This is an examination of Islam from a Christian perspective and a comparison of major Christian and Islamic doctrines. It includes examinations of Islam’s basic authorities, beliefs, sects, and history and comparisons of Jesus and Muhammad, sin and salvation according to Christianity and Islam, Yahweh and Allah, and the Bible and the Qur’an. This analysis reveals Islam’s commonalities with and differences from Christianity. 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. Many Muslim sources are cited and quoted from. The bibliography indicates which sources are written by Muslims, ex-Muslims, and non-Muslims. Appendices include the chronological order in which the Qur’an’s surahs were given, examples from the Hadith of what Muhammad requires and prohibits Muslims to do and believe, and the 99 names of Allah.
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I. BASIC OVERVIEW OF ISLAM

1. Introduction

Islam means “submission to Allah” (Darußsalam 2002b: 332; Dirks 2008: 178; Emerick 2004: 402). Muslim means “one who is submitted to God” (Braswell 2000: 3; Emerick 2004: 405). Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, is a world religion that traces its origins back to Abraham. Like Christianity and unlike the other major world religions, Islam is an overtly evangelic, proselytizing religion. Indeed, Islam divides the world into two areas: (1) Dar al-Islam (“house of Islam”), the world of peace, where Islam is practiced and the Qurʾan is observed; and (2) Dar al-Harb (“house of war”), the world of warfare and ignorance, which is dominated by non-Muslims. “The mission of Islam is to bring this second world under Islam” (Braswell 2000: 3).

A. Size and growth

1. Christianity and Islam are the two largest religions in the world. As of 2015, counting all denominations, sects, and subgroups within each religion, Christianity numbered approximately 2.4 billion adherents (approximately 33% of the world’s population) and Islam numbered approximately 1.8 billion adherents (approximately 24.1% of the world’s population) (“List of religious populations” 2019: Adherent estimates as of 2012; “Islam” 2019: Demographics).

2. Islam is the fastest growing major religion in the world (Emerick 2004: 3; “Growth of religion” 2019). Over the past century Islam has grown at a rate almost 50% faster than the growth rate of Christianity (“Growth of religion” 2019: Historical growth [chart]); over the past 40 years, Islam has grown at a rate more than twice as fast as Christianity’s growth rate (“Major religious groups” 2019: Trends in adherence [chart]). Consequently, even given the rapid increase of the world’s population over the past century, Islam has almost doubled its share of the world’s population whereas Christianity’s share of the world’s population has remained the same (“Growth of religion” 2019: Historical growth [chart]).

B. Origin and demographics

1. Foundation and spread. Islam was founded by Muhammad (AD 570-632), a native of Mecca in modern Saudi Arabia. Muhammad and his followers conquered Arabia during Muhammad’s life. Following Muhammad’s death, Gregory Davis states, “Islam rapidly spread into the territories of Byzantium, Persia, and

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1 Actually, Muslims claim that “the religion of Adam was Islam, as was the religion of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, etc. . . . Islam began with Adam, and has evolved in accordance with the progressive revelations given by Allah to His various prophets.” (Dirks 2008: 29, 38; see Q. 42:13) Muslims contend that Judaism, Christianity, and other religions are distortions from Allah’s revelations. Consequently, the prophets were sent “to call the people back to Islam from Judaism, from other forms of deviation, and from frank unbelief” (Ibid.: 33-36). “This evolution of Islam finds its perfect culmination in the final revelations of Allah, which were bestowed on the prophet Muhammad.” (Ibid.: 38; see also Emerick 2004: 193; Nehls and Eric 2009: 1). Despite such claims, even Muhammad said, “I am commanded to be the first of those who submit themselves to Allah (as Muslims)” (Q. 6:14, Hilali-Khan) and “I am the first of the Muslims” (Q. 6:163, Hilali-Khan). The Qurʾan and Muhammad acknowledge that Islam is a different religion from others: “He is who has sent His Messenger (Muhammad) with guidance and the religion of truth (Islam), that He may make it (Islam) superior over all religions” (Q. 48:28, Hilali-Khan). Muhammad said, “To you be your religion, and to me my religion (Islamic Monotheism)” (Q. 109:6, Hilali-Khan). Professor Abdur-Radhi Muhammad Abdul-Mohsin of the University of Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University (Saudi Arabia) calls Muhammad “the founder of a true religion” and states that “when Muhammad began teaching Islam, there was no one in the whole world who had the same religion” (Abdul-Mohsin 2006: 13, 130, emph. added).


3 A good, reasonably succinct introduction to Islam’s beliefs and history, available online, is Gregory Davis, “Islam 101.”

4 Woodberry and Shubin present a more nuanced picture: “Islam’s growth rate of 2.15 percent annually does exceed Christianity’s rate of 1.45 percent. It is worth pointing out, however, that 96 percent of the growth of Islam is attributable to biological growthchildren born into Muslim families. Islam is flourishing in parts of the world where population growth is high. Christianity, increasingly decentralized, has its traditional base in parts of the world where population growth is quite slow or has come to a standstill. Thus, the overall trends do show Islam growing faster than Christianity.

Conversion growth is where you find quite a contrast. According to figures presented in the 2000 edition of the World Christian Encyclopedia, each year some 950,000 people convert to Islam from some other persuasion. Christianity, by contrast, sees some 2.7 million each year shift their affiliation to Christianity and presumably their allegiance to Christ from some other religion.” (Woodberry and Shubin 2001: “The fastest growing religion”)

5 Older writings usually spelled his name Mohammed. Newer writings generally spell it Muhammad.
Western Europe in the decades after Muhammad’s death. The creaking Byzantine and Persian powers, having battled each other into mutual decline, offered little resistance to this unanticipated onslaught. The Arab Muslim armies charged into the Holy Land, conquered what is now Iraq and Iran, then swept west across North Africa, into Spain, and finally into France. The Muslim offensive was finally halted in the West at the Battle of Poitiers/Tours, not far from Paris, in 732 AD. In the east, the jihad penetrated deep into Central Asia.” (Davis 2014: sec.2.4.i)

2. Demographics. Currently, approximately 57 countries have Muslim majorities (“Islam” 2019: Demographics). The majority of the world’s Muslims live in Asia and Africa, of whom 62% are living in Asia (Ibid.). The ten countries with the largest Muslim populations, which account for over one billion Muslims are in order: Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Algeria, Morocco (“Top Ten Countries” 2018: Chart). Africa is the only continent with a Muslim majority (Ibid.). Arabs make up only about 20% of the world’s Muslim population (“Islam” 2019: Demographics).

C. Islamic sects

Muslims generally present themselves as a united community (Ummah) in contrast to the many denominations of the Christian church. This stems from the fact that, as former Muslim Thabiti Anyabwile puts it, Islam is “primarily an identity”; thus, “Of first importance is to be Muslim; the second thing is to belong to a national or ethnic category” (Anaybwile 2011: 89). However, “while Muslims share a common Qur’an and Hadith, the Muslim world is complicated. . . . Realities range from secular and apathetic cultural Muslims in many countries to the devout Qur’anic Muslims.” (Garrison 2014: 232)

Additionally, Muhammad said, “The Jews split into seventy-one sects, or seventy-two sects, and the Christians similarly, and my Ummah will split into seventy-three sects” (at-Tirmidhi: 2640). Of the “seventy-three sects,” Muhammad also said, “Seventy-two of them will go to Hell and one of them will go to Paradise, and it is the majority group” (Abi Dawud: 4597). The Dictionary of Islam states that the actual number of Islamic sects have “far exceeded the Prophet’s predictions, for the sects of Islam even exceed in number and variety those of the Christian religion” (Hughes 1895: 567). The major ones include (see Braswell 2000: 59-70; Emerick 2004: 359-72; Nehls and Eric 2009: 66-80; Schirrmacher 2011: 51-59):

- **The Sunnis (“One of the Path,” i.e., those who follow the Sunnah).** Sunnis constitute at least 80% of all Muslims. The vast majority of teaching concerning “orthodox” Islam is Sunni.
- **The Shi’ah (Shiites) (“partisans”).** Shiites constitute about 10% of Muslims (Iran and Iraq are largely Shiite). The Shiites believe that the caliphs (Muslim leaders who succeeded Muhammad) should have been hereditary and should not have begun with Abu Bakr but with Ali, Muhammad’s son-in-law, and Ali’s sons. The assassination of one of Ali’s sons led to permanent estrangement between Sunnis and Shiites. One sect within the Shiite movement is the Ismailis who are active in East Africa and whose spiritual leader is the Agha Khan.
- **The Wahhabi.** This sect is an ultraorthodox, literalist movement within Sunni Islam. It began in the 1700s in Saudi Arabia. Its founder wanted to revert Islam to its original form. It is very influential in Saudi Arabia and has influenced other ultraconservative Islamic movements around the world.
- **The Sufis.** Sufis are Muslim mystics. They form groups around a Shaikh, their spiritual leader. They renounce worldliness and seek an ecstatic experience of annihilation of the self in God. They use chanting, rhythmic dancing, and music to try to achieve direct contact with Allah.
- **The Ahmadiyya.** This group was founded in India in the late 1800s. Its founder claimed to be the Mahdi or Messiah. Although the rest of Islam denies the crucifixion of Jesus, the Ahmadiyya claim that Jesus was on the cross but was taken down and nursed back to health. The Ahmadiyya also advocate monogamy. They are very missionary-minded and are rejected by the rest of the Muslim world.6
- **Folk Islam.** Folk Islam is not a separate sect but amounts to the joining of traditional religions with Islam. Thus, while the “five pillars” of Islam may be practiced (see below), belief in the spirit world, veneration of ancestors, the use of spells, charms, and amulets, and dependence on shamans and witch doctors are the most important practical expressions of religious life. One writer noted, “Whereas Formal Islam advocates a comprehensive, legalistic code of ritual and laws, Folk Islam’s domain is spirits, demons, blessing, cursing, healing and sorcery” (Love 1994: 87; see also Brown 2006a: 6-7). Various researchers have estimated that somewhere between 70-85% of all Muslims in the world are influenced by folk Islam (Brown 2006a: 6-7).

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6 In appendix 3 of his book *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, Nabeel Qureshi, a former member of the Ahmadiyya sect, describes why Ahmadis are legitimately Muslims (Qureshi 2016: 341-48).
II. Basic Aspects of Islam

For a committed Muslim, “religion is not a matter of intellectual or theological convictions. It is not a set of beliefs. It is an identity drawn from his family, society, culture, and country.” (Houssney 2010: 82, emph. added; see also ibid. at 103-11; Brown 2008: 19 [“For many Muslims, being a Muslim is an inseparable part of their self-identity, their background, their family, their community, and their cultural heritage, regardless of what they actually believe about God”]; Travis 2000: 53 [“Even nominal Muslims tend to see Islam as a single fabric weaving together tradition, culture, and customs related to dress, diet, family life, morality, worship, and in some contexts, even economics and politics”]; Anyabwile 2011: 90 [“Islam seeks to regulate not just the religious life of the Muslim but all of life—economic, family, military, and so on”]; see also Nehls and Eric 2009b: 131-32)

Because Islam is designed to a comprehensive ordering of all of life—individual and corporate, sacred and secular—it is therefore as much governmental as it is religious. Robert Spencer states, “Islam has always been not just a religion in the Western sense, but a political and social system that acknowledges no legitimate distinction between the sacred and secular realms, and mandates religious law as the only legitimate system of law and governance” (Spencer 2009: 227). Muslim apologist Yahiya Emerick points out that “Islamic Law mixes personal morality and civil and criminal law into one overall code in keeping with the religious view that there is no difference between the secular and spiritual realms” (Emerick 2004: 35). Consequently, Islam’s goal of advancing Dar al-Islam (“House of Islam”) “is not done by teaching the pillars of Islam but by advancing sharia, the law of Islam” (Anyabwile 2011: 90). Consistent Muslims hold that “placing man-made systems of government in the position of the most wise legislation of Islam [or even] being pleased with this (man-made systems of government replacing Islamic law)” is anti-Islamic and “negates Tawhid [the foundational Islamic principle that Allah is One] and contradicts it” (Darussalam 2002a: 239).

A. Sources of authority

1. The Qur’an. The Qur’an is the holy book of Islam. It means “recitation” or “reading.” It is considered to be the very Word of Allah, eternally existing on a tablet in heaven (Q. 85:21-22). It supposedly was recited, piece by piece, by the angel Gabriel to Muhammad over a period of 23 years (Q. 17:106; 25:32). The Qur’an is divided into 114 surahs. Muslim scholar Muhammad bin Abdullaah As-Suhaym notes that a surah “is a section of the glorious Qur’an that contains a group of Verses [ayah; plural = ayat] that may or may not be related in meanings. Some translators do translate it as a chapter which is quite inaccurate because a chapter is a combination of paragraphs in which related issues are discussed.” (As-Suhaym 2006: 132n.1) The surahs are not “arranged chronologically or by subject matter” (Haleem 2005: xix; see Appendix A for the chronological order of the surahs). There is a marked difference in “tone” and subject matter between the earlier surahs from the period when Muhammad was weaker in Mecca and the later surahs when Muhammad was in a position of power in Medina (Haleem 2005: xvi-xviii; Michael and McAlister 2010: 17; Sell 1923: 187-95; Gilchrist 1995: ch.1.4). That difference includes the Qur’an’s (Muhammad’s) attitude toward Christianity (al-Fadi 2003: 2).

The Qur’an itself specifically recounts that it was given in Arabic (Q. 12:2; 13:37; 16:103; 20:113; 26:195; 39:28; 41:3; 42:7; 43:3; 46:12). Consequently, “Muslims believe that the Qur’an is inseparable from the language in which it was revealed, and for this reason, all Muslims worldwide recite it in Arabic, even though today the vast majority of Muslims are neither Arabs nor native speakers of Arabic. . . . This makes any attempt to render the Qur’an into another language a daunting task, and explains why Muslims prefer to call non-Arabic versions of the Qur’an ‘interpretations,’ not ‘translations.’” (Chaudhry 2014: n.p.; see also Emerick 2004: 236) “Indeed, the language of the Qur’an, as revealed to Muhammad, can be regarded as untranslatable” (Laylah 2005: 58).

2. The Prophetic Sunnah (the life, sayings, and examples of Muhammad). Muhammad’s life example is called his Sunnah (i.e., path, way, manner of life). Suhaym says, “The Sunnah is the second source of the religion of Islam. It means all that is reported from the Prophet – with well-connected and authentic chain of transmitters – of his sayings, deeds, confirmations and qualities. . . . The pure Sunnah is the practical implementation of the rules, beliefs, acts of worship, kinds of relationships and manners that Islam enjoins. . . .

Typically, in my ECLEA teaching books I put citations to the Bible in bold and put lengthy quotes in italics. I will follow the same format with respect to citations of and quotations from the Qur’an. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from the Qur’an will be from the English translation by Yusuf Ali, The Meaning of the Noble Qur’an. Other versions that will be cited or quoted from (i.e., Sahih International [cited as Sahih], Pickthall, Shakir, Sarwar, al-Hilali and Khan [cited as Hilali-Khan], and Arberry) are found on the Muslim website Quranic Arabic Corpus (http://corpus.quran.com/); the translations by Muhammad Asad and M. A. S. Abdel Haleem will also be cited and quoted from. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from the Bible will be from the New American Standard Bible.
The Sunnah, as it is regarded as the practical implementation of Islam, it also explains the Qur’an, makes comments on it, and explains verses that have general meanings. . . . The Sunnah may, in some cases, give independent explanations of some rules and legislations that are not in the Qur’an. One must have belief in the Qur’an and Sunnah that they are the basic sources of the religion of Islam that must be followed and turned to. The command of both must be obeyed, their prohibitions must be abstained from and their contents must be believed.” (As-Suhaym 2006: 163-65; see also Emerick 2004: 23)

The Qur’an puts things in even stronger terms. Q. 33:21 says, “Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in Allah and in the Final Day, and who engages much in the Praise of Allah.” For the Muslim masses “any story that enhances his image will be freely accepted on this ground alone” (Gilchrist 1994: 137). The Qur’an frequently commands Muslims to “obey Allah and the Messenger” (Q. 3:32, 132; 4:13, 59, 69, 80; 5:92; 8:1, 20, 46; 9:71; 24:51, 52, 54, 56; 33:33; 47:33; 58:13; 64:12). Other passages go further: “He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah” (Q. 4:80; see also 4:69; 48:10); “They can have no (real) Faith, until they make thee [Muhammad] judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against Thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction” (Q. 4:65; see also 3:31; 7:157; 59:7). On the other hand, “It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger to have any option about their decision: if any one disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path” (Q. 33:36). Indeed, “Those who disobey Allah and His Messenger and transgress His limits will be Admitted to a Fire, to abide therein: And they shall have a humiliating punishment” (Q. 4:14). Muhammad put it like this, “Between us and you is Allah’s Book. So whatever we find in it that is lawful, we consider lawful, and whatever we find in it that is unlawful, we consider it unlawful. Indeed whatever the Messenger of Allah made unlawful, it is the same as what Allah made unlawful.” (at-Tirmidhi: 2664)

In his farewell sermon preached shortly before his death, Muhammad said, “I leave behind me two things, the Qur’an and my example, the Sunnah and if you follow these you will never go astray” (Muhammad 2014: n.p.). Suhaym states, “One must have belief in the Qur’an and Sunnah that they are the basic sources of the religion of Islam that must be followed and turned to. The command of both must be obeyed, their prohibitions must be abstained from and their contents must be believed.” (As-Suhaym 2006: 165) Emerick similarly explains, “By stating that Muhammad is God’s last Messenger, we are pledging ourselves to practicing what he preached, doing what he did, and looking to him for our role model” (Emerick 2004: 130).

Whatever Muhammad said, did, or gave silent approval to is called a hadith (plural = ahadith) (Emerick 2004: 241-44). The Sunnah forms the basis of the Hadith. Since the Sunnah and ahadith are specific and practical, in many ways they may be more authoritative than the Qur’an although formally the Qur’an is the foremost authority. As one Muslim says, “If the Qur’an is a Muslim’s primary textbook for the examination of life, the Ahadith . . . represent the practical, supplemental reading, which may well help make the difference between passing and failing that all important examination” (Dirks 2008: 46). The Hadith can even supersede the Qur’an.8

Each hadith consists of two parts: the “chain of transmitters” or source (isnad) and the content (matn). Muslim scholars have graded the statements of Muhammad into degrees of reliability and have selected six collections of Muhammad’s ahadith as authentic (those of al-Bukhari, Muslim, at-Tirmidhi, Abi Dawud, an-Nasa’i, and Ibn Majah).9 Each collection was compiled in the late ninth and early tenth centuries (i.e., 250-300 years after Muhammad’s death). The collections differ among themselves, and not all Muslim scholars agree on the addition of Ibn Majah. Some consider the collection Al-Muwatta by Malik Ibn Anas (711-795) to be the legitimate sixth book. “The reason for the addition of Ibn Majah’s Sunan is that it contains many Hadiths which do not figure in the other five, whereas all the Hadiths in the Muwatta’ figure in the other Sahih [authentic] books” (“Kutub al-Sittah” 2018: Introduction). Additionally, the Mishkat al-Masabih, compiled by Al-Tabrizi in the 1300s, has enjoyed wide popularity in the world of Islamic learning and is considered by Sunni scholars to be an important work. Apart from the Qur’an itself, Islam’s entire theology, including its judicial system and practical application to life, is based on these books (Emerick 2004: 241-44; Nehls and Eric 2009: 118-29).

3. Shari’ah (Islamic Law). The shari’ah is a body of legal literature devised by Islamic scholars (the

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8 This is an issue to which we will return in chapter 5. THE BIBLE AND THE QUR’AN.
9 These and other collections of hadith are available online at http://sunnah.com/ and at https://sunniconnect.com/m3/blog/downloads/ahadith/. In this book I use “hadith” for an individual saying of Muhammad, “ahadith” for several such sayings, and “the Hadith” for the overall collection of Muhammad’s sayings. The numbers of the hadith are the “reference” numbers as given on the sunnah.com website. For a sample of Muhammad’s edicts, see APPENDIX B—A SAMPLE OF WHAT MUHAMMAD AND ISLAM REQUIRE AND FORBID MUSLIMS TO DO AND BELIEVE.
‘Ulema). Georges Houssney states, ‘The Qur’an is not taught to be understood by the masses. It’s taught to be recited for gaining merit with God. The Sharia, not the Qur’an, is what dictates the daily life of a Muslim.” (Houssney 2010: 89) The purpose of shari’ah is “to provide a ruling on any issue that may confront the Muslim community” (Emerick 2004: 55). It is designed to regulate all aspects of a Muslim’s life. The shari’ah classifies every activity or thing as either halal (permitted) or haram (forbidden) (Ibid.: 264). The shari’ah is based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah. If those do not speak to an issue, the opinions of Muhammad’s immediate followers (known as the sahaba) are consulted; if none of the foregoing apply to an issue, the scholars may use their reasoning and analogy to provide an answer. Legal rulings are called fatwas. There are five schools of legal tradition founded by five Islamic scholars in the latter half of the 8th century and first half of the 9th century AD. Four of those are Sunni; one is Shiite. Muslim author ‘Abdus-Salam al-Basuni states the proper attitude Muslims are to have regarding shari’ah: “The position of the believing Muslim is ‘I have no opinion in what Allah and His Messenger (Blessings and peace be upon him) have legislated, I hear and obey’” (al-Basuni 2007: 16).


“The basics of Islam are all rigidly prescribed. . . . The call to prayer is the same every day, the ritual of ablutions is likewise always exactly the same every time a Muslim goes to mosque, and each . . . prayer ceremony is an exact repetition of the previous one. Every ritual of the Hajj Pilgrimage to Mecca is precisely defined and the observance of the Ramadan fast likewise never changes. The repetitive nature of the practices of Islam is derived directly from that first command, Iqra! ['read” or “recite,” the first word of Q. 96:1, supposedly the first ayah given to Muhammad], and the true Muslim just repeats what has been revealed without ever having to think about it or being allowed to question it.” (Gilchrist 1994: 91) Former Muslim Thabitii Anyabwile adds, “The forms are as integral to Islam as the theology. Islam is significantly constituted by outward form.” (Anyabwile 2011: 90) Islam’s “five pillars” are:

1. Shahadah. Shahadah is the declaration of faith of the Muslim. According to the prayers that Muslims are required to say, the shahadah is repeated a minimum of 17 times per day. It says, “There is no god except Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.” In a catechism entitled “50 Questions and Answers on Islamic Monotheism,” The Research Division of Darussalam Publishers, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia explained the meaning of this: “Q.21. What is the meaning of Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah? A. It means obeying him in whatever he commanded, refraining from what he forbade, and believing all that he informed.” (Darussalam 2002b: 334)11

2. Salat. Although many people describe this second pillar as “prayers,” Islam distinguishes personal prayer and supplication (du’a) from salat. Salat is “the religious ritual that a Muslim must perform five times every day. . . . It consists of a physical routine of bowing and prostrating coupled with a litany of short recited passages and phrases.” (Emerick 2004: 136) The participants must face toward Mecca. The timing and the number of repetitions of the prayers (including body movements) are also prescribed: early morning (two repetitions); midday (four repetitions); late afternoon (four repetitions); evening (three repetitions); night (four repetitions). Additionally, the face, hands, and feet must be washed and proper clothes must be worn in order for prayer to begin, and the salat must be said “in Arabic” (Ibid.: 138, 144).

3. Zakat. Zakat is a fixed portion of wealth that is required to be paid to benefit the poor in the Muslim community. It is required of Muslims who have assets of any kind equivalent to the value of three ounces of gold. The zakat is 2.5% of the Muslim’s average annual wealth.

4. Saum. Saum is fasting during the month of Ramadan, which is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. From dawn until sunset Muslims are to avoid food, drink, and sexual intercourse. However, they may

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10 Anyabwile notes that the Five Pillars “emerged as a consensus regarding the religious duties of the faith. Early on in the history of Islam some Muslim clerics and scholars argued jihad should be the fifth pillar because jihad, or striving in the cause of Allah, runs throughout the entire practice of the faith” (Anyabwile 2011: 89n.7). The Five Pillars described here are according to Sunni Islam. Georges Houssney states, ‘The Shiite Five Pillars are quite different, made up of abstract concepts rather than deeds’ (Houssney 2010: 51n.1). Since Sunnis constitute at least 80% of Muslims, this book deals primarily with Sunni Islam. See also the article entitled “True Islam from a Christian perspective” found at http://www.true-islam.info, which compares Islam’s “five pillars” to similar statements found in the Bible.

11 See also As-Suhayym 2002: 168 (“Testifying that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah means to follow him in all that he informs, to abstain from all he prohibits and warns against and to worship Allah with only what he legislates”). Muhammad himself said, “None of you will have faith till he loves me more than his father, his children and all mankind” (al-Bukhari: 15; see also an-Nasa’i: 5013, 5014, 5015; Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 67).
freely partake of all of those things between sunset and dawn. The sick, travelers, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and women who have just delivered a baby are exempted from the requirement of saum.

5. **Hajj.** Every adult, sane, Muslim who is able to do so is required to make a pilgrimage (*hajj*) to the House of Allah—the sacred mosque of Mecca—once in his or her lifetime. The hajj is required to take place from the eighth to the tenth day of the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. All male pilgrims are required to wear two specific white garments, and all pilgrims (male and female) are not allowed to have sexual intercourse, shave or cut their nails, use colognes or scented oils, hunt or kill any living thing, or fight, argue, or bother anyone during the hajj.


1. **Belief in Allah.** Belief in Allah includes: He is the creator, possessor, and controller of all matters; He is the only true deity and that all other deities besides Him are false. Belief also includes belief in His names and attributes. Above all, belief in Allah means belief in His oneness, that He has no partner in His lordship; He alone has the right to be worshipped. This doctrine of the oneness of Allah (which is a solitary oneness that excludes the concept of the trinity) is the Islamic doctrine of *tauhid.*

2. **Belief in the angels.** According to Islam, angels were created out of light and cannot be seen (although Allah sometimes shows some of them to his prophets and messengers). They have different functions: Jibreen (Gabriel) supposedly transmitted the Qur’an to Muhammad; other angels are the keepers of Hell and Paradise, and others perform other functions. Each human being is assigned two angels, one to write down the good deeds, one to write down the bad deeds. Angels are large in size and have wings. Additionally, attached to each person at birth is a *qarina,* the person’s demonic equal, whose purpose is to haunt and distract the person from the straight path. Also, spirits created from fire are known as *shirk,* and the person’s demonic equal, whose purpose is to haunt and distract the person from the straight path. Also, spirits created from fire are known as *jinn* (most but not all of whom are evil). The ultimate evil being is Shaytan (Satan).

3. **Belief in Allah’s books.** Islam recognizes four major holy books: the *Tawrat* (Torah) given to Moses; the *Zabur* (Psalms) given to David; the *Injil* (Gospel) given to Jesus; and the *Qur’an* (Recitation) given to Muhammad. Muslims contend that the Qur’an is uncreated and eternal. Because the Qur’an contradicts the Bible at many points, Muslims contend that all of the past books no longer exist or were corrupted by the rabbis and priests assigned the task of protecting them; however, they maintain that Allah has guaranteed to protect the Qur’an from corruption, so it has remained free from all defects.12

4. **Belief in the Messengers (prophets).** Islam contends that Allah sent prophets and messengers (who are considered superior to prophets) to all the nations to warn people of idolatry, disobedience to Allah, and *shirk* (the cardinal sin of attributing partners to Allah), and to call people to submit to Allah in the true religion of Islam. Some Islamic scholars say that 124,000 messengers have been sent. The Qur’an names 25 messengers. The major ones are Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Muhammad is considered the greatest of all the messengers. He is the last and is considered “the Seal of the Prophets” (*Q.* 33:40).

5. **Belief in the Last Day (i.e., of judgment).** Islam contends that there will be a last day of resurrection and judgment. Islam teaches that people’s deeds will be weighed in scales. A bridge (*sirat*) no thicker than a razor leading to paradise will be set up over the pit of hell. Everyone will have to cross that bridge. Those not destined for paradise will fall into hell. There are seven levels of both heaven and hell. If people in hell affirmed the oneness of Allah (*tauhid*) they can get out of hell after a fixed term. Those who committed *shirk* (attributing partners to Allah) will be in hell forever.

6. **Belief in predestination (pre-decree; divine destiny).** Islam teaches that everything that happens in the universe, both good and bad, faith and unbelief, happens by the will and decree of Allah, and Allah does whatever he wills. What he decrees emanates from his knowledge, power, and will. It is unchangeable. He knows everything that has happened, is happening, and will happen for all eternity, and he wrote down the decrees concerning creation in a book in which nothing is neglected. Allah guides whomever he wills by his mercy, and he leads astray whomever he wills by his wisdom. Allah’s will and decrees are not to be questioned. “Your Lord creates whatsoever He wills and chooses, no choice have they (in any matter). Glorified be Allah, and exalted above all that they associate as partners (with Him).” (*Q.* 28:68, Hilali-Khan)

**D. Calendar, festivals, holy days, and holy places**

1. **The Islamic calendar (“Islamic calendar” 2020).** Islam follows a lunar calendar of twelve months, not the solar calendar. Consequently, the Islamic year is approximately 354 days long instead of 365 days. As a

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12 These claims are all discussed in chapter 5. **THE BIBLE AND THE QUR’AN.**
result, the months fall back about 11 days each solar year, returning to their starting points after about 33 lunar years. “Muslims are forbidden to adjust their year by adding an extra month as the Jews do to keep their lunar calendar in synch with the seasons. Hence, the months of the Muslim year do not relate to the seasons.” (Michael and McAlister 2010: 55)

The first year of the Islamic calendar is set by the flight of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina on 17 July 622 (this is called the *hegira*). In the year 639, Umar, the second caliph, introduced the *hegira* as the beginning of the Islamic calendar (Ibid.: 5). Thus, 622 is 1 AH (After Hegira) according to Muslim reckoning. 1441 AH runs from approximately 1 September 2019 to 20 August 2020. These are the names of the Islamic months:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number of days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muharram</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safar</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabi I</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabi II</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumada I</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumada II</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajab</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sha`ban</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramadan</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawwal</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhu’l-Qa’dah</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhu’l-Hijjah</td>
<td>29 or 30*     (*leap year)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Islamic holy days and festivals. The Qur’an says, “The number of months in the sight of Allah is twelve (in a year)—so ordained by Him the day He created the heavens and the earth; of them four are sacred” (*Q. 9:36*). Those four sacred months are Muharram, Rajab, Dhu’l-Qa’dah, and Dhu’l-Hijjah. The following are common Muslim festivals (Braswell 2000: 40-41; Emerick 2004: 262-63; Nehls and Eric 2009: 231-34):

- New year’s day (first of Muharram). A day that commemorates the hegira.
- *Ashura* (tenth of Muharram). A day of voluntary fasting to commemorate the day on which it is said God created Adam and Eve. This day is particularly special to Shiites, since it was on this day that Ali’s son Hussain was killed.
- *Maulid un Nabi* (twelfth of Rabi I). The birthday of Muhammad. On Lamu island off the coast of Kenya this is a major event, with Qur’an recitation competitions that last for a week.
- *Ramadan*: During the month of Ramadan Muslims are to fast from food, drink, and sexual intercourse between dawn and sunset. It is believed that fasting during Ramadan is thirty times better than at any other time and that those who fast with pure motives may obtain remission of their sins.
- *Lailatu’l-Qadr* (“Night of Power [or Glory],” twenty-seventh of Ramadan. This day commemorates when the angel Gabriel supposedly brought the first verses of the Qur’an to Muhammad. The Qur’an says, “The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. Therein come down the angels and the Spirit by Allah’s permission, on every errand: Peace! . . . This until the rise of morn!” (*Q. 97:3-5*). Some Muslims pray during the entire night.
- *Eidu’l-Fitr* (“The Minor Feast” or “Festival of the fast Breaking,” first of Shawwal). This, the most popular holiday in Islam, celebrates the breaking of the fast of Ramadan. It is a time of parties, visiting family and friends, exchanging presents, and special sweets are prepared.
- *Eidu’l-Adha* (“The Great Festival” or “Festival of the Sacrifice,” tenth of Dhu’l-Hijjah). This celebrates the completion of the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca, which is one of the “five pillars of Islam” [see above]). It is celebrated around the world, even by Muslims who have not participated in the Hajj. It is a festive time of visitation, feasting, exchange of gifts, and buying new clothes. It is also a day of sacrifice based on *Q. 22:34-37; Q. 37:100-110*. “Eid-ul-Adha commemorates Prophet Abraham’s unselﬁsh act of

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13 “The Spirit” is generally understood by Muslims to refer to the angel Gabriel, not the Holy Spirit (see Ali 2006: Q. 97:4 n.6219; Haleem 2005: Q. 97:3n.a; Dirks 2008: 197). This is an inference that is not explicitly stated in the Qur’an. For more on this see n.73, below.
sacrificing his own son Ishmael to the One God, Allah. . . But miraculously enough, when Abraham was about to sacrifice Ishmael, Allah spared the boy’s life and replaced him with a lamb. 14 And this is what Abraham ultimately sacrificed. To commemorate this outstanding act of sacrifice (qurbani) by Prophet Abraham, people sacrifice a lamb, goat, ram or any other animal on Eid-ul-Adha.” (“Eid-ul-Adha-History” 1988-2012: n.p.)


- **The Kab’ah in Mecca.** Islam’s holiest city is Mecca, where Muhammad is from. However, the holiest site in Mecca is the Kab’ah (“Cube’). The Kab’ah is a brick building approximately 14x18 meters in size, and 12 meters high. It is holy because Muslims believe it was originally constructed as a shrine by Abraham and Ishmael (Q. 2:127). The Kab’ah is covered with black draping and contains a black stone fitted into the east corner, allegedly given by the angel Gabriel to Ishmael. It is toward the Kab’ah that Muslims are required to pray five times per day. The original Kab’ah was a site for idol worship and was destroyed and rebuilt several times. Muhammad played a role in rebuilding and cleansing it of idols. The Kab’ah is surrounded by Masjids of the Prophet” (The Sacred Mosque’).

- **Al-Masjid an-Nabawi (“The Mosque of the Prophet”) in Medina.** This is Islam’s second holiest site. Muhammad was involved in constructing it. The most important feature of the site is the green dome over the center of the mosque, where Muhammad’s tomb is located. 15

- **Al-Aqsa Mosque (“The Farthest Mosque”) in Jerusalem.** This mosque stands over the site where Muhammad allegedly was taken one night by the angel Gabriel on a horselike creature called the Buraq. From there he ascended to heaven before being returned to Mecca (see Q. 17:1, 60; 53:1-18). Jerusalem was also the direction toward which Muslims originally were required to pray until Muhammad received a new “revelation” to change the direction toward the Kab’ah in Mecca (Q. 2:142-144). This mosque is located on temple mount in Jerusalem and is notable for its large gold dome.

## III. Muhammad and the History of Islam

### A. Muhammad

Muhammad’s life can be divided into three distinct parts: (1) His youth and married life up to his “calling” to be a prophet of Allah (AD 570-609); (2) his prophethood during his time in Mecca (AD 610-622); and (3) his life in Medina until his death (AD 622-632).

1. **Life prior to his calling (AD 570-609),** Muhammad was born in AD 570 in Mecca to Abdullah and Amina, of the clan of Hashim of the tribe of Quraish. His father died before he was born, and his mother died when he was six. He was then raised first by his grandfather, Abu’l Muttalib, and then by his uncle, Abu Talib. Muhammad was from a merchant family and as a young man traveled widely accompanying trading caravans. When he was 25 he married Khadijah who was his employer and was 15 years older than he was. By all accounts it was a happy marriage, producing 2 boys and 4 girls. Khadijah died after 25 years of marriage.

2. **His “calling” and prophethood during his time in Mecca (AD 610-622).** Muhammad was in the habit of periodically retreating to a cave. When he was 40 years old he claimed to be visited by the angel Gabriel in the cave, who began reciting for him the Qur’an; he did not know what was happening and became very frightened, but his wife convinced him that this was from Allah (al-Bukhari: 6982; Muslim: 160a). Three years

14 This is contrary to the account in Gen 22:1-19 where God told Abraham to sacrifice (and then spared) Isaac, not Ishmael. Q. 37:100-110 does not specifically name which son Abraham was told to sacrifice. Muslim historian Abu Ja’far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (839-923) points out, “The earliest sages of our Prophet’s nation disagree about which of Abraham’s two sons it was that he was commanded to sacrifice. Some say it was Isaac, while others say it was Ishmael. Both views are supported by statements related on the authority of the Messenger of God.” (al-Tabari 1987a: 82) He then spends 14 pages citing and quoting early Islamic authorities on both sides of the issue. *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* reflects this confusion in its comment on Q. 37:107: “Then We ransomed him the one whom he had been commanded to sacrifice namely Ishmael or Isaac — two different opinions — with a mighty sacrifice a mighty ram from Paradise.”

15 This is contrary to Muhammad’s own last words: “Narrated Aisha: Allah’s Messenger in his fatal illness said, ‘Allah cursed the Jews and the Christians, for they built the places of worship at the graves of their prophets.’ And if that had not been the case, then the Prophet’s grave would have been made prominent before the people. So (the Prophet) was afraid, or the people were afraid that his grave might be taken as a place for worship.” (al-Bukhari: 1390; see also Muslim: 529)
after this event Muhammad started preaching these revelations publicly, proclaiming that “God is One” (i.e., “tauhid”), that complete “surrender” (i.e., “islam”) to Him is the only way acceptable to God, and that he himself was a prophet and messenger of God. Muhammad’s claims resulted in some converts but also caused controversy among the polytheists and the different tribes. In about 620 his wife and uncle died. In 622 Muhammad was invited by Muslim believers in Medina (then known as Yathrib) to settle there and become their leader. He encouraged his followers in Mecca to emigrate to Yathrib and, under cover of night, Muhammad and his close companion Abu Bakr left Mecca for Yathrib (the hejira).

3. His life in Medina until his death (AD 622-632). In his last 10 years, Muhammad’s life was transformed: he went from a devoted believer in his calling who had submitted to rejection and ridicule to a warrior, conqueror, and unquestioned leader of both a religion and a state; he exchanged his poverty for riches and his monogamy for an extensive harem of wives and concubines. After fighting a number of battles against the Meccans, Muhammad’s ranks were swelled with new converts. In 630 he led an army of 10,000 into Mecca which surrendered without a fight. In June 632 Muhammad died after a short illness, which probably was the result of poison. “At the time of his death, Muhammad had emerged as a religious and political leader without equal in the Arabian peninsula. He had founded a community, in fact a nation, based on a monotheistic and prophetic religion. He had taught and required of his followers an orderly lifestyle of prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage.” (Braswell 2000: 15)

B. History of Islam (see Braswell 2000: 47-58; Davis 2014; Emerick 2004: 313-36, 373-91; Nehs and Eric 2009a: 50-60)

1. 632-750: the four “rightly guided caliphs” and the Umayyad dynasty. Muhammad did not name his successor. His closest friend, Abu Bakr, was chosen to succeed him. Following him, Umar (634-644), Uthman (644-656), and Ali (656-661) were selected as caliphs. They are known as the “rightly guided” caliphs based on their following the sunnah and their style of governance. Umar, Uthman, and Ali were all assassinated by other Muslims. Following Ali’s assassination, a dynasty called the Umayyads ruled the Muslim world from Damascus, Syria. During this period Muslim armies conquered the entire Middle East, the Byzantine and Persian empires, North Africa, Spain, reached India and China, and invaded France, where they were stopped by Charles Martel at the battle of Tours on 732.

2. 750-1258: the Abbasid dynasty. A group known as the Abbasids overthrew the Umayyads and ruled the Islamic world from Baghdad, Iraq. The Abbasid dynasty is considered the “golden age” of Islamic civilization and corresponded to the so-called “dark ages” of the Christian West. Abbasid rule was destroyed when the Mongols swept into Muslim lands from central Asia. Eventually, the Mongols themselves converted to Islam. It was during the period of the Abbasids that Roman Catholic powers from Europe attempted to restore access to the Holy Land that had once been Christian but had been conquered by the Muslims. A series of crusades lasting from 1095-1291 resulted in temporary Christian footholds in the holy land but those ultimately fell. The crusades resulted in a lasting enmity of Muslims against Christians that exists to this day.

3. 1258-1945: rival Islamic states, the Ottoman empire, and colonialization. After the defeat of the Abbasid dynasty, the Islamic world consisted of several large Muslim empires which competed among themselves. These included the Persian Empire, various Turkish states, the Mamlukes of Egypt and Syria, the Mughals of India, and other states throughout Africa and Asia. The Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey) in 1453 and by 1517 captured Cairo, Egypt and ended the Mamluke dynasty. The Ottoman Empire lasted until 1922. During this period of time the Roman Catholics succeeded in pushing the Muslims out of Spain in 1492. European colonial powers were successful politically, but not religiously, in taking over much of the Muslim world and creating nation-states and boundary lines. Western cultural influences were felt particularly in Turkey and Iran beginning after World War I. World War II marked the culmination of this period.

4. 1945-the present: the contemporary situation. After World War II the Western powers fairly rapidly granted autonomy to their former colonies. When Great Britain granted independence to India in 1947, Pakistan was partitioned off as an independent nation for Muslims from the regions where there was a Muslim majority. Other overtly Muslim states have been established since the end of World War II, including Sudan, Afghanistan, Iran, and Somalia. The breakup of the USSR led to the independence of Muslim-dominated countries in central Asia. Islamic movements in many other nations are striving to Islamicize their nations. The northern 15 provinces of Nigeria have declared shari’ah law to be the legal code of that territory. The formation of the modern nation of Israel in 1948 began a change in the Middle East that has had significant repercussions. It sparked Muslim unity which led to four wars between Israel and her Muslim neighbors and is an ongoing source of Muslim outrage. The vast oil wealth of Middle Eastern nations has resulted in a great expansion of Muslim missionaries.
and influence around the world.

The other aspect of the modern rise of Islam is the rise of extremist Islamists who focus on jihad (“struggle”). Ahmed Ali Haile, a former Muslim, identifies four events that mark 1979 as a watershed year: (1) the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, which has resulted in a complex series of events in the relations between Islam and the West; (2) Ayatollah Khomeini’s successful Iranian Islamic revolution; (3) a Wahhabist insurgency in Arabia that occupied the Grand Mosque in Mecca; (4) the formation of the governing Socialist Party in Somalia. “Especially significant was the emergence of militant jihadist Islam as a consequence of these developments” (Haile 2011: 60). Extremist jihadist Islam was demonstrated most dramatically on September 11, 2001 when jihadists hijacked four airliners and used them to destroy the Twin Towers in New York City and damage the Pentagon in Washington, DC. Today, bombings and murder by jihadists have become routine events around the world.

2. JESUS AND MUHAMMAD

I. Introduction

Jesus and Muhammad are at the center of Christianity and Islam, respectively. As noted above, Muhammad lived approximately 600 years after Jesus. Since Islam contends that it is the final manifestation of God’s (Allah’s) revelation to the world and contends that Jesus was part of Allah’s progressive revelation, it is not surprising that the Qur’an and the Hadith refer to Jesus. Muslims who are writing for Christian-influenced Westerners often make a point of saying things like “Jesus holds a particularly high place in Islam, and he is honored in many verses in the Qur’an” (Emerick 2004: 222). Muhammad even said, “I am most akin to Jesus Christ among the whole of mankind, and all the Prophets are of different mothers but belong to one religion and no Prophet was raised between me and Jesus” (Muslim: 2365b; see also 2365a, c; al-Bukhari: 3442, 3443). When they are compared, however, the Islamic Jesus is vastly different from the biblical, historical Jesus.

II. The Islamic View of Jesus

Although Jesus is said to be honored in Islam, the Jesus that Islam honors is not the same as the Jesus depicted in the Bible and who is worshipped by Christians. Michael and McAlister point out, “The Qur’an’s Isa [i.e., Jesus] is not a historical figure. His identity and role as a prophet are based solely on alleged revelations to Muhammad over 600 years after the Jesus of history lived and died.” (Michael and McAlister 2010: 79)

A. Jesus or Isa

In the Qur’an, the name of Jesus is “Isa,” although most English translations render his name “Jesus.” “Jesus’ mother tongue was Aramaic. In his own lifetime he was called Yeshua in Aramaic, and Iesous in Greek. . . Yeshua is itself a form of Hebrew Yehoshua, which means ‘the LORD saves.’ . . . Yeshua of Nazareth was never called Isa, the name the Qur’an gives to Him. It is worth noting that Arabic-speaking Christians refer to Jesus as Yasou (from Yeshua), and never as Isa.” (Michael and McAlister 2010: 79) The name Isa “obtained most probably from the Nestorian Isho. There are no other records anywhere in Christian history to possibly suggest the strange name for Jesus in the Qur’an. As Arabic is a Semitic language closely allied to Hebrew one would have expected his name to have been the same Yasu’ as the Christians used.” (Gilchrist 1994: 8)

B. The family and birth of Jesus

Islamic apologist Ahmed Deedat recounts the Islamic account of Jesus’ lineage: “The story is that the maternal grandmother of Jesus, Hannah, had hitherto been barren. She poured out her heart to God: If only God will grant her a child, she would surely dedicate such a child for the service of God in the temple. God granted her prayer and Mary [often called Maryam] was born.” (Deedat 2002: 9) In Islam’s account, Imram [Hebrew = Amram] was Maryam’s father (Q. 3:35-36; 66:12).17 Maryam then was entrusted to Zechariah, the father of Yahya (John the Baptist) for her upbringing (Q. 3:36-37, 39-41; 19:7). Although the Bible says that Mary was betrothed and then married to Joseph (Matt 1:18-24), “there is no Joseph in the Islamic version of Jesus’ life”

16 Christine Schirrmacher makes the important observation that “when Muslim partners in Muslim-Christian dialogue emphasize that they ‘accept’ biblical persons such as Abraham or Jesus Christ, indeed even venerate them, then that means that only the Koranic perspective on Abraham or Jesus has validity, while Abraham and Jesus, in the way they are portrayed in the Old and New Testaments, find no acceptance at all” (Schirrmacher 2011: 26).

17 Imram simply is the Arabicized spelling of the Hebrew Amram (“Amram” 2019: In the Qur’an).
Both the Bible (Matt 1:18-25) and the Qur’an (Q. 19:20-22) accept that Mary was a virgin when she supernaturally conceived, but according to the Qur’an Mary gave birth alone in a remote place under a date palm tree, not in Bethlehem with her husband Joseph in the fulfillment of prophecy (Q. 19:22-26; compare Matt 2:1-6; Luke 2:1-7).

Deedat confuses the birth of Mary with the biblical story of Hannah’s imploring the Lord for a son and then giving birth to Samuel (1 Sam 1:1-28). According to Num 26:59, Amram’s [Imram’s] wife was Jochebed, not Hannah. Jochebed “bore to Amram Aaron and Moses and their sister Miriam” (see also Exod 6:20; 15:20). Indeed, Q. 20:30 quotes Moses as calling “Aaron, my brother.” Q. 19:28 even calls Maryam the “sister of Aaron.” Gilchrist points out, “Elsewhere in the Qur’an the word ukhtun (a sister) is always applied to an immediate sister (as in Sura al-Nisa 4:12, 23, 176) and the use of the word in Mary’s case can only mean a ‘blood-sister of Aaron’.” (Gilchrist 2010: 5; see also “Quran Dictionary” 2009-2017: Q. 19:28, yāukh’ta) All of this indicates that Muhammad (the Qur’an) confused Mary of the NT with Miriam of the OT, who had lived 1000 years earlier.

C. According to Islam, Jesus was not crucified or resurrected

The most important differences between the Islamic Jesus and the biblical, historical Jesus go to the heart of who Jesus is and what Jesus did. Muslim Jerald Dirks says that “there are very few issues which separate Muslims from Christians as sharply as that of an alleged crucifixion” (Dirks 2008: 77). The crucifixion is central because it is necessary both for Christ’s substitutionary atonement for people’s sins and for the resurrection. Yusuf Ali recognizes this: “The Orthodox-Christian Churches make it a cardinal point of their doctrine that his life was taken on the Cross, that he died and was buried, that on the third day he rose in the body with his wounds intact, and walked about and conversed, and ate with his disciples, and was afterwards taken up bodily to heaven. This is necessary for the theological doctrine of blood sacrifice and vicarious atonement for sins, which is rejected by Islam.” (Ali 2006: Q. 4.157n.663) Islam denies all those cardinal points. Yahiya Emerick summarizes that “from the point of view of Islam, the Christian doctrine that Jesus is God is moot, because Jesus didn’t die anyway, and certainly not for the sins of humanity” (Emerick 2004: 224).

By denying the crucifixion and “the theological doctrine of blood sacrifice and vicarious atonement for sins,” Muslims unwittingly contradict five important aspects of Islam and the Qur’an:

- First, the denial of substitutionary atonement effectively denies the very heart of the 2000 years of Judaism and Christianity whichpreceded Muhammad. It therefore contradicts the claim that Islam is simply

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18 Emerick is not entirely correct. Muslim historian Abu Ja’far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (839-923) in his History relates that Joseph was Mary’s cousin. Pursuant to a warning from God, Joseph took Mary to Egypt, as is recounted in Matt 2:13-15 (although, according to al-Tabari, the trip to Egypt was before, not after she had given birth). An angel then told Joseph when Herod was dead, and Joseph took Jesus to Nazareth, as is recounted in Matt 2:19-23 (al-Tabari 1987b: 112-14, 124-25).

19 Islamic scholars Yusuf Ali and Ibn Kathir (c.1300-1373) accept that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, although still under a date palm tree (Ali 2006: Q. 19.22n.2475; Ibn Kathir, Stories, n.d.: 176).

20 Ali tries to deal with the obvious problem that Mary lived more than 1000 years after her supposed father Imram and brothers Moses and Aaron by stating, “Aaron, the brother of Moses, was the first in the line of Israelite priesthood. Mary and her cousin Elisabeth (mother of Yahya) came of a priestly family, and were therefore ‘sisters of Aaron’ or daughters of Imram (who was Aaron’s father).” (Ali 2006: Q. 19.28n.2481) However, “The problem is that Mary was never descended from Aaron at all! Aaron was a Levitical priest, descended with his brother Moses from Levi, one of the sons of Jacob. On the other hand Mary was descended from Judah, one of Jacob’s other sons, through the line of David (Luke 1:32). She was not even of the same tribe as Aaron.” (Gilchrist 2010: 5, see Matt 1:2; Luke 3:33; Heb 7:14 which indicate that Mary was of the tribe of Judah; see also Katz, “Is Mary” n.d.; Gilchrist 2015: 56-57). Halali and Khan try to explain the problem away by saying, “This Harun (Aaron) is not the brother of Musa (Moses), but he was another pious man at the time of Maryam (Mary)” (Halali and Khan 1998: 405 n.1; see also Haleem 2005: Q. 19.28n.b).

Muhammad’s own explanation when he was confronted about this was, “The (people of the old age) used to give names (to their persons) after the names of Apostles and pious persons who had gone before them” (Muslim: 2135). Muhammad’s attempted explanation of the problem is manifestly false based on the Qur’an alone, since “the Qur’an calls Mary the ‘sister of Aaron’ not according to any ‘old age’ practice but because, according to the Qur’an, Mary was the daughter of Imram by birth, a birth described in real terms in the Qur’an. Consequently, as far as the Qur’an is concerned, Mary was called the ‘sister of Aaron’ and ‘daughter of Imram’ because she was the direct offspring of Aaron’s parents.” (Sundiata 2006: 130; see also Spencer 2009: 138) Gilchrist adds, “Muhammad’s response is not convincing. No one else in the Qur’an is described as the sister of an ancestor.” (Gilchrist 2015: 57) Further, “it is also most unlikely that Aaron would be called the brother (akha) of Moses in the Qur’an, as often as he is, in the direct sense if Mary was only called his sister (ukhta) in a figurative sense” (Gilchrist 2010: 5; and, as noted in the main text, the word used means “immediate blood sister,” not “ancestor”; at pages 3-7 Gilchrist discusses other Islamic errors concerning Jesus’ genealogy).
the evolutionary culmination of Judaism and Christianity. The reason is that “the fundamental idea of sacrifice in the Old Testament is that of substitution, which again seems to imply everything else—atonement and redemption, vicarious punishment and forgiveness” (Edersheim 1881: 81; see also n.103, below, and associated text). The substitution of an innocent life for that of the guilty party, which is the heart of substitutionary atonement, pre-eminently is seen in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

- Second, the denial of substitutionary atonement contradicts many passages which 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; 46:9, 12, 30). Islam’s rejection of the crucifixion of Jesus does not address any of the OT prophecies that pointed to and were fulfilled in the crucifixion,21 nor does it address any of the NT and historical evidence for the crucifixion and resurrection.22

- Third, in Q. 11:70, 74-76 angels appeared to Abraham, told him they had been sent to destroy Sodom (where Lot lived), and then Abraham “began to argue with Us concerning the people of Lot” (Sahih). This is the Qur’an’s version of the account in Gen 18:16-33 where Abraham argued that God should not sweep away the righteous with the wicked,” and God agreed that he would spare the entire city if there were only ten righteous people in it. While the Qur’an does not detail Abraham’s argument, Muslim commentators and historians accept that Abraham argued that the entire city should be spared if there were even a few righteous people in it. Tafsir Ibn Kathir states, “When Jibril and the other angels who were with him came to Ibrahim, they said, (Verily, we are going to destroy the people of this town.) Ibrahim said to them, ‘Will you destroy a town that has three hundred believers in it?’ They said, ‘No.’ He then said, ‘Will you destroy a town that has two hundred believers in it?’ They said, ‘No.’ He said, ‘Will you destroy a town that has forty believers in it?’ They said, ‘No.’ He then said, ‘Thirty’ They still replied, ‘No.’ This continued until he said, ‘Five’ They said, ‘No.’ Then he said, ‘What do you think if there is one Muslim man in the town, would you destroy it?’ They said, ‘No.’” (Ibn Kathir 2003: Q. 11:74, comment). Famous Muslim historian and scholar Abu Ja’far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (839-923) in his History reports that other Islamic commentators said that the city would be spared if there were fourteen, ten, or five believers (al-Tabari 1987a: 116). The exact number is not significant; what is significant is that Islam admits the principle of substitutionary atonement, i.e., people are not doomed to suffer their fate solely on the basis of their own sins and behavior, but the righteousness of someone else can save the sinner.

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21 Prophecy

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22 See below, sections IV. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: The Crucifixion and V. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: The Resurrection.
• Fourth, **Q. 37:102-107** explicitly confirms the account of **Gen 22:1-14** in which God told Abraham to sacrifice his son but substituted a ram as the substitutionary sacrifice at the last moment.**23** **Q. 37:107** (Hilali-Khan) states, “We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.” That is the actualization of the principle of substitutionary atonement. Muslim commentators refer to the biblical account and the substitution of the ram (see Ali 2006: Q. 37:107n.4108; A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 37:107n.66; Jalal 2017: Q. 37:107, comment). More than that, every year Muslims commemorate this event by sacrificing animals at their great festival **Eidu l’-Adha** (“Festival of the Sacrifice”). Mawdudi states that “Allah made it a tradition till the Day of Resurrection that all the believers should offer animal sacrifice on the same date in the entire world so as to keep fresh the memory of the great and unique event signifying faithfulness and devotion” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 37:107n.66; see also Asad 1980: Q. 37:107n.43).

• Fifth, Muslims have a ritual called **aqiqah** that is not mandatory but is “highly encouraged” (“Aqiqah” 2013: “What is the purpose of Aqiqah?”; see also Malik: book 26, no. 7). Aqiqah is the sacrifice of an animal on behalf of a newborn baby, typically seven days after the birth. Aqiqah has a substitutionary and redemptive purpose. According to the Hadith, “The Messenger of Allah said: ‘The boy is mortgaged by his ‘Aqiqah; slaughtering should be done for him on the seventh day, he should be given a name, and his head should be shaved’” (at-Tirmidhi: 1522, emph. added); “The Messenger of Allah said: ‘For a boy, there is an ‘Aqiqah. So spill blood for him and remove the harm from him.’” (at-Tirmidhi: 1515, emph. added). Famous Muslim theologian, commentator, and jurist Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim (1292-1350) admitted the substitutionary and redemptive purpose of aqiqah. He stated that among the benefits of aqiqah are: “1) It is a sacrifice by means of which the child is brought close to Allah soon after he comes into this world. 2) It is a ransom for the newborn so that he or she can intercede for his parents. 3) It is a sacrifice by which the newborn is ransomed just as Allah ransomed Isma’el with the ram.” (“Sunnah of the Prophet” 2019: Benefits of Aqiqah?) The Islamic website **Muslim Aid** adds, “When a child is born, an Aqiqah must be given by the parents/guardian as a gesture of thanks to Allah (SWT), protection from Shaytaan, expiation of sins and preventing any calamities, insha Allah” (“Aqiqah [Animal Sacrifice]” 2017: n.p.)

The prayers (dua) said at the time aqiqah is performed bear this out: “In the Name of Allah and through Allah, this is the ‘aqiq of…. (name of the boy), son of …. (name of the father): its flesh [i.e., the flesh of the sacrifice of the ‘aqiqa] for his flesh blood, its bone for his bone, its hair for his hair, its skin for his skin. O Allah, let it be a protection of the family of Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family.” (“Aqiqah” 2017: “Dua,” emph. added)

In sum, the Qur’an and Islam actually accept the principle of substitutionary atonement while at the same time formally denying it.

