disgrace.*”
- Which was created first: heaven or earth? **Q. 2:29** (Sahih) says, “*It is He who created for you all of that which is on the earth. Then He directed Himself to the heaven, [His being above all creation], and made them seven heavens, and He is Knowing of all things.*” **Q. 79:27-30** (Sahih) gives exactly the opposite order of events: “*Are you a more difficult creation or is the heaven? Allah constructed it. He raised its ceiling and proportioned it. And He darkened its night and extracted its brightness. And after that He spread the earth.*”

B. Errors

The Qur'an also contains multiple errors: historical errors, scientific errors, factual errors, grammatical errors, and biblical errors (i.e., when it refers to material in the Bible it confuses things or otherwise gets it wrong). The resource list "Qur'an and Science" ("Qur'an and Science" n.d.) and Dr. William Campbell's book *The Qur'an and the Bible in the Light of History and Science* (Campbell 2002), among other resources, deal with many of these errors. A few, but not all, of the Qur'an's historical, scientific, biblical, and factual errors are the following:

- Where does the sun set? **Q. 18:83-86** says, "They ask thee concerning Zul-qarnain. Say, I will rehearse to you something of his story. Verily We established his power on earth, and We gave him the ways and the means to all ends. One (such) way he followed, Till, when he reached the setting-place of the sun, he found it setting in a muddy spring, and found a people thereabout. We said: O Dhu'l-Qarneyn! Either punish or show them kindness."
- Journey to a mosque that did not exist. **Q. 17:1** (Sarwar) says, "God is the Exalted One who took His servant one night for a visit from the Sacred Mosque (in Mecca) to the Aqsa Mosque (in Jerusalem). God has blessed the surroundings of the Aqsa Mosque. He took His servant on this visit to show him (miraculous) evidence of His (existence). It is He who is All-hearing and All-aware." That Muhammad's famous night journey was to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem is confirmed in the translations of Sahih, Hilali-Khan, Haleem, and Asad. However, Robert Spencer points out, "There was no mosque in Jerusalem at this time" (Spencer 2009: 129). "The mosque was originally a small prayer house erected by Umar, the second caliph," but even that was not begun until several years after Muhammad's death ("Al-Aqsa Mosque" 2019: Introduction; "Umar" 2019: Visit to Jerusalem in 637 CE; see also "The farthest Mosque?" n.d.).
- No one named John? **Q. 19:7** (Hilali-Khan) says of John the Baptist, "O Zakariya (Zachariah)! Verily, We give you the glad tidings of a son, His name will be Yahya (John). We have given that name to none before (him)." The Arabic Yahya is the equivalent of the Hebrew Johanan and the Greek Ioannes, which are equivalent to the English John. In fact, "there are 27 instances of the name 'Johanan' mentioned in the Old Testament. . . . John was indeed a very common name." ("John the Baptist" n.d.: n.p.)
- Sperm and fetal development? **Q. 16:4** says, "He has created man from a sperm-drop." **Q. 86:5-7** says, "Now let man but think from what he is created! He is created from a drop emitted-Proceeding from between the backbone [Arabic = sulb] and the ribs [Arabic = tara'ib]. Although the Qur'an mentions sperm, it conspicuously omits mention of the ovum supplied by the woman since that was not discovered until hundreds of years after the time of Muhammad ("Egg cell" 2019: History). The Qur'an's description of sperm is "in accord with the ancient world's understanding that the fetus developed entirely from a man's 'seed,' once that seed was planted in a woman's womb" (Spencer 2009: 175). Further, Dr. William Campbell notes: "Since the verse is speaking of the moment of adult reproduction it can't be talking about the time of embryonic development. Moreover, since 'sulb' is being used in conjunction with 'gushing fluid', which can only be physical; and 'tara'ib' which is another physical word for chest or thorax or ribs, it can't be euphemistic. **Therefore, we are left with the very real problem that the semen is coming from the back or kidney area and not the testicles.**" (Campbell 2002: sec.4.II.B.5, bold emph. in orig.) Additionally, **Q. 96:1-2** says, "Proclaim! (or read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created-created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood." Dr. Campbell points out that, as a matter of scientific fact, "there is no stage as a clot during the formation of a fetus so this is a very major scientific problem" (Ibid.: sec. 4.II.B.6). **Q. 23:14** goes on to state the presumed order of embryonic development: "We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a (foetus) lump; then we made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then we developed out of it another creature." Nabeel Qureshi received his medical degree and states, "An embryo does not first become bones to be later clothed with flesh. One layer of an embryo, the mesoderm, differentiates into bone and flesh at the same time." (Qureshi 2016: 234) Thus, the Qur'an cannot be from God, since God knows where sperm comes from and knows the correct manner of embryonic development.
- "Confirming" the Bible? **Q. 5:48** says, "To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee." Other passages similarly state that the Qur'an confirms the previous revelation of the Bible (see **Q. 2:41, 89, 97; 3:3; 4:47; 5:15, 48; 6:90, 92; 10:37; 12:111; 35:31; 41:43; 46:9, 12, 30**). We have already seen several important areas (the claim that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was the sister of Moses; the crucifixion; the resurrection; Jesus as the

Son of God; the claim that Muhammad is predicted in the Bible) in which the Qur'an does not confirm, but contradicts, the Bible. Other blatant cases where the Qur'an does not "confirm" the Bible include:

- (a) **Gen 5:32-7:23; 8:18** say that Noah had three sons, they all accompanied him on the ark, and were saved during the flood; **Q. 11:42-43** say that Noah had one son who drowned in the flood.
- (b) **Gen 8:4** says that the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat; **Q. 11:44** says that the ark rested on Mount Judi.
- (c) **Gen 11:26** says that the father of Abraham was named Terah; **Q. 6:74** says that the father of Abraham was named Azar.
- (d) **Exod 2:1-10** says that Moses was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter; **Q. 28:7-9** says that Moses was adopted by Pharaoh and his wife.
- (e) According to the Bible, Moses was Israel's first prophet (**Exod 3:10; Num 12:2-8; Deut 18:15**) and Saul (who lived several hundred years after Moses) was Israel's first king (**1 Sam 9:15-17**); contrary to these facts, **Q. 5:20** has Moses saying to Israel, "O my people! Call in remembrance the favour of Allah unto you, when He produced prophets among you, made you kings, and gave you what He had not given to any other among the peoples."

The Bible came first, and the Qur'an appeals to the consistency between it and the Bible as verification that it also is from God. Logically, therefore, if the two contradict each other then the Qur'an, not the Bible, is in error, because the Qur'an is basing its claims on the Bible and is claiming to confirm what is already in the Bible. Sundiata concludes with an important implication of this: "If the Qur'an is not forthright about straightforward earthly things that can be verified, how then can we trust it when it says things that are not verifiable empirically?" (Sundiata 2006: 35)

VIII. The Doctrine of Abrogation

One way the Qur'an and Islam attempt to deal with the Qur'an's incoherence and internal contradictions is the doctrine of "abrogation," known as "*al-Nasikh wal-Mansoukh*" (the Abrogator and the Abrogated). Abrogation means that "in situations wherein verses contradict one another, the early verses are overridden by the latter verses. The chronological timing in which a verse was written determines its authority to establish policies within Islam." (Al-Araby n.d.: Introduction)¹⁷ This doctrine is based on certain Qur'anic verses: **Q. 2:106** says, "*None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar: Knowest thou not that Allah Hath power over all things?*" (See also **Q. 13:38-39; 16:101**) The doctrine of abrogation creates serious problems for Islam. Those problems include the following:

A. The doctrine of abrogation contradicts other portions of the Qur'an and directly attacks Allah's credibility

The Qur'an affirms that Allah, his ways, and his word do not change: "*There is none that can alter the words (and decrees) of Allah*" (**Q. 6:34**); "*The word of thy Lord doth find its fulfilment in truth and in justice: None can change His words: for He is the one who heareth and knoweth all.*" (**Q. 6:115**; see also **Q. 10:64; 18:27**).

The verses on abrogation themselves contradict those verses that say Allah's word cannot be changed. This directly affects Allah's credibility and his reliability, because "to reconcile the Qur'anic assertion that Allah's ways do not change with the fact that he can change his revelations, we must assume that Allah's way is to be inconsistent" (Sundiata 2006: 85). This directly undermines the claim that the Qur'an the very Word of Allah, eternally existing on a tablet in heaven (**Q. 85:21-22**). How could it exist eternally in heaven when it contains abrogated passages?

B. The doctrine of abrogation makes the Qur'an largely unintelligible

"The number of abrogated verses has been variously estimated from five to five hundred" (Hughes 1895: 520). "Jalalu'd-Din in his *Itqan*, gives [a] list of twenty verses which are acknowledged by all commentators to be abrogated" (Ibid.). Ahadith list many verses or parts of verses that have been abrogated (see al-Bukhari: 1917, 2801, 4990, vol. 6, book 60, no. 33, 34, 53, 54, 60, 68, 69, 100, 285, 288; Muslim: 125, 630, 677a, 1145a, 3023e; Abi Dawud: 1304, 2282, 2771, 2817, 2921, 2922, 2924, 3590, 4111, 4413, 5016; an-Nasa'i: 2316, 3307, 3531, 3543, 3544, 3554, 4001, 4069, 4865; Ibn Majah: 2365, vol. 3, book 9, no. 1942, 1944; at-Tirmidhi: 798, 1568). Former Muslim Anwarul Haqq, in his book *Abrogation in the Koran*, lists over 250

¹⁷ See **APPENDIX A—CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF SURAHS**. Sundiata points out that "by inventing this scheme [the doctrine of abrogation] for dealing with the issue of contradictions in the Qur'an, Muslims indirectly admit that the Qur'an contradicts itself, even though the Qur'an says that the presence of contradictions in its pages invalidates its claims of divinity" (Sundiata 2006: 82-83).

verses that have been abrogated and the verses that abrogate them (Haqq 1926: 10-77). Al-Araby, citing “one of Islam’s classical reference books in the Arabic language,” *al-Nasikh wal-Mansoukh* (The Abrogator and the Abrogated) by Abil-Kasim Hibat-Allah Ibn-Salama Abi-Nasr, states: “Out of 114 Surahs (chapters) of the Quran, there are only 43 Surahs that were not affected by this concept. The implications are very revealing. It means that those who would be inclined to accept the Quran as reliable can take only 43 chapters of the Quran at face value. The majority of its chapters cannot be taken at face value. The cancelled verses are mixed in with the authoritative verses and only schooled Islamist know which is which.” (Al-Araby n.d.: The Doctrine of the Abrogator and the Abrogated) The problem is that there is no uniformly recognized and accepted list of which verses have been abrogated and which verses do the abrogating. Consequently, no one can be sure which commands and prohibitions are still in effect. One problem is that most abrogated verses remain in the Qur’an. This makes it extremely difficult to determine which verses have been abrogated and which verses are doing the abrogating.

C. The doctrine of abrogation has serious implications for anyone claiming that Islam is a “religion of peace”

Q. 9:5 is known as the “Sword verse”: “*But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, an seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practise regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.*” **Q. 9:29** is known as the “Fighting verse”: “*Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.*” Mahmoud Ayoub points out that surah 9 of the Qur’an, which contains the Sword and Fighting verses, “was one of the last sūras of the Qur’an to be revealed. It defined once and for all the relations between the firmly established community of Muslims and their non-Muslim subjects. Jurists have therefore taken the laws enunciated in this sūra to abrogate all previous injunctions.” (Ayoub 1986: 9)

This has profound implications. A footnote in Haqq’s *Abrogation in the Koran* states, “*An-Nāsikh-wal-Mansūkh*, by Ibn Khuzyamh, states 113 verses are abrogated by the Sword verse (9:5), and 9 verses are abrogated by the Fighting verse (9:29)” (Haqq 1926: 10n.1). Al-Araby says, “There are 124 verses that call for tolerance and patience that have been cancelled and replaced by . . . the verse of the sword” (Al-Araby n.d.: The Verse of the Sword). Islamic commentator As-Suyuti states of **Q. 9:5**, “This is an *Ayat* of the Sword which abrogates pardon, truce and overlooking” (as-Suyuti n.d.: Q.9:5, comment). Consequently, Fouda, Taha, and Al Akkad conclude that “no one should believe that the Qur’an calls for peace because all these ‘peaceful’ verses are recorded in it. All of them are abrogated as all the Muslim scholars attest.” (Fouha, Taha, Al Akkad n.d.: 137) If that is the case, then virtually every verse in the Qur’an that purports to teach “peace” or “tolerance” has been abrogated. That also means that ISIS and other Islamic terrorists are absolutely correct when they justify their terrorism by quoting the Qur’an.

D. Other problems with the doctrine of abrogation

Some contemporary Muslims contend that the Qur’an abrogates the Bible. The Research Division of Darussalam Publishers, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia states that Allah “sent Prophet Muhammad as the last of Messengers and Prophets and abrogated all the previous Books with the Qur’an” (Darussalam 2002b: 333). Athari similarly says the greatest of Allah’s books are “the *Tawrat*, the *Injil* and the Qur’an, and the greatest and best of these three, which abrogates the others, is the Qur’an” (al-Athari 2005: 93). As we discussed above, the Qur’an cannot have abrogated the Bible because in many places both it and Muhammad specifically affirmed the reliability of the Bible. Former Muslim Farooq Ibrahim points out that the idea that the Qur’an abrogates the Bible is unsupported: “As I looked at the evidence regarding this matter, I found no place in the Quran where abrogation is discussed in reference to the books (*kitab*) of the previous prophets, but only *ayah*, which means ‘a sign.’ Generally when reference is made in the Quran to the Jewish and Christian scriptures, the words used are the books (*kitab*), or specifically *Torah* and *Injil*, or scriptures given to *Musa* or *Isa*. I found no such *ayah* to exist in the Quran stating that such are abrogated.” (Ibrahim n.d.: n.p.) Gilchrist adds, “In Surah 2:106 the text speaks not only of Allah’s revelations being abrogated but also being forgotten by his power – this could hardly refer to previous scriptures which were well-known and preserved throughout the known world in thousands of manuscripts. It could only refer to actual verses of the Qur’an which had come to be neglected and forgotten by Muhammad and his companions over a period of time.” (Gilchrist 1995: ch.1.4-The Theory of Abrogation in the Qur’an)

Finally, the Sunnah (Muhammad’s life) apparently *can abrogate and supersede even the Qur’an itself*. The Qur’an as it exists does not call for stoning to death as a punishment for adultery (see **Q. 4:15-16; 24:2**). However, the Hadith reveals that Muhammad called for and carried out stoning to death as the punishment for illegal sexual intercourse, a practice that is followed in some Muslim countries to this day (see al-Bukhari: 6829, 6830). On another occasion, he called for 100 lashes for the man and death by stoning for the woman (al-Bukhari: 6827, 6828). These facts create a tremendous theological problem: the hadith literature is so voluminous that it is impossible to know which of Muhammad’s statements and actions abrogated which Qur’anic verses and which of his ahadith abrogated which other of his ahadith. Muslims are to obey Muhammad as if they are obeying Allah himself (**Q. 4:80**). Therefore, it is imperative that they know what to obey and what has been abrogated—yet the doctrine of abrogation makes it impossible to do so.

IX. The Bible and the Qur’an: Conclusion

When then Muslim Ahmed Ali Haile began to study the Bible he discovered that it told the story of “the drama of redemption beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden (Genesis 1-3) and ending with consummation at the end of time, in the heavenly city that God is building (Revelation 21-22). The Qur’an, by contrast, is not a history; it is instruction on what people should believe and do. There are some intriguing allusions to history in the Qur’an, but it does not have the unifying thread of salvation history that the Bible does.” (Haile 2011: 56)

Christians recognize that, especially because the Bible is a library of 66 “books,” it consists of multiple genres and was written in different cultural and historical contexts. Therefore, to understand and apply the Bible accurately and well, Christians try to understand as much as possible of the Bible’s history, culture, genres, and context, because to take a statement out of context amounts to *misunderstanding* or misinterpreting it. This has resulted in great advances in the disciplines of archaeology and textual criticism to verify the accuracy and correct understanding of the Bible.

The Muslim approach to the Qur’an is virtually the opposite of the Christian approach to the Bible. Islam, unlike Christianity, has never developed the art and science of textual criticism, and pays virtually no attention to genre, historical, and cultural context. This Muslim mindset is augmented by the doctrine prohibiting *bid’ah* (innovation), which essentially threatens one with Hell (see Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 49). The result is that “*sharia* [which is based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah] leaves no room for modernization or flexibility in interpretation. . . . With the Islamic bias against ‘innovation’ and ‘interpretation,’ *sharia* remains largely locked into the body of rulings and ideas set within the first three hundred years of the Muslim era.” (Anyabwile 2011: 93)

This Muslim approach to the Qur’an has profound effects, not only for Muslims, Islamic theology, and freedom of thought in Muslim lands, but for the world. Robert Spencer states, “Generally, Muslim theologians follow the practice of Ibn Ishaq: they regard Medinan suras—which constitute the bulk of Koranic teaching on warfare against unbelievers—as taking precedence over the earlier Meccan ones. This effectively enshrines the validity of the Koran’s most bellicose and supremacist injunctions.” (Spencer 2009: 223) It is therefore no surprise that Islamic terrorists justify every act of murder and terrorism by quoting the Qur’an (and the Sunnah). The issue is not *Muslims*. The issue is Islam and the Qur’an itself. Unless and until the Qur’an is fundamentally re-evaluated, reinterpreted, and reapplied *within Islam*, there will be no peace in the world. Unfortunately, from what we have seen, the chances of that happening are effectively nil.

6. BRIDGING THE DIVIDE BETWEEN ISLAM AND THE GOSPEL

I. Introduction

David Garrison states: “A wind is blowing through the House of Islam. . . . Muslim movements to Jesus Christ are taking place in numbers we’ve never seen before. For the sake of clarity and consistency, let’s define a movement of Muslims to Christ to be at least 100 new church starts or 1,000 baptisms that occur over a two-decade period. Today, in more than 70 separate locations in 29 nations, new movements of Muslim-background followers of Christ are taking place. Each of these movements has crossed the threshold of at least 100 new church starts or 1,000 baptized believers, all of whom have come to Christ over the past two decades. In some countries the numbers within these new movements have grown to tens of thousands. . . . Not limited to a remote corner of the Muslim world, these new communities of faith are widespread, from West Africa’s Sahel to the teeming islands of Indonesia—and everywhere in between.” (Garrison 2014: 5-6; see also Miller and Johnstone 2015: 1-19)

II. General Considerations

Trans-personal events or circumstances (politics, war, violence, catastrophes, economic conditions, migration to new places of abode, desire for blessing or power, and cultural influences) may be involved in opening people to being receptive to the gospel (Woodberry 2005: 12-13; Woodberry, Shubin, and Marks 2007: 85; Miller 2014: 24-25; Farrah 2013: 14; Miller and Johnstone 2015: 10-12; Abdulhugli 2005: 162-63). At the personal level, former Muslims, missionaries who work with Muslims, and researchers have identified several factors that lead Muslims to turn to Christ and which help to facilitate the witness of the gospel to Muslims.

A. *Factors that lead Muslims to turn to Christ*

Several in-depth studies involving hundreds of Muslims from different parts of the world who have turned to Christ have been conducted and have identified the important factors that led them to turn from Islam to Jesus. Some of the major factors *identified by the Muslims who converted to Christ* are the following:

1. 750 Muslim converts from every major region of the Muslim world. J. Dudley Woodberry and his colleagues have analyzed extensive questionnaires completed by over 750 Muslims who have converted to Christ from every major region of the Muslim world. In an October 2007 article he explains the reasons Muslims gave for why they turned to Christ in order of importance (Woodberry, Shubin, and Marks 2007: 80-85):

- *Love: the lifestyle of Christians, seeing a faith lived out*—Georges Houssney confirms this: “Between 2005 and 2008 . . . prepared a questionnaire with 12 questions and gave it to over 120 people at various conferences. The vast majority of Christians from Muslim backgrounds expressed that the love of Christians was a major factor in drawing them to Christ. . . . [Dr. Everett Boyce] had interviewed seventeen Indonesian converts from Islam in an effort to discover the major factors that led to their conversion. It should not come as any surprise that one hundred percent of them were attracted by the love that Christians showed them.” [Houssney 2010: 186-87]; see also Woodberry and Shubin 2001: “The greatest of these is love” [“By far, the reason found most compelling for the greatest number of Muslims who have turned to Christ is the power of love.”]) When Christ’s love transforms committed Christians into a loving community, many Muslims listed a desire to join such a fellowship as next in importance. “A second category of love is that which is demonstrated directly by God and evidenced in scripture” (Woodberry and Shubin 2001: “The greatest of these is love”) This is seen especially in the love expressed through the life and teachings of Jesus. “Christ’s character is frequently seen by the Muslim as overwhelmingly attractive” (Woodberry and Shubin 2001: “Jesus”)
- *The power of God in answered prayers and healing*
- *Dissatisfaction with the type of Islam they had experienced*—In their study of Muslims who leave Islam, Muslim professors Khalil and Bilici found: “The two major motivations identified in our study are the following: (1) *The status of women in Islam*. Gender issues figure prominently in these narratives, with the status of women in Islam being the most popular intellectual motivation, and Muslim ill-treatment of women a popular social motivation. (2) *Muslims as cruel, oppressive and backward*. This includes two types of assessments. The first is that, in comparing the behaviors of Muslims and non-Muslims, some converts find the behavior of the latter to be more attractive. The second is that some claim that their conversion owed more to their repulsion by Muslim behavior than to their attraction to positive non-Muslim behavior.” (Khalil and Bilici 2007: 120; see also Farrah 2013: 16-17 [“female conversions are strongly influenced by an awareness of Jesus’ treatment of women in the gospels”])
- *Visions and dreams*—“Over one-fourth of those surveyed state quite emphatically that dreams and visions were key in drawing them to Christ and sustaining them through difficult times” (Woodberry and Shubin 2001: “I have had a dream”; see also Greeson 2007: 50, 79-91)
- *The gospel message, especially its assurance of salvation and forgiveness*
- *The spiritual truth in the Bible*—“I examined testimonies written by Muslims born in at least thirty-three different countries. . . . In those more than half a page in length, only two did not contain references to the Bible, the New Testament (Injil), a comparison of the Qur’an with the Bible, or similar citations.” (Maranz 2005: 61; see also Brown 2006a, 2006b, and 2006c for biblical viewpoints that are attractive to Muslims, and a detailed comparative chart of bridges, similarities, differences, and barriers between the Bible and the Muslim worldview)

Leith and Andrea Gray discuss the interaction between the importance of the Bible in the face of the strength and comprehensiveness of the Islamic worldview: “One of the strengths of the Muslim worldview is that it ties together constellations of concepts in intricate webs of connection. . . . In order for the Biblical message and worldview to truly take root in a person’s life, the whole biblical picture must be seen. The

Biblical story is a compelling and attractive narrative, but the logic of it can best be seen through extended exposure and repetition.” (Gray and Gray 2008: 133; see also Greenlee 2006: 22 [“In my research in a Muslim country, I noted the great importance of Bible correspondence courses (BCCs) in the process of conversion. . . . Muslims often need a long time to process at a cognitive level the implications of Jesus’ death and resurrection and of his being the Son of God.”]) In this regard, *discipling* new believers is key (see Greenlee 2006: 25-26; Garrison and Garrison 2008: 212-13 [immediate discipleship is one of five elements in every church-planting movement]). Indeed, a successful team of Muslim-background believers in the Middle East “concentrate on discipleship, not conversion. . . . We endeavor to do the discipleship up front. We trust that a person will come to genuine faith after being taught truth.” (Daniel 2010: 40; but see Daniels 2015: 38 [the “up front” discipleship strategy is not a universal practice among fruitful workers in Muslim contexts])¹⁸

In two earlier articles, Woodberry articulated similar reasons Muslims expressed for their turning to Christ (Woodberry and Shubin 2001: n.p.; Woodberry 2005: 11-22; see also Straehler 2007: 1-2 for a summary of the three Woodberry articles, Miller 2014: 16-19 for a summary of the first article, and Perry 2015: 6 for a summary of the third article).