Islam’s denial of the crucifixion is based on only one passage in the Qur’an, written more than 600 years after the life of Jesus. **Q. 4:157-58**: “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. Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.”

Although the Qur’an denies that Jesus was crucified, Dirks points out that “the Qur’an does not say that there was no crucifixion. Rather, the Qur’an states that it was not Jesus Christ who was crucified, even though it was made to appear that he was. In short, the chasm, which separates Islam and Christianity in regard to the crucifixion, is not whether or not there was a crucifixion at the time and place the **New Testament** maintains, but only whether the person so crucified was Jesus.” (Dirks 2008: 78) Since **Q. 4:157-58** concludes by saying “Allah raised him up to Himself,” Sayyid Abul A’la Mawdudi states, “This verse categorically states that Jesus was raised on high before he could be crucified, and that the belief of both the Jews and the Christians that Jesus died on the cross is based on a misconception. As a result of a comparative study of the Qur’anic and Biblical versions we are persuaded that, so far as the trial at the court of Pilate is concerned, it was probably Jesus who was tried. Pilate sentenced him to death after the Jews showed their deep hostility to Truth and righteousness by openly declaring that, in their view, the life of a thief was of higher value than that of a man with such a pure soul as Jesus. It was then that God raised Jesus up to heaven. The person the Jews subsequently crucified was someone else who, for one reason or another, was mistaken for the person of Jesus.” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q.

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23 Although most Muslims believe that the son involved was Ishmael, the Qur’an does not specify whether the son was Ishamel or Isaac. For more on this, see n.14, above.

24 Kevin Greeson points out that **Q. 4:157** “does not say that Isa did not die. It only says that the Jews did not kill Him. The **Injil** agrees! The Jews did not crucify Jesus. They did not have the authority to crucify Him. They were under Roman occupation and Roman authority. . . . They had to turn Jesus over to the Romans and hope that the Romans would crucify Jesus for them. And the Romans, not the Jews, did crucify Him.” (Greeson 2007: 141; see also Reynolds 2018: 181)
Given the admission that there was a crucifixion at the time and place the NT says there was, Muslims are unsure what happened on the day Christ (supposedly) was crucified. “Sunni tradition indicates several different views have gained acceptance. There has never been only one view.” (Larson 2008: 7) The majority view is that someone else was substituted for Jesus and was crucified in his place. The famous commentary on the Qur’an Tafsir al-Jalalayn maintains, “The one slain and crucified, who was an associate of theirs [the Jews], was given the resemblance, of Jesus. In other words, God cast his [Jesus’] likeness to him and so they thought it was him [Jesus].” (Jalal 2017: Q. 4:157, comment) Emerick says, “Who was crucified on that fateful day? If anyone was executed, it may have been the man who betrayed Jesus [i.e., Judas Iscariot]. If he looked sort of like Jesus, in the confusion the Caucasian Romans may have grabbed him and killed him, thinking all Semites looked alike.” (Emerick 2004: 224) Mufti Muhammad Madani says that “Allah changed the looks of the guard [of the house where Jesus was imprisoned] ... As a result of this, the guard was led to be executed.” (Madani 2005: 1:388) Dirks maintains that the “Barabbas” who was released by Pontius Pilate (Matt 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:17-25; John 18:39-40) was really Jesus Christ and the “Jesus” who was crucified was a “paramilitary insurrectionist known as Jesus, the Galilean, who claimed to be the King of the Jews” (Dirks 2008: 93-108, 111). However, Dirks also floats suggestions that the person crucified might have been “Judas Iscariot; Simon of Cyrene; simulacrums [i.e., one bearing a superficial likeness to someone else] of Jesus Christ; [or] unidentified others” (Ibid.: 111; see also Ayoub 1980: 94-103 for various “substitution” theories).

Yusuf Ali in his commentary on Q. 4:158 says, “Another [view] holds that he did die (5:117) but not when he was supposed to be crucified, and that his being ‘raised up’ unto Allah means that instead of being disgraced as a malefactor, as the Jews intended, he was on the contrary honoured by Allah as His Messenger: (see 4:159)” (Ali 2006: Q. 4:158n.664). Fazlul Karim, after citing Q. 4:157 and 3:55, states, “These verses do not deny Jesus being nailed on the Cross, but they negative his having expired on the Cross. There was no eye witness of his death but it was only a supposition that he died as a result of nailing.” (Karim 1939: 4:79n.1) Adil Salahi, editor of the “Islam in Perspective” column for the Saudi Arabian newspaper Arab News, adds, “A number of scholars, some of them prominent indeed, have expressed this view and argued that this expression [mutawaffika] which occurs in three different verses in the Quran [Q. 3:55; 5:117; 19:33], means actually that Jesus Christ died a natural death” (Salahi 1992: 9; see also Mohammad 2003: 3-82 for the evidence from Islamic sources why the Ahmadiyya Islamic sect concludes that Jesus died a natural death).

Despite the prevailing view that Jesus was not crucified or did not die on the cross, some Muslims agree that Jesus did die on the cross. Tabari (1987b: 120-25), Ayoub (1980: 91-121), Cumming (2001: 1-14), Larson (2008: 5-7), and Shamoun (“Al-Tabari” n.d.) discuss the many Islamic views throughout history of what happened when Christ was (supposedly) crucified, including the view that Jesus died on the cross. Professor Ayoub even states that the Qur’an “does not deny the death of Christ. ... The death of Jesus is asserted several times and in various contexts.” (Ayoub 1980: 106, citing Q. 3:55; 5:117; 19:33) For example, Q. 3:55 states, “Behold! Allah said: “O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to Myself and clear thee of the falsehoods of those who blaspheme”; The word which is translated “will take you” (mutawaffika) is an active participle of the word tawaffā. It typically means “to pass away, to cause to die, to take in death” (“Quran Dictionary” 2009-2017:Q. 3:55, mutawaffika; Shamoun, “Al-Tabari” [Appendix: The Meaning of Tawaffa in the Quran] n.d.). Gabriel Said Reynolds points out, “The Arabic term (tawaffā) behind the translation [of Q. 3:55] is regularly used in the Qur’an to refer to the manner by which God separates soul from body at death, that is, His taking one’s life (note, for example, the prayer in 7:26: ‘Lord! Pour patience upon us, and grant us to die as Muslims.’)” (Reynolds 2018: 124). Indeed, Asad’s translation of Q. 3:55 reads, “Lo! God said: “O Jesus! Verily, I shall cause thee to die, and shall exalt thee unto Me, and cleanse thee of [the presence of] those who are bent on denying the truth.””

Similarly, Q. 5:117 states, “I [referring to Jesus] was a witness over them whilst I dwell amongst them; when Thou didst take me up Thou wast the Watcher over them, and Thou art a witness to all things.” The word translated “take me up” (tawaffaytanī) is a verb form of that same word, tawaffā and specifically means “to pass away, to cause to die, to take in death” (“Quran Dictionary” 2009-2017: Q. 5:117, tawaffaytanī; Shamoun, “Al-Tabari” [Appendix: The Meaning of Tawaffa in the Quran] n.d.). Shakir thus translates Q. 5:117 as “I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst cause me to die, Thou wert the watcher over them.” Asad similarly translates that ayah as “I bore witness to what they did as long as I dwelt in their midst;

25 These “substitution” theories will be dealt with below in section IV.H. The failure of alternative explanations.
26 This argument, known as the “swoon” theory, will be dealt with below in section IV.H. The failure of alternative explanations.
but since Thou hast caused me to die, Thou alone hast been their keeper.” Asad points out that Allah’s question to Jesus in Q. 5:116 (“O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah?”) must have taken place “after Jesus’ death”: this is fully evident from Jesus’ subsequent reference, in the past tense, to his own death (“since Thou hast caused me to die”) in verse 117” (Asad 1980: Q. 5:116n.139; see also Reynolds 2018: 181).

Finally, Q. 19:33 has the infant Jesus saying, “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)!” That is identical to what is said of the prophet Yahya (John the Baptist) in Q. 19:15: “So Peace on him the day he was born, the day that he dies, and the day that he will be raised up to life (again)!” Muslims acknowledge that Yahya died “an unjust death at the hands of a tyrant” (Ali 2006: Q. 19:15n. 2469; see also A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 19:15n.12). Since the same things are said about Yahya and Jesus in the same order and Yahya admittedly was put to death, the text suggests that Jesus likewise was put to death. Indeed, the statement at the end of Q. 19:33 “that I shall be raised up to life (again)” makes no sense unless he first had died. Tafsir Ibn Abbas interprets this text as follows, “(Peace on me the day I was born) safety to me from Satan’s touch when I was born, (and the day I die) and safety to me from the compression of the grave when I die, (and the day I shall be raised alive) when I am resurrected alive from the grave!” (Ibn Abbas 2016: Q. 19:33, comment, emph. added; see also Madani 2005: 3:379) Ibn Abbas’s and Madani’s interpretations of Q. 19:33 as referring to the resurrection of Jesus (not just his being assumed alive into heaven) are consistent with the biblical accounts of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. Nevertheless, most Muslims believe that Jesus was taken to heaven without having died; and all Muslims (including the minority who believe Jesus died) deny the bodily resurrection of Christ as described in the Bible.27

D. According to Islam, Jesus is a prophet but not the divine Son of God

The basic position of Islam regarding Jesus is that Jesus was a prophet of Allah, but he is not the divine Son of God (Dirks 2008: 35). Islam is adamant that Jesus, like all the prophets (including Muhammad), was a created being, a merely mortal human. Q. 5:75 says, “Christ the son of Mary was no more than a messenger; many were the messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their (daily) food.” In commenting on this verse, Mawdudi states, “In these few words the Christian doctrine of the divinity of Christ is repudiated. The nature of the Messiah is clear from the indications given here; he was merely a human being. He was one born from the womb of a woman, who had a known genealogy, who possessed a physical body, who was subject to all the limitations of a human being and who had all the attributes characteristic of human beings. He slept, ate, felt the discomfort of heat and cold and was so human that he was even put to the test by Satan. How could any reasonable person believe that such a being was either God or a partner or associate of God in His godhead? But the Christians continue to insist on the divinity of the Messiah, whose life has been portrayed in their own Scriptures as that of a human.” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 5:75n.100)

The Qur’an also says, “O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of Allahught 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: (far exalted is He) above a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs.” (Q. 4:171; see also Q. 2:116; 5:17, 72-73, 116-17; 6:101; 9:30; 10:68; 17:111; 18:4-5; 19:35, 88-92; 21:26; 23:91; 39:4; 43:81-82; 72:3; 112:3). Regarding Q. 4:171, Muhammad Asad states, “In the verse under discussion, which stresses the purely human nature of Jesus and refutes the belief in his divinity, the Qur’an points out that Jesus, like all other human beings, was ‘a soul created by Him’” (Asad 1980: Q. 4:171n.181; see also Ali 2006: Q. 4:171n.675-676; A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 4:171n.212-218).

Finally, the Qur’an has Jesus making statements such as these: “But said Christ: ‘O Children of Israel! worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord’” (Q. 5:72); “Never said I [Jesus] to them aught except what Thou didst command me to say, to wit, ‘worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord’”(Q. 5:117); “He [Jesus] said: ‘I am indeed a servant of Allah: He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet!’” (Q. 19:30); “Verily Allah is my Lord and your Lord: so worship ye Him” (Q. 43:64). Muslim apologists also cite statements in the Bible where Jesus calls people to worship God (Matt 4:10; 19:16-17; 23:8-9; Mark 12:28-34; John 17:3; 20:17), calls God “Father” (a term not used of Jesus) (Matt 5:8; 6:1; 7:21; 11:25; 26:39), prays to the Father (Matt 14:23), says that only the Father knows the day and the hour of the Second Coming (Matt 24:36), calls himself a “prophet” (Luke 4:24), and was considered to be a

27 The biblical and historical bases for the crucifixion and resurrection are discussed below at sections IV. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: The Crucifixion and V. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: The Resurrection.

Christians do not deny the biblical facts stated by Muslim apologists regarding Jesus’ humanity; indeed, Christians positively affirm that Christ was fully a man, but neither the Bible nor Jesus himself ever said that Jesus was only a man. 28 Muslim quotations from the Bible are very selective. They omit a vast amount of biblical data that led Christians to conclude early-on that Jesus was more than just a mortal man but was God come to earth as a man. 29 The combination of divine and human natures in the person of Christ is called the “hystoatic union.” In the hystoatic union “the two natures are unchanged by the union. The argument: If divine attributes are conferred to man, man ceases to be man. Therefore the divine and human natures are not mixed to form a third nature that is neither one nor the other. The humanity in Christ is not deified, nor is the deity of Christ humanized.” (Bozack 1993: 75) The Muslim position is based on a fundamental misunderstanding: “Ever since the Qur’an misled Muslims into assuming that Christians are promoting mere human beings (like Mary) to the position of deity, their efforts have been directed at showing that it is impossible for man to become God! Christians also believe that it is impossible for man to become God. However, Christians believe that God became man. . . . Muslims seem unable to see that Christianity is not exalting a man and equating him with God, but worshipping a God who became man.” (Sundiata 2006: 199) Christians therefore deny the Islamic conclusions that Christ was only a man and “had no share in Divinity.”

This denial of Christ’s divinity represents a fundamental divide between Christianity and Islam since it goes to the heart of who Jesus is: either he is fully God and fully man (the Christian view) or is he merely a man (the Muslim view). This issue is central to Christianity because Christ’s deity (as well as his humanity) is

28 The Bible contains far more statements concerning Jesus’ being a man than Mawdudi, Hilali, and Ali list. For example, in the Bible we see Jesus had a human body of flesh, blood, and bone (Luke 22:44; 24:39-40; John 1:14; 19:34; 20:19-29; Rom 1:3; 8:3; Phil 2:7; Col 2:9; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 2:14; 10:5; 1 Pet 2:24; 1 John 1:1-3; 4:2; 2 John 7); Jesus identified Himself as a “man” (John 8:40) and was recognized as a “man” by others (Matt 8:9; 27; 12:23-24; 13:54, 56; 26:61, 71-72, 74; Mark 2:7; 6:2; 14:71; 15:39; Luke 5:21; 7:8, 39, 49; 9:9; 15:2; 23:2, 4, 6, 14, 18, 22, 41, 47; John 1:30; 4:29; 6:52; 7:12, 15, 25, 27, 35, 46, 51; 9:11, 16, 29, 33; 10:33; 11:37, 47, 50; 18:14, 17, 40; 19:5, 12; Acts 2:22-23; 5:28; 6:13; 17:31; 25:19; Rom 5:15; 1 Cor 15:21, 47; Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2; Phil 2:8; 1 Tim 2:5).

29 John Calvin points out, the Scriptures “sometimes attribute to him [Jesus] what must be referred solely to his humanity, sometimes what belongs uniquely to his divinity; and sometimes what embraces both natures but fits neither alone. And they so earnestly express this union of these two natures that is in Christ as sometimes to interchange them. This figure of speech is called by the ancient writers ‘the communicating of properties.’” (Calvin 1960: 1:482-83 [2.XIV.11])

30 According to the Bible, Jesus is eternal. McDowell and Larson point out, “Nowhere in Scripture does it say that God ‘created’ Jesus” (McDowell and Larson 1983; 93). Indeed, Christ who “existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking on the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men” (Phil 2:6-7; see also 2 Cor 8:9). In other words, although he was God, Christ voluntarily left heaven, became a man, and submitted himself to the Father—all for our sake. Thus, whenever Jesus indicates his subordination to the Father in such statements as “the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28), we must remember this context of his voluntarily emptying himself and leaving the riches of heaven for us. As A. W. Pink reminds us, “The contrast which the Savior drew between the Father and Himself [in John 14:28] was not concerning nature, but official character and position. Christ was not speaking of Himself in His essential Being. The One who thought it not robbery to be ‘equal with God’ had taken the servant form, and not only so, had been made in the likeness of men. In both these senses, namely, in His official status (as Mediator) and in His assumption of human nature, He was inferior to the Father. . . . In view of this, Christ was now contrasting His situation with that of the Father in the heavenly Sanctuary, . . . It was Christ owning His place as Servant, and magnifying the One who had sent Him.” (Pink n.d.: 2:408) The biblical evidence of Jesus’ deity is discussed in detail in section VI. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: Jesus is the “Son of God,” below.
essential to Christ’s ability to fulfill his primary mission according to Christianity, namely, his substitutionary atonement for mankind’s sins (see below, section 3.II.D. Salvation according to Christianity: what Christ accomplished on the cross). It is also central to Islam because Islam (wrongly) considers the Christian view as amounting to Islam’s unforgivable sin, namely, *shirk*, i.e., worshiping or attributing godhood to anything or anyone other than Allah (see below, section 3.III.C. The concept of sin in Islam). This divide between Christianity and Islam ultimately is irresolvable since the two have radically different conceptions of what the “oneness” of God means (this is discussed at length in chapter 4. YAHWEH AND ALLAH).

Even though Islam denies the deity of Christ, various aspects of Qur’anic teaching show the Christian concept of the incarnation of Christ to be at least plausible:

- First, in the Qur’an, spirits or angels can take the form of human beings: “We sent to her [Mary] Our Ruh [angel Jibrael (Gabriel)], and he appeared before her in the form of a man in all respects” (Q. 19:17, Hilali-Khan). Since spirits or angels can take the form of human beings, then God, who can do anything, certainly also could take the form of a human being.

- Second, Q. 39:4 says, “Had Allah wished to take to Himself a son, He could have chosen whom He pleased out of those whom He doth create.” This affirms that Allah could have a son if he chose to. The issues thereby become whether he has a son or not and, if so, what is the nature of his son.


- Fourth, Q. 20:9-14; 27:7-9 relate the story of Moses and the fire, “But when he came to the fire, a voice was heard: ‘O Moses! . . . Verily, I am Allah’” (Q. 20:11, 14). Ali comments that “it was not an ordinary fire. It was a Burning Bush; a Sign of the Glory of Allah.” (Ali 2006: Q. 20:10n.2541) Daniel Shayesteh observes, “The Almighty God became a fire (a substance) and it did not seem blasphemous to the Qur’an. . . . Does the kind of substance God chooses to dwell in make a difference for the Qur’an? If it does not, then why does it blame Christians for claiming that God became a man?” (Shayesteh 2004: 140)

Since the Qur’an accepts in principle the concept of incarnation in these other contexts, a primary impediment to Muslims accepting the incarnation of Christ is undermined. As Sundiata states, “It is only when it can be shown that God cannot become man that the Christian claim that Jesus was God among us can be implausible” (Sundiata 2006: 218). Understanding this can help to break the barrier that separates Muslims from the gospel. An example is Jewish writer Pinchas Lapide. As a Jew, Lapide (like Muslims) rejects the incarnation of Christ. Nevertheless, he came to realize, “I used to think that becoming incarnate was impossible to God. But recently I have come to the conclusion that it is un-Jewish to say that this is something the God of the Bible cannot do, that he cannot come that close. I have had second thoughts about the incarnation.” (Skarsaune 2002: 335-36, quoting Lapide’s interview on Norwegian television, April 1978).

III. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: Introduction

The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ form the very heart of Christianity. Their central importance is repeatedly emphasized throughout the NT (e.g., Matt 20:28; John 10:17-18; Rom 5:8-11; 1 Cor 15:1-4; Gal 3:13; Eph 2:14-16; Phil 2:5-11; Col 2:13-14; 1 Tim 2:5-6; Heb 2:14-15; 1 Pet 3:18; 1 John 11:29-30; Rom 1:4).31 Jesus predicted both his crucifixion and bodily resurrection (Matt 16:21; 17:22-23; Mark 8:31-32; 9:31; 10:32-34; Luke 9:22; 18:31-33; John 2:18-22). Jesus claimed to be God come to earth as a man. Jesus’ critics asked him for a sign, and he said he would give them one—his resurrection. Jesus was saying that he would prove that he is who he claimed to be by doing something (bodily rising from the dead) that is impossible for anyone who is merely a human being (even a prophet or messenger). It is the test by which we could know that he was telling the truth (Matt 12:38-40; 16:1-4; John 2:18-21; see also Mark 14:58; Luke 11:29-30; Rom 1:4).32 Such a historical test of truth is unique to Christianity. “If Jesus did not rise from the

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31 Bruce Demarest points out that between 25%-42% of the four Gospels are devoted to the last week of Jesus’ life and “in addition to the many prophetic anticipations of the Messiah’s death in the OT, there are 175 direct references to his death in the NT” (Demarest 1997: 166-67). The one verse in the Qur’an that denies Jesus’ death, written 600 years after the fact, thus flies in the face of the overwhelming witness of the Bible which places that death at the very center of its message.

32 Q. 46:35 talks about “messengers of inflexible purpose” (or, as Hilali-Khan translates it, “strong will”). Of all the Prophets and Messengers, only five are considered to be “messengers of strong will”: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (Hilali and Khan 1998: 686 n.2; Haleem 2005: Q. 46:35n.a). Muslim apologist Dr. Abdullah Hadi Al-Kahtani says, “Muslims believe that a prophet of God will never lie, since all the prophets of God are infallible” (Al-Kahtani 1996: 16). Muslims do not appear to consider the fact that—since Jesus was a “messenger of inflexible purpose” who predicted both his death and resurrection and even said that his resurrection would be a sign—by claiming he was neither killed nor
dead, he was a false prophet and a charlatan whom no rational person should follow. Conversely, if he did rise from the dead, this event confirmed his radical claim.” (Habermas and Licona 2004: 27)

In the Bible, the bodily resurrection of Christ is intimately linked to the crucifixion (see, e.g., Matt 17:22-23; Mark 10:32-34; John 2:18-22; Rom 4:24-25; 5:8-11; 1 Cor 15:1-4; Phil 2:5-11; Heb 10:9-13). Since the very purpose of Christ’s coming into the world was to bear the punishment for mankind’s sins by sacrificing himself on the cross, the resurrection (and subsequent ascension): (1) demonstrates that God accepted Christ’s sacrifice; and (2) validates who Christ was and everything Christ said.33 Even the then-atheist philosopher Antony Flew acknowledged that “the question whether . . . Jesus did rise from the dead is of supreme theoretical and practical importance. For the knowable fact that he did, if indeed it is a knowable fact, is the best, if not the only, reason for accepting that Jesus is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.” (Flew 1987: 3) The apostles Peter and Paul clearly recognized this. On one hand, Peter said that our ability to have new life and an eternal inheritance come only “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet 1:3-4). On the other hand, in 1 Cor 15:14 Paul said, “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain” (see also 1 Cor 15:17).

The issues of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ are historical ones: either he was crucified and then bodily rose from the grave or he did not. On these crucial points either the Bible’s affirmation that those events took place is correct or the Qur’an’s denial is correct. Both cannot be true. Because these are historical issues, “Whether or not a particular event happened two thousand years ago is not made certain by faith but by historical research, to the extent that certainty can be attained at all about questions of this kind” (Pannenberg 1968: 98). “Since these events happened in the past, they are only accessible by a study of the historical evidence. [The historian] is able to inspect the relevant data such as the eyewitnesses, written documents and various other records, structures or archeological finds. Upon such confirmation the historian must obtain his evidence.” (Habermas 1984: 21) Finally, assessment of historical evidence “does not preclude certainty in matters of well-established historical events. Such events which are validated by careful historical research (and especially those which have been established for long periods of time) are proven facts.” (Ibid.: 20)

Because this issue goes to the heart of who Jesus is, and because the stakes are so high (if Jesus is who he said he is, then being rightly united with him is a matter of eternal life or death), all people—Christians, Muslims, nonbelievers of any kind—need to investigate the evidence and determine for themselves whether the Bible’s account or the Qur’an’s account is true. The Qur’an itself seems to commend this. In Q. 2:111 Muhammad is told to say specifically to Christians and Jews, “Produce your proof if ye are truthful.” On several other occasions the Qur’an calls on people to use their minds and consider the evidence (Q, 6:151; 7:169; 8:22; 10:16; 16:12, 67; 21:10; 23:80; 26:28; 30:28; 36:62). In these verses Sahih, Asad, and Haleem talk about people using their “reason”; Sarwar translates the last line of Q. 7:169 as “Will you not then think?”; Haleem translates the last line of Q. 23:80 as “Will you not use your minds?”; Sarwar translates the last part of Q. 26:28 as “if only you would think.” Q. 16:69 calls on people to “think” (Hilali-Khan; Asad; Haleem), “give thought” (Ali; Sahih), or “reflect” (Pickthall; Shakir; Arberry). Q. 28:75 tells people to “produce (or bring) your proof (or evidence).” Q. 12:108 talks about believing based “on evidence clear as the seeing with one’s eyes.” So let us turn to the evidence.

33 Ulrich Wilckens puts it this way, “The Cross is the sign and symbol of what is Christian. Trust in the Cross, however, and the enormous drive and impetus which derive their power from the Cross, are ultimately based on the raising from the dead of the crucified Christ. If the meaning and direction of Christianity stand or fall with belief in the Cross of Christ, then the power of this belief stands or falls with belief in the resurrection of the crucified Christ.” (Wilckens 1978: 124)
IV. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: The Crucifixion

Multiple lines of evidence establish that Jesus did, in fact, die by crucifixion. Those lines of evidence include the following:

A. Multiple witnesses

The crucifixion of Jesus was not a secret or private event. Instead, it was a public event involving Roman government officials, Jewish leaders (the Sanhedrin), and common people, both friends and foes of Jesus. Ryan Turner summarizes, “Though the disciples forsook Jesus, some of them were still witnesses from a distance (Mark 14:54). Also, there was an anonymous disciple [probably John] whom Jesus, while on the cross, commanded to take care of Mary (John 19:26-27). The Gospel of Luke reports that while Jesus was carrying the cross, ‘. . . there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him’ [Luke 23:27]. In addition to these people already mentioned the Gospels are scattered with references to Jewish leaders (Mt. 27:41; Mk. 15:31), Roman centurion (Mt. 27:54; Mk. 15:39; Lk. 23:47) and soldiers (Mt. 27:35; Mk. 15:24; Lk. 23:35; and John 19:18, 23) who all witnessed Jesus’ crucifixion. For Muslims to argue that the crucifixion is not historical simply does not square with the historical data because there were multitudes of witnesses to the fact that the Romans crucified Jesus.” (Turner 2014: Eyewitness Sources)

Additionally, as Jesus was being led out to be crucified, “They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross” (Mark 15:21). Timothy Keller points out, “There is no reason for the author to include such names unless the readers know or could have access to them. Mark is saying, ‘Alexander and Rufus vouch for the truth of what I am telling you, if you want to ask them.’” (Keller 2008: 101) Luke 23:49 adds that Jesus’ “acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee were standing at a distance, seeing these things,” and Jesus’ own mother, his mother’s sister, and other women he knew were eyewitnesses to the crucifixion (John 19:25-27). A mother knows her own son. Mary, Jesus’ disciples (including John, who specifically said, “He who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe,” John 19:35). Jesus’ relatives, his friends, and his acquaintances knew who Jesus was and thus knew it was Jesus who was crucified, not someone else. To claim that someone else was on the cross, or that Jesus did not die on the cross, is contrary to reason.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, the book of Acts, the epistles of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philipppians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Hebrews, 1 Peter, 2 Peter (implicitly), 1 John, and Revelation all record the death of Jesus; when the manner of that death is mentioned, they state it was by crucifixion. Those books were written by at least seven different authors and were all written within 20 to a maximum of 65 years after Jesus’ death. That means the crucifixion was written about while many of the witnesses were still alive. Keller points out, “The New Testament documents could not say Jesus was crucified when thousands of people were still alive who knew whether he was or not” (Keller 2008: 102).

In complete contrast to this, the Qur’an contains only a single assertion denying the crucifixion made over 600 years after the event. Consequently, for purposes of historical evidence, analysis, and reliability, with respect to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Bible is in a different category from the Qur’an. As Eddy 34

34 John A. T. Robinson has made a strong case that the entire NT was completed before the destruction of the temple in AD 70, which would have meant that the NT was completed only 40 years or less after Jesus’ death. See John A. T. Robinson, Redating the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster: 1976). Richard Bauckham, in an exhaustive study, concludes that, contrary to the assumption of nineteenth and early twentieth century liberal and critical scholars that the Bible was written a hundred years or more after the events based on anonymous oral traditions, the Gospels have the character of testimony and “embody the testimony of the eyewitnesses, not of course without editing and interpretation, but in a way that is substantially faithful to how the eyewitnesses themselves told it, since the Evangelists were in more or less direct contact with eyewitnesses, not removed from them by a long process of anonymous transmission of the traditions” (Bauckham 2006: 6; see also Lewis 1967b: 155 [p.36 online], the gospel accounts are “reportage,” not “poems, romances, vision-literature, legends, [or] myths”). Even the names of the people mentioned in the Gospels confirm this. The frequency and use of particular names “corresponds well to the relative frequency in the full database of three thousand individual instances of names in the Palestinian Jewish sources of the period. This correspondence is very unlikely to have resulted from addition of names to the traditions, even within Palestinian Jewish Christianity, and could not possibly have resulted from the addition of names outside Jewish Palestine, since the pattern of Jewish name usage in the Diaspora [i.e., the dispersal of the Jews after AD 70] was very different.” (Bauckham 2006: 84) In other words, “it is highly unlikely that the gospel stories originated in later Christian communities outside of Palestine [i.e., after AD 70]” (Keller 2008: 265n.8). These facts disprove the assertion that the account of Jesus’ crucifixion was a legend that somehow arose long after the time of Jesus. The “legend” theory is discussed below in detail, specifically in the context of the resurrection of Christ, in section V.H. The failure of alternative explanations.
and Boyd state, in terms of historical value “the Qur’an dates from the seventh century, far too late to be taken seriously as a reliable independent source of information about Jesus” (Eddy and Boyd 2007: 172).

B. The earliness of Christian creeds

As mentioned above, the books of the Bible were written early, beginning less than 20 years after the death of Jesus. However, the writers of the NT incorporated into their writings early Christian creeds which are much older than the books in which they appear (see Habermas 1984: 119; Cullmann 1949: 10, 22-23). “Such early traditions appear frequently in the New Testament and actually consist of oral teachings and proclamations which were repeated by word of mouth until recorded in the book itself. Therefore these creeds actually predate the New Testament writings in which they occur. . . . The two most common elements in these creeds concerned the death and resurrection of Jesus and his resulting deity.” (Habermas 1984: 33, 120) These early creeds include 1 Cor 15:3-7 and Phil 2:6-11 (Cullmann 1949: 22-23). Both of these creedal formulas refer to Christ’s death. 1 Cor 15:3-4 reports that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried.” The creed recorded in Philippians specifies the manner of his death: “even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8).

Gary Habermas points out, “That this confession [1 Cor 15:3-7] is an early Christian, pre-Pauline creed is recognized by virtually all critical scholars across a very wide theological spectrum. There are several indications which reveal this conclusion. First, Paul’s words ‘delivered’ and ‘received’ are technical terms for passing on tradition. As such, we have Paul’s statement that this material was not his own, but received from another source. Second, a number of words in this creed are non-Pauline, again indicating another origin of this material. . . . Third, it is likely that the creed is organized in a stylized, parallel form, thereby providing a further indication of the oral and confessional nature of this material. Fourth, there are indications that there may have been a Semitic original, such as the use of the Aramaic ‘Cephas’ for Peter (v. 5), hence, pointing to an earlier source before Paul’s Greek translation.” (Habermas 1984: 124-25, citations omitted; see also Jeremias 1966: 101-03) Additionally, “According to most scholars, Paul received this creed from the apostles, which makes it even earlier, and a creed has to be repeated before it becomes stylized. So now we’re right on top of the Crucifixion, and note, it’s the eyewitnesses who transmitted this information; it’s not hearsay testimony.” (Habermas 1987: 43; see also Habermas 1984: 125 and the citations therein; Wright 2003: 319) A. M. Hunter states, “The passage therefore preserves uniquely early and verifiable testimony. It meets every reasonable demand of historical reliability.” (Hunter 1976: 100) Hans von Campenhausen concludes, “What is striking is the strictly ‘historical’, as it were, documentary significance which the Christ-tradition thus acquires as regards not only its content but also its form. Especially significant in this respect is the citing of the witnesses of the resurrection by name: the list takes no notice whatever of the rank of the persons involved. Quite apart from the 24 large number of witnesses, the age, the universal dissemination, and the fixed form of the testimony all argue for the trustworthiness of its content and make it rationally unassailable.” (Campenhausen 1972: 114)

C. Medical evidence of death

A detailed article in the Journal of the American Medical Association analyzes from a medical perspective the events that led up to Jesus’ crucifixion (i.e., his sweating great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, his being beaten by the Jews and then scourged by the Romans, his inability to carry his own cross), the nature of the crucifixion itself, and his being pierced by the Roman’s spear with blood and water coming out of him, as described in the different biblical accounts. The authors conclude, “The actual cause of Jesus’ death, like that of other crucified victims, may have been multifactorial and related primarily to hypovolemic shock, exhaustion asphyxia, and perhaps acute heart failure. . . . However, the important feature may not be how he died but whether he died. Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge.” (Edwards, et al. 1986: 1463)

The Roman soldier who pierced Jesus’ side with his spear was making sure that Jesus was, in fact, dead (John 19:31-34). Had that soldier not been absolutely certain that Jesus was dead, either the soldiers would have broken Jesus’ legs as they did to the other two men who were crucified with Jesus or they would have done something else to ensure his death. If Jesus was not truly dead, but the Roman centurion reported to Pilate that he was dead, he would have been in violation of his orders and would have been lying to his commander and therefore probably would have paid for that with his own life. Consequently, it is incredible to contend that Jesus did not die on the cross.
D. Jesus’ burial in a tomb

Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect (governor) of Judea, had ordered Jesus to be crucified (Matt 27:26; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:24-25; John 19:16). After the crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, requested Jesus’ body in order to bury it; Pilate released the body to be buried but only after first confirming from the centurion who had been present at the crucifixion that Jesus was, in fact, dead (Matt 27:57-58; Mark 15:42-45; Luke 23:50-52; John 19:38).35 The early creed, which pre-dates Paul and goes back essentially to the time of the crucifixion itself, includes the statement “that He was buried” (1 Cor 15:4). N. T. Wright points out, “The mention of Jesus’ burial [1 Cor 15:4a] can only have attained such a significant place in a brief and summary traditional narrative if it was regarded as important in itself. [It served] to certify that Jesus was really and truly dead.” (Wright 2003: 321)

The manner of burial is significant. The body was prepared for burial, which would not have been done had there been any spark of life left in Jesus (Matt 27:59; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53-56; John 19:39-40). According to Jewish burial customs, the body would have been wrapped, and between the folds in the linen wrap probably 65-75 pounds of spices mixed with a gummy substance known as myrrh would have been placed (John 19:39). This would have resulted in a weighty encasement surrounding the body (see McDowell 1981: 52-53). No one who was alive could have survived when so encased.36 Jesus then was buried in Joseph of Arimathea’s own tomb; thus, the place where Jesus was buried was a known location (Matt 27:59-60; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53; John 19:38-42). A “large stone” was rolled to close the entrance, the tomb was sealed, and a guard was placed at the tomb to make sure that no one could steal the body (Matt 27:60-66; Mark 15:46; 16:3-4; Luke 23:53; John 19:41-42). The official government seal, and the Roman security guard made it impossible for anyone to break into or out of that tomb (Ibid.: 53-61).37

E. Reaction of the disciples

The immediate post-crucifixion events are only consistent with Jesus’ actually dying by crucifixion. For example, John 20:19 reports that the disciples were in a room in which “the doors were shut . . . for fear of the Jews.” That is only explicable if their leader had, in fact, been executed at the insistence of the Jewish leaders and the disciples were now afraid that the Jewish leaders would come after them. On the Sunday immediately after the crucifixion, Mark 16:10 adds that Jesus’ disciples were “mourning and weeping.” Luke 24 reports that two other disciples, one named Cleopas, were walking on the road to Emmaus. Luke 24:17 states that they were “looking sad.” The two disciples told the reason in Luke 24:20-21 when they spoke of “how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him [Jesus] to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was he who was going to redeem Israel” Again, the sadness and dashed hopes of those disciples only makes sense in light of Jesus crucifixion. The fact that one of the disciples on the road to Emmaus was named is further evidence that the account is authentic and reliable, since Cleopas could have been questioned about the events of that day.38

35 “Even the most skeptical scholars acknowledge that Joseph was probably the genuine, historical individual who buried Jesus, since it is unlikely that early Christian believers would invent an individual, give him a name and nearby town of origin, and place that fictional character on the historical council of the Sanhedrin, whose members were well known” (Craig 1981: 53).
36 The NASB says that the mixture brought to anoint the body was “about a hundred pounds weight.” Those were Roman pounds (litrai); each litra weighed approximately 11 ounces (versus 16 ounces to an English pound) (see Carson 1991: 428, 629-30). If the Shroud of Turin is the legitimate burial cloth of Jesus, although there are various plant/spice materials found on the shroud, it does not appear that the 65-75 pounds of spices mixed with the gummy substance had yet been placed by the time of the resurrection. This suggests that Nicodemus bound Jesus’ hands and feet because of rigor mortis and/or bound the shroud around Jesus, applying only a small amount of the spices he brought (John 19:39-40) but did not apply the bulk of the spices and myrrh, probably because it was so close to the beginning of Passover; the women then would have fully anointed the body with spices and myrrh after Passover had ended (Luke 23:55-56; see Habermas 1981: 47-54; Lemke 2000: 4-7, 12-14; Lanser 2014: The Wrappings).
37 Josh McDowell points out, “This seal on Jesus’ tomb was a public testimony that Jesus’ body was actually there. In addition, because the seal was Roman, it verified the fact that His body was protected from vandals by nothing less than the power and authority of the Roman Empire.” (McDowell 1981: 59)
38 On the Sunday immediately following the burial, Mark 16:11 records that Mary Magdalene reported to the disciples the tomb was empty, Jesus had risen from the grave, and he was alive, but “when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it.” Likewise, Mark 16:13 reports that the two disciples to whom Jesus had appeared on the road to Emmaus “went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either.” Luke 24:10-11 similarly records that Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women told the disciples what the angel at the tomb had said, “but these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them.” John 20:24-
F. The prevalence of self-damaging material

Christianity was born in a first-century Jewish context, yet all four Gospels and many other NT writings are centered on the fact that Jesus was crucified by the Romans. If the story of Jesus’ life was simply made up long after the fact by his followers, the account of Jesus’ crucifixion never would have been included: “It is hard to imagine a more effective way to convince people in a first-century Jewish context that someone is not the Messiah than by telling them that the would-be savior was executed by Israel’s military oppressors! To go further and tell them that this would-be savior died a cursed death on a tree would make the sales pitch all the worse (cf. Deut. 21:22-23). . . . Thus, the fact that the Synoptic tradition not only continues to mention the crucifixion but also makes it the centerpiece of its message must be taken as evidence that the earliest Christians, including the authors of the Synoptic Gospels, remained willing to acknowledge, remember, and boldly proclaim the single most embarrassing historical fact associated with their fledgling movement. This is the very sort of self-damaging material historians typically look for in assessing the veracity of ancient works.” (Eddy and Boyd 2007: 411)

G. Confirmation by hostile and non-Christian sources

1. Babylonian Talmud. The Babylonian Talmud is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. Tractate Sanhedrin, folio 43a states, “On the eve of Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, ‘He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Any one who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.’ But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of the Passover!” (Bab. Talmud: Sanhedrin 43a) One manuscript specifies that Yeshu refers to Jesus Christ by adding “the Nasarean” after his name (Bab. Talmud: Sanhedrin 43a, n.34). The reference to “hanging” is derived from Deut 21:22-23 and “in pre-Christian times it was already being applied to the victims of crucifixion” (Carroll and Green 1995: 172). The NT uses the term “hang” in the same way (Luke 39; Acts 5:30; 10:39; Gal 3:13). Most scholars conclude that this passage of the Talmud came from the earliest period of compilation, AD 70-200 (Habermas 1984: 97-98). This is significant in that the Babylonian Talmud is an “official” work of Jewish rabbis that admits responsibility for having Jesus executed and that he died.

2. Toledot Yeshu. The Toledot Yeshu is a “derogatory version of the life of Jesus, growing out of the response of the Jewish community to Christianity” (Toledot Yeshu n.d.: Introduction). Although it was not compiled until the fifth or sixth century, Toledot Yeshu again confirms Jesus’ execution: “Yeshu was put to death on the sixth hour on the eve of the Passover and of the Sabbath” (Ibid.: text). The work is also significant in that, even though it is an anti-Christian portrayal of Jesus, it confirms Jesus’ ability to work miracles, including reviving the dead, and Jesus’ claim that his coming had been prophesied in the OT: “Yeshu replied, ‘The prophets long ago prophesied my coming: “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse,” and I am he’” (Ibid.).

3. Josephus. Josephus was born in AD 37. He became a Jewish priest and later fought against the Romans during the war of AD 66-70. After the Jews were defeated, he joined the Romans as court historian for Emperor Vespasian. In his book Antiquities of the Jews, written in AD 93, Josephus wrote what is called the Testimonium Flavianum: “About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who brought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Messiah. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvellous things about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.” (Josephus 93:18.63-64, italics added) Many people believe that a later Christian editor added the italicized portions. The vast majority of scholars agree that Josephus wrote at least the non-italicized portions of the Testimonium (see Habermas and Licona 2004: 266-70n.42).

4. Tacitus. Tacitus, who lived from approximately AD 55-120, is known as the “greatest historian” of ancient Rome (Habermas 1984: 87). His Annals, written about AD 115, confirm Jesus’ death. In referring to the
great fire of Rome under Emperor Nero, Tacitus states, “Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus.” (Tacitus c.115: 15.44)

5. Lucian of Samosata. Lucian of Samosata was a Greek anti-Christian satirist. In approximately AD 165-75 he wrote The Passing of Peregrinus. In it, he talked of the Christians who worship “the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world” (Lucian of Samosata c.165-75: 11).

6. Mara Bar-Serapion. Mara Bar-Serapion was a Stoic philosopher from Syria. He wrote between approximately AD 73-200. He wrote a letter to his son to motivate him to emulate wise teachers of the past. In that letter he said, “For what benefit did the Athenians obtain by putting Socrates to death, seeing that they received as retribution for it famine and pestilence? Or the people of Samos by the burning of Pythagoras, seeing that in one hour the whole of their country was covered with sand? Or the Jews by the murder of their Wise King, seeing that from that very time their kingdom was driven away from them? For with justice did God grant a recompense to the wisdom of all three of them. For the Athenians died by famine; and the people of Samos were covered by the sea without remedy; and the Jews, brought to desolation and expelled from their kingdom, are driven away into Every land.” (Mara Bar-Serapion n.d.: n.p., emph. in orig.)

The above works establish that no one in the ancient world doubted that Jesus had died by crucifixion; it had, in fact, become common knowledge. The Qur’an’s statement that Jesus was not killed by crucifixion is not based on any historical or factual reason but is a bare assertion made for theological, not historical, reasons.

H. The failure of alternative explanations

No plausible alternative explanation has ever been advanced to explain away the crucifixion. The Qur’an’s simple denial that Jesus died or was crucified is based on no historical or factual basis whatsoever and fails for the above reasons. The same applies to the idea that someone else was “substituted” for Jesus or that he did not die on the cross but revived in the tomb.

1. The “substitution” theory. The substitution theory fails for multiple reasons, as even some knowledgeable Muslims admit. It cannot explain or refute the overwhelming historical evidence for the fact of Jesus’ crucifixion (see the main text of this section) or explain or refute the overwhelming historical evidence for the resurrection (see below, section V. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: The Resurrection). The suggestion that someone else was substituted is foolish because, as Mawdudi admits, “So far as the trial at the court of Pilate is concerned, it was probably Jesus who was tried. Pilate sentenced him to death.” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 4:157n.193) Jesus was in the presence of the Roman soldiers when he was sentenced and when he was handed over to them to be led out to execution; and he was continually in their presence until he was crucified and died (as well as continually in the presence of others from the time of his arrest and trial to the crucifixion). There was no “confusion” and no opportunity in which an innocent third party could have been substituted for Jesus. Emerick’s suggestion that the Romans grabbed the wrong man, “thinking all Semites looked alike” (Emerick 2004: 224) is foolish because all Semites do not look alike to other Semites, which in this case included Jesus’ mother, his disciples, friends, acquaintances, and his enemies (who wanted to make sure that it was Jesus who was killed, not some “look alike”).

Muslims generally have not considered other implications of the idea that Allah substituted someone else for Jesus on the cross: (1) Allah thereby would have victimized an innocent man; (2) Allah thereby would have deceived not just Jesus’ enemies but also would have deceived Jesus’ mother, relatives, friends, and disciples; (3) Allah thereby would have demonstrated that he is inherently untrustworthy because this deception was completely unnecessary. Former Muslim Daniel Shayesteh asks the obvious questions, “What was the purpose of making a Jesus look alike die and taking the unique Jesus to heaven? Wouldn’t it have been better for

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39 Yusuf Ali comments, “But some of the early Christian sects did not believe that Christ was killed on the Cross. The Basilidians believed that someone else was substituted for him. The Docetae held that Christ never had a real physical or natural body, but only an apparent or phantom body, and that his Crucifixion was only apparent, not real.” (Ali 2006: Q. 4:157n.663) While those groups denied the crucifixion, as with the Qur’an the basis for that denial stemmed from philosophical or theological reasons rather than factual or historical reasons. Both the Basilidans (followers of Basilides) and the Docetae (“illusionists,” from “docetism” [“to seem” or “appear”]) were not among the earliest Christian sects; they were second-third century Gnostic sects “who maintained that Christ as a divine being had only the appearance of a body” (Cullmann 1949: 30). Oskar Skarsaune adds, “There is no literary evidence for the existence of Gnostic systems in the first century A.D. Some of the Gnostic texts stem from the second century, most of them from the third and fourth centuries.” (Skarsaune 2002: 249) Indeed, “Docetism is not properly a Christian heresy at all, as it did not arise in the Church from the misunderstanding of a dogma by the faithful, but rather came from without.” (Arendzen 1909: n.p.)
God not to deceive people but rather kill off His enemies and take Jesus to heaven before the eyes of the people?” (Shayesteh 2004: 183) Further, as Abbas Sundiata points out, “If Allah could deceive people into thinking that an event they had witnessed was an illusion, how then can Muslims tell that Islam [itself] is not a gigantic cruel hoax? . . . Is it not remarkable that the only way the Qur’an was able to deny the historical fact that Jesus was crucified was to make Allah the deceiver of humanity?” (Sundiata 2006: 248, 249)

Islamic scholar Mahmoud Ayoub recognizes the problem. He states, “It must have been felt by hadith transmitters and commentators that for God to cause an innocent man to die unjustly to save another would be divine wrongdoing (zulm), which cannot be predicated of God. Thus the theory which eventually gained most popularity was that one of the disciples voluntarily accepted death as a ransom for his master.” (Ayoub 1980: 97) The theory of a voluntary substitution of someone else for Jesus, however, does not alter the fact that Allah was perpetrating a deception to save the life of his prophet. Ayoub himself concludes that the substitution theory is implausible for grammatical reasons and for reasons of God’s justice and integrity. He rightly asks, “Would it be in consonance with God’s covenant, his mercy and justice, to deceive humanity for so many centuries?” (Ibid.: 104) For Allah to have practiced such a deception “would lead to doubt in historical testimony, that is, the ongoing transmission of historical reports (tawātur). This historical transmission provides a sure source of knowledge, provided that tawātur is based on concrete data. If however, we allow the possibility of the occurrence of such confusion of identity, this would necessitate in the end doubt in all sacred laws.” (Ibid.: 101) Further, “it makes historical Christianity based on a divine deception which was not disclosed until the Qur’an was revealed centuries later” (Ibid.: 97).

Islamic scholar and translator of the Qur’an Muhammad Asad adds, “There exist, among Muslims, many fanciful legends telling us that at the last moment God substituted for Jesus a person closely resembling him (according to some accounts, that person was Judas), who was subsequently crucified in his place. However, none of these legends finds the slightest support in the Qur’an or in authentic Traditions, and the stories produced in this connection by the classical commentators must be summarily rejected. They represent no more than confused attempts at ‘harmonizing’ the Qur’anic statement that Jesus was not crucified with the graphic description, in the Gospels, of his crucifixion.” (Asad 1980: Q. 4:157n.171) In sum, this alleged deception by Allah is merely an assertion made 600 years after the fact with no corroborating evidence.

Finally, because the historical evidence for the resurrection is so great (see below, section V. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: The Resurrection) the idea that “someone else was substituted for Jesus” necessitates the conclusion that the “Jesus look-alike” was resurrected from the grave! In other words, Allah’s deception leads to the same result—someone was crucified and then was resurrected—except that the person involved was Allah’s imposter, not the real Jesus. More than that, after his resurrection the imposter implausibly would have continued the charade by convincing everyone he was the “real” Jesus by knowing his disciples personally (John 20:11—21:24), explaining how the entire OT was all about the real Jesus (Luke 24:13-49), commissioning his disciples to go to the entire world and spread the gospel of the real Jesus (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18), and then ascending to heaven (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-11)! The “substitution theory” therefore is nonsensical and is completely incoherent.

2. The “swoon” theory. Perhaps the most important alternative explanation to the crucifixion that at least tried to deal with some of the facts was the so-called “swoon theory,” which contends that Jesus did not die on the cross but was taken down from the cross unconscious (i.e., he “swooned”) and then revived in the tomb. This was a prominent nineteenth century “naturalistic” attempt to explain away Jesus’ resurrection; it was the position of the late Muslim apologist Ahmed Deedat and is held by the Ahmadiyya sect of Muslims today (Habermas 1984: 56; Deedat 1984: passim; “Jesus a humble prophet of God” 1995-2014: n.p.).

The swoon theory fails for all the reasons listed above. It is contrary to the uniform testimony of the very earliest witnesses—either the friends or foes of Christianity (Moule and Cupitt 1972: 508; Maier 1973: 112). Additionally, the swoon theory is contrary to the physical evidence. First, “crucifixion is essentially death by asphyxiation, as the intercostals and pectoral muscles around the lungs halt normal breathing while the body hangs in the ‘down’ position. Therefore, faking death on the cross still would not permit one to breathe; one cannot fake the inability to breathe for any length of time.” (Habermas 1984: 57) Second, the swoon theory also ignores the spear thrust into Jesus’ side. “Medical doctors who have studied this issue usually agree that this is a very accurate medical description. The water probably proceeded from the pericardium, the sac that surrounds the heart, while the blood came from the right side of the heart. Even if Jesus was alive before he was stabbed, the lance would almost certainly have killed him. Therefore, this chest wounds also disproves the swoon theory.” (Ibid.: 58; see also Edwards et al. 1986: 1463) Third, the swoon theory does not take into consideration that Jesus’ body would not have been prepared for burial had even one spark of life remained in him and that in the tomb Jesus could not have breathed through the heavy weight of spices and gummy substance in which he
was encased (see McDowell 1981: 98).

Fourth, if he somehow survived the crucifixion, how could he move the heavy stone blocking the entrance to the tomb? In his extremely weakened physical condition, could he move an object which even a healthy man would have a great problem with (according to tradition)? This would be even more difficult when it is remembered that the stone would have to be rolled uphill out of its gulley.” (Habermas 1984: 56-57)

Further, had that somehow been done, how could he have fought off the Roman guard?

Finally, the swoon theory largely was dealt its death-blow by David Strauss (an opponent of orthodox Christianity) in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Strauss pointed out, “It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening and indulgence, and who still, at last, yielded to his sufferings, could have given to the disciples the impression that he was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life, an impression which lay at the bottom of their future ministry. Such a resuscitation could only have weakened the impression which he had made upon them in life and in death, at the most could only have given it an elegiac voice, but could by no possibility have changed their sorrow into enthusiasm, have elevated their reverence into worship.” (Strauss 1865: 412)

I. Conclusion

The fact that Jesus died by crucifixion is an event “so strongly attested historically” that it is “granted by nearly every scholar who studies the subject, even the rather skeptical ones” (Habermas and Licona 2004: 44; see ibid.: 48-49). One such highly critical scholar is John Dominic Crossan who states, “That he [Jesus] was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be, since both Josephus and Tacitus . . . agree with the Christian accounts on at least that basic fact” (Crossan1994: 145; see also Dunn 2003: 339). After assessing the evidence, Hans-Ruedi Weber similarly concludes, “Jesus of Nazareth was crucified under Pontius Pilate—this is a fact which no one can doubt unless he willfully ignores all biblical and non-biblical accounts that have come to us” (Weber 1979: 12)

Even Muslim Alhaj A. D. Ajijola, a member of Nigeria’s Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, refers to “the historical fact that Jesus, son of Mary, had been put on the cross” (Ajijola 1972: 72). He also admits that “Christians and Jews, despite their discord, are at one that Jesus died on the Cross. The chronicles of the Roman Empire are in accord with this fact.” (Ibid.: 39) Nevertheless, Ajijola’s adherence to Islamic doctrine causes him to disregard what he admits to be historical facts and proclaim, “Six hundred years after Jesus, a man from the Arabian desert made his appearance and proclaimed contrary to the entire world: ‘They slew him not nor crucified him.’ [Q. 4:157] This claim is a standing miracle of Muhammad the unlettered Prophet of the Arabian Peninsula (the choicest blessings of God be upon him).” (Ibid.: 39-40)

When people try to resist the overwhelming weight of historical, factual information for philosophical or religious reasons, they end up inventing implausible theories that create more problems than they solve. Such is the case with those who deny Jesus’ death by crucifixion. The above data and conclusions have important implications regarding the basic trustworthiness of the Qur’an. As Eddy and Boyd point out, “If there is any fact of Jesus’ life that has been established by a broad consensus, it is the fact of Jesus’ crucifixion. For the Qur’an to get it wrong at this most fundamental point raises serious questions about the historical reliability of any claim it makes about Jesus.” (Eddy and Boyd 2007: 172)

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40 Mahmoud Ayoub, virtually alone among Islamic scholars, admits this problem. He tries to solve it by denying that Q. 4:157 was intended to be a historical statement at all: “Why then, it must be asked, does the Qur’an deny the crucifixion of Christ in the face of apparently overwhelming evidence? Muslim commentators have not been able convincingly to disprove the crucifixion. Rather, they have compounded the problem by adding the conclusion of their substitution theories. The problem has been, we believe, one of understanding. Commentators have generally taken the verse to be an historical statement. This statement, like all other statements concerning Jesus in the Qur’an, belongs not to history but to theology in the broadest sense. It is similar to the Qur’anic assertion that Mary, the mother of Christ, was the sister of Aaron.” (Ayoub 1980: 116) The “theology in the broadest sense” to which he refers is his assertion that Q. 4:157 “is not speaking here about a man, righteous and wronged though he may be, but about the Word of God who was sent to earth and who returned to God. Thus the denial of the killing of Jesus is a denial of the power of men to vanquish and destroy the divine Word, which is forever victorious.” (Ibid.: 117)

Ayoub is correct that Christ’s crucifixion is based on “overwhelming evidence” and that “Muslim commentators have not been able convincingly to disprove” it. However, his solution, as with the “substitution” theories themselves, creates greater problems than it solves. Specifically, by removing Q. 4:157, “all other statements concerning Jesus in the Qur’an,” and the Qur’an’s assertion that Mary was Aaron’s sister (see above, section II.B. The family and birth of Jesus) from the realm of history, the Qur’an becomes nothing but a myth which is not subject to historical or factual verification. Its assertions therefore can be taken to mean anything at all. Thus, it becomes meaningless as a guide for truth.
V. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: The Resurrection

Historical data similar to those that establish that Jesus died by crucifixion also establish that he bodily rose from the dead. Atheists, of course, do not believe in God and tend not to believe in miracles. Consequently, people with such a worldview try to look for “natural” explanations to explain the resurrection. The existence of the supernatural and miracles is not an impediment for Muslims, since they believe in the supernatural and in miracles. Indeed, Islam teaches that Jesus was bodily translated to heaven, similar to Enoch and Elijah and also similar to Jesus’ ascension forty days after his resurrection as described in the Bible (Q. 4:157-58; see also Q. 3:55; compare Gen 5:24; 2 Kgs 2:1-11; Acts 1:9-11). However, resurrection is different from being translated to heaven: “A resurrection is the physical and bodily raising up of the dead man in the tomb to new life” (Craig 1981: 133; see also Wright 2003: 109 [“Resurrection is what did not happen to Enoch or Elijah”]). Jesus predicted his resurrection and gave it as the test by which we could know he was telling the truth (Matt 12:38-40; 16:1-4; John 2:18-21; see also Mark 14:58; Luke 11:29-30; Rom 1:4). Whether he resurrected is a factual, historical question: either he did or he did not. Therefore, even though the resurrection of a man from the dead is a unique and unprecedented event involving the supernatural, whether or not it happened can and should be determined as one would determine other claimed historical occurrences—by assessing the available evidence and using our reason to evaluate the likelihood that it did or did not occur. The following historical data demonstrate that Jesus was, in fact, bodily resurrected from the grave.

A. The tomb was empty

The tomb in which Jesus had been buried was owned by Joseph of Arimathea (Matt 27:57-60; Mark 15:45-46; Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38-42); thus it was a known tomb. Further, the women who went to the tomb on the Sunday after the burial had seen where Jesus was buried, so they knew the location of the tomb (Matt 27:61; Mark 15:47; Luke 13:55; John 20:1).

1. The significance of the women. On the Sunday immediately following the burial, Mary Magdalene and other women went to the tomb, found that the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty, and encountered the risen Christ (Matt 28:1-7; Mark 16:1-9; Luke 24:1-8; John 20:1).41 Then they reported to the disciples that the tomb was empty and that Jesus had risen from the grave and was alive (Matt 28:8; Mark 16:10-11; Luke 24:9-12; John 20: 2-18). These passages are significant in that the initial appearances of Jesus following his resurrection and the initial reports of the resurrection were made to and were given by women. This fact shows that the biblical accounts were not made up but are reliable. The reason is that in ancient Judaism women were considered to be unreliable witnesses; they either were not competent to act as witnesses in court or there were significant limitations on the testimony they could give (“Witness” 2008: n.p.; Meacham 2009: Other Laws).42 Consequently, the disciples’ disbelief of the women’s reports stemmed not only from the amazing nature of what they were reporting but probably also from the fact that they were women. But that latter fact helps to authenticate that the biblical accounts are truthful because, as Paul Maier explains, since the testimony of women was considered to be unreliable, “if the resurrection accounts had been manufactured . . . women would never have been included in the story, at least, not as first witnesses” (Maier 1973: 98). Historian Michael Grant concurs, “The early Church would never have concocted, on its own account, the statement that this most solemn and fateful of all discoveries was made by women, including a woman with an immoral record at that” (Grant 1977: 176).

2. The significance of the Jews. The Jewish leaders never denied that the tomb was empty. Instead, when the Roman guard reported to the chief priests what had happened, the Jewish leaders bribed the guard and invented the story that Jesus’ “disciples came by night and stole Him away” (Matt 28:11-15).43 We previously quoted from Josephus, the first century Jewish historian for the Romans. Paul Maier notes “the remarkable fact that Josephus does not seek to scoff at the resurrection claim by any information at his disposal that Jesus’ body still lay in its grave. Certainly this is an argument from silence, but the silence is especially eloquent in view of Josephus’ known habit of rotating false Messiahs elsewhere in his books.” (Maier 1973: 116) Indeed, “Well into the second century A.D. and long after Matthew recorded its first instance, the Jerusalem authorities continued

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41 Robert Stein states, “The presence of the various Semitisms and Semitic customs in the gospel accounts of the empty tomb indicates that these accounts were early and originated most probably in a Palestinian setting. (Cf. ‘on the first day of the week’ [Mark 16: 2]; ‘angel of the Lord’ [Matt. 28: 2]; ‘Miriam’ [Matt. 28: 1]; ‘answering] said’ [Matt. 28: 5]; ‘bowed their faces to the ground’ [Luke 24: 5]; etc.).” (Stein 1977: 25)

42 This is similar to Islam both in ancient times and today (“Status of women’s testimony in Islam” 2019; see Q. 2:282; al-Bukhari: 2658 [“The Prophet said, ‘Isn’t the witness of a woman equal to half of that of a man?’ The women said, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘This is because of the deficiency of a woman’s mind.’”]; see also al-Bukhari: 304; Muslim: 79a; at-Tirmidhi: 2613).

43 The stolen body theory is discussed in more detail in section H. The failure of alternative explanations, below.
to admit an empty tomb by ascribing it to the disciples’ stealing the body. For, in his *Dialogue with Trypho* [ch. 108], Justin Martyr, who came from neighboring Samaria, reported c. 150 A.D. that the Jewish authorities even sent specially commissioned men across the Mediterranean to counter Christian claims with this explanation of the resurrection.” (Ibid.: 116-17)

Additionally, Edward Bode points out that the claim that someone stole the body had to have developed early, because after a long time “too many things could have happened to explain [the tomb’s] being empty. . . . Moreover, the polemic [the argument of the Jewish leaders] did not contest the existence of the empty tomb; rather it admitted the fact of the empty tomb by trying to explain the emptiness through some manner other than Jesus’ resurrection.” (Bode 1970: 163; see also Wright 2003: 638) As William Lane Craig states, “The early Jewish propaganda against which Matthew writes thus itself presupposes and bears witness to the fact that Jesus’ tomb was empty. The evidence is all the more powerful because it comes from the enemies of the Christian ‘heresy’ themselves.” (Craig 1981: 83-84)

3. The lack of veneration of the grave. There is another important fact that must be accounted for. Dunn observes, “One of the most striking factors to be considered is that we have no record in the early decades of Christianity of any tomb being venerated as the place where Jesus had been laid to rest. . . . This is indeed striking, because within contemporary Judaism, as in other religions, the desire to honour the memory of the revered dead by constructing appropriate tombs and (by implication) by veneration of the site is well attested. . . . Why would the first Christians not act out this pious instinct and tradition? The only obvious answer, in the light of the evidence thus far reviewed, is that they did not believe any tomb contained his body. They could not venerate his remains because they did not think there were any remains to be venerated.” (Dunn 2003: 837-38; see also Craig 1981: 63) The lack of veneration of Jesus’ tomb contrasts with the veneration of the tombs and bones of the early Christian martyrs (see *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* c.160: 18). It also contrasts with the tomb of Muhammad in Medina which to this day remains a site of pilgrimage for Muslims.

Historian Michael Grant concludes, “If we apply the same sort of criteria that we would apply to any other ancient literary sources, then the evidence is firm and plausible enough to necessitate the conclusion that the tomb was indeed found empty” (Grant 1977: 176).

B. The early Christians began proclaiming Jesus’ resurrection even in Jerusalem

The fact that Jesus’ tomb was empty and the credibility of the Christian belief in the resurrection are confirmed by the fact that the early Christians did not wait decades to proclaim Jesus’ resurrection (so the witnesses would be dead) but did so from the beginning. As Peter and John said after having been arrested and threatened by the Jewish leaders for proclaiming Jesus’ resurrection, “We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard” (*Acts 4:20*). They also did not go to some remote province to proclaim Jesus’ resurrection (where no one could contradict them), but began their proclamation in Jerusalem, the city where Jesus had been killed and buried and where their primary opponents, the Jewish leaders and the Romans, were most prominent (*Acts 2-7*). Tacitus confirms that the church began in Judea (Tacitus c.115: 15.44).

Edward Bode notes, “Given the Jewish notion of the resurrection of the body and the knowledge of the location of the tomb, it would have been impossible to preach a risen Jesus in Jerusalem if this tomb had still contained the body. With the Jewish mentality of resurrection and the availability of the tomb, someone sooner or later was bound to look for himself to see if the tomb was empty.” (Bode 1970: 174; see also Craig 1981: 82-83) “The empty tomb could not prove the resurrection of Jesus or create faith in it. *But the contrary is not true.* If the Jewish authorities had been able to produce the body of Jesus, they would have been able finally and decisively to *disprove* the resurrection of Jesus, as the disciples believed it and were proclaiming it” (Neill 1964: 288, emph. in orig.). The Jewish leaders had the means, the motive, and the opportunity to crush the incipient Christian movement, and they easily could have and would have done so had they simply gone to the tomb, removed Jesus’ dead body, and paraded it for all to see; but they did not because they could not.

The same is true with respect to the Roman authorities who, above all else, wanted to keep peace and avoid conflict among the people they governed. Terry Miethe states that “whether it’s seven years, eight years, or ten years, the claim was that the body was no longer there, that all the eyewitnesses were still alive, and that the church was causing so much trouble with its claim that the Roman government certainly could have put this to a rest by producing contrary evidence” (Miethe 1987: 70). Thus, “If the [Jewish or Roman] authorities could have produced Jesus’ corpse, they would have exploded the Resurrection faith for good; the fact that it was not exploded indicates that they did not produce the corpse, and their failure to produce it . . . shows that they could

44 The fact that Jesus’ disciples began proclaiming his resurrection is itself evidence for his crucifixion. To proclaim that someone has risen from the dead is nonsensical unless that person first is dead.
not produce it.” (Packer 1987: 149) The failure of early Christianity’s enemies to produce Jesus’ dead body is eloquent testimony that the grave was empty—and the only plausible explanation that fits all the facts is that the grave was empty because Jesus had risen from the grave exactly as he had predicted and as the disciples were proclaiming.

C. Multiple witnesses

Earlier, we considered the early Christian creeds, including 1 Cor 15:3-7. That creed is particularly important since it goes back to the early AD 30s, essentially to the time of the crucifixion/resurrection itself, and was based on eyewitness testimony (Habermas 1987: 43; see also Habermas 1984: 125 and the citations therein). Verses 4-7 of that creed state: “And that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles.”

A. M. Hunter points out that 1 Cor 15:3-7 “is traditional testimony to the fact of the resurrection taking us back to within half a dozen years of the crucifixion, and it has rightly been called ‘the oldest document of the Christian church which we possess.’ Moreover, it is ‘tradition’ whose truth was open to testing. When Paul wrote, Peter and James were still living and most of the ‘five hundred brethren’ yet survived and could be questioned.” (Hunter 1976: 100, emph. in orig.) Habermas summarizes the importance of this early creed: “No longer can it be charged that there is no demonstrably early, eyewitness testimony for the resurrection or for the other most important tenets of Christianity, for this creed provides just such evidential data concerning the facts of the gospel, which are the very center of the Christian faith. It links the events themselves with those who actually participated in time and space. . . . The fact that it was the original eyewitnesses who reported these events indicates that legends from a later period cannot explain this initial testimony.” (Habermas 1984: 126-27)

With respect to the 500 witnesses, C. H. Dodd observes, “There can hardly be any purpose in mentioning the fact that most of the 500 are still alive, unless Paul is saying, in effect, ‘the witnesses are there to be questioned’” (Dodd 1968: 128). William Lane Craig adds, “Paul could never have said that if the event had not actually occurred” (Craig 1981: 94, emph. in orig.). It is important to remember that “Paul’s letter was to a church, and therefore it was a public document, written to be read aloud. Paul was inviting anyone who doubted that Jesus had appeared to people after his death to go and talk to the eyewitnesses if they wished. It was a bold challenge and one that could easily be taken up, since during the pax Romana travel around the Mediterranean was safe and easy. Paul could not have made such a challenge if those eyewitnesses didn’t exist.” (Keller 2008: 204; see also Wright 2003: 325 (“The whole thrust of the paragraph is about evidence, about witnesses being called, about something that actually happened for which eyewitnesses could and would vouch”))

D. The early Christians’ lives were changed by what they saw

Although Jesus had predicted his death and resurrection, the NT makes clear that his disciples did not understand him; they had no conception of a dying and rising Messiah (see Matt 16:21-23; Mark 4:40-41; 6:51-52; 8:14-21, 31-33; 9:9-11, 30-32; Luke 8:25; 9:43-45, 51-56; 18:31-34; 24:18-22; John 12:12-16, 27-37; 16:16-18). As mentioned earlier, the disciples also did not believe the reports of the women that Jesus had risen from the tomb. Then Jesus appeared to the disciples in order to assure them that he was not just a vision, or hallucination, or spirit, or ghost; he asked them to touch his body, and he also ate with them (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-29; 21:9-14). That these events happened is confirmed by Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch. Ignatius was friends with Polycarp who had been “instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ” (Irenaeus c.185: 3.3.4). When Ignatius was on the way to his own martyrdom about AD 110, he wrote a letter to the church at Smyrna where Polycarp was then bishop. In that letter he recounted, “For I know that after His resurrection also He was still possessed of flesh, and I believe that He is so now. When, for instance, He came to those who were with Peter, He said to them, ‘Lay hold, handle Me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit.’ And immediately they touched Him, and believed, being convinced both by His flesh and spirit. For this cause...”

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45 “The seedbed for the first budding and growth of the church was in the city of Jerusalem itself, where, of all places, it would have been ridiculous to preach a risen Christ unless both the apostles and their hearers knew that Joseph’s sepulcher was empty. Some months later, the authorities were so desperate to stop the movement that they even resorted to persecution. A far more effective tool would have been at least an elaborate counter-rumor that there was a body in Joseph’s grave, but this was never attempted because by then there were apparently too many Jerusalemites who had seen for themselves that the sepulcher was empty at the time.” (Maier 1973: 120)

46 Although the NASB, ESV, NIV, and RSV translate the Greek as “He appeared to . . .,” Wright notes that “the verb is passive, and its normal meaning would be ‘was seen by’” (Wright 2003: 323).
also they despaired death, and were found its conquerors. And after his resurrection He did eat and drink with them, as being possessed of flesh, although spiritually He was united to the Father.” (Ignatius c.110c: 3)

These personal appearances of Jesus in his resurrection body transformed the disciples. Habermas and Licona discuss this: “After Jesus’ death, the lives of the disciples were transformed to the point that they endured persecution and even martyrdom... Compare this courage to their character at Jesus’ arrest and execution. They denied and abandoned him, then they hid in fear. Afterward, they willingly endangered themselves by publicly proclaiming the risen Christ. These facts are validated by multiple accounts, both from early sources in the New Testament as well as outside of it.” (Habermas and Licona 2004: 56) Clement of Rome, who is reputed to have seen the apostles (Irenaeus c.185: 3.3.3; Tertullian c.200: 32), wrote even at the end of the first century that their boldness in preaching was because they had “been fully assured through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Clement c.95: ch. 42). If the original disciples had not seen the risen Lord, they would not have been transformed from cowards to bold witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, despite persecution and death (which most of them suffered). But for that, Christianity would not exist.

The NT frequently discusses the persecution faced by the early disciples who had seen the risen Jesus and the boldness with which they nevertheless proclaimed that Jesus had risen and was Lord (e.g., Acts 4:1-31; 5:17-42; 6:7-7:60; 8:1-3; 9:1-31; 12:1-5; 14:1-28; 16:16-40; 18:12-16; 20:17-24; 21:10-13, 27-26:29; 28:16-31; 2 Cor 11:23-33). This is confirmed by other ancient Christian writings (e.g., Clement c.95: 5; Ignatius c.110c: 1-3). Peter and Paul, among many others, were martyred for their faith (see Tertullian c.200: ch. 36). Polycarp, who himself was martyred in about AD 160 (Martyrdom c.160: 9), in his Epistle to the Philippians (c.110) confirms not only the suffering and deaths of Paul and the other apostles but also the source of their steadfastness—the resurrection of Christ: “For they loved not this present world, but Him who died for us, and for our sakes was raised again by God from the dead” (Polycarp c.110: 9). When one is considering the historical evidence, the only plausible explanation for this amazing change in the character and lives of the disciples that is also consistent with the rest of the known evidence (e.g., Jesus’ death, his burial, the empty tomb) is Jesus’ bodily resurrection. Origen made this point in AD 248: “But a clear and unmistakable proof of the fact [of Christ’s resurrection] I hold to be the undertaking of His disciples, who devoted themselves to the teaching of a doctrine which was attended with danger to human life,—a doctrine which they would not have taught with such courage had they invented the resurrection of Jesus from the dead; and who also, at the same time, not only prepared others to despise death, but were themselves the first to manifest their disregard for its terrors.” (Origen 248: 2:56) The bold proclamation of Jesus’ resurrection in the face of persecution and death thus disproves the swoon theory, the stolen body theory, or other “naturalistic” attempts to explain away the resurrection, because no one will willingly suffer and die for what he knows to be a lie.

It is true, of course, that many people have willingly died for causes they sincerely believed in even if those causes proved to be untrue or evil. However, Michael Licona points out that, with respect to the early Christians who faced persecution and martyrdom for their faith, “There is an important difference between the martyred apostle and those who die for their beliefs today. Modern martyrs act solely out of their trust in beliefs passed along to them by others. The apostles died for holding to their own testimony that they had personally seen the risen Jesus. Contemporary martyrs die for what they believe to be true. The disciples of Jesus died for what they knew to be either true or false.” (Licona 2010: 370; see also Dunn 2003: 861 [“It was not that some conviction regarding Jesus was subsequently cast in the form of a resurrection experience story... They not only believed they had seen the Lord, they had experienced a seeing of the Lord alive from the dead.”])

E. The sudden conversion of Paul, an enemy of Christ

The apostle Paul, first known as Saul of Tarsus, was a well-educated Pharisee (Acts 22:3; 26:4-5; Phil 3:4-5). So fanatical was he for the monotheistic Jewish faith in which he was raised and instructed that he became a zealous persecutor of Christians (Acts 7:54-8:3; 9:1-2; 22:4-5; 26:9-11; Phil 3:6). However, even while he was in the middle of persecuting Christians, Paul was dramatically converted to Christ (Acts 9:1-22). What accounts for such a dramatic conversion—one that transformed Paul from being a persecutor to being persecuted? Paul himself describes the reason for this change as his encounter with the resurrected Christ. He adds to the early creed in 1 Corinthians 15, “and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also”

47 Charles Colson has stated, “But what about the disciples? Twelve powerless men, peasants really, were facing not just embarrassment or political disgrace, but beatings, stonings, execution. Every single one of the disciples insisted, to their dying breaths, that they had physically seen Jesus bodily raised from the dead. Don’t you think that one of those apostles would have cracked before being beheaded or stoned? That one of them would have made a deal with the authorities? None did. You see, men will give their lives for something they believe to be true—they will never give their lives for something they know to be false.” (Colson 2002: n.p.)
(1 Cor 15:8; see also Acts 22:1-16; 26:1-23; 1 Cor 15:9-10; Gal 1:11-24; Phil 3:6-10). Paul’s account is credible because he himself was willing continually to suffer and ultimately die for his belief in the risen Christ. Further, the early church leaders who assessed him accounted him as authoritative as the other apostles (see 2 Pet 3:16; Polycarp, c.110: 3:2; 9:1; Ignatius, c.110a: 12:2; c.110b: 4:3).

While many people have converted from one set of beliefs to another, Licona reminds us that “People usually convert to a particular religion because they have heard the message of that religion from a secondary source and believed the message. Paul’s conversion was based on what they perceived to be a personal appearance of the risen Jesus. Today we might believe that Jesus rose from the dead based on secondary evidence, trusting Paul and the disciples who saw the risen Jesus. But for Paul, his experience came from primary evidence [the direct, personal appearance of Jesus himself].” (Licona 2010: 440)

F. The sudden conversion of James, a skeptic of Christ

The Bible records that Jesus had a number of brothers, one of whom was James (Matt 13:55-56; Mark 6:3; see also Matt 12:46-47; Mark 3:31-32; Luke 8:19-20; John 2:12; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor 9:5; Gal 1:19). That James was Jesus’ brother was also confirmed by Josephus (Josephus 93: 20.9.1). James appears to have been a pious Jew who strictly held to Jewish laws and customs (see Gal 2:11-12; see also Eusebius 325: 2.23, quoting Hegesippus). During Jesus’ life, James and the other brothers did not believe that Jesus was who he claimed to be and apparently thought that he had lost his senses (Mark 3:21, 31; John 7:1-5). When he was on the cross, Jesus’ committing his mother into the care of his disciple John instead of to his own brother confirms that James was not a believer (John 19:25-27).

After Jesus’ death and resurrection, as Paul recites in the ancient creed, “then He appeared to James” (1 Cor 15:7). Although we have less information concerning James’s conversion than we have of Paul’s, the historical facts all indicate that James’s conversion was just as dramatic and powerful as was Paul’s. The appearance of the risen Christ to James evidently was early, because James is among those waiting in the upper room in Jerusalem for the empowering by the Holy Spirit which occurred on the day of Pentecost; that would place the appearance to James within 50 days of the resurrection (Acts 1:14). James then became a leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13-21; Gal 1:19). He wrote one of the epistles that make up the NT. His conversion was so profound that he, like the other early disciples, died a martyr’s death, which is attested by both non-Christian and Christian sources (Josephus 93: 20.9.1; Eusebius 325: 2.23).

As with Paul, the question must be asked: What best accounts for such a profound conversion and change of life of James, this former skeptic? The simplest, most plausible explanation that fits all the existing facts and that was maintained from the beginning (1 Cor 15:7) is the appearance to James of the resurrected Christ. As Wright puts it, “It is difficult to account for his centrality and unrivalled leadership unless he was himself known to have seen the risen Jesus” (Wright 2003: 325).

G. The formation and existence of the Christian church

While Jesus was on earth, his disciples had no understanding of a dying and rising messiah; yet “even the most skeptical scholars admit that at least the belief that Jesus rose from the dead lay at the very heart of the earliest Christian faith” (Craig 1981: 127). Where did that belief come from? Such a belief did not come from paganism. In connection with his exhaustive survey of pagan beliefs concerning resurrection and life after death, N. T. Wright summarizes, “Christianity was born into a world where its central claim was known to be false. Many believed that the dead were non-existent; outside Judaism, nobody believed in resurrection.” (Wright 2003: 35; for Wright’s survey of the data see ibid.: 32-84)

Concerning this important issue, Craig observes, “If

48 Habermas and Licona note that “Paul’s writings are certainly cited twenty-one times by five of the apostolic fathers and perhaps alluded to on several other occasions” (Habermas and Licona 2004: 280n.4).

49 Some pagan cults, of course, had stories of dying and rising gods and goddesses such as Adonis, Attis, Demeter, Dionysus, Persephone, Isis and Osiris, Tammuz, and Balder, the son of the Norse god Odin. Such myths do not account for the historical evidence of Jesus crucifixion and resurrection. Further, C. S. Lewis notes the logical fallacy of citing such myths as a reason to discount the historical fact of Christ’s resurrection: “The agnostic argument from similarities between Christianity and paganism works only if you know the answer. If you start by knowing on other grounds that Christianity is false, then the pagan stories may be another nail in the coffin: just as if you started by knowing that there were no such things as crocodiles then the various stories about dragons might help to confirm your disbelief. But if the truth of Christianity is the very question which you are discussing, then the argument from anthropology is surely a petitio [i.e., petitio principii—the logical fallacy of “begging the question” in which what is to be proved is implicitly taken for granted].” (Lewis 1970: 132)

Such pagan myths manifestly were not the source of the Christians’ belief in Jesus’ resurrection, because the early
one denies that Jesus really did rise from the dead, then he must explain the disciples’ belief that He did rise either in terms of Jewish influences or in terms of Christian influences” (Craig 1981: 129). Obviously, the belief in a crucified and resurrected messiah could not have come from Christian influences, because Christianity did not yet exist. This idea also could not have come from Judaism although many Jews believed in a resurrection: “The Jewish conception of resurrection differed in two important, fundamental respects from Jesus’ resurrection. In Jewish thought the resurrection always (1) occurred after the end of the world, not within history, and (2) concerned all the people, not just an isolated individual. In contradistinction to this, Jesus’ resurrection was both within history and of one person.” (Ibid.) Consequently, Professor C. F. D. Moule concludes, “I don’t for a moment think anything in the OT could have generated it [the belief of a resurrected messiah] . . . I have been able to discover none [either OT passages or extra-biblical Jewish beliefs] which suggests the entry upon eternal life by an individual, before the wind-up of history: and it’s this that one has to account for.” (Moule 1972: 508, emph. in orig.)

Nevertheless, “something” must have taken place on Easter morning to have ignited that spiritual explosion called Christianity” (Maier 1973: 105, emph. in orig.). What was that “something”? The only plausible explanation for the origin of Christianity—which necessitated a profound theological change from previous Jewish belief—is that Jesus had, in fact, resurrected from the dead. No other explanation fits all the facts. In connection with this, Timothy Keller makes the important observation that “a massive shift in thinking at the worldview level” (which belief in the bodily resurrection most certainly was) “ordinarily takes years of discussion and argument in which thinkers and writers debate . . . until one side wins. That is how culture and worldviews change. However, the Christian view of resurrection, absolutely unprecedented in history, sprang up full-blown immediately after the death of Jesus. There was no process or development. His followers said that their beliefs did not come from debating and discussing. They were just telling others what they had seen themselves. No one has come up with any plausible alternative to this claim.” (Keller 2008: 209) Not only does the origin of Christianity involve a massive shift at the worldview level, but the resurrection became the focus of the new worldview. As N. T. Wright states, “Even where the resurrection was taught within Judaism, it was seldom the major concern, but in early Christianity it is. It has moved . . . from the circumference to the centre.” (Wright 2003: 477) That fact also requires a historical explanation. Again, the only plausible explanation is that Jesus did, in fact, bodily rise from the dead.

This sudden and dramatic change in belief is confirmed by certain unique aspects of Christian belief and practice, all of which began early-on:

1. Sunday worship. “One of the Jewish beliefs held with most tenacity is observance of the Sabbath, and yet Christian Jews transferred their worship from Saturday to Sunday [Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2], which they termed ‘the Lord’s Day’ [Rev 1:10; Didache c.70-110: 14.1]. Only some drastic consideration would have introduced this change: their weekly celebration of the Resurrection.” (Maier 1973: 122) James D. G. Dunn adds, “Not least of relevance is the tradition that Jesus first appeared ‘on the first day of the week’ (Sunday) following his crucifixion and burial. . . . Nor should we forget the striking but often neglected fact that from as early as we can trace, Sunday had become a day of special significance for Christians, ‘the Lord’s day’, precisely because it was the day on which they celebrated the resurrection of the Lord.” (Dunn 2003: 860) Indeed, early church fathers Ignatius and Justin Martyr specifically refer to the resurrection as the rationale for...
the new day of worship (Ignatius c.110d: 9.1; Justin Martyr c.155: 67).

2. **Baptism.** While baptism had been practiced in ancient Judaism for proselytes to Judaism and as a sign of repentance and purification (“Baptism” 1906; see Matt 3:1-6; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; John 1:25-27), its meaning in Christianity was changed to directly relate to the death and resurrection of Jesus (Rom 6:3-5; Col 2:12). The church could have kept the old Jewish notions of baptism, but it did not. And this change in meaning occurred very early in church history.  

3. **Communion (the Lord’s Supper).** 1 Cor 11:23-26 sets forth another of the ancient creeds that go back to the very beginning of Christianity in the early to mid-30s, in this case back to Jesus himself (Jeremias 1966: 101, 104-05; Habermas 1984: 121). The celebration of the Lord’s Supper specifically commemorates Jesus’ death on the cross and is based on what Jesus said at the Last Supper he shared with his disciples. As we have seen, however, it is the resurrection that validates the efficacy of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Hence, 1 Cor 11:26 ends the formula by saying “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” That is a recognition that Jesus is alive and will return.

Any theory of what happened that first Easter morning other than the bodily resurrection of Christ “does not even solve the problem which is here under consideration: the origin, that is, of the Christian Church by faith in the miraculous resurrection of the Messiah” (Strauss 1865: 412). Consequently, Ulrich Wilckens concludes, “The history of mission in primitive Christianity and the entire history of Christian thought with its many layers, is to be understood as an effect of the original experience of the resurrection of Jesus, the preacher of love. If it were not for this experience Christianity would undoubtedly not have come into existence. Through this experience Christianity as a whole is given its basis.” (Wilckens 1978: 131)

**H. The failure of alternative explanations**

A number of theories that have been proposed to try to explain away the resurrection (the swoon theory; the body was stolen; the contention that Jesus didn’t die so he couldn’t have been resurrected; the resurrection is a myth like the dying and rising gods and goddesses of certain pagan cults) have been discussed above. Some other contentions are now mentioned.

1. **The resurrection is just a legend that developed later.** This is “the only satisfactory explanation” Islamic scholar and Qur’anic translator Muhammad Asad can come up with to explain the statement in Q. 4:157 regarding the crucifixion that the Jews “killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them.” Asad states, “The story of the crucifixion as such has been succinctly explained in the Qur’anic phrase wa-lakin shubbiha lahum, which I render as ‘but it only appeared to them as if it had been so’ - implying that in the course of time, long after the time of Jesus, a legend had somehow grown up (possibly under the then-powerful influence of Mithraistic beliefs) to the effect that he had died on the cross in order to atone for the ‘original sin’ with which mankind is allegedly burdened; and this legend became so firmly established among the latter-day followers of Jesus that even his enemies, the Jews, began to believe it - albeit in a derogatory sense (for crucifixion was, in those times, a heinous form of death-penalty reserved for the lowest of criminals). This, to my mind, is the only satisfactory explanation of the phrase wa-lakin shubbiha lahum, the more so as the expression shubbiha li is idiomatically synonymous with khuyyila li, ‘[a thing] became a fancied image to me’, i.e., ‘in my mind’ - in other words, ‘[it] seemed to me.’” (Asad 1980: Q. 4:157n.171) Asad’s “legend” theory is specifically directed at the issue of the crucifixion but of necessity would equally apply to the resurrection since the two are related.

Approximately 200 years ago Julius Müller made the important point that it takes considerable time for written legends to develop about historical people and events, particularly when primary sources and eyewitnesses exist. Müller wrote: “Most decidedly must a considerable interval of time be required for such a complete transformation of a whole history by popular tradition, when the series of legends are formed in the same territory where the heroes actually lived and wrought. Here one cannot imagine how such a series of legends could arise in an historical age, obtain universal respect, and supplant the historical recollection of the true character and connexion of their heroes’ lives in the minds of the community, if eyewitnesses were still at hand, who could be questioned respecting the truth of the recorded marvels. Hence, legendary fiction, as it likes not the clear present time, but prefers the mysterious gloom of grey antiquity, is wont to seek a remoteness of age, along with that of space, and to remove its boldest and more rare and wonderful creations into a very remote and unknown land.” (Müller 1844: 26, quoted in Craig 1981: 101)

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51 The NASB, in its introductory notes to the books of Romans and Colossians, indicates that Romans was probably written in the Spring of AD 57, and Colossians was probably written about AD 60 during Paul’s first Roman imprisonment. What Paul wrote, however, reflected a pre-existing and well-established understanding of baptism. Hence, the Christian rationale for baptism probably **significantly pre-dated** AD 57.
With respect to the claims in the NT that Jesus was resurrected, the situation is clear and consistent. “No matter how skeptical the critic might be concerning the Gospels, it is well-accepted that all four gospels (i.e., Matthew, Mark, Luke/Acts, John) were written during the first century. Each gospel attests to the resurrection of Jesus, and Acts is the sequel to the third gospel, Luke. This means that four accounts were written within seventy years of Jesus at the latest, reporting the disciples’ claims that Jesus rose from the dead.” (Habermas and Licona 2004: 53; but see again note 34, above, which discusses the fact that the gospels likely were all written before AD 70) Additionally, we have the letters of Paul to the Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Timothy, and 1 Peter, all of which specifically mention the resurrection. Those letters are significant in that both Paul and Peter were martyred in the mid-60s AD, which means that their letters were written only 20-30 years after the resurrection itself. They also were eyewitnesses of Christ’s post-resurrection appearances. Further, as has been discussed above, some of Paul’s letters contain ancient creeds that pre-date Paul’s writings and go back essentially to the resurrection itself. “Since the original disciples were making the claim that Jesus rose from the dead, his resurrection was not the result of myth making. His life story was not embellished over time if the facts can be traced to the original witnesses.” (Ibid.: 61-62) As we have seen, the NT accounts of Christ’s resurrection can “be traced to the original witnesses.”

The significance of these multiple early accounts is that there simply was no time for “legends” of the resurrection to have developed. Greco-Roman scholar A. N. Sherwin-White states, “Herodotus enables us to test the tempo of myth-making, and the tests suggest that even two generations are too short a span to allow the mythical tendency to prevail over the hard historic core of the oral tradition” (Sherwin-White 1992: 189-90). Craig concludes, “Müller challenged scholars of his day to find even one historical example where in thirty years a great series of legends, the most prominent elements of which are fictitious, have accumulated around an important historical individual and become firmly fixed in general belief. His challenge has never been met. The time span necessary for significant accrual of legend concerning the events of the gospels would place us in the second century A.D., just the time in fact when the legendary apocryphal gospels were born.” (Craig 1981: 101-02)

The resurrection of Jesus is not just a theological myth asserted long after Jesus lived. Instead, “The belief that God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day is as old as the Christian faith and is now, as ever before, the article by which the church stands or falls. In a day when scholars have very few assured results to report from their critical study of the New Testament, it may be refreshing to know that even the more skeptical historians agree that for primitive Christianity, if not for themselves, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was a real event in history, the very foundation of faith, and not a mythical idea arising out of the creative imagination of believers.” (Braaten 1966: 78) The leaders of the church did not develop a myth of the resurrection and write that myth down for purposes of their own. Rather, those who were present at the time saw Jesus in his resurrection body, felt that body, ate and conversed with him, and those experiences transformed their lives. Consequently, all the evidence tells us that without the actual bodily resurrection of Jesus “there would have been no Christian church and the New Testament would not have been written” (Ibid.).

2. Psychological explanations. It is not plausible to contend that the disciples proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus as a psychological reaction to his death. The idea that Peter, James, and the others “experienced fantasies brought on by grief . . . is [not] based on any evidence whatsoever” (Wright 2003: 20). For example, before the crucifixion, James did not believe that his brother Jesus was the Messiah (Mark 3:21, 31; John 7:1-5). “In fact, it seemed that he was among those who even thought that Jesus was deluded. It is unlikely that a pious Jewish unbeliever—who would have viewed his crucified brother as a false Messiah who had been cursed by God—was in the frame of mind to experience a life-changing hallucination of the risen Jesus, a hallucination so powerful that it would motivate him to alter his religious beliefs in an area that he believed would cost him his eternal soul if he was mistaken.” (Habermas and Licona 2004: 107-08) The same thing applies to the idea that Paul began spreading stories of the resurrection because he was consumed by guilt over his persecution of Christians. Not only is there no evidence whatsoever for that, but the fact is that Paul was zealously continuing to persecute Christians up until the very moment of his encounter with the risen Christ.

Further, none of the disciples were psychologically primed to believe in Jesus’ resurrection, because none of them were expecting or looking forward to it. Indeed, “‘resurrection’ was not something anyone expected to happen to a single individual while the world went on as normal. Certainly—a point often ignored by critics—the disciples were not expecting any such thing to happen to Jesus.” (Wright 2003: 689, emph. added)52 In the first century there were other messianic movements whose leaders had been executed by the

52 This is confirmed by the first-hand accounts of the reactions of the disciples who all doubted the reports of the
authorities. “In not one single case do we hear the slightest mention of the disappointed followers claiming that their hero had been raised from the dead. They knew better. ‘Resurrection’ was not a private event. . . . A Jewish revolutionary whose leader had been executed by the authorities, and who managed to escape arrest himself, had two options: give up the revolution, or find another leader. We have evidence of people doing both. Claiming that the original leader was alive again was simply not an option. Unless, of course, he was.” (Wright 1993: 63)

3. Jesus’ resurrection was only “spiritual.” The idea that Jesus did not rise bodily, but only rose in “spirit,” cannot account for the historical data. Maier points out, “In Greece, a Platonist might have affirmed the resurrection of Jesus’ spirit while his body lay moldering in an obviously occupied tomb. But for a Jew, there was no resurrection without a very physical and bodily resurrection of the flesh. The modern concept of a Christianity that would retain its validity even if the dead body of Jesus were discovered would have been philosophical nonsense to St. Paul and the early Church.” (Maier 1975: 5) Not only does such an idea disregard the context of the disciples’ own lives, but it also cannot explain the empty tomb and the beginning of Christianity.

In the first century, Jewish burials typically took place in two stages: first, the body was laid on a slab, wrapped in cloth with spices in a cave-like tomb with a movable stone door (like Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb in which Jesus was laid); second, a year or more later, after the flesh had decomposed, relatives or friends would return, collect the bones, and place them in an ossuary (bone box). “If the disciples had believed that what they called the ‘resurrection’ was just a ‘spiritual’ event, leaving the body in the tomb, someone sooner or later would have had to go back to collect Jesus’ bones and store them properly. . . . But of course, if anyone had at any stage gone back to tidy up Jesus’ bones and put them in an ossuary, that would indeed have destroyed Christianity before it had even properly begun.” (Wright 1998: 52)

Jesus himself specifically countered the idea that he was merely a spirit by having the disciples touch him and eat with him (Matt 28:9; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:15-17, 24-29; 21:9-14). Indeed, everyone who heard the proclamation of the resurrection knew that what was being proclaimed was the bodily resurrection (that is, after all, what a “resurrection” is).53 Had that not been the case, the Jewish leaders never would have concocted the story that the body had been stolen but themselves would have gone to the tomb and produced the body.

Not only does the idea of a “spiritual resurrection” (the very idea is an oxymoron) not explain the data, but it contradicts every biblical passage that talks about the resurrection. For example, in Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians 15 explicitly concerns the “bodily” resurrection: “Neither in outline nor in detail does 1 Corinthians 15 resemble an argument for the immortality of the soul. . . . The ground of his argument is the resurrection of Jesus himself (15.3-11), which is appealed to as the event through which ‘the resurrection of the dead’ has burst in upon the surprised world, and on the basis of which the future resurrection of those ‘in the Messiah’ is guaranteed (15.20-28, 45-9).” (Wright 2003: 314-15)

4. The disciples were hallucinating or had visions. Remember that Jesus’ resurrection was completely different from any previous Jewish belief in resurrection in that (1) it occurred at a point in time in history, not at history’s climax, and (2) it involved only a single individual, not humanity as a whole. Consequently, the idea that the disciples were hallucinating or saw visions “assumes that their master’s resurrection was imaginable for his Jewish followers, that it was an option in their worldview. It was not.” (Keller 2008: 207) The reason is that “Hallucinations, as projections of the mind, can contain nothing new. But Jesus’ resurrection involved at least two radically new aspects not found in Jewish belief: it was a resurrection in history, not at the end of history, and it was the resurrection of an isolated individual, not of the whole people. Even if it were possible, therefore,

resurrection (see Mark 16:11, 13; Luke 24:10-11; John 20:24-25 and n.38, above). Even some time later when Jesus appeared to the disciples in Galilee, Matt 28:17 states, “When they saw him, they worshiped him, but some were doubtful.” Had these accounts been made up long after the fact, such doubts never would have been inserted, since they would have made the disciples look like they had little faith. However, such doubts are the very thing one might expect if these events really happened, because a resurrection of an individual was completely unprecedented and was totally unexpected. Thus, the recording of these doubts is itself evidence that this is factual reporting, not after-the-fact myth-making or theologizing.

53 N. T. Wright specifies that all people in the first century (pagans, Jews, and Christians) understood that “resurrection” means “new life after a period of being dead. Pagans denied the possibility; some Jews affirmed it as a long-term future hope; virtually all Christians claimed that it had happened to Jesus and would happen to them in the future. All of them were speaking of . . . a fresh living embodiment following a period of death-as-a-state (during which one might or might not be ‘alive’ in some other, non-bodily fashion). Nobody (except Christians, in respect of Jesus) thought that this had already happened, even in isolated cases.” (Wright 2003: 31) Further, the Greek words egeiro and anastasis, which are typically translated as “resurrection” in the Bible and elsewhere, “were words in regular use to denote something specifically distinguished from non-bodily survival, namely, a return to bodily life. There is no evidence to suggest that these words were capable of denoting a non-bodily survival after death.” (Ibid.: 330)
that the disciples under the influence of the empty tomb projected hallucinatory visions of Jesus, they would never have projected Him as literally-risen from the dead. They would have had a vision of Jesus in glory in Abraham’s bosom. That is where, in Jewish belief, the souls of the righteous go to await the final resurrection.” (Craig 1981: 132)

Other problems also attend the hallucination or vision idea: “There would have to have been collective hallucinations for different groups of up to five hundred in size, all of them seeing the same thing—a virtual impossibility in the case of a phenomenon that is usually extremely individualistic. Many different people will not see the same thing at different places in any general hallucination, mirage, daydream, or mass hysteria. Such visions, moreover, are generated only when the recipients are in an agitated state of expectancy and in hopes of seeing their wishes fulfilled, a mood diametrically opposite from that of the disciples, who were hopelessly saturated in sorrow and despair. In fact, news of the resurrection nearly had to be forced on them in the face of their obvious disbelief.” (Ibid.: 113) As George Eldon Ladd succinctly summarizes, “Faith did not create the appearances; the appearances created faith” (Ladd 1975: 138, emph. in orig.).

People in both the ancient and modern world have had visions of recently deceased loved ones. However, as N. T. Wright points out, such visions “are a thoroughly insufficient condition for the early Christian belief. The more ‘normal’ these ‘visions’ were, the less chance there is that anyone, no matter how cognitively dissonant they may have been feeling, would have said what nobody had ever said about such a dead person before, that they had been raised from the dead. Indeed, such visions meant precisely, as people in the ancient and modern worlds have discovered, that the person was dead, not that they were alive.” (Wright 2003: 690-91, emph. in orig.)

Finally, “the sightings of the risen Jesus had a temporal end; when he, Paul, saw Jesus, that was the last in the sequence [1 Cor 15:8].” (Ibid.: 318)54 William Lane Craig points out that, contrary to actual sightings of the physically risen Christ when ended not long after the resurrection, “hallucinations might have continued for decades, centuries. Had they just been visions or dreams or hallucinations, they would have continued.” (Craig 1981: 113) The idea that the disciples had hallucinations or visions or some kind of “religious experience” instead of actually seeing the resurrected Jesus therefore contradicts the facts and the actual eyewitness accounts of what happened.

5. The body was taken or moved. As previously discussed, the earliest response to the proclamation that Jesus had resurrected was the claim by the Jewish leaders that the disciples had stolen the body. Maier notes, “The stolen body theory founders on two insurmountable obstacles: the problem of motive and the problem of execution. To plan a tricky grave robbery of a closely guarded tomb would have required an incredibly strong incentive by a daring and extremely skillful group of men. But who had this incentive? Who had the motive and then the courage necessary to bring it off? Certainly not the dispirited disciples, huddling and hiding in their despair over Jesus’ evident failure and in fear of the Temple authorities—hardly a pack of calculating schemers enthusiastically planning to dupe their countrymen.” (Maier 1973: 109) Maier goes on to point out how far-fetched the idea of the disciples’ ability to steal the body is, “The grave area was crawling with guards specifically instructed to forestall any such attempt. . . . Guards in ancient times always slept in shifts, so it would have been virtually impossible for a raiding party to have stepped over all their sleeping faces, as is sometimes claimed. The commotion caused by breaking the seal, rolling the stone open, entering the tomb, and lifting out the body was bound to awaken the guards even if they had all been sleeping.” (Ibid.: 110-11)

Additionally, James Dunn observes that lack of veneration of Jesus’ tomb not only is evidence for the resurrection but also is evidence against the idea that the disciples had stolen the body: “For if the disciples had indeed removed the body, it is inconceivable that they would not have laid it reverently to rest in some other fitting location. In which case, it is almost as inconceivable that a surreptitious practice of veneration would not have been maintained by those in the know and that some hint of it would not have reached a wider circle of disciples.” (Dunn 2003: 838) Finally, for the disciples to steal the body and then claim that Jesus was alive “assumes that the disciples would expect other Jews to be open to the belief that an individual could be raised from the dead. But none of this is possible. The people of that time would have considered a bodily resurrection to be as impossible as the people of our own time.” (Keller 2008: 207-08)

Similar points apply to the idea that someone else moved the body. The Jewish leaders obviously had every incentive to make sure that the body remained exactly where it was. They are the ones, after all, who procured the guard for the tomb (Matt 27:62-66). Likewise, having no incentive to move the body were “Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus, who were probably already suspected by their Sanhedral colleagues for their

54 Paul distinguishes his seeing the resurrected Jesus from visions, spiritual revelations, and other such experiences, including his own (see 2 Cor 12:1-5).
attention to Jesus’ body. . . . And certainly Pontius Pilate would have been the last to disturb the body: after permitting the sepulcher to be sealed and guarded, he was glad to have done with the sorry business.” (Maier 1973: 109-10) The idea that someone else removed the body faces not only “the problem of motive and the problem of execution,” but is also contrary to the Roman seal of the tomb and the guard. And it does not account for the well-documented resurrection appearances of Jesus. As with the other theories, there is no historical evidence that anyone moved Jesus’ body. Hence, as with the other alleged alternative explanations, the idea that something happened to Jesus’ body other than his bodily resurrection does not fit the existing historical facts.

I. Conclusion

That Jesus was crucified and bodily resurrected can be reliably determined by historical investigation in the same manner as other historical events. In other words, although Christians consider the Bible to be the Word of God, in order to investigate the truthfulness of whether or not an event happened in the ancient past, the Bible need not be looked at as the Word of God but can be looked at as one would look at other ancient writings. As Habermas and Licona state, “We are only regarding the New Testament as an ancient volume of literature containing twenty-seven separate books and letters. Then we are entertaining only those data that are well evidenced and accepted by nearly every scholar who studies the subject, even the rather skeptical ones.” (Habermas and Licona 2004: 51-52)

To assert an alternative explanation does not establish its validity. As we have seen, the alleged alternative explanations of the crucifixion and resurrection either are based on no evidence at all, do not account for all of the historical data, or contradict the historical data. The reason why the alternative explanations have been advanced does not flow from the evidence itself but is premised on philosophical or theological reasons apart from the evidence. The reason for that is because the evidence itself has implications that the holder of an alternative explanation does not want to accept, i.e., that Jesus really is the Son of God. However, to maintain any intellectual or theological credibility at all, it is not enough to simply dismiss the resurrection of Jesus by asserting “it didn’t (or couldn’t) happen.” Even the Qur’an says that one must consider the evidence and use one’s reason. In short, one must face and answer several historical questions: “Why did Christianity emerge so rapidly, with such power? No other band of messianic followers in that era concluded their leader was raised from the dead—why did this group do so? No group of Jews ever worshipped a human being as God. What led them to do it? Jews did not believe in divine men or individual resurrections. What changed their worldview virtually overnight? How do you account for the hundreds of eyewitnesses to the resurrection who lived on for decades and publicly maintained their testimony, eventually giving their lives for their belief?” (Keller 2008: 210)

Christians can have confidence in the reliability of the Bible precisely because the historicity of the crucifixion and resurrection do not depend upon the fact that the Bible is the infallible Word of God. This makes one’s confidence in the Bible increase, particularly when the Bible makes statements of a nonhistorical nature or when it makes historical statements for which (unlike the crucifixion and resurrection) there is little corroborating evidence. The same cannot be said for the statements made in the Qur’an. Indeed, would Muslims even agree to test the reliability of the Qur’an according to the canons of historical research like Christians are willing to do with the Bible?

VI. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: Jesus is the “Son of God”

The biblical doctrine that Jesus is the “Son of God” is packed with meaning (see Brown 2005: 93-94 for a summary of the different senses in which “son(s) of God” is used in the Bible). On one hand, the term “Son of God” is a messianic term indicating that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior and King promised in the OT. In the Davidic Covenant, God promised to establish a king who would reign forever and said, “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to me” (2 Sam 7:14). Thus, the phrase “Son of God” was a messianic phrase denoting the promised Davidic king. To indicate that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promised Davidic messiah and king, he frequently is called the “Son of God” (Matt 4:3, 6; 8:29; 26:63; 27:40, 54; Mark 1:1; 3:11; 15:39; Luke 1:35; 3:38; 4:3, 9, 41; John 1:34, 49; 11:27; 20:31; Acts 8:37; 9:20; Rom 1:4; 2 Cor 1:19; Gal 2:20; Eph 4:13; Heb 1:5; 4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29; 1 John 3:8; 4:15; 5:5, 10, 12, 13, 20). The Qur’an acknowledges that Jesus is “the Messiah” (Q. 3:45; 4:157, 171-72; 5:72, 75; 9:30).55 Consequently, use of the phrase in that way should not be objectionable to Muslims.

However, when Muslims hear the term “Son of God,” some may think of Allah’s having sexual relations with Mary, which they (and Christians) rightly view as untrue and even blasphemous. In several

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55 For more on this, see below, section VIII.D. Jesus, not Muhammad, is “the Messiah”.

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places, the Bible calls Jesus the “only begotten” Son of the Father (see John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9).
The Qur’an says, “It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget [or ‘take to Himself] a son” (Q. 19:35; see also Q. 2:116; 10:68; 18:4; 19:88, 92; 23:91; 39:4). Q. 112:3 adds, “He begotteth not, nor is He begotten.” Yusuf Ali articulates the Muslim objection: “Begetting a son is a physical act depending on the needs of men’s animal nature. Allah Most High is independent of all needs, and it is derogatory to Him to attribute such an act to Him. It is merely a relic of pagan and anthropomorphic materialist superstitions.” (Ali 2006: Q. 19:35n.2487; see also ibid.: Q.72:3n., Deedat 2002: 29) This idea is confirmed by the Qur’an which states, “How could He have a son when He has no consort” (Q. 6:101; see also Q. 72:3). 56

When the Bible describes Jesus as the “Son of God,” it never means or implies the physical process of conceiving and giving birth any more than Egyptians who call themselves “sons of the Nile” mean that the Nile got married and had children (Michael and McAlistier 2010: 145). Rather, “the expression ‘Son of God’ is a metaphorical or analogical term” to describe Jesus’ relationship with God the Father (Ibid.; see also Feinberg 2001: 492 [“Scripture speaks of Christ as the Son, but everyone grants that he must be Son in some metaphorical sense”]; Lewis 1967a: 137).

Additionally, John Gilchrist observes that the Islamic objection to Jesus as the “Son of God” is not even directed at the orthodox Christian understanding of that term: “The book nowhere shows any comprehension of the fundamental Christian belief in Jesus, that he is a divine figure, uncreated at any point in time, who has been one with the Father from all eternity, who took on human form and became the man Jesus. The Qur’an vents all its denunciations at the Arian alternative [referring to the heretic Arias (AD 256-336)], namely that the Son was brought into existence at some point in time. Arius taught that ‘there was a time when the Son of God did not exist’ and that only thereafter did God take to himself a Son whom he created as an independent divine figure. It is this principle that the Qur’an consistently (and without exception) assails.” (Gilchrist 2015: 101) 57

56 Reynolds observes, “The way in which the Qur’an argues in simplistic, literal terms (God has no spouse; he thus does not have sex and could not have a child; cf 72:3) suggests either a misunderstanding of the Biblical metaphor of God’s children or (more likely) a straw-man argument.” (Reynolds 2018: 237)

Some knowledgeable Muslim scholars admit that the use of “begotten” in translation of some verses of the Qur’an is incorrect. For example, Muslim Tiger Chan discusses translations of the Qur’an which mistranslate ittakhadha as “begotten” rather than “taken” (e.g., Yusuf Ali’s translation of Q. 2:116 [“They say: ‘Allah hath begotten a son’”] and Q. 19:88 [“They say: ‘(He) Most Gracious has begotten a son!’”]). Chan states that there is no linguistic basis for ittakhadha meaning “to beget” and concludes, “The bottom line is, the Qur’an does not teach that Christians believe that Jesus is literal biological Son of God.” (Chan 2003: n.p.; see also “Quran Dictionary” 2009-2017: Q. 19:88, ittakhadha) However, even the correct translation of “taken” does not resolve the issue because, as Chan explains, “If we read what Christian theology books say, it says that Christians never believe that God begot a literal biological son. . . . The doctrine of Trinity has it that the 3 Persons of the Godhead are God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The 3 Persons of the Godhead are co-equal in essence and attributes. God the Father ‘takes’ Jesus as ‘the Son’, that’s why Jesus is called the Son, God the Father is called the Father. This is a divine relationship calling (that ‘taking’) the 3 Persons as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the Qur’anic sense, the term ittakhaza [Q. 19:88, “And they say: The Beneficent Allah has taken (to Himself) a son” (Shakir)] is pointing out that there is no such thing as God taking anything as having the status of sonship. The verse Qur’an 19:88 negates such a doctrine as in the doctrine of Trinity. It rejects just any form of sonship. The Qur’an doesn’t say that Christians believe Jesus is the literal biological Son of God, it rejects just any inkling to relating sonship to God.” (Chan 2003: n.p.) Even here, Chan and the Qur’an are wrong: orthodox Christianity never has held that the Father “took” Christ as the Son, but Christ always and eternally is the Son, the second person of the Trinity.

57 Abd al-Fadi adds, “Possibly the word ‘Son’ disturbs some people, because they immediately imagine, through its relationship with the word ‘Father’, that the Father preceded the Son in time, so there must be a difference in time and of status between them” (al-Fadi 2003: 20). Such ideas are incorrect. According to the Bible, “God, from eternity, has had the title Father, so this necessitates the existence of the Son from eternity also. . . . No one becomes a father until the moment when the son comes into being. The time difference, in this case, is imaginary and a delusion in regard to God and his Son Jesus Christ. . . . We use the terms son of truth or son of light to indicate the resemblance between them and truth or light. In this way, Jesus has been called the Son of God, because of the complete resemblance between Father and Son in the person of the one God. Jesus has been called thus because he is the only complete and eternal revelation of the person of God to mankind, or, as we read in Hebrews 1:1-2, In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.” (Ibid.: 21) McDowell and Larson similarly comment, “Some people, using the fact that Jesus is a son, might say, ‘Did you ever hear of a son who did not have a beginning?’ By this they mean to contrast the ‘created’ son with the uncreated father. Of course, the question may be turned around, ‘Did you ever hear of a father who didn’t have a beginning?’ . . . An obvious implication . . . is that if the Father is eternal, then so is the Son.” (McDowell and Larson 1983: 75) Indeed, the term “father” is “a relative term that makes no sense except in relation to the person whose father he is. Thus in some way the identity of being Father depends on the Son, and vice versa.” (Pannenberg 1991: 57)
This Islamic objection also rests on a misunderstanding of the word translated “only begotten.” All of the biblical passages that talk about Christ as the “only begotten” Son (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9) are referring to his eternal nature, not to when he became incarnate as a man. The Greek word is monogenēs. While some (particularly older) translations of the Bible render it as “only begotten,” the actual meaning of the word is “the only one of its kind or class, unique (in kind)” (Danker 2000: monogenēs, 658, emph. in orig.)

Confirmation that this is the correct meaning of monogenēs is seen in Heb 11:17 where Isaac is called Abraham’s monogenēs. Isaac was not, of course, Abraham’s “only begotten” son, since Abraham also had fathered Ishmael. John Feinberg explains, “The point is that Isaac was Abraham’s unique son. . . . Though Abraham had another son, Isaac was unique in that he, and he alone, was the child of promise.” (Feinberg 2001: 491) When used of Christ, monogenēs is “descriptive of the kind of Sonship Christ possesses and not of the process of establishing such a relationship” (Zodhiates 1992: monogenēs, 996).

There are three other biblical passages that refer to Jesus as “begotten”: Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5. Each one of them quotes Ps 2:7 (“You are my Son; today I have begotten you”) and applies that to Jesus. Jochen Katz states that, in their respective contexts, “All of these passages speak about the resurrection and exaltation of Christ. It refers to his taking office as king and priest. This took place about 33 years after the birth of Jesus. Clearly, in Biblical usage, the term ‘begotten’ when used for Jesus in those passages is not at all connected with anything sexual but has a metaphorical meaning. The expression ‘the begotten son’ of God is never mentioned in respect to his miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit or his birth by the Virgin Mary. . . . What then is the Biblical meaning? I think Romans 1:4 says it most clearly that Jesus ‘was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.’ The resurrection was the time of public declaration of what he has been all along. . . . Psalm 2 is an inauguration psalm for the Israelite kings -- the public declaration of kingship. And most of the Kings became kings as grown men. None became king at his conception. And this meaning carries over into the New Testament use for Jesus just as well, that the resurrection is the public announcement by God about the true identity and authority of Jesus, Messiah, true king of Israel, representative of God among mankind.” (Katz, “You are” n.d.: n.p., bold emph. in orig.; see also Guthrie 2007: 927-28)

Some Muslim scholars try to divest the term “Son of God” of its uniqueness when applied to Jesus. For example, Hilali notes that sometimes “every God-fearing righteous person is called a ‘Son of God’” (Al-Hilali 1998: 905, citing Matt 5:9, 45). Alhaj A. D. Ajijola quotes several biblical passages where “son of God” is used in the more general sense and concludes, “These sayings should leave no doubt in our minds as to what this phrase meant for Jesus. In view of these passages from the Bible, there is no reason why Jesus should be regarded as the ‘Son of God’ in a literal or unique sense.” (Ajijola 1972: 15; see also A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 4:171n.216).

Contrary to Hilali, Ajijola, and Mawdudi, when the Bible calls Jesus the “Son of God” other than as

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58 Zodhiates points out that “John alone uses monogenēs to describe the relation of Jesus to God the Father, presenting Him as the unique one, the only one (mónos) of a class or kind (génos). . . . Génos, from which genēs in monogenēs is derived, means race, stock, family, class or kind. . . . This is in distinction from gennaō, to beget, engender or create. . . . So then, the word means one of a kind or unique.” (Zodhiates 1992: monogenēs, 995)

59 In Luke’s account of Jesus’ baptism, Luke 3:22 concludes with the voice from heaven saying, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.” A variant reading of that verse in some ancient manuscripts concludes with “today I have begotten you.” Muslim Jerald Dirks claims that this variant reading proves that “this was a ‘created sonship’, which began only secondary to Allah granting a special relationship with Him to Jesus, at the time of the baptism” (Dirks 2008: 69). That is not true. Leaving aside the fact that the oldest and the vast majority of the manuscripts use the “well-pleased” language, the fact is that Luke applies “sonship” language at different points of Jesus’ life, including his conception and birth (Luke 1:30-35), baptism (Luke 3:21-22), and resurrection (Luke 24:6-7). If we were to assume that the “begotten” language of Luke 3:22 is the correct reading, “the act of begetting in this specific context doesn’t refer to the time when Christ became God’s Son. Rather, this is Luke’s way of highlighting the moment that God chose for Jesus to begin his Messianic office in the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Shamoun, “Jesus Christ” n.d.: n.p.) Further, such a reading does “absolutely nothing to refute the plain and emphatic testimony of the author of Luke-Acts that Christ is fully God – and is therefore eternal – who came down from heaven to become a man from the blessed virgin Mary” (Ibid.).