2. 170 Muslim converts mostly from Africa (70 from Sudan). Jean-Marie Gaudeul analyzed 170 Muslim-Christian conversions, the majority being among Africans, and proposed seven key factors that attracted Muslims to Christ (Gaudeul 1999; see also Gaudeul 2005: 81-92; Gaudeul n.d.: n.p.; and Miller 2014: 19-23 for summaries of Gaudeul’s study):

- Jesus is so attractive
- A thirst for truth
- People without a family searching for a new community
- The attraction of God’s community—the church
- The need for forgiveness
- The thirst for God
- A call from God

3. 390 Muslim converts from eastern Africa. Ben Naja surveyed over 300 Muslim-background believers from Eastern Africa in 2011 (Naja 2013a: 27-29; Naja 2013b: 155-60). He found that most of the believers decided to follow Jesus through a combination of factors. The most important of those factors were:

- Verses about Jesus in the Qur’an—64%
- The love and witness of other followers of Jesus—57%
- Some supernatural experience (dream, vision, healing, deliverance)—41%
- The Bible—30% (Naja 2013a:28).

B. Factors that facilitate the witness of the gospel to Muslims

“To engage Muslims, we must see them as people, not merely as representatives of a foreign religion, culture, or political ideology. As people, they are products of those things, but they are also husbands and wives, children and students, truck drivers and heart surgeons. They are God’s lost children too, and he has given us the task of making disciples from among them.” (Houssney 2010: 13) With this in mind, and in light of the reasons why Muslims turn to Christ, there are a number of steps that can facilitate witnessing the gospel to Muslims.

The following are several such factors:

- *Prayer.* Witnessing to anyone, especially where the cultural influences, theological differences, and historical rivalry between Christianity and Islam are so pronounced, is a high spiritual endeavor (Hammond 2010: 158; Morin 2007: 134-36; Greeson 2007: 98, 258-59; Houssney 2010: 115-16, 126; Perry 2015: 3; Goldmann 2004: 130; Michael and McAlister 2010: 119; Nehls and Eric 2009b: 95; Adams, Allen, and Fish

¹⁸ The importance of discipleship is highlighted by the fact that for Muslims to say the so-called “sinners prayer” or make a “decision for Christ” “does not mean that they are all necessarily attending a church, reading the Bible, or praying, much less that they have been baptized. It generally means that during some sort of encounter with a Christian person (or website) these individuals, in some form, usually a short extemporaneous prayer, accepted Jesus as their ‘Lord and Savior’ and asked God to forgive them their sins. This does not mean that they fully understood what was happening or that what they actually felt that they were doing was what the Christian had in mind. One Muslim related that she had said this prayer as a matter of courtesy to her Christian friend with the understanding that since Muslims already accept the Prophet Jesus, there was nothing un-Islamic about it. . . . While the missionaries’ goal may well be to see the person become active in a local church and mature spiritually, that is not necessarily what happens after someone merely ‘decides for Christ.’” (Miller and Johnstone 2015: 6)

2009: 80). Prayer is not only important as preparation, but open prayer *with* the Muslim is also important. Dunning found, “Many respondents were effectively moved toward faith because the advocates prayed openly in their presence, generally beginning their visit with an enquiry of needs the respondent might have for which the advocate could pray” (Dunning 2013: 278; see also Daniels 2015: 40).

- *A Christ-like attitude.* Be humble and prepared to listen; do not approach a Muslim in order to argue, but remember that ultimately the battle is in the heart, not the mind (Hammond 2010: 157; Houssney 2010: 45, 87, 117, 125-26; Greeson 2007: 98, 250-55; Perry 2015: 5; Gilchrist 2002: 9-10, 12-13; Goldmann 2004: 131-32; Michael and McAlister 2010: 119-20; Nehls and Eric 2009b: 95-97). “Reason, don’t argue” (Goldmann 2004: 139). An important part of this approach is to ask questions. Like a doctor trying to diagnose a medical condition, we need to “discover what they know, how they feel, and what they need. Most importantly, it is critical to assess their level of interest and openness. Too many evangelists do not truly engage the people they are evangelizing. . . . When you ask people questions you demonstrate that you care about them, while also gathering the information you need in order to speak into their lives with appropriate wisdom.” (Houssney 2010: 129-30; see also Nehls and Eric 2009b: 122-24)¹⁹
- *Attend to cultural factors that Muslims find important.* Learn what is acceptable (*halal*) and forbidden (*haram*) in the local Muslim community. Avoid offending Muslims by inappropriate dress or behavior. Specifics would include using only the right hand especially for greeting, eating, and handing something to someone, wearing clothing that is appropriate for a religious teacher of a holy book, making sure that Christian women wear loose fitting clothing that covers their arms and legs, being very discreet in dealing with members of the opposite sex (e.g., avoid ministering alone to a member of the opposite gender; when praying for the sick, men should lay hands on men and women on women), and not eating pork. (Hammond 2010: 157; Morin 2007: 118-25; Perry 2015: 5; Goldmann 2004: 135-36, 142; Nehls and Eric 2009b: 100-102; Daniels 2015: 40; Adams, Allen, and Fish 2009: 77-78)
- *Hospitality.* Be hospitable, and accept the hospitality of your Muslim contacts (Hammond 2010: 157; Houssney 2010: 120 [“Hospitality has played a role in the conversion story of almost every former Muslim”]; Greeson 2007: 72-75; Goldmann 2004: 137-38; Nehls and Eric 2009b: 101-02). Hospitality may be key in identifying what Greeson calls the “person of peace.” He states, “We have learned that finding God’s person of peace is a vital first step to a multiplying movement of new believers to Christ” (Greeson 2007: 68). He uses **Luke 10:1-20** as the model for going and finding where God is already at work and identifying those Muslims who are interested (i.e., persons of peace) (Ibid.: 68-78). Ultimately, it is those people who, once they come to Christ, will be far more effective evangelists and church planters within the Muslim community than are “outsiders.”
- *Stay focused on Jesus and the gospel.* Know the Bible and the gospel well, have the Bible available and be able to use it, and keep the message simple, clear, and relevant, focusing on the core of the gospel: sin and its solution—that Jesus is the savior of the world and only through him is found forgiveness of sin (Morin 2007: 103-07; Hammond 2010: 157-58; Gilchrist 2002: 13-15; Goldmann 2004: 132-34, 141; Houssney 2010: 20, 121-23).

Initially, try to avoid using terminology that Muslims misunderstand and would create stumbling blocks to faith (e.g., calling Jesus “God” or the “Son of God” when “Word of God” or “Isa al-Masih” will do; or referring to the “Holy Spirit,” which likely would be confused with Gabriel, when “Spirit from God” will do; or referring to the “Trinity”) (Morin 2007: 107-10; Straehler 2009: 164; Goldmann 2004: 133, 140; Gray and Gray 2008: 129). Using such phrases right away “may create obstacles to further witness. . . . It is better to begin with a Muslim’s understanding of Allah from Quranic teaching.” (Goldmann 2004: 133, 141) If Muslims bring up or object to such concepts, they can be explained (see, e.g., Houssney 2011; Gilchrist 2002: 74-78; Goldmann 2004: 145-50). As one discusses Jesus and the gospel, the truth will emerge and the Muslim will understand (see Naja 2013a: 28; Naja 2013b: 156).

- *Do not be condemnatory.* Do not unnecessarily ridicule or debase Islam, Muhammad, the Qur’an, or Allah (Hammond 2010: 158; Perry 2015: 5; Gilchrist 2002: 10-12; Goldmann 2004: 139-40; Michael and McAlister 2010: 121). “The door may be closed irrevocably by a hostile attitude” (Hammond 2010: 158).
- *Persevere.* “The prevalent assumption among Christians in Kenya that conversion is a spontaneous

¹⁹ Houssney cautions against asking too many questions about Islam itself. Many Muslims are being taught to argue with Christians. Therefore, “try to avoid questions that may give the Muslim a platform to convince you of the virtues of Islam. This is one of the most common mistakes Christians commit in relating to Muslims. Try to forget that the person is a Muslim: treat him or her as an ordinary person. Most Muslims who are usually not religious will put up a religious front when engaged in a discussion about Islam, whereas they may never bring it up if you don’t.” (Houssney 2010: 132-33)

event after a one-time explanation of the gospel must be replaced by an understanding that Muslims who are on a journey to encounter Christ need time and in most cases only gradually grow in their understanding of the Christian faith” (Straehler 2009: 271). Based on his extensive experience working with Muslims particularly in South Asia, Kevin Greeson states, “Typically a Muslim did not receive Christ as Savior at the time of the first Gospel presentation. The average time between hearing an understandable Gospel presentation and actually coming to faith in Jesus Christ might range from three weeks to six months. The length of time usually depended on access the Muslim had to a Muslim-background believer who could help him work through his questions.” (Greeson 2007: 38; see also Dunning 2013: 273 [The process of Palestinian Muslims converting to Christ ranged “from weeks to years, usually with several encounters with an evangelist or after extensive reading of the Bible”]; Farrah 2013: 14 [“The overall experience of Muslims, however, is that conversion is a gradual process that takes place over many years”]). Since this is a spiritual work, we need to give the Holy Spirit time to do His work. The watchwords for us are patience and perseverance (Goldmann 2004: 134, 137-39; Hammond 2010: 158; Gilchrist 2002: 12-13).

III. Using the Qur’an and Islamic Culture to Point Muslims to Jesus Christ and the Gospel

Probably the most effective means of bridging the divide between Islam and the gospel is to begin where Muslims are, namely, use Islamic terms, cultural practices, thought patterns, and the Qur’an itself²⁰—particularly what it says about Jesus—as bridges to sharing the biblical gospel of the “real” Jesus. This is important because the spirit and culture of Islam have “taught and armed them to reject or to attack anything other than Islam” (Shayesteh 2004: 243). Therefore, beginning with Islamic terms, cultural practices, thought patterns, and the Qur’an automatically establishes a degree of commonality between the Christian and the Muslim, gives the Muslim a certain comfort level, and demonstrates that the Christian has taken Islam and the Qur’an seriously.

Kevin Greeson points out: “From Muslim-background believers who are winning their family, friends and neighbors to Christ, we have learned that the Qur’an contains many bridges that we, too, can use to introduce Muslims to Jesus Christ.” (Greeson 2007: 17) At the same time, “while the Qur’an’s teaching about Allah may echo many of the truths about God that were first revealed in the Bible, we must never confuse the Qur’an with the Word of God” (Ibid.: 19). The Qur’an is not the gospel but does require Muslims to believe in the Bible, which is our ultimate authority. In short, Islamic terms, cultural practices, thought patterns, and the Qur’an itself can be effective bridges to the full truth of Jesus and the gospel revealed in the Bible.

A. The Qur’an as a bridge to the gospel: the CAMEL Method

“The CAMEL Method,” was developed by Muslim-background believers and is being used now “in what is the largest turning of Muslims to Christ in history” (Greeson 2007: 16). The method both teaches Christians what to say to Muslims and gives Muslims permission from their own most authoritative source, the Qur’an, “to read the Bible and consider the claims of Christ” (Ibid.: 18). The CAMEL Method is detailed in Kevin Greeson’s *The Camel: How Muslims Are Coming to Faith in Christ!* (2007) and in Greeson and Owen’s 2005 detailed summary of the CAMEL Method (see also “Camel Method Summary” n.d. for a brief summary).

“**C-A-M-EL**” stands for: **C**—Chosen (Maryam was chosen by God for a special purpose); **A**—Announced by Angels (Angels announced the birth of Messiah to Maryam); **M**—Miracles (Jesus’ power is revealed in his miracles); **EL**—Eternal Life (Jesus knows the way and *is* the way to heaven) (Greeson 2007: 104). The purpose of the CAMEL Method is not necessarily to lead a Muslim to salvation but to identify those Muslims who want to know more about Jesus so that we can take them to the Bible where they will find the full truth about Jesus and the gospel. The CAMEL Method is based on **Q. 3:42-55** which focuses on Jesus Christ:²¹

²⁰ “In 1984, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia commissioned the translation of the Qur’an from Arabic into every language with a Muslim population. As long as the Qur’an remained in Arabic alone, *imams* held enormous power and control over their followers. With Muslim lay people now reading the Qur’an in their own languages, misinterpretations by *imams* are now being exposed. . . . It is not only the *imams* whose authority is being undermined. The Qur’an may prove to be its own worst enemy. As Muslims read the Qur’an in their own language they are seeing for themselves how surprisingly little it has to offer.” (Greeson 2007: 47-48)

²¹ Greeson notes that “Muslims are more familiar with the surah’s title than its number” (Greeson 2007: 34-35). Hence, one should learn the titles of the surahs one intends to use (i.e., refer to “Surah Al-Imran” rather than “Surah 3”). Similarly, if the translation of the Qur’an you have uses Muslim names for biblical/Qur’anic characters (e.g., Allah for God; Isa or Isa al-Masih for Jesus or Jesus Christ; Maryam for Mary), you probably should use such names as well. However, do *not* call Jesus “Nabi Isa” (“Prophet Jesus”) even if your Muslim friend calls him that. Call him “Jesus, the Messiah” (“Isa al-Masih”) instead. “Nabi Isa” implies that Jesus was “no more than a prophet” (Nehls and Eric 2009b: 90). On the other

⁴²Behold! the angels said: “O Mary! Allah hath chosen thee and purified thee—chosen thee above the women of all nations. ⁴³O Mary! worship Thy Lord devoutly: Prostrate thyself, and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down.” ⁴⁴This is part of the tidings [“announcements,” Shakir] of the things unseen, which We reveal unto thee (O Messenger!) by inspiration: Thou wast not with them when they cast lots with arrows, as to which of them should be charged with the care of Mary: Nor wast thou with them when they disputed (the point). ⁴⁵Behold! the angels said: “O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus[I-masih, Isa], the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah.” ⁴⁶He shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. And he shall be (of the company) of the righteous.” ⁴⁷She said: “O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man hath touched me?” He said: “Even so: Allah createth what He willeth: When He hath decreed a plan, He but saith to it, ‘Be,’ and it is!”

⁴⁸And Allah will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel, ⁴⁹And (appoint him) a messenger to the Children of Israel, (with this message): ‘I have come to you, with a Sign from your Lord, in that I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by Allah’s leave: And I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I quicken the dead, by Allah’s leave; and I declare to you what ye eat, and what ye store in your houses. Surely therein is a Sign for you if ye did believe;’ ⁵⁰(I have come to you), to attest the Law which was before me. And to make lawful to you part of what was (Before) forbidden to you; I have come to you with a Sign from your Lord. So fear Allah, and obey me. ⁵¹It is Allah Who is my Lord and your Lord; then worship Him. This is a Way that is straight.” ⁵²When Jesus found Unbelief on their part He said: “Who will be My helpers to (the work of) Allah?” Said the disciples: “We are Allah’s helpers: We believe in Allah, and do thou bear witness that we are Muslims.” ⁵³Our Lord! we believe in what Thou hast revealed, and we follow the Messenger; then write us down among those who bear witness.” ⁵⁴And (the unbelievers) plotted and planned, and Allah too planned, and the best of planners is Allah.

⁵⁵Behold! Allah said: “O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to Myself and clear thee (of the falsehoods) of those who blaspheme; I will make those who follow thee superior to those who reject faith, to the Day of Resurrection: Then shall ye all return unto me, and I will judge between you of the matters wherein ye dispute.”

The basic CAMEL Method is designed to lead the Muslim to see three main aspects of Jesus from this passage: 1. Jesus is holy (**Q. 3:42-47**); 2. Jesus has power even over death (**Q. 3:48-54**); and 3. Jesus knows the way to heaven (**Q. 3:55**). The following are specific suggestions for statements to make and questions to ask in using the CAMEL Method (the specifics are set forth at Greeson 2007: 106-09 and Greeson and Owen 2005: 12-18 [the latter is particularly helpful since the specifics are more detailed and it is online]):

1. How to begin: After a friendly introduction say something like:

“I have been reading the Qur’an and have read some amazing truth that gives us hope of eternal life in heaven. Would you read surah Al-Imran 3:42-55 from your Qur’an so we can talk about it?”

or

I have been reading the Qur’an and found that it says some very interesting things about Jesus. Would you read surah Al-Imran 3:42-55 from your Qur’an so we can talk about it?

(It is helpful to ask your Muslim friend to break up the passage into three sections as he reads it—vv. 42-47, 48-54, and 55—and then discuss them separately.)²²

2. **Q. 3:42-47**—Jesus is holy. Suggested questions and comments:

- Regarding vv. 42-44 (Jesus’ birth is announced by angels). Ask, “Do you know of any other prophets whose birth was announced by angels?” (The answer is “No.”)
- Regarding v. 45 (Jesus is “the Word of God”). Ask, “What does it mean that Jesus is a Word from God?” One can say that the verse does not say that he only will speak the word of God, but that He himself is a word from God.
- Regarding v. 45 (Jesus is “al-Masih” [the Messiah]). Ask, “What does it mean when Jesus is called al-Masih?” While Jesus is called “al-Masih,” the Qur’an does not define what that means. Focus on Jesus being the promised deliverer and savior—a “Messiah.” No other prophet is called Messiah. Also, according

hand, do *not* refer to Muhammad as “the prophet” or “Prophet Muhammad,” since that implies you believe he was a valid prophet of God. Just refer to him as “Muhammad” or, perhaps, “your prophet.”

²² Greeson cautions that “it is always best to use your Muslim friend’s Qur’an. A non-Muslim walking into a conversation with a Qur’an in hand would probably only offend Muslims.” (Greeson 2007: 100) This means that one might have to wait for the Muslim to get their Qur’an or take you to their home or mosque. If no Qur’an is available, the key points of the CAMEL Method can be recalled and stated, and the Muslim can be encouraged to go home or to his mosque and read it for himself. Contact information can be exchanged and a follow-up meeting arranged. On the other hand, since you begin by telling the Muslim that “I have been reading the Qur’an,” it should not be offensive if you use your copy of the Qur’an if the Muslim does not have one or cannot readily obtain one. However, *do not have any markings, underlinings, highlighting, or written notes* either in your copy of the Qur’an or your copy of the Bible! Muslims find marking in a holy book to be very offensive if not blasphemous (Nehls and Eric 2009b: 102).

to verse 45, Jesus will not only be held in honor in this world but also in the one to come.

- **Regarding v. 46** (Jesus is “righteous”). Ask, “*Did Jesus ever sin?*” (The answer must be “No.”) However, someone may say that none of the prophets ever sinned. “This idea that none of the prophets sinned is a common belief among Muslims, even though the Qur’an does not teach this.” (Greeson and Owen 2005: 14) In fact, the Qur’an tells us that Adam disobeyed Allah (**Q. 20:116-21**), Moses killed the Egyptian (**Q. 28:15-16**), David made a hasty and wrong judgment (**Q. 38:21-24**), several of the prophets asked forgiveness for their sins: Noah (**Q. 11:47; 71:28**), Abraham (**Q. 14:41; 26:82**), Solomon (**38:30-35**). Muhammad himself was rebuked by Allah and needed forgiveness for his sins both past and future (**Q. 8:67-68; 9:43; 40:55; 47:19; 48:1-2**). Some Muslims may admit that “the prophets ‘made mistakes’ but not that they sinned. You may ask, ‘*What is the difference between a mistake and a sin?*’ Whether you planned to or not, disobeying Allah is still sin.” (Ibid.)

It is probably more fruitful to focus not just on the fact that Jesus never sinned but upon how righteous he was. Greeson suggests asking, “*Did Isa ever kill anyone? Did he ever have sexual relations with a woman? Did he ever try to make himself rich?* These leading questions will gently draw a contrast in the mind of your Muslim friend between Isa and another prophet whom he knows all too well.”²³ (Greeson 2007: 107) Additionally, pointing out that Jesus healed people and taught us to love even our enemies shows us how Jesus’ righteousness exceeded that of any of the prophets (including Muhammad’s).

- **Regarding v. 47** (Jesus is born of a virgin). Ask, “*Does this verse say that Jesus came directly from God and that he did not have an earthly father?*” It is important to get the Muslim to reflect on the uniqueness of Jesus. Hence, you can ask, “Of the billions of people who have been born, why was only Jesus born of a virgin without an earthly father?” If the answer is that “it was just God’s special sign that Jesus was a prophet,” the point to press home is “but why *only Jesus?*—why is Jesus so unique among all human beings including among all the prophets?”

You may ask, “*Are there any other prophets who did not have an earthly father?*” The answer may be that “Adam did not have an earthly father.” In response, it is obvious why Adam could not have had an earthly father—because he was the very first human being. But that was not the case with Jesus. More importantly, Adam raises the issue of sin and Jesus’ righteousness. Adam could walk and talk with God in paradise because he was righteous and holy. But when Adam committed only one sin by disobeying God only one time, he was expelled from paradise and never allowed back in (see **Q. 2:35-37; 7:10-25; 20:115-23**). You can therefore ask, “*How many sins did it take for Adam to be removed from God’s presence and from the garden?*” (Answer: only one.)

Then we can explain what this means: Because God is 100% holy, nothing that is unholy can be in his presence. This means that if anyone wants to go to heaven, he must also be holy. If Adam committed one sin and was cast out of God’s presence, then trying to do enough good works to cover each and every sin we have committed is an impossible task. We do not have to teach our children to do wrong. We all have a natural inclination to do what is wrong. In fact, we must work hard to teach our children to do right.