60 The Nicene Creed (AD 325) includes the statement, “I believe in . . . one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.” In the creed, the word “begotten” clearly is being used in a special way, contrary to the normal usage of the word, specifically to refute the idea that Christ was created or made in time. This was not done arbitrarily, but “there was [sic.] justifiable grounds for fencing their term begotten with the qualifier ‘not made’”—specifically, that while the NT does use “begotten” language about Christ it also ascribes deity to him, and “the church was against setting one part of Scripture against another” (Sproul 1992: 88). That is the proper way to approach Scripture.
referring to his being the Messiah, it does not mean that Jesus is a “son of God” in the same way that “every God-fearing righteous person” is a “son of God”; instead, the term means that Jesus is the unique Son of God who has a special and distinct relationship with the Father, unlike that enjoyed by other men. “It describes the relationship of two persons of the triune God. It expresses an intimate relationship between these two Persons: God the Father and God the Son—Jesus the Messiah.” (Michael and McAlister 2010: 145) We may not be able to fully comprehend the depth of that relationship, but the phrase “Son of God” helps to convey something of its essence that our finite minds can relate to and understand. Thus, the term “Son of God” goes to the heart of who Jesus is.6 It is this sense of the term to which Muslims object (see Asad 1980: Q. 3:78n.60 (“Some of those who claimed to be followers of Jesus lifted this expression from the realm of metaphor and ‘transferred it to the realm of positive reality with reference to Jesus alone’: and thus they gave currency to the idea that he was literally ‘the son of God’, that is, God incarnate)). As Pierre Houssney says, “Arabs respond to ‘Son of God’ in the same way that Jews did, which indicates its accuracy... ‘Son of God’ carries the connotation of equality literally ‘the son of God’, that is, God incarnate.” As Pierre Houssney says, “Arabs respond to ‘Son of God’ in the same way that Jews did, which indicates its accuracy... ‘Son of God’ carries the connotation of equality literally ‘the son of God’, that is, God incarnate.”

A. Jesus was fully God: miraculous conception and miraculous signs

Unlike any other human being who has ever lived, Jesus was supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin (Matt 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38). Muslims admit that. Muslims also admit the fact that Jesus had supernatural powers and performed multiple miracles.62 However, there is much additional evidence to demonstrate that Jesus was more than just a man or even a prophet but was the divine “Son of God.”

B. Jesus equated Himself with God and identified Himself as God

Ajijola correctly states, “God is comprehended from His attributes. If it is proved and granted that Jesus is Master of Divine attributes, one is justified in taking him for God.” (Ajijola 1972: 20) Jesus is, indeed, “Master of Divine attributes,” as the following words and deeds of Jesus demonstrate:

1. He claimed to be pre-existent (i.e., to have existed before He became a man) (John 8:58; 17:5, 24).

2. He claimed to be pre-existent (John 1:1-2, 14-15, 30; 8:58; 1 Cor 8:6; Phil 2:6-7; Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:2; 1 John 2:13-14).


4. He claimed to be the only one who knows the Father and can reveal the Father (Matt 11:27; John 6:46; 17:25). That is true (John 1:18; Heb 1:1-2; 1 John 5:20).

5. He claimed to do nothing on his own but only what the Father showed him (John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10). He in fact lived a perfectly holy life and is the perfect manifestation of the Father (Matt

61 The doctrine that Jesus is divine/God incarnate/the second person of the Trinity also goes to the heart of who God is. The basic confession of Muslims (tauhid) is that there is only one God. Christians likewise believe and confess that there is only one God. The nature of God’s ‘oneness’ is different in Islam and Christianity. The Christian concept of the Trinity will be discussed in more detail below, in section 4.IV. The Trinity, below.


5. The Bible says that God sends the prophets (2 Chron 36:15; Jer 26:5; Luke 11:49-51). To show that He is God come to earth, Jesus said that He was the one who was sending the prophets (Matt 23:34-35).


8. He said and demonstrated that he was the Lord of the Sabbath (Matt 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5). The Pharisees claimed that Jesus’ disciples were guilty of breaking the Sabbath because they picked heads of grain on the Sabbath. Jesus answered that “the disciples are innocent of breaking the Sabbath” (Carson 1982: 67). By saying that, Jesus was asserting his “superiority over the Sabbath and, hence, of the authority to abrogate or transform the Sabbath law” (Moo 1984: 17). This amounts to a claim to be the One who originally gave the law (cf. Mark 2:28, Luke 6:5)” (Ramm 1985: 43).


C. S. Lewis noted the significance of Jesus’ claim to forgive sins—any sins: “We can all understand how a man forgives offenses against himself. You tread on my toe and I forgive you, you steal my money and I forgive you. But what should we make of a man, himself unrobbed and untrodden on, who announced that he forgave you for treading on other men’s toes and stealing other men’s money? . . . Yet this is what Jesus did. He said people that their sins were forgiven, and never waited to consult all the other people whom their sins had offended in all offences. This makes sense only if He really was the God whose laws are broken and whose love is wounded in every sin. In the mouth of any speaker who is not God, these words would imply what I can only regard as silliness and conceit unrivalled by any other character in history.” (Lewis 1996: 55)


11. He claimed to be the author of life itself (John 11:25). He in fact is (John 1:4; 5:26; Rev 1:18).


evidence from the Gospel of John: “Jesus insists that to believe in him is to believe in the one who sent him (12.44), to look at him is to look at the one who sent him (12.45; 14.9), to hate him is to hate the Father (15.23). He says that all must honour the Son even as they honour the Father (5.23), that he and his Father are one (10.30). We not only learn that the Son cannot do anything except what the father shows him, but that the Son does whatever the Father does (5.19). . . . Jesus’ words are God’s words (3.34); that is the reason why the one who receives Jesus’ witness confirms that God is true [3:33]. . . . In precisely the same way, the faith that leads to life hears Jesus’ words and believes the one who sent him (5.24, 14.24). Only Jesus has seen the Father (6.46); but to know Jesus is to know the Father (8.19).” (Carson 1994: 147, 156)

C. S. Lewis summarizes the significance of the above claims by Jesus: “Among these Jews there suddenly turns up a man who goes about talking as if He was God. He claims to forgive sins. He says He is coming to judge the world at the end of time. Now let us get this clear. Among Pantheists, like the Indians, anyone might say that he was a part of God, or one with God: there would be nothing very odd about it. But this man, since He was a Jew, could not mean that kind of God. God, in their language, meant the Being outside the world Who had made it and was infinitely different from anything else. And when you have grasped that, you will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips. . . . I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great moral teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” (Lewis 1996: 55-56)

C. Jesus claimed to have a unique relationship with God the Father, calling Him “My Father”

In Matt 7:21; 10:32-33; 11:27; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10, 19; 20:23; 25:34; 26:39, 42, 53; Luke 2:49; 10:22; 22:29; 24:49; John 2:16; 5:17, 43; 6:32, 40; 8:19, 38, 49, 54; 10:18, 25, 29, 37; 14:2, 7, 20, 21, 23; 15:1, 8, 10, 15, 23, 24; 20:17; Rev 2:27; 3:5, 21 Jesus indicated his special relationship with God the Father by calling him “My Father.” Hilali cites Jesus’ use of the term “Father” as indicating that Jesus was not God (Al-Hilali 1998: 905). Again, Hilali does not appear to understand the significance of Jesus’ use of that term. Jesus did not refer to God as “our Father,” which He taught His disciples to say when praying to God (Matt 6:9; see also Luke 11:2; Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 2 Thess 1:1; Phlm 1:3). Rather, Jesus addressed the Father directly, using the Aramaic word “Abba,” a term of intimate, personal affection (Mark 14:62). Although there are very rare instances of other Jews describing God as Abba, “we have no evidence that others before Jesus addressed God as Abba” (Bauckham 1978: 249, emph. added). Rom 8:15 and Gal 4:6 indicate that Jesus taught His disciples to use his own distinctive address of God as Abba. That unique form of address shows that “the primitive church was aware that in this form of address to God it had a distinctive privilege which it owed to Jesus. In that case it was Jesus’ own relationship to God as Abba which he shared with his disciples: their sonship derived from his own.” (Ibid.: 248, emph. added)

It was Jesus’ calling God “my Father” that caused the Jews to try to kill him for blasphemy. They recognized (as Hilali apparently does not) that when Jesus called God “my Father” he “was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God” (John 5:18; see also John 8:38-59; 10:22-33). Similarly, Jesus said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). D. A. Carson explains this: “The word for ‘one’ is the neuter hen, not the masculine heis: Jesus and his Father are not one person, as the masculine would suggest, for then the distinction between Jesus and God already introduced in [John] 1:1b would be obliterated, and John could not refer to Jesus praying to his Father, being commissioned by and obedient to his Father, and so on. Rather, Jesus and his Father are perfectly one in action, in what they do: what Jesus does, the Father does, and vice versa.” (Carson 1991: 394)

63 The Son’s and the Father’s “oneness” is far more than simply being “one in purpose” as Deedat claims (Deedat 2002: 37). Deedat based that claim on the fact that the end of John 10:28 says that no one can “pluck them [i.e., Christ’s sheep] out of my hand” and the end of John 10:29 similarly says that no one can “pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” However, Deedat conveniently omitted the first part of John 10:28 where Jesus said, “And I give unto them [his sheep] eternal life” (all quotations are from the KJV). Gilchrist notes, “Who but God alone can give not only life but eternal life?” (Gilchrist 2010: 14, emph. in orig.) He goes on to point out, “The statement ‘I and the Father are one’ (John 10:30) made by Jesus, is one which he made no attempt to qualify, and it does not behoove any interpreter to restrict its meaning to ‘one in purpose’.
The intimate union between Christ and the Father was made clear on another occasion. In John 14:6-14 the following interchange took place between Jesus and his disciples Thomas and Philip: "Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.” Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

Carson observes that Jesus is describing the complete unity between himself and the Father; indeed, “it is precisely this degree of unity that ensures Jesus reveals God to us” (Carson 1991: 494). There are important implications of this unity between Jesus and the Father:

- First, “Not all roads lead to possession of eternal life. Jesus is the God-appointed way.” (Ngewa 2006: 1283)
- Second, “A consequence of Jesus and the Father being one is that whatever is asked of the Father is also asked of Jesus. The Father ultimately owns all things. Jesus, as Son, submits to him, but at the same time, he and the Father act as one. Anything asked from or given by the Father is also asked from or given by Jesus. Jesus thus becomes both the one to be asked for blessing (ask me) and the go-between who makes it easier to have requests granted (in my name) ([John] 14:13b-14a).” (Ngewa 2006: 1284)
- Third, while distinctions exist between the Father and the Son (they are separate persons yet are one), what Jesus says here negates the idea that he is merely a prophet or Messenger. ‘This envoy [Messenger] model is suddenly outstripped when we are told that everything Jesus does is what the Father gives him to do, and that he does everything the Father does: now we are dealing in unique ‘sonship’ language. No mere envoy [Messenger] would refer to the one who sent him as his Father, claim that whoever has seen him has seen the Father, and affirm mutual indwelling between himself and the one who sent him.’” (Carson 1991: 494-95; see also John 5:19-23 and discussion at notes 57 above and 86 below)

D. Jesus’ use of the term “Son of Man” is a reference to His divinity

Jesus is called the “Son of Man” approximately 80 times in the Gospels; it is his most frequent description of Himself. Hilali acknowledges that Jesus “used to call himself the ‘Son of Man’ (Mark 2:10)” (Al-Hilali 1998: 905). However, Hilali evidently does not understand the meaning of that term. The “Son of Man” is both human and divine, just as Jesus is both human and divine. The phrase “Son of Man” alludes to Daniel 7:13-14 (“I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”). In Revelation 1:13-14 John received a revelation from Jesus, who is described as “one like a son of man . . . [whose] head and His hair were white like wool, like snow.” Those images are taken from Daniel’s vision in Daniel 7:9, 13. However, in Daniel’s vision (Daniel 7:9) it was “the Ancient of Days” whose “vesture was like white snow and the Hair of His head like pure wool.” Given this context, “John sees ‘one like a son of man’ who is distinguished from and identified with the Ancient of Days—a mysterious combination but consistent with the fact that he lays claim to the title ‘the first and the last’ ([Revel] 1:17), by which God proclaimed his divine eternity (Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12). The Son of Man is God, infinite in wisdom and holiness.” (Johnson 2001: 59)

Thus, whenever Jesus used the term “Son of Man” he was making an assertion that he was, in fact, God come to earth as a man. In John 3:13 he explicitly said, “No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.” Similarly, in John 6:62 Jesus said, “What then if you see the Son of

At face value it clearly means ‘one in all things’ and Jesus would hardly have made such a striking claim without qualifying it if he had not intended to convey the impression that there was an absolute oneness between the Father and the Son and that he therefore possessed deity. It is no wonder the Jews so understood his claim (John 10:33). Furthermore . . . how could Jesus make such a claim [about no one being able to pluck his sheep out of his hand] unless he possessed the same power to preserve his followers that his Father possessed? . . . Jesus did not claim that he was one with his Father in purpose alone but also in the possession of the absolute, eternal power required to execute that purpose to complete effect.” (Ibid.: 14-15, emph. in orig.)
Man ascending to where He was before?” Carson comments that “Jesus the Son of Man (the title especially connected with his function as the revealer from heaven) first descended [John 6:38], and so in ascending is merely returning to where he was before (cf. 17:5). This not only affirms Jesus’ pre-existence, but places him in a class quite different from antecedent Jewish religious heroes.” (Carson 1991: 301)

We see Jesus claiming to be deity in his other references to the “Son of Man.” For example, Jesus’ claim that “the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (Matt 9:6; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24) is a claim to be God come to earth as a man, because only God has the authority to forgive sins; yet here Jesus is claiming to forgive sins on his own authority (see the quote from C. S. Lewis [1996: 55] above). In Matt 12:28; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5 Jesus said, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” As was discussed above, by saying that, Jesus was claiming to be God Himself. In Luke 9:58 Jesus said, “The Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (see also Luke 19:9-10). The granting of salvation to anyone is something that only God can do. In Matt 13:41-42 Jesus said, “The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” This refers to the final judgment. Similarly, in Matt 16:27 Jesus says that “the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds.” J. Knox Chamblin points out that “as in Daniel 7:13-14, the Son of man is revealed as divine (the angels are his, not just the Father’s, v. 27)” (Chamblin 1989: 743). Sending the angels and rendering eternal judgment are the acts of God. That is the same context in which Jesus calls himself the “Son of Man” in Matt 24:30-31; 24:42-44; 25:31-46; Mark 8:38; 13:26; Luke 9:22-26; 12:8-9; John 9:35-39. Jesus’ statements concerning forgiveness of sins, granting salvation, and judgment reveal a fundamental difference between himself and Muhammad: Muhammad could only declare what Allah could only give in forgiving, saving, and judging people; Jesus said that he himself would do all those things.

In Matt 24:42-44 the “Son of Man” is specifically equated with the “Lord.” In Matt 25:31-46 the “Son of Man” is equated with the “King” who “will sit on His glorious throne” and judge all the people of the earth, sending some to hell and others to eternal life. That, of course, can only refer to God. Thus, again, when Jesus calls himself the “Son of Man” he is equating himself with God Almighty. In Matt 19:27-28 Jesus says that “in the regeneration [or, renewal of all things] when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (see also Luke 22:29-30). The “throne” can only be the throne of God. In John 6:27 Jesus says that people should work for “the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.” Again, eternal life is something that only God can give, and here Jesus is saying that he will give it (see also John 6:40, 53-54).

E. Jesus used the term “Son of Man” in the same context with the term “Son of God” to show that the two terms are equivalent

In Matt 16:13-17 Jesus equated being the “Son of Man” with being the “Son of God.” He asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” (Matt 16:13) In Matt 16:14 they replied, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” Jesus rejected the answer that he was merely a prophet, because he then asked, “But who do you say that I am?” (Matt 16:15) In Matt 16:16 Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” and Jesus responded, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” (Matt

64 Carson’s point about the term “Son of Man” being especially connected with Jesus’ function as a revealer from heaven is important. “According to Daniel 7:9-22 the Son of man was a heavenly figure who would participate in the judgment on the last day; however, Jesus pours new content into the title by claiming that the Son of man must also suffer. Thus, Jesus links together the Son of man and the Suffering Servant (Isa. 52:13-53:12 [see Matt 17:12; 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:25-27; John 3:14]).” (Schreiner 1989: 818) “The death and the exaltation of the Servant of the Lord are the way in which God reveals his glory and demonstrates his deity to the world. . . . The Servant, in both his humiliation and his exaltation, is therefore not merely a human figure distinguished from God, but, in both his humiliation and his exaltation, belongs to the identity of the unique God” (Bauckham 1999: 49, 51). Thus, the term “Son of Man” reveals (along with many of Jesus’ other statements and actions) the true nature of who God is. As Richard Bauckham puts it, “Jesus reveals the divine identity—who God truly is—in humiliation as well as exaltation, and in the connexion of the two. God’s own identity is revealed in Jesus, his life and his cross, just as truly as in his exaltation, in a way that is fully continuous and consistent with the Old Testament and Jewish understanding of God, but is also novel and surprising.” (Ibid.: viii) The nature of who God is and what he is like is a major point of contention between Christianity and Islam. In brief, Islam’s Allah is, one might say, a “one dimensional” god, i.e., a god only of transcendent power; the idea of his also being a personal god of love, suffering, and humiliation is foreign and, indeed, abhorrent to Muslims. However, the God of the Bible, particularly as definitively revealed by Jesus, is far more complex than Islam’s Allah. More will be said about the nature of God in chapter 4. YAHWEH AND ALLAH.
Thus, although Jesus indeed was a prophet, he was not merely a prophet. Likewise, although Jesus indeed was a man, he was not merely a man.

In **John 1:49** Nathanael said, “Raebi, you are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.” Jesus did not deny this but in **John 1:50-51** explained, “You will see greater things than these. . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” While the terms “Son of God” and “King of Israel” had messianic meanings, Jesus’ answer expands the meaning Nathanael probably intended for “Son of God.” Jesus does this by alluding to the vision of Jacob in **Gen 28:12**.

The reference to “the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending” conveys the image of “uninterrupted communion between Jesus and the Father” (Köstenberger 2007: 430). Jesus is saying that he “is the locus of God’s self-revelation on earth. In this regard, this final verse reiterates the affirmation of the prologue [John 1:1-18]; Jesus is the full revelation of the glory and presence of God.” (Burge 1989: 849)

In **John 5:19-29** Jesus repeatedly calls himself the “Son,” the “Son of God,” and the “Son of Man.” Jesus’ references to the “Son of God” and the “Son of Man” are in the same context of his executing judgment on the day of resurrection and judgment. The two terms therefore are equivalent. Indeed, Jesus’ statements from 5:21-29 concerning judgment, particularly his statement in **John 5:22** that “not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,” are remarkable assertions of Christ’s divine authority, since both the Qur’an and the Hebrew Scriptures (the OT) affirm that judgment is the exclusive prerogative of God.65

At his trial before the high priest in **Matt 26:63-65** (Mark 14:61-63; Luke 22:66-71), the following interchange took place: “The high priest said to Him, ‘I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.’” 64Jesus said to him, ‘You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.’

Then the high priest tore his robes and said, ‘He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy.’” Craig Blomberg discusses why Jesus’ claim to be the “Son of Man” in this context is so significant: “This ‘Son of Man’ saying, rather than the claim that he was some kind of messiah, is what would have led the high priest to tear his garments and proclaim that Jesus had blasphemed (26:65). Alleging messiahship was no capital offense; otherwise, the Jews could never have received a messiah! But claiming to be the exalted, heavenly Son of Man, one who was Lord and next to the Father himself in heaven, transgressed the boundaries of what most of the Jewish leaders deemed permissible for mere mortals.” (Blomberg 2007: 93; Chamblin 1989: 757)

### F. Jesus calls himself the “Son of God” and accepts to be called the “Son of God” by others

Hilali states that “Jesus never called himself Son of God as far as I know . . . although he heard himself being called by that name he did not object . . . and did not consider the title exclusively for him” (Al-Hilali 1998: 905, citing Matt 5:9, 45 where the term “Son [or child] of God” is applied to “every God-fearing righteous person”). Hilali is incorrect. While the phrase can have a broader meaning, its use concerning Jesus clearly meant that Jesus was God come to earth as a man (i.e., he was the “Son of God” in a special sense, with a unique relationship with God the Father).

First, Jesus did call himself the “Son” to describe his unique relationship with God the Father. In **Matt 11:27** (Luke 10:22) Jesus said, “All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” What Jesus is saying is that he is the only one who truly knows God, and the only way to know God is through him! Note that it is the Son’s will which must be exercised if anyone is to know the Father. That is a stunning claim which must be taken seriously, especially by those who call Jesus a great prophet. By making this statement in **Matt 11:27** about his unique relationship with the Father, Jesus is claiming divinity for himself and is placing himself in a class far above Muhammad or anyone else. In telling his disciples to make disciples of all the nations, Jesus told them to baptize believers “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19). Again, he is calling himself the “Son” in a unique relationship with the Father.

In **John 3:16-18** Jesus called himself the “only begotten Son,” the “Son,” and “the only begotten Son of God.”66 In connection with the works he did, Jesus called himself the “Son of God” in **John 5:25; 10:36; 11:4**.

The context was his doing what only God has the power to do (raise the dead).

In the parable of the vineyard (Matt 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19), Jesus contrasted himself

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65 With respect to Jesus’ statement in **John 5:19** that “the Son can do nothing of Himself,” see discussion at n.86, below.
66 Since ancient texts did not use quotation marks or similar markers, there is dispute as to whether or not **John 3:16-21** are Jesus’ words (i.e., the end of his answer to Nicodemus that began in v. 10) or are a comment by the writer of the Gospel of John (see Carson 1991: 203-04; Burge 1989: 851). Regarding the meaning of “only begotten,” see discussion at section II.D. **According to Islam, Jesus is a prophet but not the divine Son of God**, above.
with all the prophets who had been sent before, predicted his own death, indicated that he was the only way of salvation, said that the kingdom was not limited to the Jews, and refers to himself as the “Son” in a way that negates the Islamic claim that Muhammad is the last of the prophets. In the parable, God the Father sent prophets to Israel who had mistreated them; so at last he decided to send his own Son (Jesus). N. T. Wright correctly concludes, that “once the father has sent the son to the vineyard, he can send nobody else. To reject the son is to reject the last chance.” (Wright 1996: 362, 365)67

Second, God Himself on more than one occasion called Jesus “His Son” in circumstances that can only be referring to Jesus’ divine Sonship. At Jesus’ baptism “a voice out of heaven said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased’” (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). Again, when Jesus was transfigured before three of His disciples, “a voice out of the cloud said, ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!’” (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35).

Third, the angel Gabriel called Jesus the “Son of God.” When announcing to Mary that Jesus was to be born, Gabriel stated, “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High” (Luke 1:32). When Mary then asked “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” (Luke 1:34), Gabriel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). In that context, Gabriel’s reference to “the Son of God” can only be referring to Jesus’ divine Sonship.

Fourth, Satan and demons called Jesus the “Son of God” in circumstances that can only be referring to Jesus’ divine Sonship. In Matt 4:3, 7 (Luke 4:3, 9) Satan, in tempting Jesus, called him the “Son of God.” Chamblin points out that “the devil, far from questioning Jesus’ sonship, capitalizes upon it: ‘Since [a better translation than ‘if’] you are the Son of God’” (Chamblin 1989: 727; see also Kapolyo 2006: 1115). Jesus did not dispute being called the “Son of God.” Instead, He simply responded to Satan by quoting Scripture. In Matt 8:29 (see also Mark 5:7; Luke 4:41; 8:28) Jesus had cast out demons and they cried out, “What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?” Joe Kapolyo states, “The demons had no problems recognizing that Jesus was the king in whom the kingdom of God had come, although not yet in its fullness. So they addressed him as the Son of God and as the judge who would put an end to their activities.” (Kapolyo 2006: 1128)

Fifth, other people called Jesus the “Son of God” in circumstances indicating his divine Sonship. In Matt 14:33, Jesus had just finished walking on water, commanding and empowering Peter to walk on water, and controlling nature; then “those who were in the boat worshipped Him, saying ‘You are certainly God’s Son!’” Blomberg observes that “in demonstrating his mastery over wind and waves, Jesus clearly is exercising prerogatives previously reserved for Yahweh himself (cf. Job 9:8; Ps. 77:19)” (Blomberg 2007: 50). Note that being called “God’s Son” is coupled with the disciples “worshipping” Jesus—and Jesus does not rebuke them either for worshipping him or for calling him God’s Son. Instead, he accepts the title and the worship. In John 11:27, Martha confessed her faith that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.” Carson comments, “Her confession is neither mere repetition, nor the pious but distracted and meandering response of someone who has not followed the argument. Her reply carries the argument forward, for she holds that the one who is ‘the resurrection and the life’ [Jesus’ statement about himself in John 11:25] must be such by virtue of the fact that he is God’s promised Messiah.” (Carson 1991: 414)

G. Jesus’ opponents recognized that he was claiming to be God and sought to kill Him for blasphemy because of his claim to be God’s unique Son

In Matt 9:2-3; 26:63-66; Mark 2:6-7; 14:61-64; Luke 5:20-21; 22:66-71; John 5:17-18; 8:53, 59; 10:30-33, 39; 19:7 Jesus’ opponents recognized that Jesus was claiming to be God’s unique Son and sought to kill him because of that claim. The law of Moses prescribed the death penalty for blasphemy (Lev 24:14, 16, 23; see John 19:7). John 5:18 says that the Jews were seeking to kill Jesus “because He not only was breaking the Sabbath [by healing a man on the Sabbath], but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.” Yusuf Ali admits that “Jesus was charged by the Jews with blasphemy as claiming to be God or the

67 This same point is made in Heb 1:1-2 which states, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.” In the book of Revelation, Jesus again equates himself with God and negates the Islamic claim that Muhammad is the “last” of the prophets. In Rev 1:8 God says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega.” In Rev 1:17 Jesus then says, “I am the first and the last.” In Rev 21:6 God says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.” In Rev 22:13 Jesus then concludes, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” All of these statements are modeled on Isa 44:6; 48:12 (“I am the first, and I am the last”) which apply to God (which Jesus reapplies to himself).

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son of God” (Ali 2006: Q. 3:55n.395). Bernard Ramm points out, “At this point, from the human perspective, there is only one thing for Jesus to do. He ought to deny the charge and give some reason why he healed the man on a Sabbath day. This he does not do. He says that the Jews were right. He is equal with God. In the verses that follow Jesus specifies the kind of things only God can do but yet that he can do. Hence he is equal with the Father.” (Ramm 1985: 43)

H. People worshipped or prayed to Jesus as God, and Jesus accepted that worship

The Bible makes it absolutely clear that only God is to be worshipped (Exod 20:3-5; 34:14; Deut 4:19; 5:7-9; 8:19; 1 Kgs 9:6-7; Isa 42:8). Jesus himself specifically said that only God is to be worshipped (Matt 4:10; Luke 4:8). The worship of mere mortals or even angels is idolatrous and sinful (Exod 20:1-5; Deut 5:6-9; Rom 1:18-23). Jesus’ disciples knew that. When Cornelius tried to worship Peter, Peter said, “Stand up, I too am just a man” (Acts 10:25-26). When the people in Lystra thought that Paul and Barnabas were two gods who had come to earth in human form and wanted to make sacrifices to them, Paul and Barnabas vehemently objected to this and said, “We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God” (Acts 14:11-18). That is the response that any monotheistic Jew would have and should have made to someone trying to worship him. Even the angels said, “Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours” when someone tried to worship them (Rev 19:10; 22:8-9).

Jesus alone was different. In Matt 2:11; 14:33; 28:9, 16-17; Luke 24:51-52; John 1:1-14; 5:22-23; 9:35-38; 20:28; 28:9; Acts 2:36; 7:59-60; 20:28; Rom 9:3-5; Phil 2:5-11; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:5-10; 2 Pet 1:1; 1 John 2:23; Rev 5:1-14 people worshipped or prayed to Jesus as they would to God Himself. Jesus accepted their worship. The response of Jesus in accepting worship would be blasphemy and idolatry for anyone, even a prophet, if he were only a man. The fact that Jesus did not object, but accepted people’s worshipping him, showed that he knew he was God who had come to earth as a man—because only by being God come to earth as a man could Jesus legitimately accept being worshipped.

In fact, the worship of Jesus is known to have been present long before the NT was even written. This is known, among other reasons, because the universal worship of Jesus is stated in Phil 2:9-11, which is an early Christian creed that long pre-dated Paul’s writing of the book of Philippians (see discussion of early Christian creeds in the section IV.B. The earliness of Christian creeds, above). Phil 2:9-11 alludes to Isa 45:22-23 which pertains to the worship of Yahweh; this, again, shows that Jesus is equated with God.

There is an important implication of the fact that Jesus accepted worship of himself. Muslim scholar Shaikh Abdul-Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz states that “belief in Allah signifies that Allah is the true God Who Alone deserves to be worshipped, as He is the Creator and the Sustainer of all human beings” (bin Baz 2002: 250; see, e.g., Q. 2:21-22; 11:1-2; 16:36; 21:25; 51:56-58). Since Jesus accepted worship of himself and Muslims and the Qur’an acknowledge that Jesus was pure and sinless (see discussion at section VIII.E. Jesus, not Muhammad, is pure, holy, and without sin or error from his birth, below), that necessarily means that Jesus’ accepting worship of himself was not a sin. That could only be true if he was, in fact, God come to earth.

I. Jesus is specifically called “God” or “Lord” on multiple occasions throughout the NT

On more than one occasion the NT applies to Jesus the name which is unambiguously exclusive to the one God, namely, Yahweh [YHWH]. Richard Bauckham observes, ‘Hebrews 1:4 states that Jesus, exalted to the right hand of God, became ‘as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs’. Though most of the commentators do not think so, this can only refer to the divine name, as must ‘the name that is above every name’, which according to Philippians 2:9 was bestowed on Jesus when God exalted him to the highest position. Connected with this naming of the exalted Jesus by the divine name is the early Christian use of the phrase ‘to call on the name of the Lord’ [Acts 2:17-21, 38; 9:14; 22:16; Rom 10:9-13; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Tim 2:22], as a reference to Christian confession and to baptism. The Old Testament phrase [Ps 80:18; Isa 12:4; Joel 2:32; Zeph 3:9; Zech 13:9] means to invoke God by his name YHWH [see Gen 4:26; 1 Kgs 18:24-39], but the early Christian use of it applies to Jesus. It means invoking Jesus as the divine Lord who exercises the divine sovereignty and bears the divine name.” (Bauckham 1999: 34) Other examples of Jesus’ specifically being called “Lord” or “God” include the following:

- **Matt 7:22-23:** Many will say to me on that day, “Lord, Lord . . .” Then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”
- **Luke 1:42-43:** And she [Elizabeth] cried out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you [Mary] among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And how has it happened to me that the mother of my Lord would come to me?”
- **John 1:1, 14:** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . .
And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the father, full of grace and truth.

- **John 20:28**: After being told to reach with his finger to feel the holes in Jesus’ hands and side, Thomas said, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus did not rebuke Thomas for blasphemy but accepted those titles of deity.
- **Acts 7:59-60**: They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” Having said this, he fell asleep.
- **Acts 10:36**: The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all).
- **Acts 16:31, 34**: They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” . . . And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.
- **Acts 20:28**: Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
- **1 Cor 2:7-8**: But we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
- **1 Cor 11:26**: For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.
- **Rom 9:5**: Whose [referring to the Israelites] are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.
- **Phil 2:5-7**: Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed [lit. “being,” hupárchōn] in the form [morphē] of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form [morphē] of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 68
- **Col 2:9**: For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.
- **Titus 2:13**: Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. In addition to being called “God,” it is significant that Jesus is also called “Savior,” because in the OT God specifically said, “I, even I, am the Lord, and there is no savior besides Me” (Isa 43:11).
- **2 Pet 1:1**: Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and savior, Jesus Christ. In addition to being called “God,” it is significant that Jesus is also called “Savior,” because in the OT God specifically said, “I, even I, am the Lord, and there is no savior besides Me” (Isa 43:11).
- **1 John 5:20**: And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

J. The same names, titles, and other attributes that are applied to God in the OT or NT are applied to Jesus in the NT

Sometimes a passage which applied to God is alluded to or directly quoted as applying to Jesus (in the following table, x, y, z indicate direct quotes): 69

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Title/Attribute</th>
<th>Applied to God</th>
<th>Applied to Jesus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I AM</strong></td>
<td>Exod 3:13-14</td>
<td>John 8:24, 28, 58; 18:5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord</td>
<td>Isa 40:3; 45:23-24; Joel 2:32</td>
<td>Mark 1:2-4; Phil 2:10-11; Acts 2:36; Rom 10:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>Ps 45:6-7</td>
<td>Heb 1:8-9; John 1:1, 14, 18; 20:28; 2 Pet 1:1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alpha and Omega</td>
<td>Rev 1:8; 21:5-6</td>
<td>Rev 22:13</td>
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<td>Exalted above the heavens</td>
<td>Ps 57:5; 11; 108:5</td>
<td>Heb 7:26</td>
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<td>Redeemer</td>
<td>Ps 130:7-8</td>
<td>1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7; Titus 2:13-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judge</td>
<td>Gen 18:25; Ps 50:4-6; 96:13</td>
<td>John 5:22; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1</td>
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68 Zodhiates discusses the significance of the wording of these verses: “Morphē in Phil. 2:6-8 presumes an obj. [objective] reality. No one could be in the form (morphē) of God who was not God. . . . The fact that Jesus continued to be God during His state of humiliation is demonstrated by the pres. part. [present participle] hupárchōn, ‘being’ in the form of God. Hupárchō involves continuing to be that which was before.” (Zodhiates 1992: morphē, 997)

69 Bickersteth (1957: 24-90) provides overwhelming biblical data regarding the divinity of Christ and his equality with God; on pages 40-50 he lists 42 OT quotes regarding God that are applied in the NT to Jesus.
King of Israel
Holy
Good70
Light
Rock
Husband
Shepherd
Creator
Sustainer
Giver of life
Source of “living water”
Forgiver of sin
Sovereign over all
Omniscient
Searches hearts & minds
Rewards according to people’s deeds

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kings</th>
<th>Ps 95:3;</th>
<th>Isa 43:15;</th>
<th>44:6;</th>
<th>Zeph 3:15</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>Ps 1 Sam 2:2;</td>
<td>John 17:11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>Ps 34:8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deuteronomy</td>
<td>Ps 27:1;</td>
<td>Isa 60:20;</td>
<td>Mic 7:8</td>
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<td>Joshua</td>
<td>Deut 32:4;</td>
<td>2 Sam 22:32;</td>
<td>Ps 89:26</td>
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<td>Judges</td>
<td>Isa 54:5;</td>
<td>Hos 2:16</td>
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<td>Samuel</td>
<td>Ps 23:1;</td>
<td>80:1;</td>
<td>Isa 40:11</td>
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<td>Kings</td>
<td>Gen 1:1;</td>
<td>Ps 102:25-27;</td>
<td>Isa 40:28</td>
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<td>Chronicles</td>
<td>Job 34:14-15;</td>
<td>Ps 3:5;</td>
<td>2 Pet 3:7</td>
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<td>Psalms</td>
<td>Deut 32:39;</td>
<td>1 Sam 2:6;</td>
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<td>Isaiah</td>
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<td>Ezekiel</td>
<td>Exod 34:7;</td>
<td>Isa 55:7;</td>
<td>Dan 9:9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
<td>Neh 9:6;</td>
<td>Isa 44:24-27;</td>
<td>45:22-236</td>
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<td>Hosea</td>
<td>Job 21:22;</td>
<td>Ps 33:13-15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joel</td>
<td>Deut 32:39;</td>
<td>1 Sam 2:6;</td>
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<td>Amos</td>
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<td>Ps 62:12;</td>
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<td>3:19;</td>
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<td>2 Cor 11:2;</td>
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<td>John 10:11;</td>
<td>Heb 13:20;</td>
<td>1 Pet 2:25;</td>
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<td>John 1:3,</td>
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<td>Col 1:16;</td>
<td>Heb 1:2,</td>
<td>10-126</td>
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<td>Heb 1:3</td>
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<td>Matt 1:21;</td>
<td>Mark 2:5;</td>
<td>Acts 26:18;</td>
<td>Col 2:13</td>
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<td>Phil 2:9-116;</td>
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<td>John 16:30;</td>
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<td>Mark 2:8;</td>
<td>John 2:24-25;</td>
<td>Rev 2:23</td>
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<td>Matt 16:276;</td>
<td>Rev 2:23</td>
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K. Prophecies and statements that pertain to God or the Lord in the OT are quoted and applied to Jesus in the NT

- I have set the LORD continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. (Ps 16:8; applied to Jesus in Acts 2:25)
- Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. (Ps 45:6; applied to Jesus in Heb 1:8)
- Of old You founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. Even they will perish, but You endure; and all of them will wear out like a garment; like clothing You will change them and they will be changed. (Ps 102:25-26; applied to Jesus in Heb 1:10-12)
- The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone. (Ps 118:22; applied to Jesus in Acts 4:11)
- Isa 6:1-13: In Isa 6:5 Isaiah says, “Woe is me, for I am ruined. . . . For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” In Isa 6:8-13 “the voice of the Lord” then commissions Isaiah to go and prophesy to the people of Israel. John 12:40 quotes Isa 6:10. John 12:41 then applies all of Isaiah 6 to Jesus by saying, “These things Isaiah said because he saw His [Jesus’] glory, and he spoke of Him.”
- Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. ( Isa 7:14; applied to Jesus in Matt 1:22-23, which specifies that “Immanuel” means “God with us”)
- It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your fear, and He shall be your dread. Then He shall become a sanctuary; but to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ( Isa 8:13-14; applied to Jesus in Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:8)
- A voice is calling, “Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.” ( Isa 40:3; applied to Jesus in Matt 3:3; John 1:23)
- My house will be called a house of prayer. ( Isa 56:7; applied by Jesus to Himself in Matt 21:13)
- But as for you, Bethlehem Ephratah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. (Mic 5:2; applied to Jesus in Matt 2:6. The language of the second sentence of Mic 5:2 is OT language that typically describes the eternal God in such passages as Ps 74:12; 90:2; 93:2; Isa 43:13; 63:16)
- I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one

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70 God’s attribute of “goodness” indicates what Jesus was getting at when he asked the rich young man, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone” (Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19). He was not denying that he was God, as Hilali (1998: 906-07) claims. Rather, he was affirming his divinity by asking a rhetorical question. In effect, he was saying to the man, “Do you really know to whom you are speaking?” As Victor Babajide Cole puts it, “Jesus was not denying that he was ‘good’. Rather, he was pressing the man to see the logical implication of addressing him as ‘good’, namely that he is God!” (Cole 2006: 1189)
mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. (Zech 12:10; applied to Jesus in John 19:37; Rev 1:7)

L. Conclusion

It must never be forgotten that Christianity arose out of a Jewish context. At the time Jesus was on earth, “Judaism had clear and consistent ways of characterizing the unique identity of the one God and thus distinguishing the one God absolutely from all other reality” (Bauckham 1999: vii). In other words, Judaism was as fiercely monotheistic as is Islam. Muslim apologists often contend that the worship of Jesus as the Son of God as part of the Godhead was a later development “under the misleading influence of Greek philosophy” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 4:171n.212; see also ibid.: n.216; Ali 2006: Q.4:171n.676 [“Alexandrian and Gnostic mysticism”]; Dirks 2008: 68-69). To the contrary, all of the above data demonstrate that “the highest possible Christology, the inclusion of Jesus in the unique divine identity, was central to the faith of the early church even before any of the New Testament writings were written, since it occurs in all of them. Although there was development in understanding this inclusion of Jesus in the identity of God, the decisive step of so including him was made at the beginning of Christology. . . . The New Testament writers did not see their Jewish monotheistic heritage as in any way an obstacle to the inclusion of Jesus in the divine identity; they used its resources extensively in order precisely to include Jesus in the divine identity; and they saw in this inclusion of Jesus in the divine identity the fulfillment of the eschatological expectation of Jewish monotheism that the one God will be universally acknowledged as such in his universal rule over all things.” (Bauckham 1999: 27) The basis for this conclusion primarily was what Jesus himself said and what Jesus himself did.

Inasmuch as Muslims view Jesus as a sinless prophet who cannot lie, Jesus’ words and deeds confront them (and everyone) with the same issue that confronted the first century Jews: Who is Jesus? Based upon the evidence, multitudes of first century Jews accepted that Jesus was who he claimed to be, the Son of God, i.e., God come to earth, and their lives were changed. Jesus’ claims are so profound that everyone needs to look at the evidence and make a choice, because if Jesus’ claims are true, then to reject Jesus as Lord is to reject God and thereby to miss life itself, but to have Jesus as Lord is to have God the Father as well and thereby to have eternal life (John 8:19; 1 John 2:23; 4:15; 2 John 9).

VII. Implications of the Fact that Jesus Christ is Fully God and Fully Man

A. God can be truly and personally known in Christ

In other monotheistic religions God is essentially an abstract idea. In polytheistic religions the gods are simply spirits. In neither case can God’s (or the gods’) true nature be known in a definitive and personal way. However, Christ is “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15). In Christ “all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (Col 2:9). “He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Heb 1:3). “Jesus became human so that human beings could have some understanding of the infinite God. A second reason God chose to become a man was to bridge the gulf between God and humankind. If Jesus had been

71 John Gilchrist points out, “No historical records of any description challenging the Jesus of the canonical gospels exist from any period during the 1st century” (Gilchrist 2015: 23). Oskar Skarsaune points out that, far from stemming from Greek or Gnostic thought, “The available evidence shows, on the contrary, that most Hellenists [i.e., Greeks or people who had adopted Greek philosophy and ideas] reacted with disgust and contempt at the very idea of a divine incarnation, and with charges of blasphemy when they heard that the incarnate Son of God had suffered the uttermost shame of crucifixion. . . . And that means that the Christian doctrine of the incarnation can hardly be a product of a milieu—the Hellenistic—that regarded this doctrine as a philosophical and theological monstrosity. Nor can it be the brilliant idea of someone trying to speak the way Hellenists liked.” (Skarsaune 2002: 323-25) In the early fourth century, Arius did begin promulgating an essentially Gnostic view of Christ, describing “the Son as a second, or inferior God, standing midway between the First Cause and creatures” (“Arianism” 2012: Doctrine). That controversy resulted in the Nicene and Constantinople creeds of 325 and 381 which recognized that Christ is fully God and fully man. Richard Bauckham concludes that the idea that the Christian doctrine of Christ stems from Greek philosophy or Gnostic mysticism is “virtually the opposite of the truth. . . . In the context of the Arian controversies, Nicene theology was essentially an attempt to resist the implications of Greek philosophical understandings of divinity and to re-appropriate in a new conceptual context the New Testament’s inclusion of Jesus in the unique divine identity.” (Bauckham 1999: 78; see also Skarsaune 2002: 325, 333 [“Now if we could ask the church fathers themselves what they thought was the background of the Christology of the (Nicene) creed, they would no doubt have answered, this creed is biblical through and through, not only in substance, but also in wording. And by ‘biblical’ they would have meant that every word and clause in the creed can be substantiated from the Old Testament, not only the New. . . . It goes without saying that a Christology like this could only arise in a Jewish setting among disciples steeped in the Old Testament and Jewish categories of thought.”]).
‘only’ a man or created being, then the hugeness of the gulf between God and humanity—the infinite and the finite, the Creator and the created, the Holy and the unholy—would have remained. For us to be able to know God, God had to step down to us. No created being could have bridged the gigantic gap between God and human beings any more than a piece of clay could aspire to understand and reach the level of the sculptor. Out of love, God took that step down to us. He wanted to open a way that all might come to know Him.” (McDowell and Larson 1983: 19) The fact that God became a man and lived among us in the person of Jesus Christ means we can know him personally and truly. This makes Christianity unique among all the religions of the world.

**B. Christ shows us what God’s true nature is and thereby also is our true example of how to live**

Because Jesus is God, it is appropriate and necessary to believe in him and worship him. However, because he is man, he is a true example of how we should live our lives here on earth: “By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked” (1 John 2:5-6). Peter says that patiently enduring unjust suffering for doing what is right “finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.” (1 Pet 2:20-21) It is here that Christ’s divinity and humanity converge in a profound way. Phil 2:5-11 describes how Christ was God (2:5-6) but emptied Himself to become a man, even a slave (2:7), who 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). “The exaltation of Christ to participation in the unique divine sovereignty shows Him to be included in the unique divine identity. But since the exalted Christ is first the humiliated Christ, since indeed it is because of his self-abnegation that he is exalted, his humiliation belongs to the identity of God as truly as his exaltation does. The identity of God—who God is—is revealed as much in self-abasement and service as it is in exaltation and rule. The God who is high can also be low, because God is God not in seeking his own advantage but in self-giving. His self-giving in abasement and service ensures that his sovereignty over things is also a form of his self-giving. Only the Servant can be the Lord. Only the Servant who is also the Lord receives the recognition of his lordship—the acknowledgement of his unique deity—from the whole creation.” (Bauckham 1999: 61)

The fact that God’s true nature is revealed as much in self-abasement and service as it is in exaltation and rule has profound practical implications for how God identifies with us in our human condition. “Having taken on the form of poverty and the form of the slave, God in Christ is the impoverished slave. As such, God enters into the hurts of those who suffer so that from inside those hurts, being fully identified with them to the point of communicating his divinity through them, he heals them.” (Carter 2008: 368) God’s identification with us in Christ then leads us to identify with others, since we have received the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16) and the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:1-17). We treat others with love and forgiveness because that is the way Christ has treated us (Eph 4:32; 1 John 4:7-21). Our lives and actions become more and more like Christ’s as we are conformed to his image (Rom 8:29; 12:1-2). The Christian God is unlike any other god and Christianity is unlike any other religion in the world—and it is only Christ who reveals this.

**C. Redemption from our sin is only possible because Christ is both fully God and fully man**

All people intuitively know that we have a problem: we are separated from God because we are sinful and God is holy and perfect. The Bible correctly sees that mankind has a fatal flaw, an inner corruption known as indwelling sin (e.g., Gen 6:5; Ps 51:5; Jer 17:9; Rom 3:9-18, 23; 7:14-24; Gal 3:21-22). The Bible also correctly sees that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23; see also Gen 2:17; Ezek 18:4, 20; Rom 5:12). All other religions in the world try to bridge the gap between people and God by making one’s salvation or acceptance with God dependent on what the individual person does to “establish his own righteousness” (Rom 10:3) by performing religious rituals, making sacrifices, doing good deeds, etc. However, no amount of desire, willing, rituals, sacrifices, or other actions can change the fundamental problem of our inner corruption and the sinfulness of our heart. Consequently, no amount of rituals, sacrifices, or other actions can ever “establish our own righteousness” or “earn” our way to heaven, salvation, or acceptance with God (Gal 2:16).

Because all people have a fundamental problem of a sinful nature, cannot change that, and therefore cannot save themselves, the Bible reveals that God chose to do for mankind what mankind could not do for itself. That is why God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ. By taking on a human body “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom 8:3) and coming into the world, “the intrinsically sinless Christ became the representative of sinful mankind. Hence God, by giving up Christ to death, could condemn sin by destroying His body, and thus cancel it. Christ took the likeness of [sinful flesh] in order that God in Christ might achieve the liberation of mankind from sin.” (Schneider 1967: 196) Christ lived the life we should have lived. He was “tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15; see also 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 2:18). That qualified Him to be our
representative with the Father, to die the death we should have died, and pay the penalty for our sins that we should have paid (Rom 8:3-4). As 1 Tim 2:5 says, “There is one God, and one mediator also between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” A mediator is someone who brings together two parties who are opposed to each other. A mediator therefore has to identify with each of the parties. Because he is God, Christ identifies with God the Father. Because he is man, Christ identifies with us. Because he did not sin, he did not have to atone for his own sin. Instead, Christ could take our sin onto himself, pay the price for our sin that we should have paid, and also impute to us his righteousness so that we can stand before God (Isa 53:5-6, 10-11; Rom 10:4; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 2:17-18; 1 Pet 2:4; 3:18). He alone can thereby reconcile us to God (Col 1:19-20).

No one else who has ever lived—neither Muhammad, nor Buddha, nor anyone else—ever claimed to redeem people from their sins. And no one else who has ever lived was qualified to redeem people from their sins even if he wanted to do so, because: (1) no one else who has ever lived was both God and man like Christ is; and (2) everyone else who has ever lived has had his or her own sinful nature and actual sins to deal with (Acts 4:12; Rom 3:9-18). Consequently, Christianity alone recognizes that salvation is not, and cannot be, based on what we do, but is, and can only be, based solely on what Christ has done for us. Salvation cannot be earned by us but is a gift given to us by the grace of God through Christ (Rom 5:18-21; 6:23; Eph 1:7; 2:4-5, 8-9). Only in Christ can we have confidence to approach God, because Christ is our advocate who intercedes for us with the Father (Rom 8:34; Heb 4:16; 7:25; 1 John 2:1). As Samuel Ngewa said earlier, “Not all roads lead to possession of eternal life. Jesus is the God-appointed way.” (Ngewa 2006: 1283) Therefore, “He, as no other human being in history, is to be listened to, revered, and even worshipped. . . . To treat Jesus as a mere man (or even a god [in the polytheistic sense]) under such circumstances would be blasphemy. To fail to adjust one’s life to His teaching would be to miss life itself.” (McDowell and Larson 1983: 14-15)

VIII. The Qur’an itself places Jesus higher than anyone else (including Muhammad) and essentially gives him divine status

Muhammad invites us to compare him with Jesus Christ, because he compared himself with Jesus Christ. In the Hadith, Muhammad said, “I am most akin to Jesus Christ among the whole of mankind” (Muslim: 2365b; see also 2365a, c; al-Bukhari: 3442, 3443 Note that he is using Jesus as the standard, not himself as the standard (i.e., he did not say, “Jesus is more akin to me than anyone else”). Further, the Qur’an itself contains multiple statements that, directly or indirectly, compare Jesus and Muhammad. Not only is Jesus mentioned by name in the Qur’an five times more frequently than is Muhammad (Deedat 2002: 4), but a fair examination of the descriptions of Jesus in the Qur’an lead to the conclusion that the Qur’an places Jesus higher than anyone else (including Muhammad) and essentially gives him divine status even though official Islamic doctrine denies that. A case therefore can be made that modern Islamic apologists have downplayed and distorted Jesus, as he is depicted in the Qur’an, because Muslims who study Jesus’ life and compare him with Muhammad would be drawn to Jesus and away from Muhammad. Those Qur’anic descriptions include the following.

A. Jesus, not Muhammad, had a miraculous conception

Former Muslim Abd al-Masih states, “As for Christ, the Quran states several times that He was not born in the normal way, as we are. His father was not a human being. He was conceived in the Virgin Mary [Q. 19:20-22] without the interference of a human father, for Allah breathed His spirit into her. This makes Christ—exclusively—the only one in the whole world who was born of the Word of God and His spirit.” (al-Masih 1993: 8) Consistent with Luke 1:39-45, Tabari’s History even recounts that Mary visited her sister who was

72 This is discussed at length in Gilchrist 2015. See also the article entitled “The uniqueness of Jesus in the Qur’an” found at https://christians-about-islam.info/2017/05/16/the-uniqueness-of-jesus-in-the-quran/, which compares statements in the Qur’an pertaining to Jesus to similar statements in the Bible. As stated in the conclusion of that article, “Although the Qur’an tells us many things about Jesus, all the information is fragmentary and scattered throughout different Surahs. In order to really get to know Jesus, there is no other way than through reading the Bible. In the New Testament alone we find the fullness of Jesus’ words and deeds. Each Muslim is obliged to believe all the messengers of God and all the holy scriptures.”

73 Hilali-Khan’s translation tries to defuse the issue by having the angel Gabriel, not Allah’s Spirit, “breathe into” Mary. Their translation/interpretation of Q. 21:91 says “We breathed into (the sleeves of) her (shirt or garment) [through Our Ruh Jibrael (Gabriel)].” They translate/interpret Q. 66:12: “We breathed into (the sleeve of her shirt or her garment) through Our Ruh [i.e. Jibrael (Gabriel)].” Dirks cites Q. 2:97 which says that Gabriel brought revelation to Muhammad and Q. 16:102 which says that the Holy Spirit brought revelation to Muhammad and concludes that “Gabriel is none other than the Holy Spirit . . . an angel of Allah who transmits His messages to mankind” (Dirks 2008: 197).

At least as it pertains to the conception of Jesus, interpreting the Holy Spirit as Gabriel cannot be correct. First, Q.
The Qur’an often uses the term “‘We’, the first person plural of majesty, to represent Himself [Allah]” (Haleem 2005: xx). Second, the Arabic is rūḥīnā (from rūḥ, “spirit”), which is properly translated “Our Spirit.” Most translators (Ali, Pickthall, Sarwar, Arberry, Haleem) translate it that way. Mawdudi says that “the birth of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) was not different from that of Prophet Adam, because the wording of the Arabic text in the two cases [compare Qur’an 21:91;66:12 (Jesus) with 15:29; 32:9; 38:72 (Adam)] is almost identical” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 21:91n.89). Nowhere does the Qur’an suggest that Gabriel breathed into Adam. Muslim commentators admit this. Concerning Adam, Mawdudi states, “And have breathed into him of My Spirit [rūḥī] means when I have cast a reflection of My divine characteristics on him. This shows that the soul of man implies life, knowledge, power, will, discretion and other human characteristics in the aggregate.” (Ibid.: Q. 15:29) Ali similarly calls the breathing in to Adam of “My Spirit” in Qur’an 15:29 “the faculty of God-like knowledge” and refers to it as man’s “higher side, the faculty brought in by the Spirit of Allah” (Ali 2006: Q. 15:29n.168). The same word rūḥī translated “My Spirit” is used in Qur’an 38:72. With respect to Qur’an 32:9, the word is rūḥīhi and is translated “His Spirit.” Mawdudi says, “Allah has called this ‘Spirit’ His own either because it belongs to Him alone, and its being attributed to Himself is just like a thing’s being attributed to its master, or because the attributes of knowledge, thought, consciousness, will, judgment, discretion, etc. with which man has been characterized are a reflection to the attributes of Allah” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 32:9n.16). The Islamic website IslamAnswering.com similarly concludes, “He has created man by breathing into him of His own Spirit (Qur’an, 15:29; 32:9; 66:12). Since God is the absolute infinite good and His Spirit the absolute perfect one; since man, through creation, received of the Spirit of God, then man was bound to retain at least some portion of this good Spirit of the Creator.” (“The Concept” 2009: n.p.)

Therefore, the “Spirit” in Qur’an 21:91and 66:12 (pertaining to Jesus) and 15:29; 32:9; and 38:72 (pertaining to Adam) cannot refer to the angel Gabriel.

Qur’an 2:87, 253, and 5:110 all say that Allah “strengthened him [Jesus] with the holy spirit [Ruh Al-Qudus].” That term is always translated “Holy Spirit” (Ali, Pickthall, Shakir, Sarwar, Arberry, Haleem; see also Qur’an 16:102). Reynolds points out, “These verses [Q. 2:87, 253; 5:110] suggest that by calling this ‘Spirit’ the Qur’an does not mean an angel, and that the Qur’an uses this expression in a manner parallel to the Bible . . . to mean a divine power. This idea matches the way the Qur’an speaks of God’s ‘Spirit,’ which is active in creation (Q. 15:29; 32:9; 38:72) and revelation (Q. 16:102; 26:192-93) at the command of God (Q 17:85).” (Reynolds 2018: 427) Nevertheless, Hilali-Khan again bring Gabriel into the verses for theological not lexical reasons by saying “supported him with Ruh-ul-Qudus [Jibrael (Gabriel)].” While some other commentators likewise maintain that Gabriel is what is meant (e.g., Ibn Kathir 2003: Q. 2:87, comment; Jalal 2013: Q. 2:87, comment), not all do. Ali maintains that Qur’an 2:87 means that Allah “by His word gave him [Jesus] spiritual strength—‘strengthened him with the holy spirit’” (Ali 2006: Q. 3:32n.401; see also A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 2:87n.93 [“It also denotes the holy spirit of Jesus, the spirit which God had endowed with angelic character”]).

Qur’an 58:22 says that Allah has “strengthened them [true believers] with a spirit from Himself.” Ali comments: “Allah strengthened the Prophet Jesus with the Holy Spirit. Here we learn that all good and righteous men are strengthened by Allah with the Holy Spirit. If anything, the phrase used here is stronger, ‘a spirit from Himself.’ Whenever anyone offers his heart in faith and purity to Allah, Allah accepts it, engraves that Faith on the seeker’s heart, and further fortifies him with the divine spirit, which we can no more define adequately than we can define in human language the nature and attributes of Allah.” (Ali 2006: Qur’an 58:22n.5365) Sam Shamoun states, “In order for this Spirit to be able to strengthen all true believers at the same time he must be personally present with all of them wherever they are at and must have the divine power to protect and preserve them all” (Shamoun, “Quran” n.d.: n.p.) Thus, the “Spirit” cannot be Gabriel who is limited to being in only one place at a time and is never said to appear to all believers.