Since we are all descendants of Adam, we have all inherited his sinful nature. But in Jesus that blood line of Adam was cut! Isa was not of the blood line of Adam, for he had no earthly father. Jesus was very different from all the other prophets. In fact, Isa was very different from all people who have ever been born! . . . Jesus came from God. (Greeson and Owen 2005: 15)

You can ask, “*If Jesus was born without a human father, can he inherit his father’s sinful nature?*” (The answer, obviously, is “No.”) In other words, Jesus alone is perfectly holy.

3. **Q. 3:48-54—Jesus has power over death.** Suggested questions and comments:

- **Regarding v. 49** (Jesus’ miracles, including creating life and giving life to the dead). Ask “*What does this verse tell us that Jesus did?*” Concentrate on Jesus’ creating life and, especially, his ability to give life to the dead. You can ask, “*Do you know of any other prophet who can create life?*” You can get the Muslim to agree that one of people’s greatest fears is death. Then you can ask, “*Do you know of any other prophet who had power over death?*” The point is that Jesus, and only Jesus, has power over our greatest enemy—death itself!

The Muslim may respond that “Jesus did these things but only by God’s will.” You can agree that

²³ One must be careful concerning raising Muhammad’s personal behaviors. A Muslim-background believer probably could ask, “What kind of prophet, when he’s 53 years old, takes a six-year-old girl as his wife? And he began to have intercourse with her when she was nine.” However, someone who does not come from a Muslim background should hesitate to ask this directly because it would be seen as too direct an attack on Muhammad and might close the door to further witness (see Greeson 2007: 216-17, 248).

everything comes from God and is by His will. But you can point out that Jesus did these things by his own word, without asking God’s permission. (see Greeson and Owen 2005: 16) This also provides a transition to the Bible and the identification of Jesus with the Father.

Additionally, v. 49 shows that Jesus knows the secrets of our hearts. You can point out that only God knows the secrets of our hearts and ask, “*Do you know of anyone else who knows the secrets of our hearts?*”

- Regarding v. 50 (obeying Jesus). Ask, “*In verse 50, what does it tell us to do?*” (Answer: fear God and obey Jesus.) You can therefore say that, although the Qur’an mentions Jesus many times and tells us to obey whatever Jesus commanded, it does not tell us what Jesus commanded us to do. Only in the Injil (the NT) we can read the commands of Jesus. Consequently, you can ask, “*Since the Qur’an says it is our duty to God to obey Jesus, how can we obey him if we do not know what He told us to do?*” or “*How can we know what Jesus commands and how to obey him unless we read the Injil?*”

You can ask your Muslim friend, “*Suppose I asked you to do something for me, but I did not tell you what it was that I wanted you to do. Would you do it?*” Of course he must say no. He can’t do what you asked because he does not know what it is! In the same way, he cannot do his duty to Allah and obey ‘Isa because he does not know what ‘Isa has told him to do! You can use this opportunity to encourage your Muslim friend to read the Injil (Gospel/New Testament) so that he can find out what ‘Isa told him to do.” (Greeson and Owen 2005: 16)

This may also provide a transition for you to show the Muslim from the Gospels what Jesus said. You can point him to the Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5-7**) where Jesus taught and changed some of the OT laws (as indicated in **Q. 3:50**). One former Muslim suggests that by teaching interested Muslims to go to such a passage and ask such questions as Who is speaking? Why is he speaking? To whom is he speaking? Where is he speaking? What is he trying to teach? and How does this apply to my life? The Muslim learns to unlock the meaning of the text for himself. This is particularly important in that most Muslims are taught simply to memorize the Qur’an but are “not comfortable interpreting even the simplest words in the Quran for themselves. They were conditioned to seek the answer from someone of higher authority.” (Daniel 2010: 38; see also Houssney 2010: 88-89) By learning to interpret for themselves, the Bible can come alive to Muslim inquirers and help break them free from their dependence on imams. Particular focus probably should be on passages where Jesus talks about coming to him and following him, since that is the initial step of discipleship (e.g., **Matt 11:27-30; 19:28-30; Mark 8:34-38; John 3:1-21; 6:35-40; 8:31-32, 42; 15:1-17**). This also provides an opportunity for you to give a Bible or NT to the Muslim.

As you move to the last part of the passage you can ask, “*Do you know of any prophet who was more powerful than Jesus?*”

- Regarding vv. 52-53 (Jesus’ followers). Verse 50 had said that we are to “obey Jesus.” Now you can point out that in v.52 those who are submitted to God’s will *as disciples of Jesus* are called “Muslims” (which means “submitted to God”). God himself picks up on this in v.55. You can therefore ask about what God says he will do for those who are disciples of Jesus. (The answer is that God himself says, “*I will make those who follow thee [Jesus] superior to those who reject faith, to the Day of Resurrection.*”) Note that God is promising that Jesus’ disciples will be held superior to others, not just until Muhammad comes, but all the way to the day of resurrection!

4. Q. 3:55 (Jesus knows the way to heaven).

Regarding the way to heaven, ask, “*According to v.55, where is Jesus now?*” The answer is that he is alive with God in heaven now.

You can then ask, “*Suppose I wanted to get from here to (a certain city). Who should I choose to help me? Should I choose someone who has never been there or someone who knows the way and lives there now?*” (The obvious answer is “the one who lives there”)

or

“*If you wanted me to come to your house and you knew that I needed directions, who would be the best person to show me the way?*” (Obviously, the answer is “you are”)

You can therefore say, “The person who is most capable of showing me the way is the person who lives there. I am a sinful person. Although I have done many good things in my life, I am still a sinner and share Adam’s curse. I know that by my own power I can never become holy to get to be with God in heaven. But according to the Qur’an, Jesus came from God and is alive with God in paradise today. Therefore Jesus knows the way to get us there.”

Conclude with a closing question: “*I want to go to paradise; you want to go to paradise. Jesus is in paradise and knows the way to paradise. Of all the prophets, which one is best able to help us get to paradise?*”

If the Muslim answers “Jesus,” he may be ripe for follow-up with an eye toward salvation. At this point, however, it would be too early to have the Muslim say the “sinner’s prayer.” You need to make sure that he truly understands who Jesus really is (fully God and fully man) and what Jesus has done (lived the life we should have lived, died the death we should have died, and paid the price for our sins that otherwise we would have to pay but never could). In other words, he needs to clearly understand the gospel and what believing the gospel and receiving Jesus as Savior and Lord means and implies (including the fact that he may face opposition from his family or other Muslims). The issue is whether he understands and is committed to following the truth. This may take time but is important.

On the other hand, if he says “Muhammad,” then ask him to read **surah 46 (Winding Sand-tracts), v. 9**: “Say [Muhammad]: ‘I am no bringer of new-fangled doctrine among the messengers, nor do I know what will be done with me or with you. I follow but that which is revealed to me by inspiration; I am but a Warner open and clear.’” Do not be combative but gently say, “If you had to choose between someone who does not know what will happen to him [or to you] after he dies and one who already is in heaven, which one would you rather have to lead you?” (Greeson 2007: 109)

5. Keep things focused on the Qur’an. Muslims may respond to you by reciting stories of the prophets from the Hadith. We want them to confront what the Qur’an actually says about Jesus. Therefore, if a Muslim gets away from the text and meaning of the passage in the Qur’an you are discussing, you can ask: “Is that in the Qur’an, or is that in the Hadith?” If the answer is “the Hadith,” you can respond, “You believe that the Qur’an is the complete and final word of Allah, don’t you? So, let’s focus on what the Qur’an says.”

If they tell you, “the Qur’an,” you can say, “That is very interesting; I am learning about the Qur’an. Could you show me where that is in the Qur’an? I would like to read it.” Often they will not know where it is. Quite often this is because it is not in the Qur’an. If they cannot show you where it is simply say, “Let’s keep looking at what we see right here in the Qur’an.” (Greeson and Owen 2005: 17)

B. The Qur’an as a bridge to the gospel: other points of contact

1. The “straight way” (Q. 1:6). **Q. 1:6** says, “Show us the straight way.” Hilali-Khan translate it, “Guide us to the Straight Way.” This leads naturally to us the issue of human sin and innate sinfulness, i.e., the inability of anyone to consistently or perfectly follow the “straight way.” On the other hand, Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (**John 14:6**). Thus, **Q. 1:6** is a good bridge to Jesus and the gospel, especially since **Q. 1:6** uses the very word that Jesus used to describe himself, i.e., the “Way.”

Georges Housney gives a brief example of a conversation he had with a Muslim (Fareed), using questions to get Fareed to see the truth behind **John 14:6**:

“Fareed, Jesus said “I am the way”. What does that mean?”

He thought for a moment. ‘Umm, like a road?’

‘Yes,’ I nodded. ‘The road to where?’

Fareed looked genuinely confused. ‘Uhh...’

‘The road to God,’ I said, connecting the dots for him.

‘Ahh!’ I could see Fareed’s face brighten with understanding. . . . I asked Fareed to tell us what he understood about each word in the verse and different people on the team began to help him with his questions. True communication began to take place. My son Pierre took him aside and spent two hours reading and explaining the Gospel to him as the rest of us looked for other Arabs to talk to.

There are several lessons we can learn from this encounter:

1. Even if the passage seems simple to you, don’t assume others understand it.
2. Let them read the Bible to you, and let them try to explain it to you.
3. Make sure they understand what you’re talking about by asking follow up questions. Don’t simply ask, ‘Do you understand?’ Many will say yes to avoid embarrassment.
4. Give them chances to try answering your questions. Let their process of discovery unfold as you give them hints and suggestive questions.” (Housney 2010: 133-34)

2. The “raiment of righteousness” (Q. 7:26). **Q. 7:26** says, “O ye Children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you. But the raiment of righteousness, - that is the best. Such are among the Signs of Allah, that they may receive admonition!”

This ayah raises the issues of innate human sinfulness, the fact that none of us can become perfectly righteous, and the fact that there is only one person who is perfectly righteous—Jesus Christ—similar to how such issues were raised in the CAMEL Method by **Q. 3:46-47** (see above). This ayah also raises the issue of God’s grace: he *bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame*. We cannot earn our salvation or the “raiment

of righteousness” because our hearts are inclined to sin and we cannot change our hearts no matter how hard we try. However, just as God bestowed physical raiment to cover Adam’s physical shame, so he provides the spiritual “raiment of righteousness” for us in the person of Jesus Christ and imputes *his righteousness* to all who have received Christ by faith. **Q. 7:26** can be a good bridge to lead Muslims to the gospel. The “raiment of righteousness” is also discussed in two Muslim-friendly tracts by R. M. Harnisch.²⁴

3. Jesus as a “sign” from Allah (Q. 19:21; see also Q. 21:91; 23:50). **Q. 19:21** says, “*He said: ‘So (it will be): Thy Lord saith, “that is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us”’*” The fact that the Qur’an specifically calls Jesus a “Sign” is also important because on at least two occasions the Qur’an specifically warns and threatens people who reject and do not believe in Allah’s “signs.” **Q. 3:4** says, “*Then those who reject Faith in the Signs of Allah will suffer the severest penalty, and Allah is Exalted in Might, Lord of Retribution.*” **Q. 7:36** adds, “*But those who reject Our signs and treat them with arrogance,- they are companions of the Fire, to dwell therein (for ever).*” In light of **Q. 3:50, 55** which talk about obeying Jesus and show us that Jesus knows and is the way to heaven (see above), **Q. 19:21** is a good bridge to discussing the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. It is also a good bridge to getting Muslims to read the Injil and learn more about Jesus.

4. A study of the Prophets. In “Guide Muslims to the Bible,” A. J. Hague explains in detail the study of the prophets, including the main point of each prophet and Qur’anic and biblical references (Hague 2013: 25-27; see also “Sign Studies” n.d.). Here are summaries of the main points and key references:

ADAM	NOAH	ABRAHAM	MOSES
God makes provision to cover our sin and shame	We must accept God’s provision	God provides the sacrifice	We must apply the blood of the sacrificial lamb
Q. 7:11-27; Gen 3 (esp. 15 & 21)	Q. 11:25-49; 36:41; Gen 6:6-8:20; 9:12-17	Q. 37:83-113 (esp. 107); Gen 15:1-6, 8-10, 17-18; Rom 4:1-22; Gal 3:8-9	Q. 7:103-37; Exod 4:21-23; 12: 1-14; 21-30, 38
DAVID	JONAH	JOHN (YAHYA)	JESUS (ISA)
His descendent would become a suffering sacrifice	In the depths for three days, then back to life	Jesus is the Word and Lamb of God	God’s chosen sacrifice
Q. 4:163; 17:55; 34:10; 2 Sam 7:8-15; Ps 2, 22; 45:6-7; 110:1; Matt 1:1; Mark 10:46-52	Q. 10:94-98; 37: 139-48; Matt 12:38-42	Q. 3:38-45; 19:7-15; Luke 1:5-25, 57-80; 3:4-6; John 1:29-34 (esp. 29)	Q. 3:42-55; 19:19-21; 21:91; 43:61-63; Matt 1:18-21; 24:14; John 1:29-34; 4:41-42; 14:6; 18:36-37; Acts 10:34-43; 2 Cor 5:18-21; 2 Pet 1:19-21

- *Adam:* After disobeying God Adam cried out for the Mercy of God. God responded with giving him the robe of righteousness made from an animal sacrifice. In the same way there is a promise of a future great sacrifice for all mankind.
- *Noah:* Just like the true believers got on board the ark and were saved from God’s wrath, the true believers will accept the great sacrifice when it comes.
- *Abraham:* When asked to sacrifice his son Abraham obeyed, but God stopped him at the last moment and provided an animal sacrifice. In the same way God will be the one providing the coming great sacrifice.
- *Moses:* The entire community of Israel needed to take the blood of a perfect lamb and paint it over the door of their house in order to be protected from the angel of death.
- *David:* In the Psalms David describes that the great sacrifice will be from his family and will undergo terrible suffering. Other prophecies say that this suffering will be done as a mercy on behalf of other people.
- *Jonah:* Jonah ran from God and so the Lord kept him a fish for three days and nights. He was raised and used to see a massive number of people released from sin. Jesus said the last sign he will give is *the* “sign of Jonah.”
- *John the Baptist:* Called a holy prophet from before birth, he testified of the Word from God (i.e., Jesus), and identified Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.
- *Jesus:* All the holy books agree that man has walked off God’s straight path and is in need of His mercy. They also agree that Jesus is God’s sinless Messiah who came as a Word and Mercy from God. By becoming the great sacrifice on our behalf Jesus demonstrated God’s mercy and shows mankind how to get back on the straight path.

If Muhammad comes up in this study, emphasize that he admitted his own shortcomings and acknowledged that he was not the way of salvation (**Q. 46:9**) but pointed back to Jesus as the sinless Messiah who is alive in

²⁴ Their online addresses are in the Bibliography so that they can be accessed.

heaven now.

C. Islamic culture as a bridge to the gospel: the *Qurban Plan of salvation*

This method of bridging Islam and the gospel is based on the Islamic festival of Eid u'l-Adha (“The Great Festival” or “Festival of the Sacrifice”) which commemorates the act of sacrifice (*qurban*, sometimes spelled *qurbani*, *korban*, or *korbani*) in which Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son but Allah spared the son by giving him a lamb (or ram) to sacrifice instead. The account is in **Q. 37:100-111**. This method assumes that the Muslim you are talking to is interested in Jesus (i.e., the way has already been prepared by the CAMEL Method or otherwise) and is interested in receiving Jesus. The method is described in Greeson and Owen 2005: 25-26 (and somewhat differently in Greeson 2007: 113-20). The essentials of this method are as follows:

1. Abraham offered a sacrifice (*qurban*). Suggested questions:

- *Do you know the story of Abraham when he was told to do qurban with his son? What did Abraham do?* (Answer: Abraham took his son to offer as a sacrifice.)
- *What did God do at the last minute?* (Answer: He sent an angel to stop the sacrifice and, according to the Bible and Islamic traditions, provided a lamb or ram as the sacrifice.)
- *What test was God giving to Abraham?* (Answer: To see how much Abraham loved God.)

2. The meaning of *qurban*. Suggested questions and comments:

- *What is the meaning behind the practice of qurban?*
- After he has given his answer say, “*I have studied the Taurat and the Injil and have come to understand what true qurban is and how it should be done.*” Then explain:
 - (a) The *qurban* animal must be pure and have no blemishes. The animal represents innocence. It cannot be purchased with corrupt money or from the black market.
 - (b) The act of *qurban* is a picture of one who is innocent taking the punishment of one who is guilty. Dawuud (David) said that the best *qurban* is one that takes place on the inside of a person (**Ps 51:16-17**). Being sorry for your sin is the best *qurban*.
 - (c) The act of *qurban* is a symbol of the punishment we deserve for our sins.
- *Does this sound to you like a correct qurban prayer?* Then say, “When we lay our hands on the animal, we should say, ‘God, I know that I am a sinner and that the required punishment is my death. Take the blood of this animal as a substitute for my punishment and forgive me and my family’s sins.’”

3. Jesus—*qurban* for the whole world. Suggested questions and comments:

- The Qur’an says this about Jesus in Surah Maryam (**Q. 19:33**): “*So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again).*” Explanation: After Jesus died, His followers stopped doing animal *qurban*. Why was this so? Before Jesus died, he told his followers that God had decided to do *qurban* for the sins of the entire world, thus showing His love for all mankind. Just as God had provided the sacrifice for Abraham, He Himself would provide the sacrifice for all of mankind. God had stopped Abraham from sacrificing his son, but God did not stop the sacrifice of Jesus.
- *Why would God do this?* Answer: Most important is the fact that no one could do enough *qurban* to cover his sins. To do a *qurban* to cover the entire world, only the most holy, innocent, and righteous sacrifice would do. So God decided to sacrifice the most innocent, holy, and powerful blood this world has ever seen. We saw in **Q. 3:42-55** that Jesus was born of a virgin, came from heaven, never sinned, was perfectly holy, innocent, and righteous, and returned to heaven. Only Jesus fits the description of the perfect *qurban* who died for the sins of the whole world. This reveals God’s and Jesus’ great love for us.
- You can transition to the Bible, for example, **John 1:29** where the prophet Yahya (John the Baptist) said of Jesus, “*Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” In other words, God transferred our sins onto Jesus who then paid for our sins by the sacrifice of his own life for us.
- *How do we know that God accepted Jesus’ qurban to cover the sins of people?* Answer: God showed that he accepted Jesus’ sacrifice by raising him from the dead (see **Luke 24:17-27; Acts 2:29-36; 17:31; Rom 1:1-6; 1 Cor 15:1-4**; see also **Q. 3:54-55; 19:33**).

4. Eternal life through faith in Jesus. There are four things Muslims need to know:

- *First, we have sinned and cannot do enough to cover our sins.* One sin put Adam out of God’s presence in the Garden of Eden. We have sinned many times (see **Rom 3:10-12, 23**).
- *Second, Jesus was born without sin and never sinned.* He is the very “*Ruhullah*” (Spirit of God, **Q. 4:171**) and “*Kalamullah*” (Word of God, **Q. 3:45**). His blood is innocent because he did not inherit Adam’s sin or commit any sin while alive. His blood is holy and powerful. God asked Ibrihim to show his love for Allah by sacrificing his precious son. In the same way, to show His love for us, Allah decided to do

qurban for all of mankind by sacrificing Jesus (see **Rom 5:6-8; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5**).

- *Third, Jesus died on the cross as the qurban for our sins.* The Injil tells us, “Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that he might bring us to God” (**1 Pet 3:18**).
- *Fourth, if you believe in Jesus—who was God in heaven but came to earth as a man to live the life we should have lived and die the death we should have died, taking our sins and the punishment we deserve upon himself—you will be forgiven of your sins and have eternal life.* The Injil are says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (**John 3:16**). Through Jesus we can go to heaven when we die and live eternally with God. Jesus knows the way and is the way. If you truly believe that God did *qurban* by using the blood of Jesus to cover your sins, you can join Jesus in heaven. That is why **Rom 10:9-10** says, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

D. Islamic culture as a bridge to the gospel: other points of contact

Other Islamic terms and cultural practices that can act as bridges are the following:

1. The practice of *aqiqah*. Muslims have a ritual called *aqiqah* in which an animal is sacrificed on behalf of a newborn baby. *Aqiqah* is similar to the *qurban* practiced at the Islamic festival of Eid u'l-Adha (“The Great Festival” or “Festival of the Sacrifice”). As such, it raises the issue of the substitutionary atonement of Christ. Issues and questions like those raised in the *Qurban* Plan of salvation therefore can be used.

2. The quest for blessing (*baraka*). *Baraka* is the Arabic word for blessing, and “the concept of blessing is a central one in African folk Islamic contexts” (Howell 2015: 44; see also Pennington 2014: 196 [South Asian folk Muslims]). In animistic folk Islam, the motivation for practicing Islam’s “five pillars” is to “gain *baraka*, an impersonal spiritual power that, when stored up, helps a person obtain power for life” (Van Rheenen 1991: 60). Ultimately, the blessings sought are for prosperity, fertility, and success, motivated largely by greed and jealousy, and to ward off evil, motivated largely by fear (Howell 2015: 44-46). Many folk Muslims look to traditional healers, witchdoctors, magical amulets, and charms for blessings (Ibid.: 45-46).

The church could use this idea and be the agent of the true and lasting physical and spiritual blessing the people are really seeking. Richard Love states that in the folk Muslim context three things are required: “power encounter, truth encounter and cultural encounter. Based on the kingdom of God, we confront the powers of darkness through exorcism and healing (power encounter), preach the good news that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (truth encounter), and express the reality of the kingdom through culturally relevant rituals (cultural encounter).” (Love 1994: 87) Alan Howell suggests a *baraka*-based bridge would be a holistic process, including teaching the people to see the fleeting benefits and ultimate futility of magical practices done in search of blessing and contrasting that with the lasting blessing found in the Kingdom of God. Christian leaders would have to stop looking like pastors from the West and act more like holy men of old, not hoarding their own blessings but aiding all members of the body of Christ to live good and productive lives. Deliverance services can help believers leave behind their magical practices, and “funerals are important times for showing that the church or the community of believers is an agent of blessing that lovingly cares for orphans and widows” (Howell 2015: 50).