Muhammad confirmed that the “Spirit” communicated to Jesus is not Gabriel. He said, “He who said: ‘There is no god but Allah, He is One and there is no associate with Him, that Muhammad is his servant and His messenger, that Christ is servant and the son of His slave-girl and he (Christ) His word which He communicated to Mary and is His Spirit, that Paradise is a fact and Hell is a fact.’ Allah would make him (he who affirms these truths) enter Paradise through any one of its eight doors which he would like” (Muslim: 28a; see also at-Bukhari: 3435; at-Tirmidhi: vol. 1, book 46, no. 3616, emph. added). Since Christ “is His Spirit,” the “Spirit” cannot be referring to Gabriel, because Christ is not the angel Gabriel.

The Qur’an names the angel Gabriel by name on occasion (see Qur’an 2:297). Qur’an 16:2; 70:4; 78:38 distinguish “the Spirit and the angels.” The “angels,” of course, would include Gabriel. Qur’an 17:85 (Hilali-Khan) reports, “And they ask you (O Muhammad SAW) concerning the Ruh (the Spirit); Say: “The Ruh (the Spirit): it is one of the things, the knowledge of which is only with my Lord. And of knowledge, you (mankind) have been given only a little.” Note that Muhammad did not identify the Spirit as Gabriel; instead, he admitted his relative ignorance and indicated that the Spirit was uniquely within the knowledge of the Lord. That makes the Spirit divine (i.e., God himself) since the essence of God (Allah) cannot be comprehended by human beings but only by God himself (e.g., Qur’an 6:103: “He is above all comprehension”; Qur’an 42:11: “there is nothing whatever like unto Him”). Consequently, for Muslim commentators and translators to maintain that when the Qur’an says Jesus received the “Holy Spirit” or “Our Spirit” the angel Gabriel is being referred to amounts to both “special pleading” (i.e., a fallacious argument that involves claiming, without justification, an exception to a generally accepted rule or principle) and “begging the question” (i.e., assuming in advance that which must be proved).
then pregnant with Yahya (John the Baptist). 74 “When the two met, the Baptist’s mother felt that her child was bowing within her in recognition of Jesus” (al-Tabari 1987b: 114, 119).

Regarding the miraculous and supernatural conception of Jesus, most Muslims emphasize Q. 2:117; 3:47, 59; 19:21, 35 to the effect that Allah only has to say “Be!” and anything he wishes (including Jesus) is created (see also Q. 16:40; 36:82; 40:68). They also tend to downplay the uniqueness of Jesus by comparing him to Adam, i.e., “If it is said that he was born without a human father, Adam was also so born. Indeed Adam was born without either a human father or mother.” (Ali 2006: Q. 3:59n.398; see also A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 3:59n.53; Ibn Kathir 2003: Q. 3:59, comment; Deedat 2002: 25-26) However, Adam and Jesus are fundamentally different for at least three reasons:

• First, Adam was created from pre-existing material—the dust of the ground as a fully-formed adult, because, as the first human being, it was not possible to be born of human parents (Gen 2:7; Q. 3:59; 7:12; 32:7; 38:76). However, Jesus was not “created” but was procreated, supernaturally and contrary to the natural means which had applied to every other person since Adam and Eve. The reason for this clearly relates to who Jesus is and his unique mission on earth. Before his birth, the angel Gabriel announced both his identity and his mission: in Luke 1:35 he said that Jesus will be the Son of God; in Matt 1:21 he said, “He will save his people from their sins.”

• Second, in all other human beings, including Adam, God’s “breathing in” to them is what gives human beings their soul; it makes humans higher than animals (Ali 2006: Q.32:7-9, nn.3637-40; see Gen 2:7; Q. 15:29; 32:9). However, in the case of Jesus, Allah breathed His Spirit into Mary, not into Jesus, in order to incarnate Jesus in a direct and unmediated way (Q. 21:91; 66:12). God did not have to breathe into Jesus to give him a soul “because Jesus had long existed in the divine realms before his conception on earth” (Gilchrist 2015: 67). Because Jesus had eternally pre-existed, “he had to be born of a virgin woman. He could not have been procreated through both a father and mother as a new person entirely, distinguished purely by his parents’ genes and DNA” (Ibid.).

• Third, Adam and Jesus are complete contrasts: Adam is from the earth, but Jesus is from heaven (1 Cor 15:47); Adam was just an ordinary man, but Jesus is a life-giving spirit (1 Cor 15:45); in Adam all die, but in Christ all shall be made alive (1 Cor 15:22).

Finally, the Qur’an does not simply say that Allah said “Be!” and Jesus was created. It is far more specific regarding the supernatural conception of Jesus. Q. 21:91 says, “(And remember) her [Mary] who guarded her chastity: We breathed into her of Our spirit, and We made her and her son a sign for all peoples.” Q. 66:12 adds, “Mary the daughter of ‘Imran, who guarded her chastity; and We breathed into (her body) of Our spirit; and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and of His Revelations, and was one of the devout (servants).” 75 Regarding this verse, Mawdudi states, “That is, without her having any connection with a

74 In other accounts reported by Tabari, John the Baptist’s mother was Elizabeth, Mary’s aunt (al-Tabari 1987b: 102-03; see also Ibn Kathir, Stories, n.d.: 178).

75 The Arabic wording of Q. 21:91 and 66:12 is significant. It shows a far more “intimate” connection between Allah and Mary than most Muslims acknowledge. Hilali-Khan try to downplay this by translating Q. 21:91 as, “(And remember) she who guarded her chastity [Virgin Maryam (Mary)], We breathed into (the sleeves of) her (shirt or garment). . . .” They translate Q. 66:12: “And Maryam (Mary), the daughter of ‘Imran who guarded her chastity; and We breathed into (the sleeve of her shirt or her garment). . . .” Mumim Salih, a former Muslim, discusses this: “The above translation is completely deceptive. The word ‘her chastity’ was used as a translation to the Arabic word ‘farjaha’, which is far from true. The Arabic root word ‘farj’ means the female genital organ (vagina to be precise), . . . The Arabs refer to a woman with chastity by using words like ‘afifa’ or ‘sharifa’, with no need at all to refer to her genital organ. The deceptive translation is also evident in using the word ‘breathed into’ as a translation to the Arabic word ‘nafakhna feeha’, which means ‘we blew into her . . .’. The Quran meant to say ‘into her genital organ/vagina’, but the translators talk about sleeves and shirts! I suppose if we ask the translators why did they bring the clothing issue here, their answer would be that the blowing process happened discretely without having to uncover her! . . . The Quran refers to the same story in surat Al Tahreem (66:12), but uses the Arabic words ‘nafakhna feehy’ instead of nafakhna feeha, leaving no room at all for changing the meaning. Nafakhna feehy means ‘we blew into her organ’ which clarifies where the blowing process happened. The correct wording for Q.66:12 would have been: ‘And Maryam, the daughter of Imran who guarded her genitals; and We blew in it from our spirit’. Despite such clarity, the translators [Hilali-Khan] insist on bringing irrelevant and redundant issues of sleeves, shirts and garments to the verse.” (Salih 2007: Blowing into Mary!)

Ali and Dirks try to ridicule the biblical account of the virgin birth by comparing it to Greek myths of the gods impregnating human women. Ali says that the Qur’an’s account “should not therefore be supposed to imply that Allah was the father of Jesus in the sense in which Greek mythology makes Zeus the father of Apollo by Latona or of Minos by Europa. And yet that is the doctrine to which the Christian idea of ‘the only begotten Son of God’ leads.” (Ali 2006: Q. 66:12n.5552; see also Dirks 2008: 68 [the concept of the “begotten son . . . was a result of polytheism, e.g., the birth story
man, Allah breathed into her womb a Spirit from Himself” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 66:12n.28).

In contrast to the unique and supernatural conception of Jesus, “It is common knowledge that the father of Muhammad was Abdallah; and his mother, Amina. Muhammad was a man born of an acknowledged father and a respected mother. Neither the Quran nor Muslim scholars claim that Muhammad was born in a supernatural way. His birth was not announced by an angel, nor was he born by the Word of God. He was born in a natural way as we all are, from a human father and a human mother.” (al-Masih 1993: 8) Even here, the Qur’an contrasts Jesus and Muhammad by how it contrasts their mothers. Mary is named 34 times in the Qur’an; she is called “a woman of truth” (Q. 5:75) and “a sign for all peoples” (Q. 21:91; see also 23:50). Q. 3:42 states, “O Mary! Allah hath chosen thee and purified thee-chosen thee above the women of all nations.” In contrast to Mary, Muhammad’s mother is never mentioned even once in the Qur’an.

B. Jesus, not Muhammad, is the “Word” of God

Q. 3:45 says, “Behold! the angels said: ‘O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah’” (see also Q. 3:39; 4:171). Masih states, “All the prophets heard the Word of God and transcribed it sincerely. As for Christ, He not only heard the inspired Word, He Himself was the incarnation of the divine Word.” (al-Masih 1993: 10) The Arabic wording confirms this: “The key issue is that Jesus himself is called a Word from Allah – kalimatim-minhu – a Word from him, and kalimatahu – his Word. It is the suffix hu (him) that gives the title its special definition. A word did not come to Jesus like those that came to the prophets before him, he himself is the Word that came from Allah himself.” (Gilchrist 2015: 140-41) Muslim professor Ayoub agrees: “He [Jesus] represents a special creation; he is the Word of God injected into the human plane of existence” (Ayoub 1980: 93).

of Hercules”]) Ali and Dirks, like Hilali-Khan, appear to be willfully misleading. In the biblical account, Gabriel explained to Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35; see also Matt 1:18-23). “Nothing in [the biblical account] suggests that actual intercourse took place between God and Mary. The words come upon and overshadow in verse 35 do not imply sexual relations, and Luke here describes with great delicacy an incomprehensible event.” (Schreiner 1989: 806) On the other hand, in the Qur’an’s account, Allah did not simply say “Be!” to create Jesus. Instead, Allah was intimately involved in the creation of Jesus and clearly played the role of the father. He breathed His Spirit into Mary (into her vagina) in order to incarnate Jesus. That is far more explicit and more sexually suggestive than the biblical account. This renders the Qur’an’s account does indeed “imply that Allah was the father of Jesus.” If God is not Jesus’ father, then who is? Since God is Jesus’ father, that makes Jesus God’s “Son” in a way different from all other human beings.

76 When Jesus is called the “Word” of God, some Muslim exegetes point to Q. 3:47, 59 and claim that he is called the “Word” because, like the creation of Adam, Allah created Jesus by his word—“Be!” (see Q. 3:45, Hilali-Khan; Ali 2006: Q. 3:59n.398; Q. 4:171n.676; Ibn Kathir 2003: Q. 4:171, comment). That is not correct for at least four reasons:

- First, “If the expositors claim that what is meant by ‘Word’ is the verb ‘be’ (kun) or speech in other texts there is no way they can claim this meaning in this instance. The words, ‘a Word from him whose name is Messiah’ shows that the Word here is a person and not an utterance or command as will be clear upon the slightest reflection. It is almost like saying, ‘A being from him.’ Notice that the pronoun in the Arabic ismihi (‘whose name’) is masculine referring to kalima (Word) which in Arabic is feminine phonetically but masculine in meaning; otherwise, linguistically it would not be permissible.” (Ghabril 2003: 31) A hadith confirms this. In Sahih al-Bukhari (vol. 6, book 60, no. 236) Jesus is called “His [Allah’s] Word which He sent to Mary.” Rick Brown puts it this way, “The usage in the Qur’an is clearly incarnational, and John the Baptist is called to bear witness to Jesus as the Word (3:39, 45; 4:171). Note as well that although kalima ‘word’ is feminine in Arabic, it is construed in these verses as masculine, even before the conception, as a ‘word from God, his name is Jesus.’” (Brown 2002: 27n.2)

- Second, the Muslim argument mistakes cause for effect. Ghabril explains, “If God created Isa, the Christ, by a word of command (kun, in Arabic) as they allege, he could not be called (kalima) word, because he is not the word but the effect of the word (the command). If I write a book with my mind, that book is not called a mind (or my mind) but the object of the mind. Otherwise, truth will be mixed with error, and essentials will be confused with accidentals.” (Ghabril 2003: 31) The “Word” clearly is Jesus, i.e., an entity transmitted to a recipient, because Q. 4:171 says that the word was “bestowed on Mary” (Ali; Hilali-Khan) or “conveyed to Mary” (Darweesh, Pickthall [“conveyed unto”]).

- Third, Sundiata points out, “God’s Word or any person’s word, whether spoken, written, or expressed by some sign, is an expression of the mind. Since only Jesus is called ‘the Word of God’ in the Qur’an, it follows that the Qur’an regards Jesus alone as the divine expression, which is exactly what the apostle Paul explained to the Colossians in the Bible (Col. 2:9).” (Sundiata 2006: 204)

- Fourth, even though Adam was created out of dust with no physical parents, the Qur’an never calls him a “Word” of Allah as it calls Jesus. Therefore, calling Jesus the “Word” of God, but not similarly calling Adam a “Word,”
Muhammad is not called the incarnate Word in the Qur’an. There is a fundamental difference, even according to the Qur’an, between who and what Jesus and Muhammad are and what they did. D. A. Carson summarizes, “Jesus is not presented merely as the one who brings his Father’s message, the way Muhammad is presented in Islam as the final prophet who brings Allah’s message; rather, in important ways, Jesus is the message, he is the Word, as well as bringing it” (Carson 2008: 53).

C. Jesus, not Muhammad, is the “Spirit” from God

Q. 4:171 calls Jesus “a spirit proceeding from Him [i.e., Allah].” Gilchrist notes, “Jesus is not only a Word from Allah, he is also a Spirit from Allah. The same Arabic words are used – min-hu – ‘from him’. No other prophet is given this title in the Qur’an or is said to have come from Allah. . . . Some say the Qur’an is talking about the spirit that breathed Jesus into life when he was born of a virgin woman. . . . Surah 4.171, however, says that Jesus himself is a spirit from Allah, not that he received a spirit from him. There are eternal distinctions between the two.” (Gilchrist 2015: 144, 145)

In the Hadith, Muhammad himself said that one of the truths one must affirm to enter Paradise is that Christ is “His word which He communicated to Mary and is His Spirit” (Muslim: 28a; see also al-Bukhari: 3435; at-Tirmidhi: vol. 1, book 46, no. 3616, emph. added). Tabari quotes a letter from Muhammad to the Negus (the king of the Ethiopians) saying, “I bear witness that Jesus the son of Mary is the Spirit and Word of God, which He cast into the goodly and chaste Virgin Mary, so that she conceived Jesus” (al-Tabari 1997: 108; see also Ibn Ishaq 1955: 152). Ghabril states, “God has called some Apostles, some prophets, some warners, some Preachers. But all these names are less than Word of God and Spirit of God which Jesus Christ was called. He is thus undoubtedly greater than all, particularly as the spirit is greater than the apostle because Spirit of God means God himself whereas His apostle is another individual.” (Ghabril 2003: 33; see also Shayesteh 2003: 78)

In other words, Jesus Christ is “the divine Spirit incarnated in human flesh” (al-Masih 1993: 9). No claims like that are made in the Qur’an with respect to Muhammad.

D. Jesus, not Muhammad, is “the Messiah”

On multiple occasions, the Qur’an refers to Jesus as “the Messiah” (Q. 3:45; 4:157, 171-72; 5:72, 75; 9:30; the Arabic is “al-Masih”). Memsuah Mansoor explains, “The Arabic word, ‘masih’ differs from ‘mamsuah’ in that ‘mamsuah’ simply means ‘anointed’ and signifies a lesser anointing. ‘Masih’ however, is based on the grammatical form which emphasizes the fact of the anointing being possessed by someone or something. It is an ‘intensive form’ that often indicates ‘a very high degree of the quality which their subject possesses or an act which is done with frequency . . . by their subject.’” (Mansoor n.d.: n.p.)

Al-Masih “is the only title prefixed to the name of any prophet in the Qur’an. . . . [This indicates] that there was something very distinctive about Jesus, that he was in some way exalted above all the other prophets of Allah.” (Gilchrist 2015: 121, 123) Although Jesus is given the title “al-Masih,” the meaning of that term or of his special “anointing” is not defined or described. The description of Jesus as “the Messiah” (al-Masih), clearly comes from the Bible, since “Christ” (Greek = Christos) is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “Messiah” (Danker 2000: Christos, 1091), and “the Qur’anic al-Masihu ‘Isa is simply an Arabic translation of this same name and title, meaning literally ‘the Christ, Jesus’ or more specifically ‘the Messiah Jesus.’ This explains why the Qur’an makes no attempt to explain the title – its use alongside the name Jesus was extremely common among Christians and was simply accepted and admitted.” (Gilchrist 2015: 124)

Mansoor points out, “Since it is referring to a person referred to in the Hebrew language, the title ‘masih’ should not be separated from the fullness of the meaning which it held in the Hebrew context. Though not always admitted in Islamic doctrine, the significance that the Jewish Messiah had is brought across in the Arabic grammar because ‘al’ makes reference to ‘a previously known’ or ‘specific’ mash, and is often used to indicate the greatest one.” (Mansoor n.d.: n.p.) In the Bible, the term “the Messiah” was initially derived from Ps 89:19-20. “The term denotes an expected or longed-for savior, especially in the Jewish tradition. . . . In its primary biblical usage, then, ‘anointed’ is, virtually a synonymous term of ‘king,’ in particular David and his

cannot simply be a way of referring to the supernatural manner of Jesus’ conception but is, in fact, a way of distinguishing Jesus from Adam despite their supernatural conceptions. Because the Qur’an does not itself define or describe the meaning of Jesus as the “Word,” that meaning can only have come from the Bible which first described Jesus as the “Word.” Jesus is pre-eminently described as the “Word” in John 1:1, 14: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (see also Rev 19:13). Given this background, the only plausible meaning of Jesus as the “Word” in the Qur’an is that Jesus is the incarnation of the divine Word.
descendants. Eventually royal language and imagery came to be applied primarily to a hoped-for future king, whose reign would be characterized by everlasting justice, security, and peace. Belief in a priestly messiah, son of Aaron, who would arise alongside the Davidic messiah to save Israel, appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Finally, the tradition that the divinely appointed savior should suffer (Luke 24:26; Acts 3:18) has its roots in numerous psalms attributed to David (e.g., 22:55; 88).” (Sawyer 1993: 513-14)

Muslim professor Abdul-Mohsin admits that “the Jews expected the Messiah to come in one of three forms: 1. A king [citing Jer 23:5-6; Ps 110:1-2]. 2. A priest [citing Zech 6:12-13; Ps 110:3-4]. 3. A prophet [citing Deut 18:18-19].” (Abdul-Mohsin 2006: 95-97) Importantly, the Messiah was not merely to be “a king” but was to be “the king”—the final king of the world. Louis Jacobs writing in the Jewish Virtual Library says, “In rabbinic thought, the Messiah is the king who will redeem and rule Israel at the climax of human history and the instrument by which the kingdom of God will be established. While the Bible stresses the nature of the age called the ‘end of days,’ the rabbis focus as well on the person of their regent, who gives the messianic age (yemot ha-mashi‘ah) its very name.” (Jacobs 2008: Messiah in Rabbinc Thought) Many OT passages indicate that the Messiah would be a human being (e.g., Gen 3:15; Isa 11:1-5; 42:1-6; 59:20; Jer 30:18-22; 33:14-15); however, other passages suggest that the Messiah would be divine (e.g., Ps 2:6-12; 110:1-7; Isa 9:6; Jer 23:5-6; Mic 5:2; Zech 14:9).

The NT clearly shows that Jesus Christ fulfills the Israelite expectations of a king and savior sent by God (see, e.g., Matt 2:4-11; 16:16, 20; 22:42-45; 26:63-64; Mark 8:29; 12:35-37; 14:61-62; Luke 4:41; 20:41-44; 22:67-70; 23:2-3, 39; 24:26, 46; John 4:25-26; 11:25-27; 20:30-31; Acts 2:30-36; 9:22; 17:3, 18:5, 28; 1 John 2:22; 5:1). Jesus was the prophesied king. This was recognized at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (John 1:49, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel”) and when Jesus entered Jerusalem the final time, which all four Gospels interpret as the coming of the prophesied Davidic king (Matt 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-40; John 12:12-16). Jesus also is the perfect high priest in the true Temple (Heb 2:17; 4:14-5:10; 7:1-8:6; 10:11-22). Finally, Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Moses that God would raise up another prophet like him (see Deut 18:15, 18-19; John 1:45; 6:14; Acts 3:20-23).

Jesus received worship as the Messiah, but Jesus the Messiah, i.e., the longed-for savior, came to save people not in a political sense but from their enslavement to sin. Thus, he claimed the authority to forgive people of their sins (Matt 9:2-8, 12-13; Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:17-26, 31-32; 7:47-50; 9:56; 19:10; John 5:33-34; 8:1-11; 10:7-9; 12:47). However, when Jesus was crucified those who believed he was the promised deliverer lost their hope because a crucified Messiah seemed to be a contradiction in terms (see Luke 24:19-21). The people did not understand that the crucifixion was the means by which salvation from sin had to be accomplished. Then the unexpected occurred: Jesus rose from the dead. After his resurrection, Jesus explained to his disciples, “Was it not necessary for the Christ [i.e., Messiah] to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:26), and “Thus it is written, that the Christ [i.e., Messiah] would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day” (Luke 24:46). Jesus therefore fulfilled all the OT expectations of the Messiah, but he did so in an unexpected way. He thereby gave the term a greater and deeper meaning than people had anticipated. Hence, the NT proclaims him as the savior who alone can save people from their sins (Matt 1:21; Luke 2:11; John 1:29; 3:17; 4:42; Acts 3:26; 4:12; 5:31; 13:23, 38-39; 15:11; 16:31; Rom 3:24-26; 4:25; 5:1, 6-11, 15-21; 8:2; 10:9; 1 Cor 1:30; 6:11; 15:17; 2 Cor 5:18-21; Gal 1:3-4; Eph 2:13-16; 4:32; 5:2, 25-26; Phil 3:20; Col 1:12-14; 3:13; 1 Thess 1:10; 5:9-10; 1 Tim 1:15; 2 Tim 2:10; 3:15; Titus 1:4; 2:13-14; Heb 2:17; 5:9; 7:25; 13:20; 1 Pet 1:18-19; 3:18; 2 Pet 1:11; 1 John 3:5; 4:9-10, 14; Rev 5:9; 14:4). Muhammad, of course, never claimed to save anyone (even himself) from his or her sins.

Because Jesus is “the Messiah,” and the Messiah is the final, eschatological prophet, priest, and king, Muhammad could not be the “last” of the prophets, since that role is uniquely fulfilled by the Messiah, i.e., Jesus. Since even the Qur’an recognizes that Jesus is “the Messiah,” the meaning of that term can only be the

77 They did not understand even though the OT had prophesied that the Messiah’s royal crown and throne would be thrown down (Ps 89:39, 44), his enemies would rejoice (Ps 89:42), and he would be killed as a sacrificial offering (Isa 53:1-12). See also below, section 3.II.D. Salvation according to Christianity: what Christ accomplished on the cross.

78 Muhammad said, “The most wretched person in the sight of Allah on the Day of Resurrection and the worst person and target of His wrath would of the person who is called Malik al-Amlak (the King of Kings) for there is no king but Allah” (Muslim: 2143a; see also al-Bukhari: 6205, 6206; at-Tirmidhi: vol. 5, book 41, no. 2837). In other words, the phrase “King of Kings” suggests that the person is God himself. However, in the Bible Jesus is called “King of Kings” (1 Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14). Further, in connection with Jesus’ Second Coming to the earth, Rev 19:16 reports that “on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.’” Since “there is no king but Allah,” and Allah says “I am King” and mocks those who call themselves “kings” (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 336; see also al-Bukhari: 6519, 7382), Jesus must therefore be God and King because he is called “King of Kings” and on his robe and thigh he calls...
meaning that Jesus himself gave it. That meaning can only be found in the NT, because only the NT records in detail what Jesus said and did to lead to the (unexpected) conclusion that he was, in fact, the Messiah. Because the Qur’an is using a biblical term (“the Messiah”) and says that it simply confirms prior revelation (Q. 2:41, 89, 97; 3:3; 4:47; 5:15; 48; 6:90, 92; 10:37; 12:111; 35:31; 46:9, 12, 30), and because it says that “We believe in . . . what was given to Musa (Moses), ‘Iesa (Jesus) and the Prophets from their Lord” (Q. 2:136, Hilali-Khan), it must therefore accept the Bible’s revelation of what “the Messiah” means and why Jesus is the Messiah—and that includes that Jesus is divine, since part of the biblical description of Messiah is that he is divine.

There is one more significant aspect to the Qur’an’s calling Jesus “the” Messiah (al-Masih): “In Arabic, al is always equal to ‘the’ and it is attached to names which are attributed to god only. This is why all the 99 names of Allah start with Al or The. Take note however, that The is not part of the name. It is just a device used to indicate that the name is unique to god—only god can be given this distinction. For example, we cannot say ‘The Muhammad,’ because Muhammad is just the name of a person. It is interesting to note that the Messiah is called Al-Maseeh in the Qur’an. It means he is the only Messiah in the whole world. He is the only man in the Qur’an who has Al or The attached to his name.” (Prince 2011: 5; see also Mansoor n.d.: n.p.)

The Qur’an never refers to Muhammad or any other prophet as “masih,” let alone “al-Masih.”

E. Jesus, not Muhammad, is pure, holy, and without sin or error from his birth

In Islam, all prophets “were plain human beings” who, nevertheless, were “sinless” (Emerick 2004: 199, 202). However, according to Islamic teaching, “Sinless doesn’t mean perfect. It doesn’t mean that they didn’t make mistakes or errors in judgment on temporal matters. What it signifies is that all persons chosen to be prophets had their records cleared, their hearts purified by God, and thereafter never intentionally did any immoral action again.” (Ibid.: 202) Abdul-Mohsin puts it this way: “The majority of the Muslim community and theologians say that Prophets are infallible regarding major sins but can commit minor ones” (Abdul-Mohsin 2006: 69). These “minor” sins can be far more than mere “errors in judgment.” The Qur’an tells us that that Adam disobeyed Allah (Q. 20:116-21); Moses killed the Egyptian (Q. 28:15-16); David made a hasty and wrong judgment or had Bathsheba’s husband killed so that he could marry her (Q. 38:21-24);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; see Abdul-Mohsin 2006: 69-75; Ghabril 2003: 13-20; and see below for more regarding Muhammad). The words used in all of these instances are standard Arabic words “which throughout the Qur’an are used to express the act of asking forgiveness for sins against God [not mere ‘faults’ or ‘errors in judgment’]” (Gilchrist 2015: 72-75).

Jesus alone was different. Although the Qur’an lists sins for the other prophets including Muhammad, no sins are recorded for Jesus because he never committed any. Abbas Sundiata observes an important corollary of this: “Even when we do not sin, we remain sinners—it is our heritage as human beings. In contrast, God does not have such inclinations. Therefore, if God lived among men as a man, then the one thing that would attract his attention to Him and distinguish Him from others would be the perfect life He would live, because God cannot sin.” (Sundiata 2006: 201) Q. 19:19 says an angel announced to Mary that, although she was a virgin, she would be given “a holy son” (Ali), “a faultless son” (Pickthall), “a righteous son” (Hilali-Khan), “a boy most pure” (Arberry; see also Sahih, Shakir, Sarwar, Haleem). Abd al-Masih states, “The Muslim scholars al-Tabari, al-Baidawi, and al-Zamakhshari agreed that the expression ‘most pure’ means blameless, guiltless and sinless. Before Christ was born, divine inspiration declared that the one who was going to be born out of the spirit of God would always live pure, without a single sin. There was no need to purify His heart, for He was holy in Himself. The Son of Mary did not hear the Word of God only; He was it. There was no difference between His

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79 In trying to reduce Jesus to the level of other prophets, Deedat says that the Greek christos means “anointed” and that many things and people in the Bible are said to be anointed (Deedat 2002: 13-14). While that is true as far as it goes, Deedat omits the most significant fact: “The title given to Jesus in the Bible is actually (in the original Greek) ho Christos, that is, ‘the Christ’. The use of the definite article renders the title exclusive in a very real sense and reveals that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, God’s Anointed One, in a way that none of the other prophets were.” (Gilchrist 2010: 8)

80 Asad, in commenting on the story of David and Bathsheba (Q. 38:21-26), says, “The story contradicts the doctrine - somewhat arbitrarily developed by Muslim theologians in the course of the centuries - that prophets cannot sin by virtue of their very nature, and tends to show that their purity and subsequent sinlessness is a result of inner struggles and trials and, thus, represents in each case a moral achievement rather than an inborn quality.” (Asad 1980: Q. 38:21n.22)

81 For more detail on this incident, see n.163, below.
actions and His words. He remained blameless and without sin." (al-Masih 1993: 13) Mawdudi concludes, "God endowed Jesus with a pure, impeccable soul. He was therefore an embodiment of truth, veracity, righteousness, and excellence." (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 4:171n.213) The uniqueness of Jesus is highlighted by Muslim professor Mahmoud Ayoub: “Jesus is therefore free from the taint of evil and impurity. . . . This purity, which Adam had till he was touched by Satan’s finger and thus lost it, now remains exemplified by Jesus alone.” (Ayoub 1980: 93)

Unlike Jesus, “the Prophet [Muhammad] is sometimes even censured in Qur’an” (Haleem 2005: xv). In Q. 8:67-68 Muhammad is rebuked for accepting ransom from prisoners taken at the battle of Tabuk in 624 CE. In Q. 9:43 Muhammad is censured for having given permission for some of his fighters to stay at home before the battle of Tabuk in 631 CE. In Q. 66:1 (Sarwar) Muhammad is rebuked for “mak[ing] unlawful that which God has made lawful.” Twice in the Qur’an, Q. 40:55 and 47:19, Muhammad is commanded to “ask forgiveness for thy fault” (see also Q. 110:3). Arberry, Shahih, Pickthall, Sarwar, and Haleem translate Q. 40:55 as “for your sin(s).” Hilali-Khan joins Arberry, Shahih, Pickthall, Sarwar, and Haleem in translating the similar verse, 47:19, as “ask forgiveness for thy sin(s).” John Gilchrist points out that in 47:19 the Arabic words for “ask forgiveness for thy sin(s)” are wastaghfir li thanbik “which are exactly the same words used when Zulaykah (the Muslim name for Potiphar’s wife) is commanded to repent of her desire to seduce Joseph [in Q. 12:29]” (Gilchrist 2002: 48). Q. 48:1-2 affirms that Muhammad committed sins both before and after his calling as a prophet.

Muhammad himself admitted sinning and asking Allah’s forgiveness for his sins. At the end of one prayer he said, “O Allah, to Thee I turned my attention, and by Thee I disputed, and to Thee I brought forth my case, so forgive me my former and latter sins, and my secret and open sins” (Abi Dawud: 760, 761). Another hadith records, “When the Prophet uttered salutation at the end of the prayer, he used to say: ‘O Allah, forgive me my former and latter sins, what I have kept secret and what I have done openly, and what I have done extravagantly; and what You know better than I do.’” (Abi Dawud: 1509) He also admitted to faults, ignorance, immoderation, serious and deliberate sins (Muslim: 2719a). In fact, other ahadith report that Muhammad admitted having to repent one hundred times a day! “The Messenger of Allah (saas) said: ‘I seek the forgiveness of Allah and repent to Him one hundred times each day’” (Ibn Majah: 3815; see also al-Bukhari: 6307; Ibn Majah: 3814; at-Tirmidhi: 3434; Muslim: 2702a, 2702b; Abi Dawud: 1516). The last words his wife Aisha heard before he died was Muhammad’s begging Allah for forgiveness: “When the Prophet fell sick with the sickness that would be his last, I took his hand and wiped it over his body and recited these words. He withdrew his hand from mine and said: ‘O Allah, forgive me and let me meet the exalted companions (i.e., those who occupy high positions in Paradise).’ Those were the last words of his that I heard.” (Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 6, no. 1619, emph. added)

Dirks describes an incident in which Muhammad “ignore[ed] the questioning of a blind man interested in Islam, due to his preoccupation in attempting to persuade a person of substance and influence into Islam” (Dirks 2008: 187). Allah rebuked Muhammad for this, as Q. 80:1-6 (Sarwar) records, “He [Muhammad] frowned and then turned away from a blind man who had come up to him. You never know. Perhaps he wanted to purify himself, or receive some (Quranic) advice which would benefit him. Yet you pay special attention to the one who is wearing fine clothes, and you give special attention to the one who is wearing fine clothes, and say, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and you say to the poor man, ‘You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,’ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? . . . 8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,’ you are doing well. 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.”

Significantly, Muhammad has no guarantee that Allah will forgive him. According to Q. 33:56 (Sarwar; see also Hilali-Khan), “the angels seek forgiveness for him,” and believers likewise are to “pray for the Prophet.” That angels seek his forgiveness and believers are supposed to pray for him can only mean that, at least as of now, Muhammad is not forgiven. Indeed, in Q. 46:9 Muhammad himself confessed that he had no
assurance of salvation, “Nor do I know what will be done with me or with you.” The Hadith confirms this. Muhammad said, “By Allah, though I am Allah’s Messenger, I neither know what will happen to me, nor to you” (al-Bukhari: 7018; see also 1243, 3929).

There is an important implication of the fact that even the Qur’an acknowledges that Jesus alone was without sin or error: “If Jesus Christ was merely human and still faultless, it follows that God deliberately gave Jesus the power to overcome sin and evil? Does He not want all other human beings to live without sin, or has He not got enough power to make all of us live like Jesus did? If God wants us to live like Jesus, then there must be a fundamental reason why of all who have appeared as humans, only Jesus had the power to live above reproach. So, either God gave Jesus, a mere man the special power to overcome all sin and deliberately left the rest of us to wallow in it, or Jesus Christ was without sin and faultless in the first place because He is fundamentally different from every other human being. The sinlessness of Jesus was the result of His divine nature rather than the result of some preferential treatment by God.” (Sundiata 2006: 201-02)

The fact that Jesus was pure and sinless whereas Muhammad was sinful of necessity also means that “the example of Jesus, introduced in the Qur’an, is perfect and better than the example of Muhammad. This in turn raises two other issues, which are worthy of consideration. Firstly, Jesus as the perfect model would never encourage people to follow any imperfect model. Secondly, Jesus would never let His perfect ministry be followed up by an imperfect ministry, especially when it is uncertain about salvation. Therefore, Muhammad’s claim on calling himself the seal of the prophets contradicts the highest quality the Qur’an has attributed to Jesus amongst all other prophets, including Muhammad himself.” (Shayesteh 2004: 191-92)

F. Jesus, not Muhammad, was protected from the influence of Satan

Q. 3:36 reports that, after giving birth, Mary’s mother said to Allah, “I have named her Mary, and I commend her and her offspring to Thy protection from the Evil One, the Rejected.” Tafsir al-Jalalayn states that Allah heeded that plea: “Her Lord accepted the child, that is, He received Mary from her mother, with gracious acceptance, and made her grow excellently, He made her grow up with excellent character” (Jalal 2017: Q. 3:37, comment; see also Ali 2006: Q. 3:37n.379). Islamic historian al-Tabari in his History relates a story substantiating this: When Jesus was born, “wherever idols were worshiped, the idols were toppled and thrown upside down. Devils took fright but remained unaware of the cause. They rushed to Iblīs [Satan] [who investigated and tried to approach Jesus but was prevented from doing so by the angels who surrounded and protected him]. Then informing them about the birth of Christ, he said to them, ‘It was concealed from me. No female womb has ever conceived without my knowledge, and none has given birth without my presence. . . . No prophet was ever more calamitous to me and to you than this one.’” (al-Tabari 1987b: 115-16) Muhammad himself confirmed that Jesus is untouched by Satan, unlike every other person (including Muhammad himself). According to the Hadith, “The Prophet said, ‘When any human being is born, Satan touches him at both sides of the body with his two fingers, except Jesus, the son of Mary, whom Satan tried to touch but failed, for he touched the placenta-cover instead.’” (al-Bukhari: 3286; see also 3431; Muslim: 2366a, c)

Nowhere does the Qur’an or the Hadith say that Allah protected Muhammad from the influence of Satan. In fact, a hadith relates that Satan had entered Muhammad: “Anas b. Malik reported that Gabriel came to the Messenger of Allah while he was playing with his playmates. He took hold of him and lay him prostrate on the ground and tore open his breast and took out the heart from it and then extracted a blood-clot out of it and said: That was the part of Satan in thee. And then he washed it with the water of Zamzam in a golden basin and then it was joined together and restored to its place.” (Muslim: 162c, 163; see also al-Tabari 1999: 275-82)

- The Satanic verses. The washing with the water of Zamzam did not end Satan’s influence over Muhammad. Tafsir al-Jalalayn reports that Satan spoke to Muhammad and caused him to praise three idols worshipped by the Quraysh tribe: “When he [Muhammad] recited [the scripture] Satan cast into his recitation, what is not from the Qur’an, but which those to whom he [the prophet] had been sent would find pleasing. The Prophet (s) had, during an assembly of the [men of] Quraysh, after reciting the [following verses from] surat al-Najm, Have you considered Lāt and ‘Uzza? And Manāt, the third one? [Q:53:19-20] added, as a result of Satan casting them onto his tongue without his [the Prophet’s] being aware of it, [the following words]: ‘those are the high-flying planes (al-ḥarānīq al-‘ulā) and indeed their intercession is to be hoped for’, and so they [the men of Quraysh] were thereby delighted.” (Jalal 2017: Q. 22:52, comment)

Those are the so-called “Satanic verses.”

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82 “These were stone idols which the idolaters worshipped and which they claimed interceded for them with God” (Jalal 2017: Q. 53:20, comment). (Muhammad later announced that Gabriel told him that those verses had come from Satan, not
Ibn Ishaq (c. 704-767), one of Muhammad’s first Muslim biographers, reported that after Muhammad praised the three idols, he even led the people in bowing down to them: “When he reached His words ‘Have you thought of al-Lat and al-‘Uzza and Manat the third, the other’, Satan, when he was meditating upon it, and desiring to bring it (sc. reconciliation) to his people, put upon his tongue ‘these are the exalted Gharaniq whose intercession is approved.’ When the Quraysh heard that, they were delighted and greatly pleased at the way in which he spoke of their gods and they listened to him; while the believers were holding that what their prophet brought from their Lord was true, not suspecting a mistake or a vain desire or slip, and when he reached the prostration and the end of the Sura in which he prostrated himself the Muslims prostrated themselves when their prophet prostrated confirming what he brought and obeying his command, and the polytheists of Quraysh and others who were in the mosque prostrated when they heard the mention of their gods, so that everyone in the mosque believer and unbeliever prostrated.” (Ibn Ishaq 1955: 165-66; see also al-Bukhari: 1070, 3972, vol. 6, book 60, no. 385; Muslim: 576 regarding Muhammad and the pagans all prostrating themselves) In other words, Muhammad could not tell the difference between the words of Allah and of Satan. 83

There is an important implication of the above facts. Q. 15:42-43 says, “For over My servants no authority shalt thou [Iblis; Satan] have, except such as put themselves in the wrong and follow thee. And verily, Hell is the promised abode for them all!” Q. 16:98-100 also says, “When thou dost read the Qur’an, seek Allah’s protection from Satan the rejected one. No authority has he over those who believe and put their trust in their Lord. His authority is over those only, who take him as patron and who join partners with Allah.” (see also Q. 38:82-83) Q. 22:53 adds, “He [Allah] may make the suggestions thrown in by Satan, but a trial for those in whose hearts is a disease and who are hardened of heart: verily the wrong-doers are in a schism far (from the Truth).” In his commentary on Q. 22:53 Ali says, “If any suggestion comes to the human mind that is not in accordance with Allah’s Will and Plan, it has two opposite effects: to evil minds it is a trial and a temptation from the Evil One, but to the mind well-instructed in Faith, it stands self-condemned at once, and becomes a means of strengthening the Faith and stimulating redoubled efforts to conform to the Will of Allah” (Ali 2006: Q. 22:53n.2883). Given the fact that Muhammad could not tell the difference between Satan’s words and Allah’s, Muhammad cannot have been a sincere servant purified by God’s grace or a true prophet of God.

- Muhammad admitted he was cursed. Muhammad’s own wife Aisha revealed that Muhammad was not protected from Satan. Aisha narrated, “Once the Prophet was bewitched so that he began to imagine that he had done a thing which in fact he had not done” (al-Bukhari: 3175; see also 3268, 6391). Indeed, Muhammad’s being under the spell of Satan, or magic, or delusions, or madness, was so severe that he even imagined he had slept with his wives when he had not! Aisha again testified, “The Prophet continued for such-and-such period imagining that he has slept (had sexual relations) with his wives, and in fact he did not” (al-Bukhari: 6063). In that same hadith, two observers concluded that Muhammad was “under the effect of magic” (the magical object being “the skin of the pollen of a male date tree with a comb and the hair stuck to it, kept under a stone in the well of Dharwan”); Muhammad himself concluded, “Allah has cursed me” (Ibid.). The pagans who saw and heard him concluded that Muhammad was mad or possessed by demons (Q. 23:70; 25:8; 37:36; 44:14; 68:51).

- The nature of Muhammad’s death. Q. 69:44-47 (Hilali-Khan) says, “And if he (Muhammad SAW) had forged a false saying concerning Us (Allah swt), We surely should have seized him by his right hand (or

Allah (Ibid.: Q. 22:52, comment). The “Satanic verses” were then changed to read, “Have ye seen Lat and Uzza, and another, the third (goddess), Manat? What! for you the male sex, and for Him, the female? Behold, such would be indeed a division most unfair! These are nothing but names which ye have devised,- ye and your fathers,- for which Allah has sent down no authority (whatever).” This entire incident is discussed by many sources, including Green 2006; Shamoun, “Muhammad and” n.d.; Silas, “Muhammad and” n.d.

83 Q. 2:23 makes this challenge: “If ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Sura like thereunto” (see also Q. 10:38; 11:13; 17:88; 52:33-34). That test of the Qur’an’s supposedly divine nature is logically false and purely subjective, so every Muslim will have already decided in advance that no one else’s words are “like” those of the Qur’an no matter how sublime they may be (see Nehls 1987: Produce a Sura; “Produce” 2011: n.p.; “The Irrefutable Refutation” 2011). The deceptiveness of the challenge is made clear by the very next verse, Q. 2:24, which says that no one can ever meet the challenge and then threatens with hellfire anyone who tries (see also Q. 6:93)! Nevertheless, the “Satanic verses” successfully met the challenge because Muhammad believed they were from Allah as did the Muslim believers and the polytheists of the Quraysh (Ibn Ishaq 1955: 166). Green concludes, “Thus the Islamic sources record that Satan produced verses which sounded exactly like those of the Qur’an. If they did not sound like the Qur’an then surely Muhammad, his followers and the Quraysh would never have accepted them.” (Green 2006: 6).
with power and might), and then certainly should have cut off his life artery (Aorta), and none of you could withhold Us from (punishing) him.” The Hadith reports, “When Khaibar was conquered, a (cooked) sheep containing poison, was given as a present to Allah’s Apostle” (al-Bukhari: 4249; see also 2617; Muslim: 2190a; Abi Dawud: 4509). Another hadith then recounts, “Narrated Aisha: The Prophet in his ailment in which he died, used to say, ‘O Aisha! I still feel the pain caused by the food I ate at Khaibar, and at this time, I feel as if my aorta is being cut from that poison’” (al-Bukhari: 4428, emph. added). The fact that Q. 69:44-47 mentions a particular form of death (cutting the aorta) that will happen to Muhammad if he should be a false prophet (i.e., speak falsely concerning Allah), and then Muhammad died specifically using the very words of Q. 69:46, cannot be coincidental but confirms that his death is the fulfillment of those ayat.

G. Jesus, not Muhammad, has the special blessing and honor of Allah in this world and the next

Q. 3:45 says, “Behold! the angels said: ‘O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah.’” Ghabril comments on this verse that “from a study of the Qur’an one learns that no one has been described as being eminent in this world and the next other than Christ (Isa), and none of the prophets and apostles enjoyed this distinction except him” (Ghabril 2003: 35). Christ’s special distinction is confirmed in Q. 19:31 where Jesus is quoted as saying that Allah “has made me blessed wherever I may be.” Lester Fleenor states, “Sura 19:31 mentions that Christ was blessed wherever He was, meaning that God agreed upon His every action and word, every moment in His life. God would never bless anybody in every circumstance unless all his life was pure and sinless.” (Fleenor 2005: 61) Q. 19:33 quotes Jesus as saying, “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).” In commenting on this, Masih says, “The Son of Mary is the Prince of Peace who lived His earthly life at peace with God from beginning to end. Nothing separated Him from His eternal blessing.” (al-Masih 1993: 38) Muslim apologist Ahmed Deedat admits that “there is not a single disparaging remark in the entire Quran” concerning Jesus.

On the other hand, as discussed above, Muhammad is censured by Allah in the Qur’an. Further, unlike Allah’s guarantee that Jesus will be held in honor in the hereafter, Muhammad had no assurance that he would even make it to paradise (Q. 46:9; al-Bukhari: 7018; see also 1243, 3929).

H. Jesus, not Muhammad, is a “Sign” for all people of the world

The Qur’an describes Jesus himself as “a Sign” to all the people of the world: “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.”’” (Q. 19:21). Q. 43:61 adds, “And (Jesus) shall be a Sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment).”\

84 These passages that refer to Jesus as a “Sign” reinforce the fact that he also is the “Word” of God because the term translated “Sign” is āyat, which is the same term for verses (ayat) of the Qur’an itself (“Quran Dictionary” 2009-2017: Q. 19:21, āyatān). This contrasts with the typical Muslim view of Jesus’ prophethood and ministry. For example, Dirks says, “Islam reserves the concept of the universal messenger to Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and sees Jesus as being a prophet and messenger whose prophetic mission and ministry were limited to the Jews alone” (Dirks 2008: 113; see also Emerick 2004: 200; Q. 3:49; 43:59). The typical Muslim view of the limited nature of Jesus’ prophethood and ministry also contrasts with the biblical understanding. Jesus indeed said, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt 15:24). The reason is that “only the Jews could understand the significance of Jesus. No Roman, Indian or Japanese could have accommodated Him, because He was embedded in the history and the inspired writings of Israel alone.” (Nehls and Eric 2010: 116) As Paul put it in Rom 9:4-5, it was the Israelites “to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever.” The Gentiles “were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). However, God had promised to bless the entire world through Israel (see Gen 12:3; 22:18). Given this background, “Instead of seeing Jesus’ messianic mindset in terms of either or, one ought to see his mission as to Israel on behalf of the nations. In other words, in narrowing his focus to Israel, Jesus does the work necessary for the entire world to be blessed.” (Wax 2013: Christ’s Mission to Israel for the World) Thus, in his meeting with the Samaritan woman, Jesus said “salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22) not “salvation is for the Jews.” OT Israel failed in its task of being a “light to the nations” (Isa 42:1-6; 49:1-6). Jesus came to fulfill Israel (Matt 5:17; Luke 16:16-17; Rom 10:4; Col 2:16-17) and, in effect, reconstitute the new, true Israel, i.e., all those who are united to Jesus by faith (see Menn 2009-2018: 26-93). Therefore, Jesus said “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). Through the cross, Jesus completed his mission and explicitly proclaimed that his salvation and lordship were for all people not just for Jews. Thus, he said of his crucifixion, “If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to Myself” (John 12:32-33). Consequently, “Jesus was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel in order that through his regathering and
similarly says, “We made her [Mary] and her son [Jesus] a sign for all peoples” (see also Q.23:50). “The Qur’an only speaks so prominently of Mary because of her relation to Jesus . . . the one she was privileged to bear and bring into the world. . . . What could that sign have been other than that he was a divine person, from God’s own spirit, coming into the world in a very unique way?” (Gilchrist 2015: 48). Significantly, Q. 7:36 states, “But those who reject Our signs and treat them with arrogance, - they are companions of the Fire, to dwell therein (for ever)” (see also Q. 3:4 which threatens retribution against those who “reject faith” or “disbelieve” in God’s signs). On the other hand, Muhammad is not described as a sign; rather, the Qur’an repeatedly describes him as only a messenger or warner (e.g., Q. 3:144; 7:188; 11:2, 12; 17:93, 105; 22:49; 24:54; 25:56; 27:92; 29:50; 34:28; 42:7; 46:9; 79:45; 88:21).

I. Jesus, not Muhammad, performed miraculous signs

The Qur’an states that Jesus was able to work miracles, including speaking as a newborn (Q. 19:29-34; 5:110), creating life (Q. 3:49; 5:110), healing people (Q. 3:49; 5:110), and raising the dead (Q. 3:49; 5:110); see also Q. 2:253; 3:45-49; 43:63; 61:6. For example, Q. 5:110 states, “Then will Allah say: ‘O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount My favour to thee and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened thee with the holy spirit, so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. Behold! I taught thee the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel and behold! thou makest out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My leave, and thou breareth into it and it becometh a bird by My leave, and thou healest those born blind, and the lepers, by My leave. And behold! thou bringest forth the dead by My leave.”

God has used others to miraculously heal (Elisha, 2 Kgs 5:1-14; Peter, Acts 3:1-8; 9:32-34; Paul, Acts 14:8-10; 28:8) and even raise the dead (Eliah, 1 Kgs 17:17-24; Elisha, 2 Kgs 13:20-21; Peter, Acts 9:36-41; Paul, Acts 20:9-12). Consequently, those miracles, and even speaking as an infant, do not prove that Jesus was God in the flesh. The miracle of creating life, however, is another matter since no one else has created life and the Qur’an indicates that only Allah is able to create life (Q. 7:158; 9:116; 10:34, 15:23; 22:73; 23:80; 67:2). Although Ali translates Q. 5:110 as Jesus “makest” the bird out of clay (Hilali-Khan say “design”), the word is “akhluqu” which means “create” (as Sarwar and Arberry properly translate Q. 3:49). Everywhere else in the Qur’an the word and its derivations are translated as “create” (“Quran Dictionary” 2009-2017: Q. 5:110, takhluqa), including specifically when Allah “creates” something (e.g., Q. 2:29; 3:47; 5:17; 7:19; 14:32; 16:17, 48; 17:99; 22:73; 24:45; 28:68; 30:54; 51:6). Jesus even “breathes into it” (the clay bird he created) the breath of life (Q. 3:49; 5:110). That is exactly what Jesus does in giving life (Q. 15:29; 21:91; 32:9; 38:72; 66:12).

Q. 10:34 says, “Say: ‘Of your ‘partners,” can any originate creation and repeat it?’ Say: ‘It is Allah Who originates creation and repeats it: then how are ye deluded away (from the truth)?’” Ali says concerning this verse, “The false gods can neither create out of nothing nor sustain the creative energy which maintains the world” (Ali 2006: Q. 10:34n.1428). Since Jesus did create life, he must not be a false god but must himself be divine. That also means, according to Q. 10:34, that Jesus is not a “partner” with God (as Muslims allege Christians make him to be), but is God himself.

reconstituting the true Israel, the blessing of salvation would be released to flow from Israel and into all the world, just as God promised in the Old Testament” (Wax 2013: Conclusion). As Jesus himself said in Luke 24:46-47, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (see also Jesus’ commissioning his disciples to go to all nations in Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

85 The stories of Jesus speaking as an infant and creating clay birds were first told in the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, a pseudepigraphical (i.e., the real author attributed it to the figure of the past) story of the young Jesus, written approximately AD 140-170. This may have been a source for the Qur’an’s similar stories.

86 Muslim apologists are quick to point out, “Note how the words ‘by My leave’ are repeated with each miracle to emphasize the fact that they arose, not out of the power or will of Jesus, but by the leave and will and power of Allah, who is supreme over Jesus as He is over all other mortals” (Ali 2006: Q. 5:110n.820). There are two answers to this. First, former Muslim Daniel Shayesteh points out, “The breath that Jesus breathed into the clay bird had the same power and characteristics as the breath of God in creation. If Jesus is not divine, how can His breath act in the same way as does the divine breath? Did this breath come out from inside of Jesus? Was that because God had made His dwelling inside of Jesus? Doesn’t the breath of creation belong only to God? . . . A bird that could become a testimony to the life giving breath that came out of Jesus. Because of these verses and many others, the fact that the Qur’an denies the divinity of Jesus is something that brings the consistency of the Qur’an’s theology into question.” (Shayesteh 2004: 141)

The second answer is that the Muslim position fundamentally misunderstands the biblical depiction of Jesus Christ and how he acted while he was on earth. Jesus was, indeed, fully human. But he was more than simply a mortal human being: he also was the divine Son of God. R. C. Sproul summarizes that “in the Trinity all members are equal in nature, in
In contrast to Jesus, the Qur’an records that Muhammad was challenged to perform miracles but replied that he did not have that ability, let alone the ability to perform signs that only God can perform (Q. 2:118-19; 3:183-84; 6:37, 109; 10:20; 13:7, 27; 17:59, 90-93; 20:133; 21:5; 28:48; 29:50; 30:58; 34:28; 43:40). In fact, according to the Qur’an, the only “sign” that Muhammad was given was being the Qur’an itself (Q. 2:118-19; 20:133). Muhammad said, “There was no prophet among the prophets but was given miracles because of which people had security or had belief, but what I was given was the Divine Inspiration which Allah revealed to me. So I hope that my followers will be more than those of any other prophet on the Day of Resurrection.” (al-Bukhari 7274; see also Muslim: 152) Consequently, Muslim apologists say that “the holy Qur’an is the greatest verification of the prophethood of Muhammad. It is the strongest proof and most specific sign.” (Abdul-Mohsin 2006: 142; see also al-Athari 2005: 96 (“The Qur’an is the greatest abiding miracle of the Prophet of Islam”)).

This voluntary divesting or emptying himself of his position and privileges as God and becoming a man is known as Christ’s kenōsis (Phil 2:7; Zodhiates 1992: kenoō, 857-58). Consequently, “as a man, he wrought his miracles, not by virtue of his Deity, which was ever inherent in him, but by virtue of a perfect faith in the power of the Father, through the plenitude of the Holy Ghost” (Bickersteth 1957: 99n.*, emph. in orig.). That is the context in which Christ repeatedly stated that he did nothing on his own initiative but only did what the Father had him do (John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10). In other words, there was perfect unity, communication, and harmony between the Father and the Son. That is not contrary to the doctrine of the Trinity but confirms it. Indeed, so complete was the identification of Jesus with the Father that in the same speech in which he said “I did not speak on my own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak” (John 12:49), Jesus also said, “He who believes in Me does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me” (John 12:44-45). As al-Masih summarizes concerning Q. 5:110, “The Quran testifies repeatedly to the perfect cooperation among Allah, the Christ and the Holy Spirit. The three cooperated in a complete unity, performing the miracles of Christ together. Christians, too, believe in the cooperative action of the holy Trinity.” (al-Masih 1993: 22) That is exactly the picture of Jesus’ unity and perfect cooperation with the Father described in the Bible and stated by Jesus himself in John 12:44-45. D. A. Carson concludes, “The peculiar subordination of the Son to the Father is precisely what guarantees that all that the Son does is what the Father wants him to do, indeed, what the Father does. . . . Thus faith in Jesus (v. 44) is not faith in a merely human agent, one more prophet, but faith in God mediated by God’s supreme self-disclosure, the Word incarnate, the God/man, his unique Son—or else it is not faith at all. And so closely is the Son, the Word, identified with the Father (1:1, 18), that to see Jesus is to see the Father who sent him (cf. 14:9).” (Carson 1991: 451-52)

Despite Muhammad’s own statements in the Qur’an and the Hadith that he was not able to perform miracles, later tradition attributes miracles to him (perhaps in an effort to elevate him to Jesus’ stature). These alleged miracles include: miraculous healings (al-Bukhari: 2942, 3701, 4210); miraculous increase in food or drink (al-Bukhari: 4102; Muslim: 1807a); water springing from between his fingers (al-Bukhari: 169, 200, 3576, 4152; at-Tirmidhi: vol. 1, book 46, no. 3631, 3633; an-Nasa’i: vol. 1, book no. 76, 77); and splitting the moon into two parts (al-Bukhari: 3636, 3637, 3868, 3870; Muslim: 2800b; at-Tirmidhi: 2182, vol. 1, book 44, no. 3289). Abdul-Mohsin 2006: 181-83, 190-92, al-Athari 2005: 106-07, and Marshall 1994: 51-59 list these and similar alleged miracles.

The “splitting of the moon” is based on Q. 54:1-2 (“The Hour (of Judgment) is nigh, and the moon is cleft asunder”). Abdel Haleem points out “Some traditional commentators hold the view that this describes an actual event at the time of the Prophet, but it clearly refers to the end of the world” (Haleem 2005: Q. 54:1n.a; see also Ali 2006: Q. 54:1n.5128). In commenting on Sahih al-Bukhari: 3868 (“The people of Mecca asked Allah's Messenger to show them a miracle. So he showed them the moon split in two halves between which they saw the Hira’ mountain”) and Q. 54:1 (Sahih, “The Hour has come near, and the moon has split [in two]”), the Muslim website Quran-Islam.org observes that “the words [in two] are not found in the Arabic Quran. It is obvious that they were added by the translator in order to make the Quranic words in harmony with the hadith! This hadith is an example of many others which present clear contradictions to the Quranic truth. What is more serious is that all who believe such a hadith when the Quranic truth is shown to them are the ones who insist on disbeliefing the Quran.” (“Did prophet Muhammad split the moon?” 2001-2019: n.p.) The “clear contradictions to the Quranic truth” includes all traditions and claims that Muhammad performed any miracles at all, since the Qur’an affirms that he did not. Mawdudi in his commentary acknowledges that Jesus was able to perform “such miracles as had not been granted to anyone before him nor to anyone after him [which includes Muhammad]” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: q. 43:59n.53). “Had Muhammad been a miracle-worker, indeed had all the fanciful legends of his miracles in his childhood in the tradition literature been true, it would have been a simple matter to respond to such challenges. Yet throughout the Qur’an, whenever the question of whether he could emulate the signs of the prophets before him arises, the
J. Jesus, not Muhammad, has supernatural knowledge

The Qur’an says, “Only You [Allah] are the All-Knower of all that is hidden (or unseen, etc.)” (Q. 5:109, Hilali-Khan) and “with Him [Allah] are the keys of the unseen, the treasures that none knoweth but He” (Q. 6:59; see also 34:2-3). Islamic scholar and author Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi states, “Al-Ghayb means ‘unseen’ or ‘hidden’ things. Ilmu ‘l ghayb means knowledge of the things which are hidden at present, like the events of the future. Such knowledge is the sole prerogative of Allah. Nobody can know the ghayb except Allah.” (Rizvi 1992: 37) At the end of Q. 3:49 Jesus is quoted as saying, “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.” Tafsir al-Jalalayn comments on this, “I will inform you too of what things you eat, [of what things] you partake in your pursuit of lusts and pleasures, and what you treasure up in your houses, that is, in the houses of your unseens [sic.] in the way of motives and intentions. Surely in that is a sign for you, if you are believers.” (al-Kasabi 2002-19: Q. 3:49, comment) This confirms that Jesus knows even the motives and intentions of people’s hearts and minds!

Masih summarizes, “There is hardly a greater proof or better admission on the part of Muhammad for the deity of Christ than this one. He confessed that Christ knows the hidden truth and can read the secrets of the hearts of men. He knows all your secrecies in detail. He will manifest your deeds whether good or evil, for He is the All-knowing. No one can hide anything from Him.” (al-Masih 1993: 26) Since no one knows the unseen except God (see Q. 2:33; 3:5; 6:59; 9:4, 105; 10:20; 11:5; 13:9; 16:19, 23; 20:7; 21:110; 23:92; 24:29; 27:65; 31:34; 64:18), but Jesus knows the unseen, then of necessity Jesus must be divine (i.e., God come to earth as a man).

On the other hand, Muhammad admitted, “I tell you not that with me are the treasures of Allah, nor do I know what is hidden” (Q. 6:50). In another surah, Muhammad said, “If I had knowledge of the unseen, I should have multiplied all good, and no evil should have touched me: I am but a warner, and a bringer of glad tidings to those who have faith” (Q. 6:50). In another surah, Muhammad said, “And they say: Why is not a sign sent to him from his Lord? Say: The unseen is only for Allah; therefore wait-surely I too, with you am of those who wait.” (Shakir) In Q. 46:9 Muhammad again confirms “nor do I know what will be done with me or with you.”

K. Jesus, not Muhammad, taught with divine authority

Q. 3:50 quotes Jesus as saying, “(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.” Ibn Kathir comments, “This part of the Ayah indicates that ‘Isa abrogated some of the Laws of the Tawrah and informed the Jews of the truth regarding some issues that they used to dispute about” (Ibn Kathir 2003: Q. 3:50, comment; see also Al Qushairi 2002-2014: Q. 3:49, comment). This is significant inasmuch as Allah says “We abrogate” our revelations (Q. 2:106). In other words, Jesus did not just confirm the law (Torah) but had authority over the law. Since the law was God’s law, only God has authority over his own law. Only God has authority to “abrogate” his own law. By doing what only God could do, Jesus was asserting that he was, indeed, God come to earth as a man.

This is consistent with Jesus’ teaching as recorded in the Bible. He would quote God’s Word (“you have heard that it was said”) but then clarify, modify, extend, deepen, or revoke God’s Word on His own authority by saying “but I say to you” (Matt 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-34, 38-44). He equated his own words with the law of God and said that His words will never pass away (compare Matt 5:18; 24:35). Masih summarizes that Christ was not subject to the law, but rules above it and perfects it. Moses, all the prophets, and everyone else in the Old Testament lived under the Law. They were expected to fulfill the Law, but Christ had the authority and the power to perfect and complete it . . . Blessed is he who realizes that Christ is not merely an ordinary human or a mere prophet but the divine Legislator with the authority of God.” (al-Masih 1993: 27-28)

Given the divine authority with which Jesus taught, Jesus had said in Q. 3:50 “so fear Allah and obey me.” He says the same thing in Q. 43:63 (“When Jesus came with Clear Signs, he said: “Now have I come to answer is always in the form of a denial.” (Gilchrist 1994: 134)
you with Wisdom, and in order to make clear to you some of the (points) on which ye dispute: therefore fear Allah and obey me”). In fact, in Q. 3:52 Jesus’ disciples are called true Muslims. Allah himself then picks up on this in Q. 3:55 and says, “I will make those who follow thee [Jesus] superior to those who reject faith, to the Day of Resurrection” Yusuf Ali points out, “Those who follow thee refer to both Muslims (insofar as they truly follow the basic teachings of Jesus) and Christians (who claim to follow him)” (Ali 2006: Q. 3:55n.396). In light of these passages, the article “True Islam from a Christian perspective” states “Everyone who wants to submit to God follows the word of the Torah, the Prophets and the words of Jesus confirming the Torah. A true Muslim desires to get to know the whole revelation of God. Therefore he cannot ignore the Torah, the Prophets and the Gospel. A true Muslim will obey the words of Jesus.” (“True Islam” 2014: Who teaches us true Islam? citing Q. 5:44, 46-47; 43:63)

The divine authority of Jesus contrasts with Muhammad, who specifically said in Q. 46:9, “I am not something original among the messengers” (Sahih) or, as Ali translates it, “I am no bringer of new-fangled doctrine among the messengers.” He was even told to consult with the people of the Book (i.e., Christians and Jews) so that he could understand the meaning of the revelations to him (see Q. 10:94; 21:7; see also 3:93; 16:43). Muhammad claimed only to confirm what had been revealed before (Q. 41:43; see also 6:90).

**L. Jesus, not Muhammad, was raised to heaven alive where he still is**

Q. 4:158 says, “Allah raised him [Jesus] up unto Himself” (see also Q. 3:55). In saying that Allah raised Jesus up to Himself, the Qur’an is confirming that Jesus “returned to the very throne of God whence he had come” (Gilchrist 2015: 91). In other words, Jesus “did not ascend to the lower heavenly realms – he returned to the presence of his Father above the heavens and sat down at the right hand side of the throne of God himself” (ibid.). This confirms what Christ himself said about his ascension (Luke 22:69; John 3:13; 16:28; see also Mark 16:19; John 8:42; 13:1, 3; Acts 2:24-26; 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20-21; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 1 Pet 3:21-22). This means that Jesus is the way to heaven since he is there. As we have seen, Muhammad does not know whether he will even make it to heaven someday in the future (Q. 46:9; al-Bukhari: 7018; see also 1243, 3929). This also means that Jesus is alive today, 2000 years after he walked this earth. On the other hand, Muhammad died and was buried in Medina. Only his grave is with us today.

If one accepts the typical Muslim view that Jesus was raised alive to Allah (as opposed to his being resurrected), this alone does not necessarily prove that Jesus is divine, since the Bible records that Enoch and Elijah were translated to heaven while they were alive and they are not divine (see Gen 5:24; 2 Kgs 2:1-11).**88** However, it does demonstrate the superiority of Jesus, because Q. 35:22 indicates that the living are superior to the dead: “Nor are alike those that are living and those that are dead. Allah can make any that He wills to hear; but thou canst not make those to hear who are (buried) in graves.” Since Jesus is alive and Muhammad is dead, even according to the Qur’an, Jesus is greater than Muhammad.

**M. Jesus, not Muhammad, is coming again to the earth to judge and rule**

Q. 43:61 says, “And (Jesus) shall be a Sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment): therefore have no doubt about the (Hour), but follow ye Me: this is a Straight Way.” Hilali-Khan translates it this way: “And he [‘Iesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary)] shall be a known sign for (the coming of) the Hour (Day of Resurrection) [i.e. ‘Iesa’s (Jesus) descent on the earth]. Therefore have no doubt concerning it (i.e. the Day of Resurrection).” In the Hadith, Muhammad affirmed that Jesus will return to the earth: “Allah’s Messenger said, ‘By Him in Whose Hands my soul is, surely (Jesus) the son of Mary will soon descend amongst you and will judge mankind justly (as a Just Ruler)”’ (al-Bukhari: 3448; see also 2222, 2476).**89** This is in accord with the biblical teaching that Jesus will judge humanity (e.g., Matt 25:31-46; John 5:22; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom 2:16; 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 19:11). Karim’s commentary on the Mishkat Ul-Masabih says that the second advent of Christ is “an Ijma [i.e., agreement of the Muslim community on religious issues] which is binding upon the Muslims” (Karim 1939: 4:79).

When he returns, Jesus’ just rule will be universal. Again, Jesus is exercising the attributes of divinity, because as Q. 6:57 says, “He [Allah] declares the truth, and He is the best of judges.”” Jesus alone can “judge

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**88** But see sections II.C. According to Islam, Jesus was not crucified or resurrected and V. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: The Resurrection, for the Qur’anic and biblical/historical proof of Jesus’ resurrection.

**89** The hadith adds that “he will break the Cross and kill the pigs and there will be no Jizya (i.e. taxation taken from non-Muslims). Money will be in abundance so that nobody will accept it, and a single prostration to Allah (in prayer) will be better than the whole world and whatever is in it.” This is contrary to the Bible’s account of Christ’s second coming. However, the point of this comparison between Jesus and Muhammad is not that Christians agree with every detail of the hadith but that Muslims admit Jesus’ superiority as evidenced by his coming again to judge and rule.
“justice” and is the “Just Ruler” because just as Allah “declares the truth, and He is the best of judges,” so Jesus is “the Word” and “the Spirit” from God. Jesus alone is the Just Judge and Ruler because unlike Muhammad, he alone is “the Messiah,” is without any sin, and is perfectly “holy” (Q. 19:19). Jesus alone is the Just Judge and Ruler because he alone is untouched by Satan (al-Bukhari: 3286) and therefore is “a pure, impeccable soul . . . an embodiment of truth, veracity, righteousness, and excellence” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 4:171n.213). Jesus alone is the Just Judge and Ruler because he knows the unseen, even people’s “motives and intentions” (al-Kashani 2002-19: Q. 3:49, comment).

According to the Qur’an, Muhammad has none of those attributes. Muhammad is dead and, according to the Qur’an, unlike Jesus, he will not return to “judge mankind justly.” Instead, he admitted that he did not know what would happen to him after death (Q. 46:9; al-Bukhari: 7018), was fearful of the hour of judgment and the “punishment of the grave” (al-Bukhari: 1059; 1372), and was begging Allah to forgive him even on his death bed: Muhammad knew he would be judged.

N. Conclusion

There is no one like Jesus according to the Qur’an itself, not even Muhammad. As one writer put it when considering all of the attributes that the Qur’an states about Jesus, “Does all this not raise the intrinsic question on just how ‘human’ a person can be who unites all the above attributes in himself or herself? Do we know of any person who could boast of calling just two of these attributes his or her own? In the case of Jesus, one can only conclude that He is superhuman. And that is divine!” (Nehls 2011: 53)

IX. The Character of Muhammad

Our character reveals “the real us” regardless of our outward circumstances or what others may say about us (whether good or bad). Reputation is what people think you are; character is what you are.

Q. 33:21 says, “Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the Praise of Allah.” Muslim professor Abdul-Mohsin lists Muhammad’s “conduct and morals” as the fourth evidence or sign of his prophethood. Abdul-Mohsin says, “Never before the advent of Muhammad was moral perfection used as evidence of prophethood” and “the Prophet’s moral perfection was the strongest evidence that obliged many people to believe in Muhammad” (Abdul-Mohsin 2006: 213, 214). Among the many virtues Abdul-Mohsin cites are Muhammad’s “extreme tolerance,” the fact that animosity “made him even kinder and more merciful,” the fact that he “never showed wrath or took vengeance unless it was for Allah’s sake,” he “became known as truthful,” he “had the best manners,” he “took from this world just what was sufficient,” and he “showed exemplary generosity” (Ibid.: 214-16). Emerick says that Muhammad is “considered by Muslims to be the best model of a husband, father, leader, friend, guide, and politician” (Emerick 2004: 131). Abdul-Mohsin calls him “a form of human perfection” and “the ideal and perfect example for all mankind” (Abdul-Mohsin 2006: 56-57).

The Qur’an and the Hadith actually reveal a considerably different character than Abdul-Mohsin and Emerick’s assessment. While he was in Mecca, Muhammad faced opposition and, indeed, did not respond with hatred and violence; at that time he did not order his followers (who were relatively few in number) to fight or wage war, since he considered himself simply a “warner” sent by Allah (Q. 2:119; 14:4; 42:7; 43:3; 46:12). He was happily married to one wife, Khadijah. Because Khadijah was wealthy, he was content materially (Ibn Abbas 2016: Q. 93:8, comment). He lived simply, a pattern he, to a large degree, continued throughout his life (Gilchrist 1994: 57-58; Parshall 1994: 43-44). However, the situation changed after he moved to Medina in 622. After that time Muhammad became a warrior-prophet-ruler in absolute control of a religion and a state. His true character thereby was revealed. This is so because he now had the power to command and obtain anything he wanted—and what he wanted and the lengths he went to get it expose what was really in his heart.

Since Muhammad is the central role model for Muslims, it is important to assess his character—as revealed by important aspects of his life—in comparison with the character of Jesus Christ. This is especially true since Muhammad compared himself to Jesus Christ: “I am most akin to Jesus Christ among the whole of mankind” (Muslim: 2365b; see also 2365a, c; al-Bukhari: 3442, 3443).

A. Muhammad and money

In Q. 6:90 Muhammad had been commanded to follow the example of the other prophets and ask for no

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90 The other three evidences he discusses are the Qur’an itself, Muhammad’s alleged miracles, and alleged prophecies concerning Muhammad found in the Bible. The issue of Muhammad’s miracles has been discussed above at section VIII. Jesus, not Muhammad, performed miraculous signs. The Qur’an and alleged prophecies of Muhammad in the Bible will be discussed in chapter 5. THE BIBLE AND THE QUR’AN.
money for his messages: “Those were the (prophets) who received Allah’s guidance: Copy the guidance they received; Say: ‘No reward for this do I ask of you: This is no less than a message for the nations.’” The following ayat apply this principle to Muhammad: Q. 12:104; 25:57; 42:23; 52:40; 68:46; Noah: Q. 10:71-72; 11:29; 26:109; Salih: Q. 26:145; Lot: Q. 26:164; Shu’ayb: Q. 26:180; Hud: Q.26:124-27; Other Messengers: Q. 36:20-21. Despite this command from Allah (which is consistent with the lifestyles of biblical prophets), Muhammad’s desire for wealth is clearly revealed in the Qur’an and the Hadith. Muhammad’s ignoring the question of a blind man to pay attention to a rich man (Q. 80:1-6), related earlier, 91 reveals Muhammad’s character concerning his desire for wealth and his looking down on the poor. In Q. 7:188 Muhammad said, “If I had knowledge of the unseen, I should have multiplied all good, and no evil should have touched me.” Muhammad was saying that if he did have knowledge of the unseen he would use that knowledge to “have abundant good things and no harm could touch me.” In other words, his attitude was self-centered and was all about blessing himself with good things and avoiding harm to himself rather than blessing and protecting others. 92

When Muhammad became a man of war he was able to act on his desire for money and gain. Q. 8:1 (Hilali-Khan) says, “They ask you (O Muhammad SAW) about the spoils of war. Say: ‘The spoils are for Allah and the Messenger’” (see also Q. 59:7). Q. 8:41 commands Muhammad’s men to give him one-fifth of the spoils they take in battle. In addition to the one-fifth of the spoils of battle, Muhammad also received a “special portion” of spoils called “safî,” as this hadith narrates: “The Prophet had a special portion in the booty called safi. This would be a slave if he desired or a slave girl if he desired or a horse if he desired. He would choose it before taking out the fifth.” (Abi Dawud: 2991) Muhammad got his “special portion” in addition to the one-fifth share of the plunder even if he did not participate in the battle himself (Abi Dawud: 2992-93). In one case, one of Muhammad’s fighters, Dihyât Al Kalbi, received a slave girl as part of his share of the spoil; however, “When he [Muhammad] looked at her, he said to him ‘take another slave girl from the captives.’ The Prophet then set her free and married her.” (Abi Dawud: 2998; see also 2996-97; al-Bukhari: 947, 2228)

In addition to one-fifth of the plunder and his “special portion” (including any woman he fancied, even if she was someone else’s), Muhammad received considerable amounts of real estate: “Malik ibn Aws al-Hadthan said: One of the arguments put forward by Umar was that he said that the Messenger of Allah received three things exclusively to himself: Banû an-Nadir, Khaybar and Fadak. The Banû an-Nadir property was kept wholly for his emergent needs, Fadak for travellers, and Khaybar was divided by the Messenger of Allah into three sections: two for Muslims, and one as a contribution for his family. If anything remained after making the contribution of his family, he divided it among the poor Emigrants.” (Abi Dawud: 2967) As a result, the Qur’an speaks of the oneness of the origin of men and women (the Lord “created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate”). Q. 3:195 indicates equality in rewards for men and women (“Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female”; see also Q. 16:97). Nevertheless, men and women (particularly wives) are not regarded as having equal worth as human beings in the Qur’an: “Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other” (Q. 4:34, Sahih), “they (women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in kindness, and men are a degree above them” (Q. 2:228, Pickthall). Ibn Kathir comments on this verse, “Men are in a more advantageous position than women physically as well as in their mannerism, status, obedience (of women to them), spending, taking care of the affairs and in general, in this life and in the Hereafter” (Ibn Kathir 2003: Q. 2:228, comment, emph. added).

Because of their superior position, husbands are permitted by the Qur’an to beat their wives (wives do not have a right to beat their husbands): “And those you fear may be rebellious admonish; banish them to their

91 See above, section E. Jesus, not Muhammad, is pure, holy, and without sin or error from his birth.
92 In contrast, Jesus said that he “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45).
couches, and beat them,” Q. 4:34 (Arberry). Additionally, males receive double the inheritance of females (Q. 4:11, 12, 176); one male witness in court is the equivalent of two females (Q. 2:282); women, but not men, are required to cover everything except their face and hands in public (Q. 24:31; see Jalal 2017: Q. 24:31, comment); men, but not women, may marry more than one spouse (Q. 4:3) and may marry and have sex with pre-pubescent girls (Q. 65:4); and wives are considered, essentially, the property of the husband: “Your wives are as fields for you. You may enter your fields from any place you want” (Q. 2:223, Sarwar).

In the Hadith, Muhammad expressed similar views concerning his low regard for women, including:

- **Women are inherently evil and crooked.** “I heard the Prophet saying, ‘Evil omen is in three things: The horse, the woman and the house’” (al-Bukhari: 2858; see also 110, 2859, 5093, 5094; Abi Dawud: 3921); and “Woman is like a rib. When you attempt to straighten it, you would break it. And if you leave her alone you would benefit by, and crookedness will remain in her.” (Muslim: 715l; see also 1467a, b, 1468a; al-Bukhari: 5184; see also 3331, 5184, 5185, 5186);
- **Women are defective in intelligence, and religion.** In a conversation with some women, Muhammad said, “...You curse frequently and are ungrateful to your husbands. I have not seen anyone more deficient in intelligence and religion than you. A cautious sensible man could be led astray by some of you.’ The women asked, ‘O Allah’s Messenger! What is deficient in our intelligence and religion?’ He said, ‘Is not the evidence of two women equal to the witness of one man?’ They replied in the affirmative. He said, ‘This is the deficiency in her intelligence. Isn’t it true that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menses?’ The women replied in the affirmative. He said, ‘This is the deficiency in her religion.’” (al-Bukhari: 304; see also 1462, 5196);
- **Women annul men’s prayers and are equivalent to donkeys and dogs.** “Narrated Aisha: The things which annul prayer were mentioned before me (and those were): a dog, a donkey and a woman. I said, ‘You have compared us (women) to donkeys and dogs.’” (al-Bukhari: 514; see also 511; Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 5, no. 949, 950, 951)
- **A woman cannot be alone with a man or travel except when accompanied by a man.** “Narrated Ibn Abbas: that he heard the Prophet saying, ‘It is not permissible for a man to be alone with a woman, and no lady should travel except with a Muhram (i.e. her husband or a person whom she cannot marry in any case for ever; e.g. her father, brother, etc.).’” (al-Bukhari: 3006; see also Muslim: 1341c)
- **A woman’s duty to her husband is primary even over her duty to Allah.** “Abdullah bin Abu Awfa said ‘When Muadh bin Jabal came from Sham, he prostrated to the Prophet who said: “What is this, O Muadh?” He said: “I went to Sham and saw them prostrating to their bishops and patricians and I wanted to do that for you.”’ The messenger of Allah said: ‘Do not do that. If I were to command anyone to prostrate to anyone

93 Some Muslim apologists try to downplay the fact that the Qur’an authorizes wife-beating. Yahiya Emerick cites an example of Muhammad’s holding up his toothbrush when asked what a husband should use to slap his wife with (Emerick 2004: 160). Ali and Hilali-Khan even add the word “lightly” in parentheses after the words “beat them” in Q. 4:34, even though the “Arabic doesn’t say to beat them lightly, it just says to beat them” (Spencer 2009: 20). Further, the context indicates that “beating comes as the last corrective measure when sexual desertion fails. Light beating after sexual desertion is an anticlimax that serves no purpose... The beating must be stronger than sexual desertion to have any effect.” (Newton and Haqq 2006: 13)

Muhammad did not insist that wife-beating follow carefully prescribed rules or be “light.” The Hadith reports that “The Prophet said: A man will not be asked as to why he beat his wife” (Abi Dawud: 2147; see also Ibn Majah: vol. 3, book 9, no. 1986). In one hadith, Aisha (Muhammad’s favorite wife) reported that Muhammad left her one night after he thought she was asleep. She got up and followed him. When he returned “he gave me a shove in the chest that hurt me” (an-Nasawi: 3964; see also 3963). In another hadith, “Habibah daughter of Sahl was the wife of Thabit ibn Qays Shimmans. He beat her and broke some of her part. So she came to the Prophet after morning, and complained to him against her husband. The Prophet called on Thabit ibn Qays and said (to him): Take a part of her property and separate yourself from her. He asked: Is that right, Messenger of Allah? He said: Yes. He said: I have given her two gardens of mine as a dower, and they are already in her possession. The Prophet said: Take them and separate yourself from her.” (Abi Dawud: 2228; see also 2227) Note that this wife had been beaten so severely that she had broken bones, yet Muhammad never admonished or even questioned the man who had beaten her. To compound the injury to the woman, Muhammad ordered her to give back the dowery she had received, which means that, even though she was the one who was complaining against her husband, she had to endure a savage beating and then give up her property; the husband lost nothing and now had the means to purchase a new wife! Similarly, al-Bukhari: 5825 reports that a man had beaten his wife severely enough that the skin of face had a green mark: “the lady (came), wearing a green veil (and complained to [Aisha] of her husband and showed her a green spot on her skin caused by beating). It was the habit of ladies to support each other, so when Allah’s Messenger came, Aisha said, ‘I have not seen any woman suffering as much as the believing women. Look! Her skin is greener than her clothes!’”—yet Muhammad did not condemn the husband for beating the wife on her face.
other than Allah, I would have commanded women to prostrate to their husbands. By the One in Whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad! No woman can fulfill her duty towards Allah until she fulfills her duty towards her husband. If he asks her (for intimacy) even if she is on her camel saddle, she should not refuse.” (Ibn Majah: vol. 3, book 9, no. 1853; see also 1852; Abi Dawud: 2140; al-Bukhari: 814)

- **The majority of those in hell will be women.** “Then I stood at the gate of the Fire and saw that the majority of those who entered it were women” (al-Bukhari: 5196; see also 304).

2. **Muhammad and his wives.** The above attitudes toward women were exemplified in Muhammad’s own relationships with his wives. Shortly before Muhammad moved to Medina, his wife of 25 years, Khadijah, died. After her death, Muhammad revealed his true character regarding women. Q. 4:33 permits a man to marry up to four women but only if he treats them all justly (or, as the Islamic Bulletin puts it, “only on condition that the husband is scrupulously fair”) [“Can a Muslim” n.d.: n.p.]). Those rules did not apply to Muhammad. Q. 33:50-51 provides, “O Prophet! We have made lawful to thee thy wives to whom thou hast paid their dowers; and those whom thy right hand possesses out of the prisoners of war whom Allah has assigned to thee; and daughters of thy paternal uncles and aunts, and daughters of thy maternal uncles and aunts, who migrated (from Makka) with thee; and any believing woman who dedicates her soul to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to wed her:- this only for thee, and not for the Believers (at large): We know what We have appointed for them as to their wives and the captives whom their right hands possess; - in order that there should be no difficulty for thee. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Thou mayest defer (the turn of) any of them that thou pleasest, and thou mayest receive any thou plearest: and there is no blame on thee if thou invite one whose (turn) thou hadst set aside,” (emph. added) Thus, following Khadijah’s death, “Muhammad married as many women as he wanted and interned many more in his harem as concubines. The number of his wives varies from nine to thirteen, and many of them had no choice in the matter—for by ‘divine revelation,’ any woman he fancied he also got.” (Sundiata 2006: 363) But while Muhammad could do essentially as he wished with women, his wives were not permitted to remarry after his death (Q. 33:53).

Later, Q. 33:52 (Hilali-Khan) restricted Muhammad from marrying more wives, but even that contained an important caveat: “It is not lawful for you (to marry other) women after this, nor to change them for other wives even though their beauty attracts you, except those (captives or slaves) whom your right hand possesses.” Mawdudi frankly acknowledges, “This verse explains why one is permitted to have conjugal relations with one’s slave-girls besides the wedded wives, and there is no restriction on their number. . . . Likewise the Shariah has allowed that the women who are captured in war and whose people do not exchange them for Muslim prisoners of war nor ransom them, may be kept as slave-girls, and gave the persons to whom they are assigned by the government the right to have conjugal relations with them.” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 33:52n.94) Further, Tafsir Ibn Kathir says, “Allah lifted the restriction stated in this Ayah and permitted him to marry more women” (Ibn Kathir 2003: Q. 33:52, comment). The hadith confirms this: “Aishah said: ‘The Messenger of Allah did not die until Allah permitted him to marry whatever women he wanted’” (an-Nasa’i: 3205).94

Muhammad’s favorite wife was Aisha. As Aisha relates, “The Messenger of Allah married me when I was six, and consummated the marriage with me when I was nine, and I used to play with dolls” (an-Nasa’i: 3378; see also 3255; al-Bukhari: 3896, 5133, 5135, 5155; Muslim: 1422b, d; Abi Dawud: 2121). She also related that she had been “playing in a swing with some of my girl friends” when her mother took her to Muhammad to consummate their marriage (al-Bukhari: 3894; see also Abi Dawud: 4935).

Muhammad had no surviving son, so he adopted a freed slave, Zaid ibn Haritha, as his son; Zaid then married Zainab, Muhammad’s cousin (Sundiata 2006: 364; Pfander 1910: 330-31). After the marriage, “on one occasion he [the Prophet] caught sight of her and felt love for her, where after [when he realized that] Zayd lost

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94 The right to have sex with captives and slave-girls (i.e., “whom your right hand possesses”), in addition to having sex with one’s wife, is not limited to Muhammad but applies to all Muslim men (see Q. 4:24; 23:6; 70:30). Mawdudi states, “Women who come as captives of war, leaving their husbands behind in Dar al-Harb (Domain of War), are not prohibited, for their marriage is nullified by virtue of their entry into Dar al-Islam (Domain of Islam). . . . Although the Law has fixed the maximum number of wives at four, it has set no limit with regard to slave-girls.” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 4:24n.44, emph. added). A hadith reports that, after a particular battle, “They met their enemy and fought with them. They defeated them and took them captive. Some of the Companions of Apostle of Allah were reluctant to have relations with the female captives because of their pagan husbands. So, Allaha the exalted sent down the Qur’anic verse ‘And all married women (are forbidden) unto you save those (captives) whom your right hand posses.’” (Abi Dawud: 2155) In other words, the men were reluctant to have sex with the captured women because the women were married, and the hadith implies that their captured husbands were even present! The presence of the husbands is confirmed by another hadith (at-Tirmidhi: vol. 5, book 44, no. 3017). Yet, according to Muhammad, none of that mattered.
his affection for her and so said to the Prophet, ‘I want to part with her’” (Jalal 2017: Q. 33:36, comment; see also Muslim: 1428b). Muhammad replied, “Keep your wife to yourself, and fear Allah” (Q. 33:37, Hilali-Khan). However, Allah gave Muhammad a “revelation” that in saying “keep your wife to yourself,” ‘you did hide in yourself (i.e. what Allah has already made known to you that He will give her to you in marriage) that which Allah will make manifest, you did fear the people (i.e., Muhammad SAW married the divorced wife of his manumitted slave) whereas Allah had a better right that you should fear Him. So when Zaid had accomplished his desire from her (i.e. divorced her), We gave her to you in marriage, so that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the believers in respect of (the marriage off) the wives of their adopted sons when the latter have no desire to keep them (i.e. they have divorced them). And Allah’s Command must be fulfilled.” (Q. 33:37) Thus, Muhammad’s telling Zaid to “keep your wife to yourself” clearly appears to be lacking in candor since he was hiding in his heart “what Allah had already made known to you that He will give her to you in marriage.”

Additionally, “to the Arabs it was disagreeable for a man to marry his daughter-in-law” (Sundiata 2006: 364). Therefore, another “revelation” helped facilitate his marriage to Zainab: “Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his (one) body: nor has He made your wives whom ye divorce by Zihar your mothers: nor has He made your adopted sons your sons.” (Q. 33:4, emph. added) The fact that Zaid had to first divorce Zainab before Muhammad married her technically made Zainab no longer his daughter-in-law. However, according to Q. 33:37 (see above), Allah’s giving Zainab to Muhammad contradicts the hadith in which, “The Prophet said: Of all the lawful acts the most detestable to Allah is divorce” (Abi Dawud: 2178). The self-contradictory nature of Allah speaks volumes, as Sundiata observes: “Muhammad was the one ‘prophet’ who had everything tailor-made to fit his every whim—at the expense of other believers if necessary. Allah made all the arrangements so that Muhammad would have no difficulties with whatever took his fancy. Muhammad’s Allah is the kind of god that human beings have always invented; a god who does only what pleases us; a god who is prepared to change his decrees to accommodate our wishes; a god who is there to do our bidding after he consults us; a god who is for us but against our enemies; a god who shows mercy to us but justice to everyone else; a spineless god without a will.” (Sundiata 2006: 367)

Q. 4:23 states, “Prohibited to you (For marriage are): … two sisters in wedlock at one and the same time.” Again, Muhammad exempted himself from that prohibition by having both Mary the Copt and her sister Shereena in his harem (Sundiata 2006: 365; Nehls and Eric 2009: 38-39). On the other hand, Muhammad may have technically circumvented that prohibition—but only by not actually marrying Mary the Copt. Mawdudi states, “Besides making the fifth wife lawful for the Prophet, Allah in this verse [Q. 33:50] also granted him the permission to marry a few other kinds of the women” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 33:50n.88). He then lists three women Muhammad received as part of the booty of prisoners of war “and Hadrat Mariah the Copt, who was presented by Maqauqis of Egypt. Out of these he set three of them free and married them, but had conjugal relations with Mariah on the ground of her being his slave-girl. In her case there is no proof that the Holy Prophet set her free and married her.” (Ibid.) Nehls and Eric quote an article by Muslim Hafiz Muhammad Sawar Qureshi on the effect of Mawdudi’s comment: “How could a great messenger of God, walking in the path of Truth, have done such a thing? Whatever else such a person might be, he certainly would not be the messenger of God. . . . The stories that the Prophet was a lustful person and used women as concubines (O Allah forgive us) and that Muslims could take men as slaves, even without war, and take women from decent households and use them as concubines and ‘keeps’ without benefit of marriage, was being given the seal of authenticity by a scholar of Islam. It is clear that Mary the Copt was not taken as prisoner in a war. And according to Mauddoodi, the messenger of Islam took her as his concubine without any fault of hers and entirely according to the tradition of the unbelievers. . . . Thus when we get this witness from the greatest scholar of Islam in our time, that ‘in fact’ the messenger of Islam had not even been forced by the conditions of war but had merely, according to unislamic culture then prevalent, taken Mary as a slave girl, and that too without marriage, and forced her entry into his household, then who could conscientiously believe in the messengership of such a person?” (Nehls and Eric 2009: 39-41, quoting Hafiz Muhammad Sawar Qureshi, Al-Balaag, Johannesburg, Nov.-Dec. issue, 1988) Those questions remain as poignant today as when Qureshi asked them.

Q. 33:51 was a “special revelation” in Muhammad’s favor that, contrary to Q. 4:3, relieved Muhammad of the requirement to treat his wives equally and fairly. Because he could essentially act as he wished toward his wives unconstrained by law, his true character was clearly revealed. His real character revealed a man who did not treat his wives equally but instead showed favoritism to some. As a result, jealousy was rife among Muhammad’s wives. For example, “Zainab bint Jahsh used to boast to the other wives of the Prophet and say: ‘Allah married me to him from above the Heavens’” (an-Nasa’i: 3252). Even Aisha, his favorite, was not immune to this. Mu’adh recounted that Aisha said, “Allah’s Messenger used to take the permission of that wife with whom he was supposed to stay overnight if he wanted to go to one other than her, after this Verse was
revealed:-- ‘You (O Muhammad) can postpone (the turn of) whom you will of them (your wives) and you may receive any (of them) whom you will; and there is no blame on you if you invite one whose turn you have set aside (temporarily).’ (33.51) I asked Aisha, ‘What did you use to say (in this case)?’ She said, I used to say to him, ‘If I could deny you the permission (to go to your other wives) I would not allow your favor to be bestowed on any other person.’” (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 312) Aisha also recounted both her jealousy and her acute sense of how Muhammad’s “revelations” just happened to coincide with his every desire: “Narrated Aisha: I used to look down upon those ladies who had given themselves to Allah’s Messenger and I used to say, ‘Can a lady give herself (to a man)?’ But when Allah revealed: ‘You (O Muhammad) can postpone (the turn of) whom you will of them (your wives), and you may receive any of them whom you will; and there is no blame on you if you invite one whose turn you have set aside (temporarily).’ (33.51) I said (to the Prophet), ‘I feel that your Lord hastens in fulfilling your wishes and desires.’” (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 311, emph. added; see also al-Bukhari: 5113; an-Nasa’i: 3199; Ibn Majah: vol. 3, book 9, no. 2000)

Muhammad’s refusal to treat his wives equally resulted in their being split into two rival groups. Their hurt at being treated unequally led some of the wives to appeal to him on more than one occasion to treat them all fairly—but he refused, as Sahih al-Bukhari reports in a lengthy hadith: “The wives of Allah’s Messenger were in two groups. One group consisted of Aisha, Hafsa, Safiyya and Sauda; and the other group consisted of Um Salama and the other wives of Allah’s Messenger. The Muslims knew that Allah’s Messenger loved Aisha, so if any of them had a gift and wished to give to Allah’s Messenger, he would delay it, till Allah’s Messenger had come to Aisha’s home and then he would send his gift to Allah’s Messenger in her home. The group of Um Salama discussed the matter together and decided that Um Salama should request Allah’s Messenger to tell the people to send their gifts to him in whatever wife’s house he was. . . . He then said to her, ‘Do not hurt me regarding Aisha, as the Divine Inspirations do not come to me on any of the beds except that of Aisha.’ On that Um Salama said, ‘I repent to Allah for hurting you.’ Then the group of Um Salama called Fatima, the daughter of Allah’s Messenger and sent her to Allah’s Messenger to say to him, ‘Your wives request to treat them and the daughter of Abu Bakr on equal terms.’ Then Fatima conveyed the message to him. The Prophet said, ‘O my daughter! Don’t you love whom I love?’ She replied in the affirmative and returned and told them of the situation. They requested her to go to him again but she refused. They then sent Zainab bint Jahsh who went to him and used harsh words saying, ‘Your wives request you to treat them and the daughter of Ibn Abu Quhafah on equal terms.’ On that she raised her voice and abused Aisha to her face so much so that Allah’s Messenger looked at Aisha to see whether she would retort. Aisha started replying to Zainab till she silenced her. The Prophet then looked at Aisha and said, ‘She is really the daughter of Abu Bakr.’” (al-Bukhari: 2581; see also 2580)

Such jealousies and rivalries are inherent in polygamy because it is impossible to love and treat several wives equally (as Q. 4:3 requires). 95 That was exacerbated in Muhammad’s case because, per Q. 33:51, he did not have to be “scrupulously fair” to his wives and wasn’t. The Hadith therefore disclose other instances of Muhammad’s favoritism and the ill effects it had on his wives. For example, at one point he appears to have favored Zainab. This led his wives Aisha and Hafsa to collude to get him to decrease the attention he was paying to Zainab. Aisha related: “Allah’s Messenger used to drink honey in the house of Zainab, the daughter of Jahsh, and would stay there with her. So Hafsa and I agreed secretly that, if he come to either of us, she would say to him, ‘It seems you have eaten Maghafir (a kind of bad-smelling resin), for I smell in you the smell of Maghafir,’ (We did so) and he replied, ‘No, but I was drinking honey in the house of Zainab, the daughter of Jahsh, and I shall never take it again. I have taken an oath as to that, and you should not tell anybody about it.’” (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 434) As in other instances of his conduct, Muhammad received a convenient “revelation” to let him off the hook of this oath. Thus, Q. 66:1-2 (Hilali-Khan) says, “O Prophet! Why do you ban (for yourself) that which Allah has made lawful to you, seeking to please your wives? And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Allah has already ordained for you (O men), the dissolution of your oaths. And Allah is your Maula (Lord, or Master, or Protector, etc.) and He is the All-Knower, the All-Wise.” The Hadith specifies that it was this oath regarding not taking honey again that was the reason why Q. 66:1-2 was revealed (al-Bukhari: 5267, 6691; Muslim 1474a; Abi Dawud: 3714; an-Nasa’i: 3421, 3795, 3958).

Q. 66:3-4 and the Hadith (al-Bukhari: 6691; vol. 6, book 60, no. 435) reveal other jealousies and conspiracies among Muhammad’s wives and their arguments and tensions with him. Indeed, at one point the

95 In fact, in contradiction to Q. 4:3, Q. 4:129 says, “Ye are never able to be fair and just as between women, even if it is your ardent desire.” Ali’s comment on this verse admits that the problem is inherent in polygamy: “Legally more than one wife (up to four) are permissible on the condition that the man can be perfectly fair and just to all. But this is a condition almost impossible to fulfill.” (Ali 2006: Q. 4:129n.689) Note Ali’s attempt to soften the frank contradiction between Q. 4:3 and 4:129 by adding the word “almost” where the Qur’an says “Ye are never able to be fair and just.”
situation got to the point that Muhammad considered divorcing all of his wives, as his companion Umar related: “The wives of the Prophet out of their jealousy, backed each other against the Prophet, so I said to them, ‘It may be, if he divorced you all, that Allah will give him, instead of you wives better than you.’ So this Verse was revealed (66.5).” (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 438) Once again, Allah came to the rescue with a verse clearly intended to warn and intimidate the wives: “It may be if he divorced you (all) that his Lord will give him instead of you, wives better than you, Muslims (who submit to Allah), believers, obedient to Allah, turning to Allah in repentance, worshipping Allah sincerely, fasting or emigrants (for Allah's sake), previously married and virgins” (Q. 66:5).

When his first post-Kadijah wife, Saudah, became old, she evidently knew Muhammad’s character well enough that she feared he would divorce her. A hadith recounts what happened: “When Saudah daughter of Zam’ah became old and feared that the Messenger of Allah would divorce her, she said: Messenger of Allah, I give to Aishah the day you visit me. The Messenger of Allah accepted it from her. She said: We think that Allah, the Exalted, revealed about this or similar matter the Qur’anic verse: ‘If a wife fears cruelty or desertion on her husband's part,...’ [4:128].” (Abi Dawud: 2135) The verse referred to provides, “If a wife fears cruelty or desertion on her husband’s part, there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves; and such settlement is best; even though men's souls are swayed by greed” (Q. 4:128). Tafsir Ibn Kathir indicates that this was another “after the fact” verse revealed to Muhammad to justify what he already had done (Ibn Kathir 2003: Q. 4:128, comment).

Muhammad permitted himself a license toward women that he permitted no one else—sex with a pre-pubescent girl, taking his adopted son’s wife, sex with sisters, sex without marriage, showing favoritism among his wives, and multiple wives beyond what the Qur’an permitted anyone else—and all permitted by Qur’anic revelations specifically directed to his own extraordinary conduct (often revelations given “after the fact” to excuse what he had already done). Even among his own wives, the multiple jealousies, conspiracies, and favoritisms show Muhammad’s conduct to be rather less than “a beautiful pattern (of conduct)” (Q. 33:21). Gilchrist summarizes, “Far from being an example of how polygamy can work harmoniously the story of Muhammad’s marriages tends to reinforce the Biblical ideal of monogamy. It is not a question of whether a man can treat his many wives equally with each other, the real question is how can he treat them equally with himself. . . . It surely goes without saying that a husband cannot truly reciprocate his wife’s total devotion to him if he has to divide his own affections between a host of consorts.” (Gilchrist 1994: 84-85)

C. Muhammad and power

As Muhammad’s power increased, “He justified every act of his, no matter how hideous, as an act of Allah—and cast himself as the perfect example for all mankind. Eventually he elevated himself to the level where ‘Allah and his Apostle’ became indistinguishable. The phrase ‘Allah and his Apostle’ is littered all over the Medinan Suras—in sharp contrast to the Meccan.” (Sundati 2006: 331, e.g., Q. 3:31; 4:14, 65, 69, 80; 7:157; 8:20; 33:66, 71; 47:33; 48:10; 57:7, 28; 59:7; 64:8) As the hadith says, “Whatever the Messenger of Allah made unlawful, it is the same as what Allah made unlawful” (at-Tirmidhi: 2664). Multiple ahadith report Muhammad stating, “Whoever obeys me, obeys Allah; and whoever disobeys me, disobeys Allah” (Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 3; see also vol. 4, book 4, no. 2859; al-Bukhari: 2956, 2957, 7137; Muslim: 1835a, b, c; an-Nasa’i: 4193, 5510). He even made obedience to himself the criterion for entry into Paradise: “Allah’s Messenger said, ‘All my followers will enter Paradise except those who refuse.’ They said, ‘O Allah’s Messenger! Who will refuse?’ He said, ‘Whoever obeys me will enter Paradise, and whoever disobeys me is the one who refuses (to enter it).’” (al-Bukhari: 7280) His demands were so absolute that he claimed to make his decisions in consultation with Allah; consequently, his followers could not question anything he decided or have any option other than to unquestioningly obey everything he said: “It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger to have any option about their decision: if any one disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path” (Q. 33:36).

His control over Muslims was total. Despite his claim that he was following in the line of the Jewish prophets and of Jesus Christ, Muhammad prohibited Muslims from taking Jews, Christians, or other non-Muslims as friends (Q. 3:28; 4:89, 144; 5:51; 9:23; 60:1). That has the effect of preventing Muslims from learning the truth about Christianity, the Bible, and Muhammad’s misrepresentations of them. He also commanded a state of permanent war against all non-Muslims (e.g., Q. 2:191, 193; 4:89; 9:5, 29, 123; 47:4). To insure his total control, Muhammad made leaving or apostasizing from Islam punishable by death: “Ali burnt some people and this news reached Ibn Abbas, who said, Had I been in his place I would not have burnt them, as the Prophet said, ‘Don't punish (anybody) with Allah’s Punishment.’ No doubt, I would have killed them, for the Prophet said, ‘If somebody (a Muslim) discards his religion, kill him.’” (al-Bukhari: 3017; see also an-
His control over his subjects extended even to petty forms of behavior: When someone wanted to consult with Muhammad, he was supposed to make a charitable donation first (Q. 58:12). When speaking with him, people were required to “raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak aloud to him in talk as you speak aloud to one another, lest your deeds may be rendered fruitless while you perceive not” (Q. 49:2). When people were with him on some public business, they were not permitted to leave his company without his permission, which he was at liberty not to grant (Q. 24:62). Additionally, people were to “enter not the Prophet’s houses, until leave is given you, for a meal, and then not (so early as) to wait for its preparation: but when ye are invited, enter: and when ye have taken your meal, disperse, without seeking familiar talk. Such (behaviour) annoys the Prophet” (Q. 33:53). This ayah was another after-the-fact “revelation” resulting from Muhammad’s displeasure when people didn’t leave a dinner party at his house as quickly as he wanted them to (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 314, 315). Even to “annoy” Muhammad carried the risk of eternal damnation: “Those who annoy Allah and His Messenger - Allah has cursed them in this World and in the Hereafter, and has prepared for them a humiliating Punishment” (Q. 33:57).

D. Muhammad and murder

Just as obedience to Muhammad was considered obedience to Allah, so opposition to Muhammad was equal to opposition to Allah. For example, Q. 8:13 (Hilali-Khan) says, “Whoever defies and disobeys Allah and His Messenger, then verily, Allah is Severe in punishment.” Q. 5:33 (Hilali-Khan) adds, “The recompense of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and do mischief in the land is only that they shall be killed or crucified or their hands and their feet be cut off on the opposite sides, or be exiled from the land. That is their disgrace in this world, and a great torment is theirs in the Hereafter.” Similarly, Q. 9:61, 63 say, “Those who molest the Messenger will have a grievous penalty. . . . Know they not that for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, is the Fire of Hell? - wherein they shall dwell. That is the supreme disgrace.”

Muhammad enforced his will with ruthless brutality. After his move to Medina, Muhammad became the leader of a powerful army. By its nature, warfare is brutal. However, Muhammad’s brutality included the slaughter of helpless prisoners and the murder of innocents based on personal pique. For example, after the Battle of the Trench in AD 627 when various tribes had besieged Medina but had been defeated by Muhammad’s forces (an event recounted in Q. 33:9-27), Muhammad’s forces surrounded the quarter of the Jewish tribe of the Banu Qurayza. They asked for mercy or to be exiled as Muhammad had done for two other tribes after other battles. Instead, Muhammad appointed Sa’d b. Mu’adh who pronounced judgment “that the men should be killed, the property divided, and the women and children taken as captives” (Ibn Ishaq 1955: 464). Ishaq reports that “then the Apostle went out to the market of Medina (which is still its market today) and dug trenches in it. Then he sent for them and struck off their heads in those trenches as they were brought to him in batches. . . . There were 600 or 700 in all, though some put the figure as high as 800 or 900.” (Ibid.; see also Gilchrist 1994: 73-75) Q. 8:67 (Hilali-Khan) confirms Muhammad’s ethic of making “a great slaughter (among his enemies)” instead of taking prisoners of war (and free them with ransom).” Muhammad’s attitude toward captured prisoners is shown when, following his victory at the Battle of Badr, he had a prisoner named ‘Uqba killed. Ibn Ishaq reports, “When the apostle ordered him to be killed, ‘Uqba said, ‘But who will look after my children, O Muhammad?’ ‘Hell,’ he said.” (Ibn Ishaq 1955: 308)

His brutality was not limited to war but included personal matters. Ibn Ishaq’s biography recounts how Kinana b. al-Rabi allegedly had some treasure that Muhammad wanted. Ishaq reports, “So the apostle gave orders to al-Zubayr b. al-Awwam, ‘Torture him until you extract what he has,’ so he kindled a fire with flint and steel on his chest until he was nearly dead. Then the apostle delivered him to Muhammad b. Maslama and he struck off his head.” (Ibn Ishaq 1955: 515) This was not the only example of Muhammad’s ordering extreme torture of his victims. Sahih al-Bukhari recounts how Muhammad had provided some Bedouins with milk camels and a shepherd. However, “they reverted to Heathenism after embracing Islam, and killed the shepherd of the Prophet and drove away the camels. When this news reached the Prophet, he sent some people in pursuit of them. (So they were caught and brought back to the Prophet). The Prophet gave his orders in their concern. So their eyes were branded with pieces of iron and their hands and legs were cut off and they were left away in Harra till they died in that state of theirs.” (al-Bukhari: 4192; see also 5685, 5686)

Muhammad also ordered the murder of Abu Rafi, a Jew who apparently had fallen out with Muhammad over the change in direction of worship from Jerusalem to Mecca (Sundiata 2006: 351; see al-Bukhari: 4039, 4040; Ibn Ishaq 1955: 482-83). The violence inherent in Muhammad and Islam is revealed in that, following the murder of Rafi and another Jew (a rabbi): “The apostle said, ‘Kill any Jew that falls into your power.’
Thereupon Muhayyyisa b. Mas’ud leapt upon Ibn Sunayna, a Jewish merchant with whom they had social and business relations, and killed him. Huwayysiya was not a Muslim at the time though he was the elder brother. When Muhayyyisa killed him Huwayyisyaa began to beat him, saying ‘You enemy of God, did you kill him when much of the fat on your belly comes from his wealth?’ Muhayyisa answered, ‘Had the one who ordered me to kill him ordered me to kill you I would have cut your head off.’ He said that this was the beginning of Huwayyisaa’s acceptance of Islam. . . . He exclaimed, ‘By God, a religion which can bring you to this is marvelous!’ and he became a Muslim.” (Ibn Ishaq 1955: 369)

Muhammad ordered the murders of Abu ‘Afak and Asma, the daughter of Marwan, apparently for no greater “crimes” than each having written a poem expressing disaffection with Muhammad for having killed various people (Ibid.: 675-76). Muhammad similarly ordered the murders of other personal enemies. In these cases he authorized the murderers to lie and deceive their victims and murder them in cold-blood. One such victim was Ka’b bin Ashraf, a Jew, killed for the “crime” of composing “amatory verses of an insulting nature about the Muslim women” (Ibn Ishaq 1955: 366-68; see al-Bukhari: 3032, 4037; Muslim: 1801). One of Muhammad’s companions even composed a poem celebrating that murder, “Sword in hand we cut him down; By Muhammad’s order when he sent secretly by night; Ka’b’s brother to go to Ka’b; He beguiled him and brought him down with guile” (Ibn Ishaq 1955: 368-69). As one of the murderers said, “Our attack upon God’s enemy cast terror among the Jews, and there was no Jew in Medina who did not fear for his life” (Ibid.: 368).

Sunan Abi Dawud recounts another incident where Muhammad approved the murder of a pregnant mother for the sole reason that she had made disparaging remarks about Muhammad to her slave master: “A blind man had a slave-mother who used to abuse the Prophet and disparage him. He forbade her but she did not stop. He rebuked her but she did not give up her habit. One night she began to slander the Prophet and abuse him. So he took a dagger, placed it on her belly, pressed it, and killed her. A child who came between her legs was smeared with the blood that was there. When the morning came, the Prophet was informed about it. He assembled the people and said: ‘I adjure by Allah the man who has done this action and I adjure him by my right to him that he should stand up.’ Jumping over the necks of the people and trembling the man stood up. He sat before the Prophet and said: ‘Messenger of Allah! I am her master; she used to abuse you and disparage you. I forbade her, but she did not stop, and I rebuked her, but she did not abandon her habit. I have two sons like pearls from her, and she was my companion. Last night she began to abuse and disparage you. So I took a dagger, put it on her belly and pressed it till I killed her.’ Thereupon the Prophet said: ‘Oh be witness, no retaliation is payable for her blood.’” (Abi Dawud: 4361) This sort of behavior directly implicates Muhammad’s character and prophethood: “Will a true prophet of God condone the cold-blooded murder of a mother and her child? Does not the murder of an innocent child matter to him? A double murder has been committed and Muhammad did not even bother to investigate to ascertain whether this murderer was lying to escape punishment.” (“The Qur’an Disqualifies” 2013: Muhammad Disqualifies Himself as a True Prophet).

These are not isolated or atypical incidents. Nehls and Eric state, “When studying the biographic materials of Muhammad’s life, we find that he ordered at least 27 assassinations” (Nehls and Eric 2009: 33; see also Sundiata 2006: 349-61; Gilchrist 1994: 63-77). Finally, as noted above, he authorized the murder of anyone who leaves Islam (al-Bukhari: 3017; see also Muslim: 1676; an-Nasa’i: 4016, 4019, 4058, 4059, 4061, 4062, 4063, 4064, 4721, 4743; at-Tirmidhi: 1402, 1413, 2158; Abi Dawud: 4352; Ibn Majah: vol. 3, book 20, no. 2533, 2534; vol. 3, book 21, no. 2659, 2660). He added that “no Muslim should be killed for killing a disbeliever” (an-Nasa’i: 4744; see also 4735, 4745, 4746; al-Bukhari: 111, 6903, 6915; Abi Dawud: 2751; at-Tirmidhi: 1412; Ibn Majah: vol. 3, book 21, no. 2658). Can anyone honestly say this is “a beautiful pattern (of conduct)”? Whether or not it is beautiful, this was Muhammad’s pattern of conduct, and it influences Islam and Muslims to this day.

X. Jesus and Muhammad: Conclusion

The differences between Christianity and Islam largely stem from the differences between Jesus and Muhammad. In all of the major areas of life we have considered, the differences in character between Muhammad and Jesus Christ are plain and profound. Muhammad’s true character was clearly revealed after he ascended to power in Medina. When he had the ability to do so, Muhammad instituted special privileges of gain for himself and even had al-Zubayr b. al-Awwam tortured and beheaded to get monetary gain. On the other hand, Jesus said, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Matt 8:20; Luke 9:58). He had to ride into Jerusalem for the last time on a borrowed donkey (Matt 21:1-6; Mark 11:1-6; Luke 19:29-35) and ate his last meal in a borrowed room (Matt 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-13). Jesus repeatedly taught about the dangers of the love of money and how it turns one from devotion to God (e.g., Matt 6:19-24; 13:7, 22; 19:16-26; Mark 4:7, 18-19; 10:17-27; Luke 8:7, 14;
He taught, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35; see also Matt 5:42; Mark 12:41-44; Luke 6:30, 38; 21:1-4). And Jesus’ life was consistent with his teaching; he gave everything he had, including the only thing he ever owned (the clothes he wore, Matt 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34)—indeed, he gave his very life—for the sake of others. Is there any doubt about which of the two was the self-centered taker and which was the others-centered giver?

Muhammad did not abide by the rules he imposed on others regarding marriage and sex but instead took any woman he wanted regardless of whether she was a child playing with dolls or his own son’s wife. He played favorites among his many wives and concubines which led to marital jealousies and discord. On the other hand, contrary to Islam’s polygamy and Muhammad’s special polygamous privileges, Jesus taught that God had ordained “from the beginning of creation . . . the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh” (Mark 10:6-8; Matt 19:4-6). Further, contrary to Muhammad’s self-centered approach to women and sex, Jesus said, “I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt 5:28). One need hardly ask whose ethic of marriage and sexual relationships is better, fairer, and more loving.

Muhammad took all power for himself. He imposed rules on others that did not apply to himself and threatened all who opposed him with physical death and eternal damnation in hell. On the other hand, on the night before he died Jesus washed his disciples’ feet, an act that a household slave would do. He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.” (John 13:12-15) When two of his disciples sought preferential treatment, Jesus told them, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matt 20:25-28; see also Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:25-27) On another occasion he taught his disciples, “If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:35; see also Matt 20:16). Again, one need hardly ask whose ethic of power leads to the happiness and betterment of mankind.

Muhammad treated his opponents, even those who merely had composed satiric verses against him, with extreme brutality. He ordered that his companions lie, deceive, and murder those he did not like, and he personally massacred hundreds of helpless people. On the other hand, Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matt 5:7). Later in that discourse he taught, “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.” (Matt 5:21-22) He further taught, “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.” (Matt 5:43-45) At the end of that same discourse Jesus summarized, “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matt 7:12; see also Luke 6:31). Jesus did not just teach these things to others, but he lived what he taught. When Jesus was being arrested, his disciple Peter drew his sword and cut off the right ear of the high priest’s slave; but Jesus said, “Stop! No more of this.” And He touched his ear and healed him.” (Luke 22:51; see also Matt 26:51-52; Mark 14:47; John 18:10-11) Again, it is obvious that Jesus’ ethic of life leads to reconciliation and peace among people, whereas Muhammad’s ethic of life leads to anger, hatred, cruelty, and war.