3. Freedom from defilement. Under the Muslim worldview, “the greatest felt need is not salvation from sin but deliverance from defilement. Every element of a devout Muslim’s life is ordered by this insecurity; the direction to face when falling asleep, the Arabic words with which to preface a task, speech, or greeting, and even the way to blow one’s nose or wipe one’s bottom. . . . Defilements come in various levels. Each defilement has an appropriately matched ritual for cleansing.” (Sidebotham 2002: 4) Jesus got to the heart of the matter—that all humans are *themselves* unclean and defiled—when he said, “There is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man” (**Mark 7:15**). The concept of defilement thus makes the concept of mankind’s inherent sinfulness and depravity understandable to Muslims: “The concept of original defilement helps total depravity make sense. ‘There is no one righteous, not even one’ (Romans 3:10) and ‘all our righteous acts are like filthy rags’ (Isaiah 64:6), because we are defiled. Sin is not inherited but stems from our being. We are unclean and everything we touch or do, even with good intent, becomes contaminated. The Muslim who understands that the ground is cursed wherever he steps if he has not bathed after having had sex may comprehend how bondage to unrighteousness proceeds from defilement. This may also explain why Muslims seem to strive harder to be clean than they strive to be righteous.” (Ibid.: 5)

This, in turn, helps to make the atonement more understandable. **Heb 12:2** tells us that Jesus is “*the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*” (see also **Isa 53:4-5**). In other words, “Jesus not only bore our sins; he bore our shame” (Ibid.). He *became* sin for us “*so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*” (**2 Cor 5:21**). Or, as Peter and Paul both say, “*Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him will not be put to shame [the literal meaning of ‘disappointed’ as translated in the NASB is ‘put to shame’]*” (**1 Pet 2:6**; see also **Rom 9:33**). On the cross and by his resurrection Jesus overcame and destroyed the most serious consequence of our defilement, namely, death itself. Our only hope lies in appropriating Jesus’ once-and-for-all cleansing from defilement and death into ourselves by faith in Him—and baptism is the outward and visible sign of this appropriation: it is the perfect and final ablution that fulfills all the imperfect and temporary cleansings that Islamic rituals only hint at.

Sidebotham gives an example of how he used this insight to begin presenting the gospel to a Muslim: “In Indonesia a friend asked me why Christians insist that Jesus is God and that he was crucified. Instead of trying to convince my friend that all have sinned and that all sin must be punished by death, I noted what he already knew, that all flesh is defiled and from before birth contains the very substances from which we need to be cleansed. I expressed my opinion on the futility of ceremonial rituals for making us clean enough for heaven, because dirt cannot make itself clean any better than darkness can make itself light. I said that just as a candle drives darkness from a room by entering it, God drives defilement from human flesh by becoming it. In other words, the very thing that Muslims object to most in Christianity,—the identification of God with his creation, is the solution to man’s most basic problem as perceived by most Muslims.” (Sidebotham 2002: 4; see also Hayes 2015: 29-31, who gives an “honor-shame”-based presentation of the gospel to a Muslim)

Certain implications flow from viewing what Christ did as freeing us from defilement. For example, Muslims object to the idea that Christians say that Jesus is God incarnate. Yet, by using the concept of defilement, “The nature of Jesus’ miracles – healing blindness with his spit and leprosy with his touch – proves that he had to be God. No mere prophet could touch a leper without being contaminated, and while a prophet’s grave might be holy his spit remains foul like everyone else’s.” (Sidebotham 2002: 4). Yet Jesus (and his spit) remained pure and holy (see **Q. 19:19**)—which means he cannot be a mere man. Similarly, Muslims are offended at eating pork because it introduces great defilement. However, Christians are free to eat what they want. Why? Sidebotham states, “When Jesus ‘declared all foods “clean”’ (Mark 7:18-23), he was . . . pointing out that the issue of cleanness was in man’s basic condition and not in the food” (Ibid.: 5). The food laws highlighted humanity’s defiled condition just as the sacrifices highlighted humanity’s sin. Now, we are no longer bound by those laws because Jesus removes our defilement just like he removes our sin; because he (who is pure and clean [**Q. 19:19**]) is in us, we remain clean regardless of what we eat (**Mark 7:15**). Warick Farrah puts it like this, “Through faith we are joined with the glorious Messiah in his life, death, and resurrection. He gets our loyalty (praise, glory, and honor) and we get his life in us, removing our shame and defilement.” (Farrah 2013: 17-18)

4. The patron-client view of the gospel. Many Muslims come from societies and cultures which emphasize membership in the group, hierarchy, interpersonal linkage, and leadership (as opposed to Western individualism and egalitarianism). In such cultures, “the leader represents me and is someone with whom I am linked” (Edwards 2013: 81). Leaders act as patrons who supply longed for resources, while clients act with loyalty and faithfulness to the leaders. In spiritual terms, many Muslims have the view that, despite the Islamic idea that people will be judged strictly according to a weighing of good deeds versus bad deeds, they will be saved because Muhammad is their patron; they view “their connectedness with Muhammad’s group as the means to salvation” (Ibid.: 84)

But Jesus is more powerful than anyone, including Muhammad: “The first step is an event that attracts attention to *Isa al Masih*. The second step is to investigate who he is, usually looking at the Qur’an. . . . As they go on to other sources e.g. the *Injil*, they see he is creator, light, powerful, etc. Their search in the *Injil* vitally deepens their understanding. They find the position of *Isa* is higher in the hierarchy than they had originally thought. . . . Indeed the very real question they begin to ask is that of his relative status with respect to the prophet Muhammad. In this finely tuned hierarchy, two leaders is one too many; there cannot be equals at the top and so the question arises as to who is more important. . . . Those who place their loyalty and faith in *Isa* resolve this crisis by deciding he is the one of most honor. This premier position then means they are joined with him, as leader and patron.” (Ibid.: 84-85).

5. The Hadith. Dr. Edward Hoskins has written that, for the Muslim, answers to most of life’s questions “are not, as commonly supposed, found primarily in the Qur’an. In fact, many of them are not found in the Qur’an at all.” (Hoskins 2011b: 93) Nevertheless, “Muslims believe that Allah, through his prophet, provided

for every situation. . . . If the Qur'an is the skeleton, then Muhammad is the flesh on the skeleton, which puts all of Islam into action." (Ibid.: 96). Hoskins writes, "Using the hadith traditions build instant rapport. Why? Because the hadith are near and dear to the heart of every Muslim I have ever met." (Ibid.: 104-05) Hoskins' study of the Hadith is set forth in his book, *A Muslim's Mind: What Every Christian Needs to Know about the Islamic Traditions* (Hoskins 2011a) and summarized in his article (Hoskins 2011b).

Hoskins' method is, "When I speak with a Muslim friend about the hadith, I like to take along a small notebook with a few of the Islamic traditions I have collected. I have one or two hadith printed on each page with an accompanying Bible passage where I have found a similarity. . . . I pull one out when I sit with my friend and let him read the tradition and accompanying Bible verse. After this I ask a few questions. One or two usually suffice. Here are a few questions I have found useful:

- Have you heard of this tradition before or something like it?
- How does this hadith practically influence your life as a Muslim?
- What does this hadith tell you about the character of God?
- What does it say about the condition of man?
- Does it suggest a possible way to bridge the gap between the two?
- Do you recall a personal story where you saw this hadith illustrated, either as a child or as an adult?

When I'm done I always ask if they have any questions they want to ask me. These questions often produce the most fruitful discussions." (Ibid.: 105) He goes on to give some examples of how he used a hadith and the accompanying Bible verse to segue to biblical truth.

Hoskins observes, "During my study of the hadith, I found many with significant similarities to our own Bible. The hadith are jam-packed with topics like the 'golden rule,' 'control your temper,' 'God looks at the heart,' 'blessed are the merciful,' 'feed the hungry,' and many, many more." (Ibid.: 108, 109) He concludes with two cautions: (1) "Many hadith portray Islam and their prophet in less than positive terms. . . . When you come across these, please, please do not use them as weapons to bludgeon Muslims. They are definitely valuable for increased personal information, but I have found them hurtful to my friends' feelings and overall non-productive." (Ibid.: 109) (2) "In our desire to seek commonality and relate with our Muslim friends we can wind up giving away what is most precious to us – the centrality of the person and work of Christ" (Ibid.). Thus, while the Hadith serves as a bridge, we must always keep in mind that it is a bridge *to Christ and the gospel*.

E. Dealing with questions and objections

Probably the four most common objections Muslims may raise are the following:

1. The Bible is not trustworthy. This has been discussed at length in sections **5.II. The Development of the Bible**, **5.III. The Islamic View of the Bible**, and **5.IV. Responses to the Islamic View of the Bible**. Shane Bennett suggests a short response to this contention: "Wouldn't you agree that God is powerful enough to protect his Word? Who would be strong enough to corrupt His Word, and when would they have done it?" After a pause, then ask 'How about studying the holy books with me to see what they actually say?'" (Bennett 2013: n.p.)²⁵

2. Jesus did not die on the cross. **Q. 4:157** asserts, "*They said (in boast), 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah';- but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not.*" This has been discussed at length in section **2.IV. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: The Crucifixion**. The Qur'an states that many prophets were killed (**Q. 2:2:87; 3:21, 183; 4:155**). Thus, Shane Bennett's short response to this contention is: "You might be thinking, how could God let his prophet lose by dying on the cross. Let me ask you a question, 'Which is greater, for God to save his prophet by keeping him from death or to save him by raising him up and defeating death?'" (Bennett 2013: n.p.)

3. Jesus is not God or the Son of God. This has been discussed at length in sections **2.VI. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: Jesus is the "Son of God"** and **2.VII. Implications of the Fact that Jesus Christ is Fully God and Fully Man**. Shane Bennett's short response to this contention is: "Yes [we do believe that Jesus is God's son], but probably not in the way you're thinking. Christians believe Jesus' conception resulted from a miracle of the Holy Spirit. You don't believe God would defile himself through a physical relationship with a woman, do you?" (Bennett 2013: n.p.)

²⁵ "Some Muslims may be confused by the various translations of the Scriptures. Languages change, and various versions have been printed to make the Holy Bible more readable. We can point out that many versions of the Quran have been translated into English [and into other languages] by various scholars, such as Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, Muhammad Ali, and Dawood. Each seeks to be true to the original meaning." (Goldmann 2004: 147)

4. Christians worship three gods. This has been discussed at length in section **4.IV. The Trinity**. Shane Bennett's short response to this contention is: "Are you thinking God, Jesus and Mary? Far from it. We worship one God, revealed in three persons, Father, Son or Word, and Spirit. Let me ask you a question, 'Which existed first in eternity: God or His Word or His Spirit?'" (Bennett 2013: n.p.)

5. What do you say about Muhammad? It would not be wise to attack Muhammad when asked about him by a sincerely inquiring Muslim because that would be highly offensive and likely would end any opportunity to continue dialog.

- One can affirm that "Muhammad was a great statesman and religious reformer, bringing Arabs from pagan polytheism to Abrahamic monotheism [and] Muhammad spoke of *Isa* the Messiah (his virgin birth, miracles and sinlessness) and acknowledged that the *Torah*, *Zabur* and *Injil* are God's Word and must be obeyed" (Travis 2000: 56).
- It might also be helpful to turn to what Muhammad said about himself, particularly in **Q. 46:9** where he said, "*I am no bringer of new-fangled doctrine among the messengers, nor do I know what will be done with me or with you. I follow but that which is revealed to me by inspiration; I am but a Warner open and clear.*" That provides a bridge to ask the Muslim all the things he does to try to get to heaven (practice the "five pillars," obey the shari'ah law). One could ask, *How many laws are there? How many of them are you able to obey consistently and well all the time (50%? 90%?)?* Then ask, *So how do you know that you will go to heaven?* (He will have to answer that he cannot know; all he can do is do his best, but Allah has the final word.) That can provide the bridge to ask, *Would you like to know what the Bible says about how to receive forgiveness from sin and what qualifies you to enter God's presence in heaven?* If the Muslim is open, you can then contrast what Muhammad said in **Q. 46:9** with what Jesus said in **John 14:1-3, 6**. You can then explain the gospel.