In none of the areas we have considered was Muhammad forced by circumstances beyond his control to do any of the evil deeds he did. When he did these deeds he held all the power. Consequently, his actions reveal what was inside the man—his true heart—just as Jesus had taught: “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.” (Mark 7:20-23; see also Matt 15:19-20) Muhammad was guilty of virtually everything Jesus listed among the things that defile a man; the above brief look at his life and character discloses, at minimum, Muhammad’s evil thoughts, fornications, murders,

96 This and the other areas we are considering demonstrate that Muhammad was not telling the truth when he claimed that he only confirmed what had been revealed before (Q. 41:43; 46:9), since his words and his deeds were diametrically opposed to the prior teaching and example of Jesus.
coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, and pride. Those sins are not minor matters only at the “surface” level—they are not an “occasional minor mistake” (Dirks 2008: 187) or “an unintentional error in judgment committed by a sinless prophet” (Emerick 2004: 201). Instead, what the Qur’an and the Hadith themselves have described are deep sins of Muhammad’s character which reveal his true nature. On the other hand, even the Qur’an acknowledges that Jesus was not guilty of those or any other sins and did not have even one character flaw. Jesus’ nature and character were pure and were entirely good—and his life demonstrated it. When the lives and characters of Jesus and Muhammad are compared side-by-side, it is obvious which one demonstrates the “beautiful pattern of conduct” (Q. 33:21) and which one does not.

Three final incidents highlight the fundamental differences between the two:

• The fundamentally different attitudes of Jesus and Muhammad toward those whom society shunned: lepers. Muhammad said, “One should run away from the leper as one runs away from a lion” (al-Bukhari: 5707). On the other hand, “a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, ‘If You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.” (Mark 1:40-42; Luke 5:12-13; see also Matt 8:1-3; 11:5; Luke 7:22; 17:11-19) Jesus also told his disciples not to run away from lepers but to “heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.” (Matt 10:8)

• The fundamentally different attitudes of Jesus and Muhammad concerning mercy and justice. The Hadith reports the case of a woman who confessed her own adultery to Muhammad; she had even become pregnant by the adultery. Sahih Muslim’s account of the event reports that Muhammad himself told one of his companions, “By Him in Whose Hand is my life, she has made such a repentance that even if a wrongful tax-collector were to repent, he would have been forgiven.” (Muslim: 1695b; see also Abi Dawud: 4442) Nevertheless, Muhammad showed no such forgiveness: “Malik related to me from Yaqub ibn Zayd ibn Talha from his father Zayd ibn Talha that Abdullah ibn Abi Mulayka informed him that a woman came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and informed him that she had committed adultery and was pregnant. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to her, ‘Go away until you give birth.’ When she had given birth, she came to him. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to her, ‘Go away until you have suckled and weaned the baby.’ When she had weaned the baby, she came to him. He said, ‘Go and entrust the baby to someone.’ She entrusted the baby to someone and then came to him. He gave the order and she was stoned.” (Malik: book 41, no. 5; see also Muslim: 1695b; Abi Dawud: 4442) Note that Muhammad waited until the woman had bonded with her child before ordering her stoned to death. His heartlessness amounted to punishing the innocent child as well as the repentant woman.

On the other hand, John 8:1-11 reports, “But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?’ They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, ‘He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.’ Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. Straightening up, Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said, ‘I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.’”

• The dying words of Jesus and Muhammad. When a person is dying he often says what is most important to him and thereby reveals much about himself. As Muhammad was about to die, he was full of hatred and cursed the Jews and Christians: “On his death-bed Allah’s Messenger put a sheet over his face and when he felt hot, he would remove it from his face. When in that state (of putting and removing the sheet) he said, ‘May Allah’s Curse be on the Jews and the Christians for they build places of worship at the graves of their prophets.’ (By that) he intended to warn (the Muslim) from what they (i.e. Jews and Christians) had done.” (al-Bukhari: 3453, 3454; see also 435, 436, 1330, 1390, 5815, 5816; Muslim: 529, 531; an-Nasa’i: 703) On the other hand, from the cross Jesus said of real enemies—the very people who were killing him, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

These incidents, as well as the rest of their lives, reveal that neither Muhammad nor his “revelations” rose above the level of the mindset and psychology of seventh century Arabia. He hated, regarded as enemies,
and ordered his followers to kill those who did not embrace Islam. In stark contrast, Jesus did not regard as enemies those who disagreed with him but was able to forgive his real enemies, and he taught his followers to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt 5:44). Jesus sacrificed himself for others; Muhammad sacrificed others for himself. Even their relationship with their followers differed. Despite being the very Son of God, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. Can one even imagine Muhammad doing that? It is true that Jesus’ followers are not all perfect, loving, and forgiving—but Jesus was. It is also true that Muhammad’s followers are not all violent, hateful, and vindictive—but Muhammad was. One need hardly ask: Would the world be a better, more peaceful and loving place if people followed the example and teachings of Jesus or Muhammad?

3. SIN AND SALVATION

I. Introduction

Sultan Muhammad Khan has raised the issue that goes to the heart of every religion, including Islam and Christianity: “The more I thought, the more evident it became to me that salvation is the vital breath of religion and its necessary foundation. Without it a religion is not a religion. Furthermore, I considered that all men agree that man, as his name indicates, is a bundle of forgetfulness, disobedience, and transgressions. His life never remains so pure as to be absolutely free from the stain of sin. Sin has become man’s second nature. It is a true saying that ‘to err is human’. The question is how can one escape accountability and punishment? How is one to be saved? What does Islam have to say about it? And what is the message of Christianity? It is my duty to investigate this important matter honestly and without prejudice.” (Khan 1992: 11)

There are many similarities between Christianity and Islam concerning the issue of sin, but there also are profound differences. Christianity’s and Islam’s positions concerning sin and salvation mirror their positions concerning Jesus Christ: the differences between the two go to the heart of the matter—the origin of sin, the nature of human beings, and the remedy for sin (how to be saved).

Khan pointed out to himself (and to us) why these issues are so important: “Sultan, consider that you are a child of an hour and the world is fleeting. When you die, your country and your inheritance will be of no benefit to you; nor will your family and friends be of help to you. All these belong to this world alone. Nothing but your faith can go beyond the grave. Therefore it is not wise to forsake eternal life and spiritual happiness for the sake of this transitory life.” (Ibid.: 29) Because of the importance of these issues and the “duty to investigate this important matter honestly and without prejudice,” we will attempt to do that in this chapter.

II. Sin and Salvation According to Christianity

The Bible lays out a comprehensive and coherent (i.e., logically connected and internally consistent) explanation for the origin of sin, the nature of humanity, and the rescue (salvation) of humanity from the problem of sin. The main features are as follows:

A. The meaning of sin

In the Bible, God is transcendent and sovereign over creation (Gen 1:1; 1 Chron 29:11-12; Jer 31:35; Eph 1:11) and therefore has no needs (Job 22:2-3; Ps 50:10-12; Acts 17:24-25); yet he is also immanent, engaged with and in relationship with his creation (Ps 139:1-18) such that he is said to love and give (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10), grieve and lament (Gen 6:6; Jer 9:10). The biblical emphasis concerning sin stems from God’s relationship with his creatures. Thus, the essence of sin according to the Bible is what John Stott calls “the godless self-centeredness of sin” (Stott 1986: 90). In other words, “Every sin is a breach of what Jesus called ‘the first and great commandment’ [‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND’ (Matt 22:36-38; Mark 12:28-30)], not just by failing to love God with all our being, but by actively refusing to acknowledge and obey him as our Creator and Lord. . . . Worse still, we have dared to proclaim our self-dependence, our autonomy, which is to claim the position occupied by God alone. Sin is not a regrettable lapse from conventional standards; its essence is hostility to God (Rom. 8:7), issuing in active rebellion against him.” (Ibid.; see also Calvin 1960: 1:421 [2.VIII.58]) This sinful predisposition separates us from God (Isa 59:1-2)

It is therefore no surprise that in the Ten Commandments the first commandment is specifically directed against idolatry, i.e., elevating anything or anyone over God (Exod 20:1-6; Deut 5:7). Martin Luther explained: “All those who do not at all times trust God and do not in all their works or sufferings, life and death, trust in His favor, grace and good-will, but seek His favor in other things or in themselves, do not keep this [the first] Commandment, and practise real idolatry, even if they were to do the works of all the other Commandments,
and in addition had all the prayers, fasting, obedience, patience, chastity, and innocence of all the saints combined. For the chief work is not present, without which all the others are nothing but mere sham, show and pretense, with nothing back of them.” (Luther 1520: X) Timothy Keller puts it like this, “The very first of the Ten Commandments is to ‘have no other gods before me [Exod 20:3; Deut 5:7.’] So, according to the Bible, the primary way to define sin is not just the doing of bad things, but the making of good things into ultimate things. It is seeking to establish a sense of self by making something else more central to your significance, purpose, and happiness than your relationship to God.” (Keller 2008: 162) Thus, in a real sense the party who is primarily injured when we sin is God. David recognized this when he repented for having committed adultery with Bathsheba and cried out to God, “Against You, You only, I have sinned” (Ps 51:4). Nevertheless, because God is the ultimate good and is sovereign over the entire universe, to sin against Him necessarily affects everything else, i.e., sin harms ourselves, harms others, and harms the world.

God “does not tempt anyone” to sin (Jas 1:13); rather, humanity’s fundamental self-centeredness and separation from God leads to every specific sin, i.e., every moral evil committed by people (see Jas 1:13-15).77 Such sins may be passive, the failure to do what God has commanded (i.e., sins of omission; e.g., Luke 12:47; Jas 4:17), or sins may be active, doing things prohibited by God (i.e., sins of commission; e.g., Exod 20:13-16). John Stott describes the relationship between God’s law and ourselves: “It is, in fact, his moral law, which expresses his righteous character. It is not the law of his own being only, however; it is also the law of ours, since he has made us in his image and in so doing has written the requirements of his law in our hearts (Rom. 2:15). There is, thus, a vital correspondence between God’s law and ourselves, and to commit sin is to commit ‘lawlessness’ (1 Jn. 3:4), offending against our own highest welfare as well as against the authority and love of God.” (Stott 1986: 89-90) Because sin is grounded in people’s relationship with God, sin exists not only in external actions but also in internal attitudes and the dispositions of the heart: what is expressed externally in words and deeds is a reflection of what is inside a personheart (Exod 20:17; Prov 23:7; Matt 5:21-22, 27-28; Mark 7:20-23). Therefore, Christianity can never be reduced to a list of “dos and don’ts.”

B. The origin of sin and its effects on people

In human history, Genesis 3 recounts that sin originated in the garden of Eden when Satan tempted Eve;78 both Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command and ate from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve’s sin affected themselves psychologically (Gen 3:7), interpersonally (Gen 3:16), and relationally with God (Gen 3:8-10). Additionally, according to the biblical view all of humanity was in some sense “in Adam” (Rom 5:12-19; 1 Cor 15:22). Thus, Adam and Eve’s sin affected everyone else throughout history and resulted in the moral and ethical corruption of human nature.79 This is what is known as the “Fall” of mankind. Sin entered into Adam and Eve and, after the Fall every human being since Adam and Eve has been born in a state of moral corruption—an internal predisposition to sin—which leads to universal actualized sins as people go through lives (e.g., Gen 8:21; Ps 51:5; 143:1-2; Jer 17:9; Mark 7:20-23; Rom 3:9-18, 23; 5:12-14; 7:14-24). Indeed, sin dwells in people; it is a “law” or power that is actively working inside every person (Rom 7:5, 8-11, 14-24; Gal 5:17; Heb 3:12-13). God had warned Adam that to eat the forbidden fruit would surely result in death (Gen 2:17). That same principle applies to all people: “Just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom 5:12).

This is the doctrine of “original sin.” “Original sin is not the sin that Adam and Eve committed. It is the result of that first sin. Original sin has reference to our sinful condition, our sinful bent, our sinful inclination from which actual sin flows. In other words, we sin because we are sinners. We are not sinners because we sin. Since the fall of mankind it is now the nature of human beings to be inclined and drawn to sinfulness.” (Sproul 2002: 34, emph. in orig.) Our inner corruption is such that even our good deeds are not entirely pure but bear, to one degree or another, the taint of self-centeredness, self-aggrandizement, or are motivated by such things as fear, guilt, pride, greed, etc. Consequently, sin can be expressed in two radically different ways: either “being very bad and breaking all the rules [or] being very good and keeping all the rules and becoming self-righteous” (Keller 2008: 177). That is why Isaiah says that “all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment” (Isa 64:6).

Further, our corruption is such that we cannot consistently and completely meet even our own standards,

77 There are moral evils and natural (physical) evils. Sin is moral evil. Hence, all sin is evil, but not all evil is sin.
78 The Bible clearly implies, but does not explicitly discuss that Satan “fell” before the sin of Adam and Eve since Satan is the one who tempted Adam and Eve and lied to them about the nature and consequences of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (compare Gen 2:16-17 and Gen 3:1-4). Thus, Jesus called Satan both a “murderer from the beginning” and “a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44-45).
79 Different views on how the guilt and corruption of Adam’s sin was transmitted to his posterity are briefly summarized at Menn 2009-2018: 10-11.
let alone God’s. Spiritually speaking, our corruption is such that “every person born into the world is tainted by
the Fall such that all of humanity is ethically debilitated, and people are powerless to rehabilitate themselves,
unless rescued by God” (“Original sin” n.d.: Introduction; see John 3:3, 5; 6:44, 65; 8:34; Rom 6:16-17, 20;
8:6-8; 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 2:1-3; 8-9; Heb 11:6). Because sin is an active part of our very nature which separates
us from God and corrupts even outwardly good deeds, the Bible accurately describes people as being “slaves to
sin” (John 8:34; Rom 6:6, 16-17, 20; 7:14). Thus, “There is none righteous, not even one. . . . There is none
who seeks for God; all have turned aside. . . . There is none who does good, there is not even one.” (Rom 3:10-
12) Without God’s intervention each person would remain “dead in your trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1).

C. The impossibility of people saving themselves by their good deeds

Every person knows in his or her heart that we have a fundamental problem deep within us that we
cannot eradicate. Many people tend to downplay the seriousness of this by saying something like “to err is
human.” However, we must consider what we are like in relation to God. God’s holiness is foundational. Sin is
incompatible with his holiness. Closely related to God’s holiness is his wrath. God’s wrath “is in fact his holy
reaction to evil. . . . What is common to the biblical concepts of the holiness and the wrath of God is the truth
that they cannot coexist with sin. God’s holiness exposes sin; his wrath opposes it. So sin cannot approach God,
and God cannot tolerate sin.” (Stott 1986: 102, 103, 106; see Hab 1:13; Rom 1:18)

There is an important corollary to all this, namely, that “God is not indifferent to our immoral thoughts and
behaviour. On the contrary, his holy nature is deeply offended by such things. As a perfect God, he cannot
give anything evil. The smallest lie is an offense to the One who is truth. The tiniest feeling of animosity
against his divine authority.” (Alexander 2008: 130) Consequently, “if God is to be true to his own righteous nature, all wrongdoing must be punished. In addition, if God is to condemn and punish Satan, then he must be consistent in condemning and punishing . . . every other creature that has rebelled
against his divine authority.” (Ibid.: 131; see Rom 2:16; 2 Cor 5:10; Heb 9:27; Rev 20:10-15)

Many people think that God will accept (save) them if they do enough “good deeds.” They think, “If my
good deeds outweigh my bad deeds, I’m in!” However, that approach to salvation is doomed to failure for at
least five reasons:

• First, because God himself is morally holy and perfect, that is the standard to which God holds us (Matt
5:48). However, “once a person sins, it is impossible to ever be perfect” (Sproul 2002: 94; see also ibid.: 53).

• Second, even our good deeds are tainted with sin and typically arise from mixed motives. Indeed, if we
are doing good deeds in order to escape God’s punishment and hell, that alone makes our good deeds not
“good.” The reason is that if our motive is to escape hell by doing “good deeds,” then those deeds are, by
definition, selfish and self-centered, e.g., when we help the poor, we are really primarily helping ourselves
avoid hell. Thus, no amount of good deeds, since they themselves are tainted with sin, can atone for other
sins.

• Third, it is impossible to ever know whether one has “done enough” good deeds or made enough
sacrifices to satisfy God. Timothy Keller states, “The moral and spiritual standards of all religions are very
high, and Pharisees [i.e., all who try to save themselves by doing good deeds and obeying religious rules]
know deep down that they are not fully living up to those standards. They are not praying as often as they
should. They are not loving and serving their neighbors as much as they should. They are not keeping their
inner thoughts as pure as they should.” (Keller 2008: 178)

• Fourth, no amount of good deeds changes the sinful nature and sinful propensities of the heart. Thus,
good deeds do not transform corrupt, sinful people into righteous, sinless people at their core; they remain
sinful people. If God let sinful people into heaven and the new earth in which people will live forever
(Revelation 21-22), heaven and the new earth would be forever corrupted. God could not be there since “sin
cannot approach God, and God cannot tolerate sin” (Stott 1986: 106). Indeed, given humanity’s innate
corruption and sinful propensities, heaven would be turned into a hell.

• Fifth, ultimately sin is against God because God’s law comes from him and is a reflection of his holy
nature; therefore, to sin by transgressing his law is to offend him personally. Further, to sin against other
people is to sin against God because people are made in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27; 9:6; Jas 3:9-10);

100 Although most people deny their connection with Satan, Jesus called Satan “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31). Jesus
told the Pharisees, “You are of your father the devil” (John 8:44). Elsewhere Satan is called “the god of this world [age]”
(2 Cor 4:4) who holds unbelievers “captive” (2 Tim 2:26) and in his power (1 John 5:19; see also Eph 2:2; Col 1:13).
sin amounts to dishonoring and defiling God’s image and thereby reveals what the sinner really thinks about God himself. The situation is similar to when a person commits a crime against another person; the criminal violates not only the person but primarily violates the law of the state. Hence, it is the government which prosecutes the lawbreaker, not the wronged individual. Sin also is like dropping a rock into a pool of water; the rock creates ripples from its point of entry to the surrounding waters. In the same way sin permanently corrupts and changes the sinner, other people, and the world in ways perhaps unknown to the sinner. Therefore, any “good deeds” or other things we try to do to atone for our sin and earn our salvation, by their very nature, are *temporal and imperfect*. They do not transform the sinner into a holy person and they cannot eliminate the effects of the sin which has *permanently* corrupted the sinner’s soul and has affected other people and the world. Finally, God is infinite: infinitely holy; infinitely lovely; infinitely good. Therefore, our obligation to him is infinite (*Deut 6:5; Matt 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27*). Therefore, our sin against him amounts to an infinite evil. In short, there is such a thing as a finite offense against an infinite God. Consequently, no temporal, finite, and imperfect deeds of ours can ever hope to atone for the infinity of our sin. As John Stott concludes, “If we are ever to be forgiven, we must repay what we owe [see *Anselm 1903: I:11*]. Yet we are incapable of doing this, either for ourselves or for other people. Our present obedience and good works cannot make satisfaction for our sins, since these are required of us anyway. So we cannot save ourselves.” (*Stott 1986: 119*)

Since we cannot save ourselves, “some may say the problem is not severe because God in His kindness will overlook it. God could do this if He were willing to negotiate His own righteousness or sacrifice His own justice.” (*Sproul 2002: 94*) Even an earthly judge who didn’t enforce the law but simply let the guilty go free will overlook it. God could do this if He were willing to negotiate His own righteousness or sacrifice His own.

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Since we cannot save ourselves, “some may say the problem is not severe because God in His kindness will overlook it. God could do this if He were willing to negotiate His own righteousness or sacrifice His own justice.” (*Sproul 2002: 94*) Even an earthly judge who didn’t enforce the law but simply let the guilty go free without punishment would be universally recognized as unjust.¹⁰¹ That is why God cannot just say, “In My mercy and compassion, I forgive you sinful people.” To do that would be both unjust and would result in sinful people forever inhabiting and corrupting heaven and the new earth. On the other hand, as discussed above, human beings are not able to save themselves. Because all humans are corrupt at their core and sin against God in thought, word, and deed, no amount of “good deeds,” rule keeping, or other actions could ever hope to atone for our sin. Thus, if left to themselves, all humans have earned and deserve only God’s judgment. This results in a profound dilemma: “Man as a sinner owes God for his sin what he is unable to pay, and cannot be saved without paying” (*Anselm 1903: I:25*).

D. Salvation according to Christianity: what Christ accomplished on the cross

This is where Christianity is different from every other religion, including Islam. Indeed, only Christianity has a credible and coherent answer to the above dilemma. Christianity alone recognizes and takes

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¹⁰¹ The Bible says that the ultimate punishment for sin against God is what is called the “lake of fire” or “the second death” (*Rev 19:20; 20:6, 10, 14-15*). While some object to this idea, there are at least two responses to such objections: (1) justice, and (2) respect for human dignity and choice. Nicola Yacoub Ghabril states the first response: “Both Islamic and civil law prescribe that the punishment for transgression or crime shall be severe or mild in proportion to the one sinned against. For instance, if a student at school insults his fellow pupil, he is punished lightly, whereas if he insults his teacher he would be expelled from school. In legislative terms, if someone reviles his equal it is considered an offence, but if he insults the judge his punishment would be greater. However, if he insults the king his sentence would be greater still. But if he should sin against God, who is unsurpassed in greatness and holiness, how much more would be his punishment! Doubtless he would be condemned to painful endless torment.” (*Ghabril 2003: 20*)

Timothy Keller articulates the second response: “In Romans 1-2 Paul explains that God, in his wrath against those who reject him, ‘gives them up’ to the sinful passions of their hearts. . . . In Ephesians 4:19 it is said that sinners give themselves up to their sinful desires. It means that the worst (and fairest) punishment God can give a person is to allow them their sinful hearts’ deepest desire. What is that? The desire of the sinful human heart is for independence. We want to choose and go our own way (Isaiah 53:6). . . . What is hell, then? It is God actively giving us up to what we have freely chosen-to go our own way, to be our own ‘the master of our fate, the captain of our soul,’ to get away from him and his control. It is God banishing us to regions we have desperately tried to get into all our lives. . . . The idea of hell is implausible to people because they see it as unfair that infinite punishment would be meted out for comparably minor, finite false steps (like not embracing Christianity.) Also, almost no one knows anyone (including themselves) that seems to be bad enough to merit hell. But the Biblical teaching on hell answers both of these objections. First, it tells us that people only get in the afterlife what they have wanted most-expected to have God as Savior and Master or to be their own Saviors and Masters. Secondly, it tells us that hell is a natural consequence. Even in this world it is clear that self-centeredness rather than God-centeredness makes you miserable and blind. . . . On the other hand, a soul that has decided to center its life on God and his glory moves toward increasing joy and wholeness. We can see both of these ‘trajectories’ even in this life. But if, as the Bible teaches, our souls will go on forever, then just imagine where these two kinds of souls will be in a billion years. Hell is simply one’s freely chosen path going on forever. We wanted to get away from God, and God, in his infinite justice, sends us where we wanted to go.” (*Keller 2009: sec.3*)
Anselm of Canterbury puts it like this: Because man cannot satisfy his debt to God, “none but God can make this satisfaction. But none but a man ought to do this, other wise man does not make the satisfaction. If it be necessary, therefore, as it appears, that the heavenly kingdom be made up of men, and this cannot be effected unless the aforesaid satisfaction be made, which none but God can make and none but man ought to make, it is necessary for the God-man to make it. . . . Therefore, in order that the God-man may perform this, it is necessary that the same being should be perfect God and perfect man, in order to make this atonement. . . . Since, then, it is necessary that the God-man preserve the completeness of each nature, it is no less necessary that these two natures be united entire in one person, just as a body and a reasonable soul exist together in every human being; for otherwise it is impossible that the same being should be very God and very man.” (Anselm 1903: II:6-7)

Only Jesus Christ meets the qualifications.¹⁰²

It is only this mysterious union of God and man in the person of Christ that enabled God both to inflict and endure the punishment of the cross. Jesus lived the life we should have lived as a man: he perfectly obeyed God the Father in everything; he was “tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15). That qualified him to be our representative, to take upon himself our sin and pay the penalty that otherwise we would have to pay but never could (Rom 8:1-4; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13; Col 2:13-14; 1 Tim 2:5-6; 1 Pet 2:24).¹⁰³ As Keller states, “God did not, then, inflict pain on someone else, but rather on the Cross absorbed the pain, violence, and evil of the world into himself. Therefore the God of the Bible is not like the primitive deities who demanded our blood for their wrath to be appeased. Rather, this is a God who becomes human and offers his own lifeblood in order to honor moral justice and merciful love so that he can destroy all evil without destroying us. . . . Why did Jesus have to die in order to forgive us? There was a debt to be paid—God himself paid it. There was a penalty to be borne—God himself bore it. . . . On the cross neither justice nor mercy loses out—both are fulfilled at once. Jesus’s death was necessary if God was going to take justice seriously and still love us.” (Keller 2008: 192-93, 197) Or, as Sultan Muhammad Khan puts it, “God is both merciful and just. If Christ had promised salvation without giving His life, the demands of mercy would certainly have been fulfilled. In order to satisfy the demands of justice also, Christ paid the ransom, which was His precious blood. In this way God has manifested His love for us.” (Khan 1992: 26) John Stott summarizes, “The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties which belong to man alone.” (Stott 1986: 160)

¹⁰² Christ as fully man and as the divine Son of God is described in detail above in section 2.VI. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: Jesus is the “Son of God”.

¹⁰³ Christ’s substitution and sacrifice of himself on our behalf did not take place in a vacuum. God had prepared the way and established the principle long beforehand in the OT. Ghabril explains, “At first it started with blood sacrifices, which are pivotal to the Mosaic Law. The sons of Adam offered sacrifices even before the written Law was sent down. Those coming after them did the same until the Law was given to Moses, God’s spokesman, where the subject is given in detail. In it we see how God, to impress on men the ugliness of sin and its painful consequences, proceeded to teach them as children. He divided the animals into ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ and taught them the principle, ‘in fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness’ (Hebrews 9:22). Thus he instructed the sinner to offer as a sacrifice for his sin a clean animal, in whom was no blemish. He was to slay it and place it on the fire to remind him that the sinner deserved to be put to death. However, by means of the substitute sacrifice he could obtain forgiveness. All these sacrifices pointed to Christ’s great sacrifice, since they could never in themselves redeem one man because of their inferior value.” (Ghabril 2003: 21)
Christ bore our punishment on the cross so that we do not have to face God’s punishment for our sin; he was forsaken on the cross so that we can be accepted. In Christ, we are as free from the guilt and penalty of sin as if we had paid the full price for our sin ourselves (Rom 6:3-7; Gal 2:20). More than that, when we are united with Christ everything that is true of him is now true of us: he not only removes our guilt by having paid for our sin himself, but he also gives us his righteousness. Thus, only in Christ are we not condemned, but we are positively accepted, loved, and honored by God. The depth of humanity’s sin—and the corresponding depth of what Christ accomplished on the cross—is indicated by the biblical language used to describe what Christ did for us on the cross:

- **The language of OT sacrifices**—“blood” (Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; Acts 20:28; Rom 3:25; 5:9; 1 Cor 10:16; 11:25; Eph 1:7; 2:13; Col 1:14, 20; Heb 9:12, 14, 22; 10:19; 13:12; 1 Pet 1:2, 19; 1 John 1:7; Rev 1:5; 7:14; 12:11). “Lamb” (John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1 Pet 1:19; Rev 5:6, 8, 12-13; 6:1; 7:9-10, 14, 17; 12:11; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 19:7, 9; 21:14, 22-23; 22:1, 3). “sacrifice” (1 Cor 5:7; Eph 5:2; Heb 9:26; 10:12)—indicates that we were guilty before God but now have been forgiven.

- **The language of personal relationships**—“reconciliation” (Eph 2:16; Col 1:20, 22; Rom 5:10-11; 2 Cor 5:18-19), “brought near” ( Eph 2:13)—indicates that we were alienated from God but now have been brought into intimate fellowship.

- **The language of the temple**—“propitiation” (Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17)—indicates that we were under God’s wrath but now that wrath has been satisfied and quenched.

- **The language of the marketplace**—“redemption” (Rom 3:24; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; Heb 9:15). “ransom” (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45; 1 Tim 2:6), “bought” (1 Cor 6:20; 7:23; 2 Pet 2:1), “free” (John 8:36; Rom 6:18, 22; 8:2; Gal 5:1; Heb 2:15), “release” (Rom 7:6)—indicates that we were enslaved but now have been set free.

- **The language of the law court**—“justification” (Acts 13:39; Rom 3:24, 26; 4:5, 25, 5:9, 16, 18; 8:30, 33; 1 Cor 6:11; Gal 2:16; Titus 3:7)—indicates that we were condemned but now have been pardoned and counted as righteous.

- **The language of the battlefield**—“deliverance” (Rom 7:24; 2 Cor 1:10), “rescue” (Gal 1:4; Col 1:13; 1 Thess 1:10)—indicates that we were facing dreadful enemies but now have are triumphant in Christ.

- **The language of a quest or voyage**—“save” (Matt 18:11; Luke 9:56; 19:10; John 12:47; Acts 15:11; 16:30-31; Rom 5:9; 1 Cor 15:2; 1 Tim 1:15)—indicates we were lost but now have been found.

Only the above understanding explains Jesus’ cry from the cross, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34) Muslim apologists clearly do not understand what was going on when Jesus uttered that cry. For example, Hilali states, “This is a blatant declaration of disbelief according to all theological authorities” (Al-Hilali 1998: 913). Abdullah Hadi Al-Kahtani says that on the cross Christ was trying to “trick Satan,” and “these words . . . were spoken so that the Devil will not know that he [Jesus] was ‘God’ or ‘the son of God’” (Al-Kahtani 1996: 14-15). Neither Hilali nor Kahtani are even remotely close to being accurate. So what was going on?

Christianity, unlike Islam, recognizes that “forgiveness is always a form of costly suffering” (Keller 2008: 193). When someone has been wronged and damaged, the first option “is to demand that [the wrongdoer] pay for the damages. The second is to refuse to let him pay anything. . . . Notice that in every option the cost of the damage must be borne by someone. Either you or he absorbs the cost for the deed, but the debt does not somehow vanish into thin air. . . . [To forgive someone means that] you are absorbing the debt, taking the cost of it completely on yourself instead of taking it out on the other person” (Ibid.: 187, 189, emph. added) To forgive someone means that you not only suffer the original loss but also that you refuse to make the wrongdoer pay for what he has done. Thus, all forgiveness involves suffering—and the greater the wrong and the injury, the greater the cost and the suffering of the one who forgives.

The costliness of our sin and what it cost God to forgive us (i.e., “His only begotten Son,” John 3:16) is revealed by Jesus on the cross. What Jesus was doing on the cross was receiving the judgment, paying the cost, and taking onto himself the punishment due to sinful humanity: “In Matthew 10:28 Jesus says that no physical destruction can be compared with the spiritual destruction of hell, of losing the presence of God. But this is exactly what happened to Jesus on the cross—he was forsaken by the Father (Matthew 27:46). . . . When he cried out that his God had forsaken him he was experiencing hell itself. But consider—if our debt for sin is so great that it is never paid off there, but our hell stretches on for eternity, then what are we to conclude from the fact that Jesus said the payment was ‘finished’ (John 19:30) after only three hours? We learn that what he felt on the cross was far worse and deeper than all of our deserved hells put together. . . . When Jesus was cut off from God he went into the deepest pit and most powerful furnace, beyond all imagining. He experienced the full wrath of the Father. And he did it voluntarily, for us.” (Keller 2009: sec.4) Why did Jesus cry, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” John Stott summarizes: “An actual and dreadful separation took place between the Father and the Son; it was voluntarily accepted by both the Father and the Son; it was due to our sins and their
just reward; and Jesus expressed this horror of great darkness, the God-forsakenness, by quoting the only verse of Scripture which accurately described it and which he had perfectly fulfilled” (Stott 1986: 81).104

Jesus’ cry from the cross also reveals something else: his perfect obedience (Phil 2:8). Throughout his life on earth Christ himself repeatedly stated that he did nothing on his own initiative but only did what the Father had him do (John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10). His cry of “My God” reveals the intimacy of his relationship with the Father. On the cross, Jesus endured an infinity of suffering and the curse of the Father (Gal 3:13); yet he continued to obey the Father all the way to the end. Far from being “a blatant declaration of disbelief,” his cry was quoting Ps 22:1, a psalm of David, who was a prophet (see Acts 2:30). In quoting that psalm in those circumstances, Jesus was saying that Ps 22:1 was pointing to and was being fulfilled in what he was doing on the cross. Jesus knew exactly what was going on. In essence, he was saying, “I trust you Father, I believe in your plan for the salvation of lost souls, and I love you so much that I will obey your will completely, even though it means my complete separation from you and having to endure the combined hells of sinful humanity.”

The depth of the sacrifice that Jesus made reveals the depth of human sin—because there was no other way by which humanity could be saved (Matt 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42). Yet Jesus did it all voluntarily (John 10:18) because we were worth it to him. As Isa 53:11 says, “As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied.” What Christ did on the cross shows, in a way that no other religion even hints at, how valuable people are to God. Keller concludes, “Jesus suffered infinitely more than any human soul in eternal hell, yet he looks at us and says, ‘It was worth it.’ What could make us feel more loved and valued than that? The Savior presented in the gospel waded through hell itself rather than lose us, and no other savior ever depicted has loved us at such a cost.” (Keller 2009: sec.4)

What Jesus accomplished on the cross was not a defeat but was a victory of cosmic proportions. Col 2:13-15 says, “When you were aliens in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.” (See also Heb 2:14) Consequently, who Jesus is and what he has done—particularly on the cross—is the heart of the gospel. It is repeatedly proclaimed throughout the NT (see Acts 10:36-43; 16:30-31; Rom 1:1-4, 16-17; 3:23-28; 10:8-13; 1 Cor 2:2; 15:1-5; 1 Pet 3:18).

Because the gospel—and people’s salvation—is based on what Christ has done, salvation cannot be “earned” by doing “good deeds.” Rather, salvation is given by God to people as a gift of his grace; it is received by people solely by faith in Christ. As Eph 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” To be saved means to repent of our sins, accept by faith what Christ has done for us, and turn to Christ as the Lord of our life (Matt 11:28; Mark 1:14-15; John 1:12; 3:16; 17:3; Acts 26:20; 1 John 1:8-9). The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) summarizes: “The principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life” (Westminster 1646: XIV:2).

E. Implications of sin and salvation according to Christianity

The biblical understanding of sin and the fact that Christ lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died (i.e., paid the price and took the judgment and punishment), have important implications which are not true of any other religion.

1. The doctrine of the “fall” of mankind gives Christians a coherent basis to fight against evil, Abbas Sundiata states, “The biblical worldview makes Jews and Christians struggle against the ravages of a world we see as fallen and abnormal. We struggle because we believe that we have a part to play in its redemption. This mind-set makes it possible for us to confront the problems presented by an abnormal world with the conviction that there is a solution. To those who hold this view of the world, everything has value and significance; time is important and can be redeemed instead of wasted or just allowed to pass by, and every individual has immense value because each has a part to play in this work of redemption... There is no doubt that the Judeo-Christian doctrine of the fall conforms to the reality in the world; it explains the presence of sin and evil in a world created by a holy, good, loving, and powerful God; it affirms our freedom of choice; it tells us what has been done on our behalf by God despite ourselves and encourages us to work to change our circumstances.” (Sundiata 2006: 213-14)

104 “His cry was in the form of a question (‘Why . . . ?’) not because he did not know its answer, but only because the Old Testament text itself (which he was quoting) was in that form” (Stott 1986: 82).
2. All those who are united to Christ by faith have assurance of their salvation. If salvation depended even in part on our own efforts, we could never have the assurance that we had “done enough” to merit salvation. However, because God-in-Christ did for us what we could not do, Christians can and do have assurance that they are and forever will remain saved (see, e.g., John 3:36; 6:37, 47; 11:25; 1 John 5:11-12). Because the penalty for sin has been fully paid and the debt has been fully satisfied it can never again be demanded of anyone who is in Christ.

3. Being saved and united with Christ changes the legal status of Christians, “Objectively” the cross liberates from the power of sin, propitiates God’s wrath, washes away the guilt and stain of sin, reconciles believers to God, and achieves cosmic victory over deadly spiritual foes” (Demarest 1997: 196). In addition, in both his life and on the cross, Christ perfectly obeyed the Father and did only what the Father had him do; he thereby lived the life we should have lived. This means that, on the cross, not only was our sin imputed to him, but his righteousness was imputed to us! As 2 Cor 5:21 says, “He [the Father] made Him who knew no sin [Christ] be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” This deals with the issue of sinful people inheriting heaven and the new earth: everyone who is in Christ does not have “a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith” (Phil 3:9).

4. Being saved and united with Christ changes Christians on the inside, Subjectively, “Christ’s example of suffering on our behalf releases a new moral power that transforms our attitudes, motives, and conduct” (Demarest 1997: 196). When one comes to Christ, he or she receives a new heart (Ezek 36:26; 2 Cor 3:3), the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16), and the Spirit from Christ (Ezek 36:26; John 14:17). Thus, the source of guidance and power to live righteously are not primarily external (conformity to rules and rituals) but are internal—it is Jesus, through his word, mind, and spirit, who now lives in and through his people. As Gal 2:20 puts it, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” By the internal means given to the believer by Christ, people are inevitably and progressively being sanctified and changed on the inside “to become conformed to the image of His Son [i.e., Jesus Christ]” (Rom 8:29).

5. Being saved and united with Christ gives Christians an intimate, personal relationship with God through Christ. “The Christian gospel is that I am so flawed that Jesus had to die for me, yet I am so loved and valued that Jesus was glad to die for me. This leads to deep humility and deep confidence at the same time. . . . I cannot feel superior to anyone, and yet I have nothing to prove to anyone.” (Keller 2008: 181) Thus, we can “draw near with confidence to the throne of grace” (Heb 4:16; see also Heb 7:19). Christians can have such confidence because they know they have a deep, personal relationship with God, because Christ is “in” believers (John 14:20; 17:23; Rom 8:10; Gal 2:20; Eph 3:17; Col 1:27; 1 John 3:24; Rev 3:20) and believers are “in Christ” (e.g., Rom 8:1; 12:5; 16:6, 7, 9-10; 1 Cor 1:2, 30; 4:10, 15; 15:18, 22; 2 Cor 1:21; 5:17; 12:2; Gal 1:22; 3:28; 6:15; Eph 1:3; 2:6, 10; Phil 1:1; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 2:14; 4:16; 1 Tim 3:13; 2 Tim 3:12; Phlm 23; 1 Pet 5:14).

6. Being saved and united with Christ gives Christians a new motive and means of living. In terms of practical living, Christianity, again, is unique compared to every other religion, including Islam. “Religion operates on the principle ‘I obey—therefore I am accepted by God.’ But the operating principle of the gospel is ‘I am accepted by God through what Christ has done—therefore I obey.’” (Keller 2008: 179-80)

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105 Rom 5:17 states, “For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (see also Rom 5:12-16, 18-19; 1 Cor 15:21-22, 45-49). Christ is able to assume the sin and guilt of believers and transfer his righteousness to believers because believers are united with Christ in his crucifixion and resurrection (Gal 2:20; Eph 2:5-6). This is the corollary to Adam’s sin being imputed to all who followed him. Both Adam and Christ are unique in that they are both the “federal heads (or covenant representatives) of the human race. Adam was appointed the authorized representative of all mankind; Christ was appointed the authorized representative of redeemed mankind. . . . Adam’s sin was imputed to all his descendants . . . just as Christ’s sinless obedience was reckoned to all those who by faith belong to Him. All the human race fell into sin and guilt through Adam’s fall; but all those who are in Christ are redeemed through His righteousness, which is reckoned to their account by the grace of God, extended to all those who sincerely and savingly believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, as their Lord and Savior.” (Archer 1982: 389

106 Islam’s and Christianity’s fundamentally different approaches to the relationship between belief and actions is probably why Muslim Yahiya Emerick finds “incomprehensible” the Christian belief of being saved, which he caricatures as “a life of good works, created in Christ Jesus for good works, regardless of whether the person is a Muslim or not” (Emerick 2004: 35). Emerick does not appear to understand that, while we cannot work our way to heaven but are saved only by God’s grace through faith in Christ (John 3:16-18; 6:28-29; Rom 2:16-17; 10:8-13; Eph 2:8-9; Gal 3:1-14); nevertheless, we are saved for a purpose: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,”
The situation is similar to falling in love with someone: “Your love makes you eager for acceptance from the beloved. . . . [When you marry your beloved] Do you say, ‘Great! I’m in! Now I can act any way I want’? Of course not. Now you don’t even wait for the object of your affection to directly ask you to do something for them. You anticipate whatever pleases and delights them. There’s no coercion or sense of obligation, yet your behavior has been radically changed by the mind and heart of the person you love.” (Keller 2008: 183) That is why Rom 6:1-2 says, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”

III. Sin and Salvation According to Islam

In fundamental ways, Islam takes a different approach than Christianity’s to both the issues of sin and salvation. In contrast to the Christian approach, however, Islam’s approach is internally inconsistent with respect to both issues.

A. The nature of humanity in relation to sin according to Islam

The Qur’an includes the account of Adam and Eve eating forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden (Q. 2:35-37; 7:10-25; 20:115-23). However, the Qur’an also says, “No person earns any (sin) except against himself (only), and no bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another” (Q. 6:164, Hilali-Khan); “Who receiveth guidance, receiveth it for his own benefit: who goeth astray doth so to his own loss: No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another” (Q. 17:15); and “no burdened person (with sins) shall bear the burden (sins) of another” (Q. 53:38, Hilali-Khan; see also Q. 4:111; 7:23; 35:18; 39:7; 53:38-39). Islam takes such statements as applying not only to people today but also as applying to Adam and Eve. The “official” position of Islam therefore denies that Adam and Eve’s sin resulted in the fall of mankind and denies the doctrine of “original sin.” Emerick says, “Islam flatly rejects any notion of original sin and says we are all born pure. Yes, Adam and Eve sinned, the Qur’an says, but God forgave them when they asked for His mercy. No sin was passed on to their descendants.” (Emerick 2004: 46) He adds, “We are not eternally defective as a species or naturally inclined to sin” (Ibid.: 150). Kahtani states, “Islam entertains no idea of the ‘fall of man’, no concept of ‘original sin’. It holds no man to stand in an innate, necessary predicament out of which he cannot pull himself. Man, it holds, is innocent. He is born with his innocence. Indeed, he is born with a thousand given perfection[s], with faculties of understanding, and an innate sense with which to know the true God.” (Al-Kahtani 1996: 24) Karim says that “Every child is born in the religion (of Islam) 30:30Q and as such is not sinful” (Karim 1939: 3:123). That state of sinlessness remains “till the age of discretion” (Ibid.) or puberty (Zawadi n.d.: n.p.). In fact, the soul’s “natural tendency is to strive towards good” (Karim 1939:3:122).

What, according to Islam, accounts for human sin? The Islamic website IslamAnswering.com states, “No matter how much good and perfect man may be, by the grace of creation, he is still far short of the goodness and perfection of the Creator. Man is not without such qualities, to be sure. But they are limited and proportionate to man’s finite nature, capacity, and responsibility. This may explain the imperfection and fallibility of man.” (“The Concept” 2009: n.p.) The IslamAnswering.com article says, “Whatever becomes of man after birth is the result of external influence and intruding factors. . . . If he chooses to actualize the potential of sin instead of the potential of goodness, he will be adding a new external element to his pure nature. For this added external element man alone is responsible.” (“The Concept” 2009: n.p.) Emerick puts it this way, “We are merely forgetful of what life is about, and Shaytan [Satan] uses our desire for pleasure to accentuate this” (Emerick 2004: 150).

B. The concept of morality in Islam

In Islam, morality, good, and evil are not based on universal standards of right and wrong grounded in which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” (Eph 2:10) The works we do after we receive Christ by faith “are an index of the spiritual condition of a person’s heart. . . . The judgment is not a balancing of good works over bad works. Rather, works are seen as unmistakable evidence of the loyalty of the heart; they express belief or unbelief, faithfulness or unfaithfulness. The judgment will reveal whether or not people’s loyalties have been with God and the Lamb or with God’s enemies.” (Ngundu 2006: 1576; see Matt 6:19-21; 24:45-51; 25:31-46; Luke 42-48; Phil 2:12-13; 1 Tim 6:18-19; Heb 6:10-12; 1 John 4:7-21)

Daniel Shayesteh concludes by pointing out, “We understand that the so-called Christian world has extensively failed to surrender itself to Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is the disbelief in Jesus Christ that has spread immorality among those who apparently live under the name of Christianity. For the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there is only one type of Christian in the world, only those who are saved from the ruler of immorality. Muslims, therefore, must not take the immorality of so-called Christian societies as a sign of the Christian faith having shortcomings.” (Shayesteh 2004: 204, emph. added)
the nature and character of God himself and written on the human heart as Christianity teaches. Instead, according to Islam, it is the specific commands and prohibitions contained in the Qur’an and the Hadith that determine what is or is not moral, good, or evil. To attain “everlasting bliss in the Hereafter,” Suhaym states that Allah “ordained His Law for you and commands you to obey Him. If you therefore believe, obeys [sic.] His Commandment and abstain from all He forbids you, you will attain what He promises you” (As-Suhaym 2006: 221; see also al-Athari 2005: 135). In his commentary on the Mishkat, Karim summarizes: “There are two-fold duties of a man, duty towards God and duty towards His creations. These duties were clearly laid down in the Quran and Hadis [Hadith]. Observance of these duties is called virtue, and the negligence or breach thereof is called sin. . . . Hence the observance of the rules of the Quran and Hadis is compulsory for preservation of the soul from the fire and for its continued progress.” (Karim 1939: 3:121-22)

In following the dictates of the Qur’an and the Hadith, the Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam states, “Allah’s law is not to be penetrated by the intelligence, it is ta’abbudî, i.e. man has to accept it without criticism, with its apparent inconsistencies and its incomprehensible decrees, as wisdom into which it is impossible to enquire. One must not look in it for causes in our sense, nor for principles; it is based on the will of Allah which is bound by no principles.” (Gibb and Kramers 1953: 525) This is confirmed by Q. 5:101-02 which says, “Ask not questions about things which, if made plain to you, may cause you trouble. . . . Some people before you did ask such questions, and on that account lost their faith.” Abdullah al-Athari quotes a number of noted Islamic scholars to the effect that, on matters that the Qur’an mentions but does not explain or that Muhammad did not explain in answer to his companions (e.g., Allah’s attributes, seeing Allah, how Allah “rose above his throne” [Q. 20:5; 57:4], how Allah descends), “Accept them as they are, without asking how. . . . Belief in it is obligatory and asking about it is bid’ah [‘innovation,’ which is prohibited].” (al-Athari 2005: 86-87)107 Mawdudi states that Muhammad “discouraged people from being over-inquisitive and unnecessarily curious about every question” (Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 5:101n.116). In a well-attested hadith, Muhammad said, “The most sinful person among the Muslims is the one who asked about something which had not been prohibited, but was prohibited because of his asking” (al-Bukhari: 7289; see also Muslim: 2358b).

Muslim scholar Vincent J. Cornell confirms that this attitude has always been inherent in Islam: “As an institutionalized religion, Islam always had a problem with difference, and hostility toward non-Muslims has usually been accompanied by hostility against Muslim dissidents as well. Throughout much of Islamic history, meaningful debates about theology or epistemology were discouraged, whether inside or outside of the creedal boundaries of Islam. Adoption of epistemologies deemed alien to Islam, such as those of Hellenistic philosophy, brought charges of bid’ah (unwarranted innovation of tradition) or zandaqah (heresy), which could lead to imprisonment or worse. . . . For Muslim jurists and theologians, it was not fear of the other as an individual that was seen as a threat, but fear of the other’s ideas and values. . . . This attitude continues to exist today, not only in the doctrines of extremist groups such as al-Qaeda and the Taliban, but also in the beliefs of many mainstream Muslims who have been influenced by Wahabbism, Salafism, and other purist ideologies.” (Cornell 2014: 73-75)

In sum, Islamic morality, good and evil, are defined by the shari’ah which is designed to regulate all aspects of a Muslim’s life and “provide a ruling on any issue that may confront the Muslim community” (Emerick 2004: 55). Therefore, “reason cannot take precedence over shari’ah,” but “reason must work within the framework of shari’ah” (al-Athari 2005: 175). The shari’ah is based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah; and since the Qur’an is based solely on Muhammad’s word, and the Sunnah is, by definition, the words and deeds of Muhammad, in Islam “Muhammad is at the center, the standard by which all behavior is measured” (Spencer 2009: 94). As Ram Swarup puts it, “Morality does not determine the Prophet’s actions, but his actions determine and define morality” (Swarup 2002: 11).108

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107 In a hadith, Muhammad said that bid’ah puts one out of Islam, thus guaranteeing one a place in Hell: “Allah will not accept any fasting, prayer, charity, Hajj, ‘Umrah, Jihad, or any other obligatory or voluntary action from a person who follows innovation (Bid’ah). He comes out of Islam like a hair pulled out of dough.” (Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 49) Because one man asked how Allah “rose over [Istawa] his throne,” as Q. 20:5 literally says, Athari reports that the leader of the assembly said, “‘I do not think you are anything but misguided.’ And he commanded that this man should be expelled from the gathering.” (al-Athari 2005: 86-87)

108 C. S. Lewis observed a huge problem with the basis of Islam’s entire theory of morality: “If good is to be defined as what God commands, then the goodness of God Himself is emptied of meaning and the commands of an omnipotent fiend would have the same claim on us as those of the ‘righteous Lord’” (Lewis 1967c: 79). This is not merely a theoretical or philosophical problem but is intensely practical, particularly given the multiple commands and examples of Allah and Muhammad to hate, lie to, and kill non-Muslims (see section 2.IX.D. Muhammad and murder, above, and sections III.F. Implications of sin and salvation according to Islam and 5.VIII. The Doctrine of Abrogation, below).
C. The concept of sin in Islam

Muhammad said, “Righteouness is good behaviour, and sin is what fluctuates in your chest, and you would hate that the people discovered it about you” (at-Tirmidhi: 2389). Although this implies that Islam has the concept of sinful thoughts, most Muslims hold that is not correct. “Islamicly speaking, an evil thought only becomes sinful when acted upon.” (Brown 2011: n.p.) According to Islam, “A sin is any act, thought, or will that (1) is deliberate, (2) defies the unequivocal law of God, (3) violates the right of God or the right of man, (4) is harmful to the soul or body, (5) is committed repeatedly, and (6) is normally avoidable” (“The Concept” 2009: n.p.).

The situation for Muslims concerning the issue of sin, however, is far more complicated than the above principles might suggest. For example, the idea that an evil thought only becomes sin if acted upon is not entirely correct: it also becomes sin if spoken about, because Muhammad said, “Verily Allah forgave my people the evil promptings which arise within their hearts as long as they did not speak about them or did not act upon them” (Muslim: 127a; see also al-Bukhari: 5269, 6664; Ibn Majad: vol. 3, book 10, no. 2040, 2044; an-Nasa’i: 3434). Further, the thoughts of the heart themselves or the character that springs from them may indeed be counted as sins. Muhammad said, “He who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of pride shall not enter Paradise” (Muslim: 91c). Similarly, the “stingy person” will not enter Paradise (at-Tirmidhi 1963), and the “miser” will be an inmate of Hell (Muslim: 2865a). The person “whose greed cannot be concealed even in the case of minor things” likewise will be an inmate of Hell (Muslim: 2865a). Muhammad said that “neither the Jawwaz nor the Jazari will enter paradise. He said that the Jawwaz is the one who is coarse and uncivil.” (Abi Dawud: 4801).

More importantly, sin is a complicated matter for Muslims because “Islam is an ordering of life for the family and for society; it prescribes clothing as well as dietary regulations just as it imposes laws regulating marriage and inheritance. Exact regulations are to be observed in prayer, fasting, and the pilgrimage to Mecca, regulations that are not placed at the discretion of the individual. These regulations have the status of religious law, the disregard of which makes the respective action (prayer, for example) invalid before God.” (Schirrmacher 2011: 13; see also As-Suhayym 2006: 202-03) Emerick summarizes that, contrary to Christianity, “Islamic Law, which is derived from the rules contained in the Qur’an and the oral traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, is a detailed code concerned with do’s and don’ts, good and evil, and relations among people” (Emerick 2004: 33).

1. Under Islamic law, all actions are either halal (allowed) or haram (prohibited). “In keeping with the Islamic spirit of planning for all eventualities, there are two other categories by which actions can be judged. These are things permissible, though not encouraged; and things disliked, though not sinful.” (Emerick 2004: 264) Pursuant to this rule-based, legalistic notion of sin, Islam has multiple categories or gradations of sin.109 There is a basic division between “kabirah, ‘great,’ and saghirah, ‘little’ sins” (Hughes 1895: 594). However, Islamic law does not clearly differentiate between the two. For example, Karim states, “Any breach of the fundamental duties of which the performance is Farz (compulsory) and Wajeb (obligatory) is called a great sin. Any breach of other minor duties is called a minor sin. Breach of any duty which the Holy Prophet used to do constantly without any break is a great sin. Constant repetition of a minor sin makes it a major one.” (Karim 1939: 3:127) There is no definitive list of “great sins.” Ghabril lists 17 generally agreed upon major sins (Ghabril 2003: 15). Karim’s commentary on the Mishkat lists 53 (Karim 1939: 3:128-29).

2. The greatest sins in Islam are shirk (associating partners with Allah) and kufr (unbelief). One Muslim author says, “Murder, rape, child molesting and genocide. These are all some of the appalling crimes which occur in our world today. Many would think that these are the worst possible offences which could be committed. But there is something which outweighs all of these crimes put together: It is the crime of shirk. . . . Linguistically, shirk means a partnership or to share or associate. However, Islamically it is to give to other than Allah, that which belongs solely to Allah. This means that parts of Allah’s creation are given powers and attributes which belong to Allah, thus, ultimately sending worship to other then Allah alone.” (“Shirk” 1997: Introduction; The Reality of Shirk)

There are two main kinds of shirk: major and minor; but there is also “hidden [or invisible] shirk” which may be either major or minor (“The types” 2016: n.p.; At-Tamimi 2002: 212-15). Major shirk is “to devote any form of worship to anyone other than Allah” (At-Tamimi 2002: 212; see also “Shirk” 1997: Shirk in the Worship of Allah [Eebaadah]). Tamimi lists four subcategories of major shirk: (1) invocation (i.e., supplicating other than Allah [Q. 29:65]); (2) intention, will, and purpose (i.e., desiring the life of the world [Q. 11:15-16]);

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109 Iskander Jadeed gives examples of fifteen different descriptions of sin in the Qur’an and adds that there are many others (Jadeed 2010: 2-4).
(3) obedience (i.e., readiness to comply with the orders of others in disobedience to Allah [Q. 9:31]); and (4) love (i.e., showing love to others which is due to Allah alone [Q. 2:165]) (At-Tamimi 2002: 212-14). Allah will never forgive at least major shirk (see Q. 4:48, 116; 17:39; 39:65; 98:6). Muhammad said that minor shirk is “showing-off (of good deeds)” (al-Asqalani n.d.: book 16, no. 1527; see also At-Tamimi 2002: 2015; “The types” 2016: One example of ash-Shirk ul-Asghar).

Shirk can be very subtle. “Hidden Shirk is one of the most confusing forms of shirk as people cannot see that they are committing it” (“The types” 2016: Ash-Shirk ul-Khafie [The Hidden Shirk]). Muhammad said that hidden or invisible shirk “is more hidden than the track of a black ant on a black stone in a dark night” (At-Tamimi 2002: 215; see also Abdul-Wahhab 2002: 141). Muhammad also said, “There is nothing standing between a person and Shirk (polytheism) except leaving the prayer, so if he leaves it he has committed Shirk.” (Ibn Majad: vol. 1, book 5, no. 1080), “Ibn ‘Umar heard a man saying: ‘No by the Ka’bah’ so Ibn ‘Umar said: ‘Nothing is sworn by other than Allah, for I heard the Messenger of Allah say: ‘Whoever swears by other than Allah, he has committed disbelief or shirk.’” (at-Tirmidhi: 1535; see also Abdul-Wahhab 2002: 145). Q. 57:22 says, “Nothing is sworn by other than Allah but is recorded in a decree before We bring it into existence: That is truly easy for Allah.” Consistent with that, Ibn Abbas said that shirk “is also to say: ‘Had there not been this little dog or the duck in the house, the thief would have entered.’ Or, like the statement of a man to his companion: ‘By Allah’s will and yours will…’ or ‘Had it not been Allah and so-and-so’, etc. Do not mention anybody with Allah because all of it is shirk.” (Abdul-Wahhab 2002: 141). Abdul-Wahhab maintains that “it is Shirk to perform a (righteous) deed for worldly reasons” (Ibid.: 129). The Research Division of Darussalam Publishers lists 28 examples of “some things that negate Tawhid [the foundational Islamic doctrine that Allah is One] or cause deficiencies in it” (Darussalam 2002a: 232-39).