IV. Bridging the Divide between Islam and the Gospel: Conclusion

Georges Houssney says, "The Muslim's unquestioning acceptance of his identity is perhaps the most serious roadblock in communicating the Gospel to him" (Houssney 2010: 83; see also Morin 2007: 118-22; Greenlee 2013: 6). A Muslim's cultural identity has an important corollary for the spread of the gospel within the Muslim community. Because Islam is part of a whole-life cultural identity—religious, social, behavioral, familial, etc.—multiple studies are finding that the gospel is being spread, churches are being planted, and movements are occurring most effectively by Muslim-background believers indigenously, primarily through *existing social networks* among the (former) Muslims themselves (Gray and Gray 2009a: 19-28; Gray and Gray 2009b: 63-73; Naja 2013b: 157 ["mainly, though not exclusively, along family lines"]; Naja 2013a: 28; Dutch 2000: 15-24; Greeson 2007: 38). As a result, more Christians working among Muslims are moving toward sharing the gospel not just with individuals but, to the extent possible, "within the context of a natural social network, gradually transforming the network towards Christ, regardless of the stage of faith of individual members of the network" (Gray, et al. 2010: 89; see also Greeson 2007: 34-40; Gray and Gray 2009b: 63-73; Adams, Allen, and Fish 2009: 78-80; Adams 2013: 23).

Even though a large number of Muslim-background believers retain many of the cultural indicators of being "Muslim," a substantial percentage face persecution after coming to Christ, including rejection, strained family and community relations, imprisonment, beatings, death threats, and other forms of persecution (see Naja 2013b: 157; Adams 2013: 23-24; Greeson 2007: 40-41; Gaudeul n.d.: 11; Greenham 2010: 152; Dunning 2013: 287-88; Abdulahugli 2005: 162-63). Sadly, many of these Muslim-background believers also do not experience acceptance or welcome by non-Muslim-background Christians because of their cultural differences (Greenlee 2013: 6; Gaudeul n.d.: 11). This is an issue that goes to the heart of the church. To not embrace fellow believers who are culturally different from ourselves is contrary to the gospel itself (see **Gal 2:11-21**). To truly and effectively bridge the divide between Islam and the gospel, we who proclaim the gospel must live it, especially by demonstrating Christ's own word, "*By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*" (**John 13:35**).

APPENDIX A—CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF SURAHSNote: This table is taken from http://tanzil.net/wiki/Revelation_Order.Spellings and English translations of the surahs are from Ali, Yusuf. 2006. *The Meaning of the Noble Qur'an*. Online: <http://www.unitedamericanmuslim.org/pdf/english-quran-with-commentaries%28yusuf-ali%29.pdf>.

Chronological order received by Muhammad	Surah Name	Surah Number	Type	Note
1	Al-Alaq (The Blood-clot)	96	Meccan	
2	Al-Qalam (The Pen)	68	Meccan	Except 17-33 and 48-50, from Medina
3	Al-Muzzammil (The Enfolded One)	73	Meccan	Except 10, 11 and 20, from Medina
4	Al-Muddaththir (The One Wrapped Up)	74	Meccan	
5	Al-Fatiha (The Opening Chapter)	1	Meccan	
6	Al-Lahab (The Flame)	111	Meccan	
7	At-Takwir (The Folding Up)	81	Meccan	
8	Al-A'la (The Most High)	87	Meccan	
9	Al-Layl (The Night)	92	Meccan	
10	Al-Fajr (The Dawn)	89	Meccan	
11	Ad-Dhuha (The Glorious Morning Light)	93	Meccan	
12	Al-Sharh (The Expansion of the Breast)	94	Meccan	
13	Al-Asr (Time Through the Ages)	103	Meccan	
14	Al-Adiyat (Those That Run)	100	Meccan	
15	Al-Kawthar (The Abundance)	108	Meccan	
16	At-Takathur (The Piling Up)	102	Meccan	
17	Al-Ma'un (The Neighborly Assistance)	107	Meccan	Only 1-3 from Mecca; the rest from Medina
18	Al-Kafirun (Those Who Reject Faith)	109	Meccan	
19	Al-Fil (The Elephant)	105	Meccan	
20	Al-Falaq (The Daybreak)	113	Meccan	
21	Al-Nas (Mankind)	114	Meccan	
22	Al-Ikhlās (The Purity of Faith)	112	Meccan	
23	An-Najm (The Star)	53	Meccan	Except 32, from Medina
24	Abasa (He Frowned)	80	Meccan	
25	Al-Qadr (The Night of Power or Honor)	97	Meccan	
26	Al-Shams (The Sun)	91	Meccan	
27	Al-Buruj (The Constellation)	85	Meccan	
28	Al-Tin (The Fig)	95	Meccan	
29	Quraysh (The tribe of Quraysh)	106	Meccan	
30	Al-Qari'a (The Great Calamity)	101	Meccan	
31	Al-Qiyamah (The Resurrection)	75	Meccan	
32	Al-Humazah (The Scandalmonger)	104	Meccan	
33	Al-Mursalat (Those Sent Forth)	77	Meccan	Except 48, from Medina
34	Qaf	50	Meccan	Except 38, from Medina
35	Al-Balad (The City)	90	Meccan	
36	Al-Tariq (The Night Star)	86	Meccan	
37	Al-Qamar (The Moon)	54	Meccan	Except 44-46, from Medina
38	Sad	38	Meccan	
39	Al-A'raf (The Heights)	7	Meccan	Except 163-170, from Medina
40	Al-Jinn (The Spirits)	72	Meccan	
41	Ya Sin	36	Meccan	Except 45, from Medina
42	Al-Furqan (The Criterion)	25	Meccan	Except 68-70, from Medina
43	Fatir (The Originator or Creation)	35	Meccan	
44	Maryam (Mary)	19	Meccan	Except 58 and 71, from Medina
45	Ta Ha	20	Meccan	Except 130 and 131, from Medina
46	Al-Waqi'ah (The Inevitable)	56	Meccan	Except 81 and 82, from Medina

47	Al-Shu'ara (The Poets)	26	Meccan	Except 197 and 224-227, from Medina
48	Al-Naml (The Ants)	27	Meccan	
49	Al-Qasas (The Narrations)	28	Meccan	Except 52-55 from Medina and 85 from Juhfa at the time of the Hijra
50	Al-Isra' (The Night Journey)	17	Meccan	Except 26, 32, 33, 57, 73-80, from Medina
51	Yunus (Jonah)	10	Meccan	Except 40, 94, 95, 96, from Medina
52	Hud (The Prophet Hud)	11	Meccan	Except 12, 17, 114, from Medina
53	Yusuf (Joseph)	12	Meccan	Except 1, 2, 3, 7, from Medina
54	Al-Hijr (The Rocky Tract)	15	Meccan	Except 87, from Medina
55	Al-An'am (The Cattle)	6	Meccan	Except 20, 23, 91, 93, 114, 151, 152, 153, from Medina
56	As-Saffat (Those Ranged in Ranks)	37	Meccan	
57	Luqman	31	Meccan	Except 27-29, from Medina
58	Saba (Sheba)	34	Meccan	
59	Al-Zumar (Crowds)	39	Meccan	
60	Ghafir (Forgiver)	40	Meccan	Except 56, 57, from Medina
61	Fussilat (Expounded)	41	Meccan	
62	Al-Shura (Consultation)	42	Meccan	Except 23, 24, 25, 27, from Medina
63	Al-Zukhruf (The Gold Adornments)	43	Meccan	Except 54, from Medina
64	Al-Dukhan (The Smoke)	44	Meccan	
65	Al-Jathiya (The Kneeling Down)	45	Meccan	Except 14, from Medina
66	Al-Ahqaf (Winding Sand-tracts)	46	Meccan	Except 10, 15, 35, from Medina
67	Adh-Dhariyat (The Winds that Scatter)	51	Meccan	
68	Al-Ghashiyah (The Overwhelming Event)	88	Meccan	
69	Al-Kahf (The Cave)	18	Meccan	Except 28, 83-101, from Medina
70	Al-Nahl (The Bee)	16	Meccan	Except the last three verses from Medina
71	Nuh (Noah)	71	Meccan	
72	Ibrahim (Abraham)	14	Meccan	Except 28, 29, from Medina
73	Al-Anbiya (The Prophets)	21	Meccan	
74	Al-Mu'minun (The Believers)	23	Meccan	
75	Al-Sajdah (The Prostration)	32	Meccan	Except 16-20, from Medina
76	At-Tur (The Mount)	52	Meccan	
77	Al-Mulk (The Dominion)	67	Meccan	
78	Al-Haqqah (The Sure Reality)	69	Meccan	
79	Al-Ma'arij (The Ways of Ascent)	70	Meccan	
80	Al-Naba (The Great News)	78	Meccan	
81	Al-Nazi'at (Those Who Tear Out)	79	Meccan	
82	Al-Infitar (The Cleaving Asunder)	82	Meccan	
83	Al-Inshiqaq (The Rending Asunder)	84	Meccan	
84	Ar-Rum (The Romans)	30	Meccan	Except 17, from Medina
85	Al-Ankabut (The Spider)	29	Meccan	Except 1-11, from Medina
86	Al-Mutaffifin (The Dealing in Fraud)	83	Meccan	
87	Al-Baqara (The Heifer)	2	Medinan	Except 281 from Mina at the time of the Last Hajj
88	Al-Anfal (The Spoils of War)	8	Medinan	Except 30-36 from Mecca
89	Al-Imran (The Family of Imran)	3	Medinan	
90	Al-Ahzab (The Confederates)	33	Medinan	
91	Al-Mumtahinah (That Which Examines)	60	Medinan	
92	Al-Nisa (The Women)	4	Medinan	
93	Al-Zalزالah (The Earthquake)	99	Medinan	
94	Al-Hadid (Iron)	57	Medinan	
95	Muhammad	47	Medinan	Except 13, revealed during the Prophet's Hijrah
96	Al-Ra'd (The Thunder)	13	Medinan	
97	Al-Rahman (The Most Gracious)	55	Medinan	

98	Al-Insan (Man)	76	Medinan	
99	At-Talaq (Divorce)	65	Medinan	
100	Al-Bayyinah (The Clear Evidence)	98	Medinan	
101	Al-Hashr (The Mustering)	59	Medinan	
102	Al-Nur (The Light)	24	Medinan	
103	Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage)	22	Medinan	Except 52-55, revealed between Mecca and Medina
104	Al-Munafiqun(The Hypocrites)	63	Medinan	
105	Al-Mujadilah (The Woman who Pleads)	58	Medinan	
106	Al-Hujurat (The Chambers)	49	Medinan	
107	At-Tahrim (Prohibition)	66	Medinan	
108	At-Taghabun (The Mutual Loss and Gain)	64	Medinan	
109	Al-Saff (The Battle Array)	61	Medinan	
110	Al-Jumu'ah (Friday)	62	Medinan	
111	Al-Fath (The Victory)	48	Medinan	Revealed while returning from Hodaybiyya
112	Al-Ma'ida (The Repast)	5	Medinan	Except 3, revealed at Arafat on Last Hajj
113	Al-Tawbah (The Repentance)	9	Medinan	Except last two verses from Mecca
114	Al-Nasr (The Help)	110	Medinan	Revealed at Mina on Last Hajj, but regarded as Medinan surah

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