Related to shirk is disbelief (kufr). Athari says there are two kinds of kufr: major kufr puts a person beyond the pale of Islam and the other kind does not. Major kufr is called kufr of belief: “This is what goes against faith and nullifies Islam, which dooms a person to abide in Hell forever. It may take the form of beliefs, words or deeds. It is divided into five categories.” (al-Athari 2005: 144) Those five categories are: (1) Kufr by disbelief, i.e., believing that the Messengers were false or claiming that Allah permitted or forbade something the person knows is not the case; (2) Kufr of arrogantly refusing to follow a truth of Islam even though the person affirms it to be true; (3) Kufr of turning away, i.e., neither believing nor disbelieving the Messenger or ignoring the truth; (4) Kufr of hypocrisy, i.e., making an outward show of following what the Messenger brought while inwardly rejecting and denying it; (5) Kufr of doubt, i.e., having some doubts about the Prophet and hesitancy in following him. (Ibid.: 144-46; see also At-Tamimi 2002: 216-17)

3. Other aspects and implications of the Islamic view of morality and sin. Because Islam’s view of morality is based on compliance with the “detailed code of do’s and don’ts” in the Qur’an and the Hadith, acts of sin that can land one in Hell are virtually endless. In addition to that, Emerick warns, “When our good and our bad deeds are about to be examined, Muhammad said that our prayers will be looked at first. If they are found to be full of deficiencies, then God won’t even look at the rest of our record. Imagine going to court and having all the evidence that exonerates you declared inadmissible because of serious procedural mistakes on your part!” (Emerick 2004: 136)

Finally, unintentional acts may be sin, even shirk. For example, Q. 12:106 says, “Most of them believe in Allah and still practice Shirk (polytheism).” In one case, Muhammad said, “Allah said: ‘The son of Adam hurts Me by abusing Time, for I am Time’” (al-Bukhari: 7491). Abdul-Wahhab comments, “Abusing Ad-Dahr (the time) is in fact to wrong Allah. . . . Something may be an abuse even if it was not the heartfelt intention (of the abuser).” (Abdul-Wahhab 2002: 147, emph. added) In another case, “Jundub reported that Allah’s Messenger stated that a person said: Allah would not forgive such and such (person). Thereupon Allah the Exalted and Glorious, said: Who is he who adjores about Me that I would not grant pardon to so and so; I have granted pardon to so and so and blotted out his deeds (who took an oath that I would not grant pardon to him).” (Muslim: 2621) Abdul-Wahhab notes that the man who had made the statement had been a faithful worshipper, but “his one statement destroyed his life in this world and the Hereafter. . . . In this Hadith it is described that a man sometimes utters a sentence unintentionally but the consequences of that are grave (i.e., severe

110 Abdul-Wahhab states, “The Companions used to explain that the Verses revealed about major Shirk include minor Shirk also” (Abdul-Wahhab 2002: 142). If that is the case, then Allah also may never forgive minor shirk.

111 Thirteenth century Muslim scholar Abu Zakaria Mohiuddin Yahya Ibn Sharafal-Nawawi, in his book Riyad as-Salihin, commented, “Some ‘Ulama’ are of the opinion that the words of the Prophet that ‘He who swears by anyone or anything other than Allah has indeed committed an act of Kufr [disbelief] or Shirk,’ are in the nature of extreme admonition. And in fact, it is not Shirk. The same applies to the saying of the Prophet, who said, ‘showing off is Shirk.’” (al-Nawawi, Riyad: book 18, no. 201) Other Islamic scholars disagree (see Abdul-Wahhab 2002: 34-35 [showing off is a type of Shirk]).
D. Contrary to its official doctrine, Islam in fact accepts the innate sinfulness of mankind

Islam’s formal doctrine is that human beings are created innocent and our natural tendency is to strive toward good. One therefore would expect at least some persons—especially Muhammad himself—acting in accordance with their supposed “innocence” and “natural tendency” would not sin. That is not the case. Islam in fact recognizes that every human being who lives and who ever has lived, including Muhammad, is a sinner.112 Thus, Q. 35:45 states, “If Allah were to punish men according to what they deserve. He would not leave on the back of the (earth) a single living creature” (see also Q. 16:61; 103:2).

The universality of sin is not just the result of “external influence and intruding factors” (“The Concept” 2009: n.p.). Instead, contrary to its own professed doctrine that human beings are born pure and are naturally inclined to good, Islam, like Christianity, in fact attributes the universality of human sin to the corrupt internal nature of all human beings. Islamic teaching gives three different reasons for humanity’s innate sinfulness:

1. Human sinfulness is attributed to the way Allah made people from the beginning. Many Qur’anic passages indicate that Allah created human beings with a corrupt or sinful nature: “Man was created weak” (Q. 4:28); “Verily, man is given up to injustice and ingratitude” (Q. 14:34; see also Q. 33:72; 50:16); “Man is ever miserly!” (Q. 17:100, Hilali-Khan); “Truly man was created very impatient” (Q. 70:19); “And violent is he in his love of wealth” (Q. 100:8). “And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it and inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness” (Q. 91:7-8, Sahih).113 In commenting on this very passage, Muhammad clarified that Allah is the one who inspired (i.e., “breathed in”) sin into the human soul: “Consider the soul and Him Who made it perfect, then breathed into it its sin and its piety” (Muslim: 2650, emph. added). Muhammad also said, “Allah fixed the very portion of adultery which a man will indulge in. There would be no escape from it.” (Muslim: 2658a; see alsoal Bukhari: 6243; al-Nawawi, Riyad: book 18, no. 112)

The Qur’an and the Hadith confirm that sinfulness is an integral part of humanity’s nature as created by Allah. In Q. 2:30, when Allah proposed to make human beings a viceroy on earth the angels responded, “Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?” That response indicates that the angels were aware, even before any actual sin had been committed, that sin was inevitable because of humanity’s sinful, created nature. Ibn Kathir admits, “The angels knew of this fact, according to their understanding of human nature” (Ibn Kathir 2003: Q. 2:30, comment). “When Allah fashioned Adam in Paradise, He left him as He liked him to leave. Then Iblis roam round him to see what actually that was and when he found him hollow from within, he recognised that he had been created with a disposition that he would not have control over himself.” (Muslim: 2611a, emph. added). Thus, Q. 12:53 affirms that the natural state of all humans is not prone to good, but is prone to evil: “Nor do I absolve my own self (of blame): the (human) soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy.” Hilali-Khan translates it as “Verily, the (human) self is inclined to evil.”

Q. 18:60-82 tells a strange story of Moses meeting a prophet known as Al-Khidr on whom Allah had bestowed mercy and knowledge (Q. 18:65). Q. 18:74 (Hilali-Khan) says, “Then they both proceeded, till they met a boy, he (Khidr) killed him. Musa (Moses) said: ‘Have you killed an innocent person who had killed none? Verily, you have committed a thing ‘Nukra’ (a great Munkar - prohibited, evil, dreadful thing)! ’” In a hadith, Muhammad tried to justify this murder by saying, “The young man whom Khaidr killed was a non-believer by his very nature and had he survived he would have involved his parents in defiance and unbelief” (Muslim: 2662a, emph. added).114

112 The one exception to this is Jesus Christ (see above, section 2.VIII.E. Jesus, not Muhammad, is pure, holy, and without sin or error from his birth).

113 Note that the portions of these verses in brackets are interpretations added by the translator and are not in the original wording. When they are removed, the verses indicate that it is Allah who inspired in man’s soul its wickedness.

114 This is no justification at all. The boy had done nothing wrong. To murder someone for a crime he has not yet committed is unjust by any standard—except, apparently, Islam’s. Tafsir al-Jalalayn even states that “they met a boy, who had not yet reached puberty, playing with [other] boys, among whom his face was the fairest—and he, al-Khidr, slew him, by slitting his throat with a knife while he lay down, or by tearing his head off with his hand, or by smashing his head against a wall” (Jalal 2013: Q. 18:74, comment, emph. added). Since the boy had not reached puberty, according to Islam’s official doctrine he was in his natural state of purity or fitrah and thereby sinless. The operative fact in this story, according to Muhammad, is that the boy was a non-believer, which evidently is a sufficient ground to murder someone. Al-Khidr’s own reason for murdering the boy is even more outrageous: “And as for the boy, his parents were believers, and we feared lest he should oppress them by rebellion and disbelief” (Q. 18:80). According to Al-Khidr, the innocent boy was the child of good Muslim parents, and he only “feared” that the boy would become rebellious and an unbeliever! Any way one looks at it, this story reveals an ugly and violent side of Islam.
Additionally, “The Prophet said, ‘When any human being is born. Satan touches him at both sides of the body with his two fingers, except Jesus, the son of Mary, whom Satan tried to touch but failed, for he touched the placenta-cover instead’” (al-Bukhari: 3286; see also 3431; Muslim: 2366a, c). These ahadith directly contradict the idea that people are born in a state of purity, innocence, or fitrah, or are naturally inclined toward good. Emerick admits that “no human can ever hope to be perfect enough to earn heaven” (Emerick 2004: 35).

Mawdudi, in commenting on Q. 29:6, which talks about people “striving” or “struggling,” notes that people have to struggle against Satan and other people but also “he has to fight his own self also, which exerts to make him the slave of its lusts . . . This struggle is not of a day or two, but of a lifetime, of every moment of the day and night. And it is not a struggle in one field only but on every front of life.” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 29:6n.8)

Khan quotes a poem by the first caliph, Muhammad’s closest companion Abu Bakr, “O God, how shall I be saved, for there is no goodness in me? I am overwhelmed with iniquities, but am wanting in goodness.” (Khan 1992: 17) Suhaym states that repentance lets a person “know his real self, that it is inclined to evil” and “enables him to know that he is full of faults and defects” (As-Suhaym 2006: 217, 218).

2. Human sinfulness is attributable to Adam and Eve’s sin which affected their progeny. Islam appears to have its own version of the “fall” of mankind. Q. 33:72 states, “We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it;—He was indeed unjust and foolish.” Yusuf Ali comments on this, “The Heavens, the Earth, and the Mountains, i.e., other creatures of Allah, besides man, refused to undertake a Trust or a responsibility, and may be imagined as happy without a choice of good or evil being given through their will. In saying that they refused, we imply a will, but we limit it by the statement that they did not undertake to be given a choice between good and evil. They preferred to submit their will entirely to Allah’s Will, which is All-Wise and Perfect, and which would give them far more happiness than a faculty of choice, with their imperfect knowledge. Man was too audacious and ignorant to realise this, and the result has been that man as a race has been disrupted.” (Ali 2002: Q. 33:72n.3779) In another comment on this same verse, Ali adds, “Allah intended a very high destiny for man, and placed him in his uncorrupted state even above the angels, but in his corruption he made himself even lower than the beasts” (Ali 2002: Q. 33:72n.3781). From this, one can infer that humanity originally was uncorrupted but through sin has become corrupted, i.e., “fallen.”

Other Qur’anic passages and ahadith directly tie mankind’s “fall” to Adam and Eve’s sin in the Garden, just as the Bible relates. Q. 2:35-36 says, “We said: ‘O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will; but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression.’ Then did Satan make them slip from the (garden), and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been. We said: ‘Get ye down, all (ye people), with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be transgression.’ Then did Satan make them slip from the (garden), and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been.” (Ali 2002: Q. 2:35-36, comments)

Emerick admits that “no human can ever hope to be perfect enough to earn heaven” (Emerick 2004: 35). Suhaym states that repentance lets a person “know his real self, that it is inclined to evil” and “enables him to know that he is full of faults and defects” (As-Suhaym 2006: 217, 218).

Further, Adam and Eve’s “fall” affected not only themselves but their progeny as well. In other words, in addition to accepting the doctrine of the “fall” of mankind, Islam also does accept the doctrine of “original sin.” We know this because Allah’s punishment of Adam and Eve condemned all of Adam and Eve’s progeny to the same exclusion from the garden—despite the fact that they supposedly are born in a state of purity, fitrah, and...
sinlessness. Note that Allah’s command in Q. 2:36 encompassed “all” people, not “both.” Thus, in some sense all of humanity was “in Adam,” just as Christianity maintains. As a result, “God declared that humans would have discord and hatred for each other from now on because of the inherent struggle to survive in the world” (Emerick 2004: 94). Tabari’s History states, “When God settled Adam and his spouse in His Paradise, He permitted them to eat of whatever fruit they wished, except the fruit of one tree. This was to afflict them and have God’s judgement on them and their progeny come to pass [citing Q. 2:35].” (al-Tabari 1989: 275, emph. added.)

Additionally, Allah’s punishment included being able to live on the earth only “for a time” (Q. 2:36). In his comment on this ayah, Ibn Kathir points out that “for a time” means “limited life” (Ibn Kathir 2003: Q. 2:36, comment) Thus, human death is the result of Adam and Eve’s sin. One Muslim writer uses this analogy concerning Adam and Eve’s sin and Allah’s punishment: “As for the consequences of the sin of Adam, which was his extradition from the Garden, this was felt by those to come after him and this is only natural. If one was to become drunk and have a car accident, and some of the passengers die, the sin of driver effects [sic.] the passengers in their death.” (Abdulsalam 2006: The Divine Will) By visiting the results and punishments of Adam and Eve on their offspring, Adam and Eve’s sin was disastrous not only for themselves but for everyone who followed after them—exactly as the doctrines of original sin and the fall of man state.

In the Hadith, Muhammad explicitly articulated the doctrine of original sin. In connection with the final judgment he said, “Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, would gather people. The believers would stand till the Paradise would be brought near them. They would come to Adam and say: ‘O our father, open for us the Paradise.’ He would say: ‘What turned ye out from the Paradise was the sin of your father Adam.’” (Muslim: 195; see also al-Bukhari: 6614; see also 3409, 7515, vol. 6, book 60, no. 260, 262; Muslim: 2643a, 2652a, b, c; Abi Dawud: 4701, 4702; an-Nawawi, Riyad: book 1, no. 201) Elsewhere, Muhammad similarly applied the concept that sin is imputed to others: “But for the Israelis, meat would not decay and but for Eve, wives would never betray their husbands” (al-Bukhari: 3330; see also 3399); and “No person who is killed unjustly, but the judgment he said, “Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, would gather people. The believers would stand till the Paradise would be brought near them. They would come to Adam and say: ‘O our father, open for us the Paradise.’ He would say: ‘What turned ye out from the Paradise was the sin of your father Adam.’” (Muslim: 1677a; see also al-Bukhari: 3335, 6867, 7321; at-Tirmidhi: 2673; an-Nasa’i: 3985; Ibn Majah: vol. 3, book 21, no. 2616).117

If, as Muslims assert, the doctrine that a person is only responsible for his or her own sins also applies to Adam and Eve, then the following two corollaries would apply: (1) Allah should have readmitted Adam and Eve to Paradise after he forgave them because they had been forgiven and no longer deserved punishment; (2) Allah should have readmitted Adam and Eve to Paradise for the sake of their offspring (because the offspring are born in a state of purity and sinlessness)—or he should have removed the offspring to paradise at their birth (as he had done with Adam and Eve themselves [see Muslim: 854a, b; an-Nasa’i: book 14, no. 10; at-Tirmidhi: 488])—since the offspring did nothing to deserve the punishments of enmity and death on the earth. Because none of those things occurred, although Islam formally denies the doctrines of original sin and the fall of mankind, in fact it teaches both doctrines.

3. Human sinfulness is attributable directly to Allah. We saw above that the Qur’an and the Hadith teach that Allah created people with a corrupt, sinful nature. Creating people in such a state is not all Allah has done to make sure that every human being sins. Q. 4:88 (Hilali-Khan) states that Allah is the one who actually causes people to go astray without hope or remedy: “Do you want to guide him whom Allah has made to go astray? And he whom Allah has made to go astray, you will never find for him any way (of guidance).” Q. 14:4 (Hilali-Khan) adds, “Allah misleads whom He wills and guides whom He wills” (see also Q. 16:93). In the Hadith Muhammad said, “There is no heart that is not between two of the Fingers of the Most Merciful. If He wills, He guides it and if He wills, He sends it astray.” (Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 199; see also 3834; Muslim: 2655; at-Tirmidhi: 3522) In a similar hadith, Muhammad’s companion, Anas bin Maalik said, “O Prophet of Allah! We believe in you and what you have come with, but do you fear for us?” He said: ‘Yes. Indeed the hearts are between two Fingers of Allah’s Fingers, He changes them as He wills.’” (at-Tirmidhi: vol. 4, book 6, no. 2140)

Allah also actively guarantees that those who go astray and will fall further into sin. First, Allah himself caused Satan to sin: “Then Satan said, ‘Because you have made me go astray, I shall certainly try to seduce people into straying from the right path’” (Q. 7:16, Sarwar); Arberry translates it “Now, for Thy perverting me .

116 Abdulsalam goes on to say, “That does not mean that the passengers are to be held to account for the sin of the driver” (Abdulsalam 2006: The Divine Will). Although that is true in one sense, the essence of the doctrine of original sin refers to the result of Adam and Eve’s sin for their progeny, just as the passengers bear the result of the drunk driver’s accident.
117 This is, indeed, original sin: “If I kill today, I do it by my own choice also [as did Cain]. In other words, I did not kill because Cain killed, but I sinned (by killing), because sin started with Cain. Cain’s capacity for sin became our inheritance, or as Muhammad put it, we share the sin of Cain.” (Prince 2011: 53, emph. in orig.)
. . .” Second, Allah attaches demons to people as intimate companions: “If anyone withdraws himself from remembrance of (Allah) Most Gracious, We appoint for him an evil one, to be an intimate companion to him. Such (evil ones) really hinder them from the Path, but they think that they are being guided aright!” (Q. 43:36-37) Additionally, Allah guarantees that the demons will be effective because, as Muhammad said, “The devils do not lead anyone astray by their temptation except the one whom Allah destined to go to Hell” (Abi Dawud: 4614). The Hadith also confirms that Allah’s purpose and pleasure in creating human beings was that they sin. Muhammad said, “If you were not to commit sins, Allah would have swept you out of existence and would have replaced you by another people who have committed sin, and then asked forgiveness from Allah, and He would have granted them pardon” (Muslim: 2748b; see also 2749).

E. Salvation according to Islam

Just as Islam has internally inconsistent positions regarding the nature of humanity and the cause of sin, it likewise has inconsistent positions concerning how people can be saved or rescued from their sins and go to Paradise instead of Hell. There are at least three conflicting lines of teaching concerning how people are saved from Hell and go to Paradise: (1) Balancing one’s good deeds against bad deeds; (2) Allah’s simply choosing to forgive someone for reasons of his own, regardless of one’s works; and (3) Allah’s pre-decree whereby some have been eternally predestined to Paradise and some eternally predestined to Hell.

1. Salvation is a balancing of one’s works. Q. 53:39 (Hilali-Khan) states the basic “self-salvation” philosophy of Islam: “Man can have nothing but what he does (good or bad).” Q. 2:281 warns that one should “fear the Day when ye shall be brought back to Allah. Then shall every soul be paid what it earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly.” The Qur’an has dozens of verses that say that Allah’s favor at the final judgment will be on those who “believe and work righteousness” (e.g., Q. 10:4; 11:23; 14:23; 17:9; 18:30, 46; 20:75, 82, 112; 22:14, 23, 50, 56; 28:67, 80; 32:19-20; 99:6-8). Suhaym states, “The believer in Allah will have certain knowledge that there is no way to success and salvation except through good deeds that please Allah” (As-Suhaym 2006: 179). The Qur’an also compares the judgment to scales in which good deeds will be weighed against bad deeds: “The balance that day will be true (to nicety): those whose scale (of good) will be heavy, will prosper: Those whose scale will be light, will be their souls in perdition, for that they wrongfully treated Our signs.” (Q. 7:8-9); “And when the trumpet is blown there will be no kinship among them that day, nor will they ask of one another. Then those whose balance (of good deeds) is heavy,- they will attain salvation: But those whose balance is light, will be those who have lost their souls, in Hell will they abide.” (Q. 23:101-03; see also Q. 21:47; 101:6-9)

The situation is not quite as simple as the balancing of the scales might imply. The Qur’an says that on judgment day all people and all demons first will be sent to Hell; only later will some be saved out of Hell: “Does not man remember that We created him before, while he was nothing? So by your Lord, surely, We shall gather them together, and (also) the Shayatin (devils) (with them), then We shall bring them round Hell on their knees. Then indeed We shall drag out from every sect all those who were worst in obstinate rebellion against the Most Beneficent (Allah), Then, verily, We know best those who are most worthy of being burnt therein. There is not one of you but will pass over it (Hell); this is with your Lord: A Decree which must be accomplished. Then We shall save those who use to fear Allah and were dutiful to Him. And We shall leave the Zalimun (polytheists and wrongdoers, etc.) therein (humbled) to their knees (in Hell).” (Q. 19:67-72, Hilali-Khan) Muhammad said, “Some people who will be scorched by Hell (Fire) as a punishment for sins they have committed, and then Allah will admit them into Paradise by the grant of His Mercy. These people will be called, ‘Al-Jahannamiyyin’ (the people of Hell).” (al-Bukhari: 7450; see also at-Tirmidhi: vol. 4, book 13, no. 2597)

That is not all. Emerick says that people “whether guilty or innocent, will have to take a harrowing journey over a bridge called the Sirat, which spans the chasm of Hell and leads to Paradise on the other side. The Sirat is as thin as a razor and is studded with jagged edges and spikes.” (Emerick 2004: 73-74) Several ahadith discuss this: “Allah will call them, and As-Sirat (a bridge) will be laid across Hell and I (Muhammad) shall be the first amongst the Apostles to cross it with my followers. Nobody except the Apostles will then be able to speak and they will be saying then, ‘O Allah! Save us. O Allah Save us.’ There will be hooks like the thorns of Sa’dan in Hell. . . . These hooks will be like the thorns of Sa’dan but nobody except Allah knows their greatness in size and these will entangle the people according to their deeds; some of them will fall and stay in Hell forever; others will receive punishment (torn into small pieces) and will get out of Hell, till when Allah intends mercy on whomsoever He likes amongst the people of Hell, He will order the angels to take out of Hell those who worshipped none but Him alone. The angels will take them out by recognizing them from the traces of prostrations, for Allah has forbidden the (Hell) fire to eat away those traces. So they will come out of the Fire, it will eat away from the whole of the human body except the marks of the prostrations. At that time they will
come out of the Fire as mere skeletons. The Water of Life will be poured on them and as a result they will grow like the seeds growing on the bank of flowing water. (al-Bukhari: 806; see also 6573, 7437, 7438; see also Muslim: 195; an-Nawawi, *Riyad*: book 1, no. 201)

In yet another hadith on the same subject, Muhammad amazingly states that “when the believers pass safely over (the bridge across) Hell, they will be stopped at a bridge in between Hell and Paradise where they will retaliate upon each other for the injustices done among them in the world, and when they get purified of all their sins, they will be admitted into Paradise. By Him in Whose Hands the life of Muhammad is everybody will recognize his dwelling in Paradise better than he recognizes his dwelling in this world.” (al-Bukhari: 2440) Almost unbelievably, the people “are cleansed and purified (through the retaliation)” (al-Bukhari: 6535).

2. Salvation is Allah’s choosing to forgive, regardless of one’s works. In conflict with the above bizarre method of judgment and salvation, multiple other Islamic authorities divorce one’s deeds from salvation. For example, in the Hadith, Muhammad said, “None amongst you can get into Paradise by virtue of his deeds alone. They said: Allah’s Messenger, not even you? Thereupon he said: Not even I, but that Allah should wrap me in His Grace and Mercy.” (Muslim: 2816f; see also 2816a, b, c, d, e, g, 2817c, 2818a; al-Bukhari: 5673, 6463, 6464, 6467; Ibn Majah: vol. 5, book 37, no. 4201)

This line of authority cites the statements at the beginning of every Qur’anic surah except surah 9 that Allah is called “the Beneficent, the Merciful.” Many verses call on people to repent and ask for Allah to forgive their sins. For example: “Allah accept the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and repent soon afterwards; to them will Allah turn in mercy: For Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom” (Q. 4:17); “But any that (in this life) had repented, believed, and worked righteousness, will have hopes to be among those who achieve salvation” (Q. 28:67; see also Q. 3:16-17; 47:19; 48:1-2). Emerick cites the case of Adam and Eve: “Islam states that after a while God had mercy on the repentant and humbled pair and taught them how to ask for His forgiveness. Then, when they implored God for His grace, guess what? He forgave them. End of story.” (Emerick 2004: 94)

Nevertheless, salvation by one’s repenting and asking for Allah’s forgiveness is problematic for at least two reasons:

- First, forgiveness does not cancel the effects of sin and God’s judgment of sin. “It is true that God, out of His bounteous love, has willed that man be saved. How? Is it through repentance? But repentance cannot overrule judgement and, consequently, lift punishment because this would not meet the demands of God’s justice. It is true that while repentance stands between the repenting person and the committal of further sin, it does not eradicate the effect of preceding sin and the judgement of God therein.” (Jadeed 1996-2019: 11) Islam has no provision for the penalty of sin being paid for like Christ did on the cross. Ghabril discusses this inherent problem within Islam: “Heaven or paradise, which men aspire to enter, is a pure spot where only the purified and those made righteous can enter. Thus he who commits one sin has transgressed and become[s] unclean. . . . Suppose a Muslim is dressed in a white robe and while on his way to prayer a speck of dirt fell on his robe or person. Wouldn’t he be considered unclean? If that was his state wouldn’t he have to return and purify himself to be able to start prayer? This is the state of man towards God in respect to purity and impurity.” (Ghabril 2003: 24) He adds, “While it is true [Allah] can do as he pleases, yet he would not will what denies his original attributes and his divine law. Supposing the judge pardoned your brother’s murderer after his crime was proved, then went on to forgive him. Would you regard him as being just? Not at all! You would regard him as unjust because he violated the law.” (Ibid.)

- Second, forgiveness is neither automatic nor guaranteed. The Qur’an says that Allah may or may not accept one’s repentance: “Others (there are who) have acknowledged their wrong-doings: they have mixed an act that was good with another that was evil. Perhaps Allah will turn unto them (in Mercy): for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Q. 9:102, emph. added); “And to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. He forgives whom He wills, and punishes whom He wills. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Q. 3:129, Hilali-Khan; see also Q. 2:284); “Allah forgiveth not (The sin of) joining other gods with Him; but He forgiveth whom He pleaseth other sins than this” (Q. 4:116; see also Q. 5:8; 48:14). Athari says that if a person dies having committed a sin “for which there is no evidence that committing it constitutes *kufr* [unbelief]—then his case rests with Allah: if He wills, He will punish him, and if He wills, He will forgive him” (al-Athari 2005: 141).

Allah chooses to forgive or not forgive for reasons only he knows; what he may choose to do is completely unpredictable. For example, one hadith says, “He [Allah] laughs at two men, one of whom killed the other, then they both entered Paradise” (an-Nasa’i: 3165). On the other hand, another hadith says, “The Messenger of Allah said: If anyone who is sexual defiled leaves a spot equal to the breadth of a hair without washing, such and such an amount of Hell-fire will have to be suffered for it” (Abi Dawud: 249). Are we to
conclude from this that an unwashed spot no larger than the breadth of a hair is more serious to Allah than murder? Further, as we saw above, Allah’s “forgiveness” of Adam and Eve is at best only partial: (1) he never let them back into paradise from which he had expelled them; (2) they were condemned to a life of enmity, discord, and hatred between themselves; (3) they were doomed to die as a consequence of their sin; and (4) their children and all others who would follow after them were consigned to share the same fate as they themselves had to bear.

3. Salvation is determined by Allah’s pre-decree. Another line of Islamic authority divorces salvation both from one’s works and from Allah’s choice to forgive or not forgive but places one’s eternal destiny solely in Allah’s pre-existing decree. We noted in the first chapter that the sixth of Islam’s six articles of belief (imam) is belief in Allah’s pre-decree, namely, everything that happens in the universe, both good and bad, faith and unbelief, happens by the will and decree of Allah, and Allah does whatever he wills. For example, Q. 28:68 (Hilali-Khan) says, “Your Lord creates whatsoever He wills and chooses, no choice have they (in any matter). Glorified be Allah, and exalted above all that they associate as partners (with Him)”;

Q. 16:93: “If Allah so willed, He could make you all one people: But He leaves straying whom He pleases, and He guides whom He pleases.” (See also Q. 4:88) Ahadith confirm this: “I heard the Messenger of Allah saying: Verily the first of what Allah created was the Pen. He said to it: Write. So it wrote what will be forever.” (at-Tirmhidi: vol. 5, book 44, no. 3319; see also Abi Dawud: 4700).

Allah’s pre-decree specifically includes decreeing and creating some to go to Paradise and some to Hell: “Many are the Jinns and men we have made for Hell” (Q. 7:179); “If We had so willed, We could certainly have brought every soul its true guidance: but the Word from Me will come true, ‘I will fill Hell with Jinns and men all together’” (Q. 32:13; see also Q. 11:118-19; Q. 6:149; 13:31). Multiple ahadith confirm this: “Allah created people for Paradise, He created them for it when they were still in their father’s loins, And He has created people for Hell, He created them for it when they were still in their fathers’ loins” (Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 82; see also Muslim: 2662b, c; Abi Dawud: 4713; an-Nasa’i: 1947); “The Messenger of said: ‘Indeed Allah created Adam, then He wiped his back with His Right Hand, and his offspring came out of him. So he said: “I created these for Paradise, and they will do the deeds of the people of Paradise.” Then He wiped his back, and his offspring came out of him. So He said: “I created these for the Fire, and they will do the deeds of the people of the Fire.”’ A man said: ‘Then of what good is doing deeds O Messenger of Allah!’ The Messenger of Allah said: ‘Verily, when Allah created a man for Paradise, He makes him perform the deeds of the people of Paradise, until he dies doing one of the deeds of the people of Paradise. So Allah will admit him into Paradise. And when He created a man for the Fire, He makes him perform the deeds of the people of the Fire until he dies doing the deeds of the people of the Fire. So Allah will enter him into the Fire.’” (at-Tirmhidi: vol. 5, book 44, no. 3075; see also Abi Dawud: 4703)

In fact, the Mishkat relates an amazing hadith that not only addresses Allah’s eternal pre-decree but also reveals his arbitrariness, his uncaring nature, and his racism. Muhammad said, “Allah created Adam when He created him. Then He stroke his right shoulder and took out a white race as if they were seeds, and He stroke his left shoulder and took out a black race as if they were coals. Then He said to those who were on his right side: Towards Paradise and I don’t care. He said to those who were on his left shoulder: Towards the fire and I don’t care.” (Al-Tabrizi 1939: 3:117-18, no. 454w)118

Finally, despite Islam’s official doctrine that a child is in a state of sinlessness until puberty, because of Allah’s pre-decree even children younger than the age of puberty cannot be sure of salvation: “The Messenger of Allah was called to lead the funeral prayer of a child of the Ansar. I said: Allah’s Messenger, there is happiness for this child who is a bird from the birds of Paradise for it committed no sin nor has he reached the age when one can commit sin. He said: ‘A’isha, per adventure, it may be otherwise, because God created for Paradise those who are fit for it while they were yet in their father’s loins and created for Hell those who are to go to Hell. He created them for Hell while they were yet in their father’s loins.” (Muslim: 2662c; see also Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 82)

4. The issue of intercession. As noted above, Islam teaches that everyone must bear the burden of his or her own sins (Q. 6:164; 7:23; 17:15; 39:53; 53:38). The corollary is that no one is able to intercede for another at the judgment. Thus, the Qur’an says, “Then will no intercession of (any) intercessors profit them” (Q. 74:48)

118 Muhammad himself owned and sold a number of Africans as slaves (al-Bukhari: 2468, 5191, 6161, 7263, vol. 6, book 60, no. 435; Muslim: 1602, 2323a; Ibn Majah: vol. 4, book 24, no. 2869; an-Nasa’i: 3728; 4184, 4621; at-Tirmidhi: 1239, 1596). Muhammad even mocked how Africans look: “Allah’s Messenger said, ‘You should listen to and obey, your ruler even if he was an Ethiopian (black) slave whose head looks like a raisin’” (al-Bukhari: 7142, emph. added; Ibn Majah: vol. 4, book 24, no. 2860). In light of the hadith recorded in the Mishkat and these ahadith, it is incredible that any African or person of African heritage would become a Muslim.
and “Guard yourselves against a day when one soul shall not avail another nor shall intercession be accepted for her, nor shall compensation be taken from her, nor shall anyone be helped (from outside)” (Q. 2:48; see also Q. 2:254; 4:109, 123; 6:51, 70; 16:111; 31:33; 40:18, 40-41). The Qur’an specifies that even Muhammad cannot intercede: “Whether thou [Muhammad] ask for their forgiveness, or not, (their sin is unforgivable): if thou ask seventy times for their forgiveness, Allah will not forgive them: because they have rejected Allah and His Messenger: and Allah guideth not those who are perversely rebellious.” (Q. 9:80; see also Q. 39:19) In the Hadith, Muhammad admitted that he could not do anything to save even his own tribe or family, including his daughter, mother, and father: “When Allah revealed the Verse: ‘Warn your nearest kinsmen,’ Allah’s Messenger got up and said, ‘O people of Quraish (or said similar words)! Buy (i.e. save) yourselves (from the Hellfire) as I cannot save you from Allah’s Punishment;’ O Bani `Abd Manaf! I cannot save you from Allah’s Punishment, O Safiya, the Aunt of Allah’s Messenger! I cannot save you from Allah’s Punishment; O Fatima bint Muhammad! Ask me anything from my wealth, but I cannot save you from Allah’s Punishment.’” (al-Bukhari: 2753; see also an-Nasa’i: 3644, 3646, 3647, 3648; at-Tirmidhi: vol. 5, book 44, no. 3185) Muhammad also said, “I sought permission to beg forgiveness for my mother, but He [Allah] did not grant it to me” (Muslim: 976a; see also 976b; Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 6, no. 1572; an-Nasa’i: 2034; Abi Dawud: 3234), and “A man asked: where is my father, Messenger of Allah? He replied! Your father is in Hell. When he turned his back, he said: My father and your father are in Hell.” (Abi Dawud: 4718)

However, just as Islam sets forth conflicting bases for salvation, it also inconsistently allows for intercession at the judgment. The Qur’an opens the possibility of intercession by stating, “To Allah belongs exclusively (the right to grant) intercession: to Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth” (Q. 39:44; see also Q. 2:255; 10:3; 19:87). Angels are said to intercede for the forgiveness of those on the earth (Q. 40:7; 42:5). Q. 43:86 contradicts the “no intercession” passages by saying, “And those whom they invoke besides Allah have no power of intercession:—only he who bears witness to the Truth, and they know (him).” Many Muslim commentators take this to be a reference to Muhammad as having the exclusive ability to intercede (see Ali 2006: Q. 43:86n.4683); others contend that Messengers in addition to Muhammad will be able to intercede (see A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 43:86 n. 68; Jalal 2017: Q. 43:86, comment). In popular Islam, Muhammad’s image “has taken on messianic proportions and, while all Muslims will boldly state that they worship Allah alone and that their prophet was only a faithful messenger, it is obvious that his status in the world of Islam is such as to place him almost as an essential mediator between Allah and his people” (Gilchrist 1994: 121).

While emphasizing Muhammad’s intercessory role, the Hadith adopts intercession virtually without restriction. Despite being unable to effectively intercede even for his own family, Muhammad portrays himself as the greatest intercessor: “I shall be pre-eminent amongst the descendants of Adam on the Day of Resurrection and I will be the first intercessor and the first whose intercession will be accepted (by Allah)” (Muslim: 2278; see also al-Bukhari: 7510; Abi Dawud 4673; Ibn Majah: vol. 5, book 37, no. 4308). He said, “My intercession will be for those of my people who have committed major sins” (Abi Dawud: 4739). Intercession will not be limited to Muhammad: “Whoever reads the Qur’an and memorizes it, Allah will admit him to Paradise and allow him to intercede for ten of his family members who all deserved to enter Hell” (Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 216); “The Prophet said: The intercession of a martyr will be accepted for seventy members of his family” (Abi Dawud: 2522); “If a company of Muslims numbering one hundred pray over a dead person, all of them interceding for him, their intercession for him will be accepted” (Muslim: 947). Nevertheless, there is a limit:Q. 9:113 says, “It is not fitting, for the Prophet and those who believe, that they should pray for forgiveness for Pagans, even though they be of kin, after it is clear to them that they are companions of the Fire.”

F. Implications of sin and salvation according to Islam

Just as the Christian view of the nature of humanity, sin, and salvation through the person and sacrifice of Christ have important implications, so the Islamic view of humanity, sin, and the ways of salvation have important implications. The internal contradictions of Islam may pull Muslims in conflicting directions, as the first two implications show.

1. Muslims have no coherent basis to fight against evil and may be driven to passivity and despair. While one strain of Islamic thought teaches both the “fall” of mankind and the doctrine of “original sin,” official Islamic teaching denies both of those doctrines. By denying the fall of mankind, Islam therefore must see the world as Allah intends it to be. Further, the overwhelming teaching of Islam is Allah’s predestination and direct control of and involvement in everything, including evil. This emphasis on Allah’s pre-decree can lead to passivity and even despair. This is indicated by the question a man asked when Muhammad explained that Allah had already created and decreed some people for Paradise and some for Hell: “What is the good of doing
According to the amount of our good deeds. It's a kind of religious capitalism with results that can only make life better for everyone.” (Emerick 2004: 36) While the prospect of earning one’s salvation can be an incentive of religion” (al-Athari 2005: 58).

Hadith. Therein lies the problem, for Muslims “do not regard anyone as a friend or an enemy except on the basis of what constitutes “good deeds” is not based on any universally-acknowledged morality but on the specific commands and prohibitions of the Qur’an and the Shi’ah Commentary. For example, Muhammad said, “Whoever introduces an innovation (bid‘ah) with which Allah and his Messenger are not pleased, he will have a (burden of) sin equivalent to that of those among the people who act upon it, without that detracting from their sins in the slightest” (Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 210; see also vol. 1, book 1, no. 14, 42, 45, 50). The practical implications of this are summarized by Bernard Lewis in his book What Went Wrong? Despite the great numerical growth of Islam, “it became abundantly clear in the Middle East and indeed all over the lands of Islam that things had gone badly wrong. Compared with its millennial rival, Christendom, the world of Islam had become poor, weak, and ignorant. In the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the primacy and therefore the dominance of the West was clear for all to see.” (Lewis 2002: 151) As Sundiata states, this worldview “is responsible for the Muslims’ lack of determination to improve their situation; they think that their situation is exactly ‘as Allah wills’ and have therefore neither the power nor the permission to interfere with the fate Allah has fixed for them. The Islamic mind-set stifles the human desire to learn how things and situations work and how they may be made to work; it discourages Muslims from learning about other people, places, and things.” (Sundiata 2006: 214)

2. Many Muslims are driven to fanaticism, terror, and jihad. Emerick alleges that “Allah rewards us according to the amount of our good deeds. It’s a kind of religious capitalism with results that can only make life better for everyone.” (Emerick 2004: 36) While the prospect of earning one’s salvation can be an incentive for doing good deeds, recall that Islam’s definition of what constitutes “good deeds” is not based on any universally-acknowledged morality but on the specific commands and prohibitions of the Qur’an and the Hadith. Therein lies the problem, for Muslims “do not regard anyone as a friend or an enemy except on the basis of what constitutes “good deeds” is not based on any universally-acknowledged morality but on the specific commands and prohibitions of the Qur’an and the Shi’ah Commentary. For example, Muhammad said, “Whoever introduces an innovation (bid‘ah) with which Allah and his Messenger are not pleased, he will have a (burden of) sin equivalent to that of those among the people who act upon it, without that detracting from their sins in the slightest” (Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 210; see also vol. 1, book 1, no. 14, 42, 45, 50). The practical implications of this are summarized by Bernard Lewis in his book What Went Wrong? Despite the great numerical growth of Islam, “it became abundantly clear in the Middle East and indeed all over the lands of Islam that things had gone badly wrong. Compared with its millennial rival, Christendom, the world of Islam had become poor, weak, and ignorant. In the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the primacy and therefore the dominance of the West was clear for all to see.” (Lewis 2002: 151) As Sundiata states, this worldview “is responsible for the Muslims’ lack of determination to improve their situation; they think that their situation is exactly ‘as Allah wills’ and have therefore neither the power nor the permission to interfere with the fate Allah has fixed for them. The Islamic mind-set stifles the human desire to learn how things and situations work and how they may be made to work; it discourages Muslims from learning about other people, places, and things.” (Sundiata 2006: 214)

Violating this command has eternal consequences. Sunni scholars Dr. Naajeh Ibrahim, Sheik ‘Aasim ‘Abdul Maaajid, and Sheikh ‘Esaaum-ud-Deen Darbaalah, in their book In Pursuit of Allah’s Pleasure, add that Islam “determines the position a Muslim should take against the disbelievers, namely hatred, animosity and roughness, and nothing else other than that. There should be no inclination towards the disbelievers, nor should there be any compromises with them. . . . Islam considers both inclination towards the disbelievers and making compromises with them forbidden acts. . . . Hidden loyalty to the disbelievers (that is with the heart) is deemed kufr akbar, or major disbelief which definitely takes one out of the fold of Islam, whether or not one expresses it openly.” (Ibrahim, Maaajid, and Darbaalah n.d.: 137-38, citing Q. 2:120, 217; 3:28, 118; 11:113; 58:22; 61:8; 68:9) Tamimi says that one thing which “negates Tauhid” [and thereby guarantees consignment to Hell since tauhid is the foundational Islamic doctrine that Allah is One] is “befriending disbelievers and hypocrites by
glorifying and honoring them. This includes addressing them with the title Saiyid (sir), receiving them with greetings of respect and loving them.” (At-Tamimi 2002: 238) This even includes one’s own family: “Thou wilt not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day, loving those who resist Allah and His Messenger, even though they were their fathers or their sons, or their brothers, or their kindred” (Q. 58:22). Q. 48:29 (Hilali-Khan) goes beyond that and says, “Muhammad (SAW) is the Messenger of Allah, and those who are with him are severe against disbelievers, and merciful among themselves” (see also Q. 5:54; 66:9). Q. 9:29 goes beyond that, commanding Muslims to “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” (see also Q. 2:191, 216; 4:89; 9:5, 123).

These commands raise the issue of jihad. The root from which the word jihad is derived occurs 41 times in the Qur’an in different forms; its basic meaning is “to strive” (“Quran Dictionary” 2009-2017: Q. 160:1, jihādān). There are a few “peaceful” applications of jihad in the Qur’an (see Q. 22:78) and the Hadith (see al-Bukhari: 2784; 2787). Nevertheless, although Muhammad used the term jihad in both spiritual (peaceful) and physical (warfare) contexts, he strongly emphasized physical jihad. “The peaceful practice of Islam hinges on later, often Western, interpretations of Muhammad’s teaching, whereas the more violent variations of Islam are deeply rooted in orthodoxy and history” (Qureshi 2016: 116). In fact, David Cook states, “In reading Muslim literature—both contemporary and classical—one can see that the evidence for the primacy of spiritual jihad is negligible. Today it is certain that no Muslim writing, in a non-Western language (such as Arabic, Persian, Urdu), would ever make claims that jihad is primarily nonviolent or has been superseded by spiritual jihad. Such claims are made solely by Western scholars, primarily those who study Sufism and/or work in interfaith dialogue, and by Muslim apologists who are trying to present Islam in the most innocuous manner possible.” (Cook 2005: 165-66)

The centrality of jihad in Islam is pointed out by Hilali and Khan; in commenting on Q. 2:190, they state, “Al-Jihad (holy fighting) in Allah’s Cause (with full force of numbers and weaponry) is given the utmost importance in Islam and is one of its pillars (on which it stands). By Jihad Islam is established. . . . By abandoning Jihad (may Allah protect us from that) Islam is destroyed and Muslims fall into an inferior position; their honour is lost, their lands are stolen, their rule and authority vanish. Jihad is an obligatory duty in Islam on every Muslim, and he who tries to escape from this duty, or does not in his innermost heart wish to fulfill this duty, dies with one of the qualities of a hypocrite.” (Hilali and Khan 1998: 39n.1) Lest one think these commands no longer apply or are optional, a recent commentary on Q. 2:193 (“And fight them on until there is no more Tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah”) states, “The worst sins are Infidelity (Kufr) and polytheism (shirk) which constitute rebellion against Allah, The Creator. To eradicate these, Muslims are required to wage war until there exists none of it in the world, and the only religion is that of Allah.” (Madani 2005: 1:235; see also bin Jamil Zino 2002: 316 (“Jihad (fighting and struggle in the cause of Allah) with one’s wealth, and strength, according to one’s ability is obligatory in Islam,” emph. added))

These commands are corroborated in the Hadith. Muhammad said, “I have been commanded to fight against people, till they testify to the fact that there is no god but Allah, and believe in me (that) I am the messenger (from the Lord) and in all that I have brought” (Muslim: 21b; see also Muslim: 22; al-Bukhari: 25). That command was not limited to Muhammad but applies to all Muslims for all time. In other hadith he said, “You will fight against the Jews and you will kill them until even a stone would say: Come here, Muslim, there is a Jew (hiding himself behind me); kill him.” (Muslim: 2921a) Also, “I heard the Messenger of Allah (May peace be upon him) say: Towards the end of the time there will be people who are young in age and from Islam as an arrow goes through the animal aimed at, and their faith will not pass their throats. Wherever you meet them kill them, for their killing will bring a reward for him who kills them on the day of Resurrection.” (Abi Dawud: 4767) In fact, when the Khazraj tribe was swearing allegiance to Muhammad, the person administering the oath said, “In swearing allegiance to him you are pledging yourselves to wage war against all mankind” (al-Tabari 1988: 134).

The Qur’an says that Allah prefers those who fight over those who stay at home, and promises much greater rewards for the fighters (Q. 4:95; see also Q. 61:4). Additionally, special incentives are given in the Qur’an and the Hadith to participate in jihad to the death. Q. 47:4-6 says, “Therefore, when ye meet the

119 An example of a (Western) Muslim apologist who is “trying to present Islam in the most innocuous manner possible,” is Emerick 2004, whose chapter on jihad sanitizes it. Cook’s study of jihad, Understanding Jihad, is one of the best and most comprehensive such studies because it is based “completely upon original sources, grounding the analysis in Muslim history” (Cook 2005: 2). Another excellent discussion of jihad, its history, and the Islamic theology of war and peace, is Patrick Sookhdeo, Understanding Islamic Terrorism. (Pewsey, Wiltshire, UK: Isaac Publishing, 2004).
Unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks; At length, when ye have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly (on them): thereafter (is the time for) either generosity or ransom: Until the war lays down its burdens. Thus (are ye commanded): but if it had been Allah’s Will, He could certainly have exacted retribution from them (Himself); but (He lets you fight) in order to test you, some with others. But those who are slain in the Way of Allah,- He will never let their deeds be lost. Soon will He guide them and improve their condition, and admit them to the Garden which He has announced for them.” (See also Q. 9:88-89) In the Hadith, “Allah’s Messenger said, ‘Allah guarantees to the person who carries out Jihad for His Cause and nothing compelled him to go out but the Jihad in His Cause, and belief in His Words, that He will either admit him into Paradise or return him with his reward or the booty he has earned to his residence from where he went out.’” (al-Bukhari: 7457; see also 36, 3123, 4046, 7463) Further, “Whoever fights in the cause of Allah, the Mighty and Sublime, for the length of time between two milkings of a she-camel, Paradise is guaranteed for him.” (an-Nasa’i: 7457; see also 36, 2795, 2797, 2972, 7226). Islam also has a “the end justifies the means” approach to lying and deception versus being truthful. In fact, Islam has developed a doctrine of deception called taqiyya, which is particularly prevalent among Shi’ah Muslims (see Sookhdeo 2004: 89-92); the Sunni equivalent is called muda’rat (“Some Islamic Doctrines” 2018: n.p. [this article discusses this issue in some detail]). The doctrine is based on certain passages from the Qur’an and a number of ahadith. Q. 16:106 says, “Any one who, after accepting faith in Allah, utters Unbelief, except under compulsion, his heart remaining firm in Faith - but such as open their breast to Unbelief, on them is Wrath from Allah, and theirs will be a dreadful Penalty.” The doctrine receives additional support by referring to Moses “who had concealed his faith” (Q. 40:28). In his commentary on Q. 3:28 (“Let not the believers take for friends or helpers unbelievers rather than believers: if any do that, in nothing will there be help from Allah: except by way of precaution, that ye may Guard yourselves from them”), Ibn Kathir considers the case of a Muslim who fears for his safety from a non-Muslim: “In this case, such believers are allowed to show friendship to the disbelievers outwardly, but never inwardly. For instance, Al-Bukhari recorded that Abu Ad-Darda’ said, ‘We smile in the face of some people although our hearts curse them.’” (Ibn Kathir 2003: Q. 3:28, comment) Sahih al-Bukhari also reports a close companion of Muhammad saying, “I may say things just to cheat my enemy” (al-Bukhari: 6930). In this regard, the Qur’an defines an “enemy” as follows: “Unbelievers are unto you open enemies” (Q. 4:101; Hilali-Khan’s translation of this ayah says, “disbelievers are ever unto you open enemies”). Lying and deceit are allowed to murder non-Muslims: “The Prophet said, ‘Who is ready to kill Ka’b bin Ashraf (i.e. a Jew).’ Muhammad bin Maslama replied, ‘Do you like me to kill him?’ The Prophet replied in the affirmative. Muhammad bin Maslama said, ‘Then allow me to say what I like.’ The Prophet replied, ‘I do (i.e. allow you).’” (al-Bukhari: 3032; see also 4037; Muslim: 1801) Lying is even allowed to gain wealth: “After the conquest of the city of Khaybar by the Muslims, the Prophet (S) was approached by Hajaj Ibn ‘Aalat and told: ‘O Prophet of Allah: I have in Mecca some excess wealth and some relatives, and I would like to have them back; am I excused if I bad-mouth you (to escape persecution)?’ The Prophet (S) excused him and said: ‘Say whatever you have to say.’” (Abbas 1995-2014: Al-Taqiyya, Dissimulation Part 1, ref. 8) Abdul-Wahhab reports that Ibn Mas’ud (one of Muhammad’s close companions) said, “To swear by Allah while lying is more loved by me than to swear by other than Him while speaking truth” (Abdul-Wahhab 2002: 142). The sixth Shi’ah imam, Ja’far as-Sadiq (699-765), even said that “He who has no taqiyyah, has no religion.” (Enayat 2005: 176) Consequently, Hamid Enayat concludes that “in practice it [taqiyyah] has become the norm of public behavior whenever there is a conflict between faith and expediency.” (Ibid.: 177) All of the above aspects of Islamic “morality” are directly contrary to the “universally accepted standard of right and wrong” which even Muslims admit exists and whose “unique source” is God who has placed this standard within all people “as part of our innate constitution” (Emerick 2004: 195). Thus, Islamic “morality” contradicts the very nature of reality that Muslims themselves admit to be true!

Islam’s system of “morality” and salvation based on unquestioning obedience to the dictates of the Qur’an and Muhammad also point up a fundamental moral difference between Christianity and Islam: When supposed Christians lie, cheat, and kill the innocent, they are acting inconsistent with their faith and are being disobedient to Christ; when Muslims lie, cheat, and kill innocent people they are acting consistent with their

120 Muhammad’s own view of jihad is clearly stated in the Hadith: “Allah’s Messenger said, ‘By Him in Whose Hand my life is, I would love to fight in Allah’s Cause and then get martyred and then resurrected (come to life) and then get martyred and then resurrected (come to life) and then get martyred and then resurrected (come to life).’” (al-Bukhari: 7227; see also 36, 2795, 2797, 2972, 7226). For more on Qur’anic basis for jihad, see below, section 5.VIII. C. The doctrine of abrogation has serious implications for anyone claiming that Islam is a “religion of peace.”
faith and are being obedient to Muhammad and the Qur'an. This Islamic system of “morality” inherently leads to fanaticism, deception, and violence, since those things are clearly and repeatedly emphasized throughout the Qur'an and the Hadith. As Muslim journalist Abdel Rahman al-Rashed wrote, “It is a certain fact that not all Muslims are terrorists, but it is equally certain, and exceptionally painful, that almost all terrorists are Muslims” (al-Rashed 2004: n.p.). Almost 75% of the over 12,500 terrorist murders committed in 2011 were by Muslims (“Muslim Statistics (Terrorism)” 2016: Worldwide) Multiple surveys around the world demonstrate that Muslims who advocate violence and terror are not a “tiny minority of extremists” (“Muslim Opinion Polls” 2002-2019; Shapiro 2014). For example, in a recent poll taken for the Al Jazeera Arabic television channel, 81% of the respondents support “the organizing victories of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)” (Schachtel 2015: n.p.). This is increasingly significant to the extent that Muslims take their faith seriously, since Muhammad said, “None of you [truly] believes until his desires are subservient to that which I have brought” (al-Nawawi, 40 Hadith: 41), and that includes violence and deception.

3. There is no assurance of salvation in Islam. Muhammad said, “There is no one among you who does not have two abodes: An abode in Paradise and an abode in Hell. If he dies and enters Hell, the people of Paradise inherit his abode.” (Ibn Majah: vol. 5, book 37, no. 4341) He also said, “Jannah [Paradise] is nearer to anyone of you than your shoe-lace, and so is the (Hell) Fire” (al-Nawawi, Riyad: book 1, no. 105). With the incredibly comprehensive list of “dos and do nots” that no one can fully keep and the fact that shirk can be as hidden as a black ant on a black rock in a dark night, no Muslim can know if he or she will be admitted to Paradise or to Hell. Indeed, Athari states that even the most devout Muslims “think that one should say insha’ Allah when describing oneself as a believer, i.e., one should say, ‘I am a believer, if Allah wills.’ They do not state with certainty that they are believers, because of their intense fear of Allah, their belief in the divine will and decree, and their reluctance to praise themselves.” (al-Athari 2005: 135)

Further, Islam teaches that people’s “hearts are between two Fingers of Allah’s Fingers [and] He changes them as He wills” (at-Tirmidhi: vol. 4, book 6, no. 2140). Even Abu Bakr, Muhammad’s closest companion and the first caliph, “used to place his right hand on his heart and repeat loudly the supplication of The Messenger of Allah . . . : ‘O (Allah) the Turner of hearts! Make my heart constantly firm on Your religion (of Islam).’ Although he had such a faith, which was too great to suffice all the inhabitants of the earth, he was afraid that his heart might go astray. So, he used to utter, while weeping: ‘Would that I have been a broken tree!’ whenever he was reminded of his position in Allah’s sight, he would say: ‘By Allah! I would not rest assured and feel safe from Allah’s punishment, even if one of my feet was in Paradise.’” (Khalid 2005: 98-99)

Additionally, no Muslim can have any assurance of salvation because Islam “rejects the possibility of its followers experiencing God in the life on earth. . . . The Qur’an on the contrary, believes that salvation does not take place during life on earth, but in the life after death although a person’s fate after death is uncertain.” (Shayesteh 2004: 131, 202) That, of course, is the opposite of Christianity, where salvation “is received on earth and lasts forever” (Ibid.: 202; see, e.g., John 3:16; 3:36; Acts 16:31; Rom 10:9-10; Eph 1:13-14; 1 John 5:13). When we couple all that with the fact that Allah’s “forgiveness” is not guaranteed and is completely unpredictable, and no one knows his or her pre-decree fate, even the most devoted Muslims “believe that the ultimate destiny of people is unknown and no one knows what his end will be” (al-Athari 2005: 148).

Muhammad himself had no assurance of salvation. In the Qur’an, after saying that he was bringing no new message, Muhammad said, “not do I know what will be done with me or with you” (Q. 46:9). The Hadith also attests to the fact that Muhammad had no assurance of salvation. In one hadith, he had visited a house where a man had died. Muhammad said, “As for him, death has come to him and I wish him all good from

121 Sundiata observes that “the atrocious deeds of Islamic States and the Islamic terrorists can be traced to something Muhammad himself said, did, or sanctioned” (Sundiata 2006: 17). On the other hand, “Those who denounce the oppressive, hypocritical and violent actions done in the name of Jesus of Nazareth will find the same Jesus on their side because He uncompromisingly spoke against these vices and was Himself oppressed and murdered for doing nothing wrong” (Ibid.: 18). Recall Shayesteh’s comment, “We understand that the so-called Christian world has extensively failed to surrender itself to Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is the disbelief in Jesus Christ that has spread immorality among those who apparently live under the name of Christianity. For the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there is only one type of Christian in the world, only those who are saved from the ruler of immorality. Muslims, therefore, must not take the immorality of so-called Christian societies as a sign of the Christian faith having shortcomings.” (Shayesteh 2004: 204, emph. added)

122 Shamoun points out that “the Muslim translator has deliberately distorted the original text of Muhammad Khalid’s book. Instead of translating the Arabic words limakr Allah as ‘the deception of Allah’ he has decided to render it as, ‘from Allah’s punishment,’ in order to obscure the real meaning. It seems that the Muslim translator was rather embarrassed by Abu Bakr’s statement that Allah is a deceiver whose promises of granting eternal bliss to the faithful cannot be trusted.” (Shamoun, “Greatest Deceiver” n.d.: n.p.)
Allah. By Allah, though I am Allah’s Messenger, I neither know what will happen to me, nor to you.” (al-Bukhari: 7018; see also 1243, 3929)

In fact, Muhammad was very fearful of death and of Allah’s judgment: “Aisha said that a Jewess came to her and mentioned the punishment in the grave, saying to her, ‘May Allah protect you from the punishment of the grave.’ Aisha then asked Allah’s Messenger about the punishment of the grave. He said, ‘Yes, (there is) punishment in the grave.’ Aisha added, ‘After that I never saw Allah’s Messenger but seeking refuge with Allah from the punishment in the grave in every prayer he prayed.’” (al-Bukhari: 1372) Muhammad was so insecure and his fear of Allah’s judgment was so great that it caused him to panic whenever a strong wind blew, an eclipse occurred, or even a cloud appeared in the sky—because he thought these natural phenomena signified that the day of judgment was at hand! “Whenever a strong wind blew, anxiety appeared on the face of the Prophet (fearing that wind might be a sign of Allah’s wrath),” (al-Bukhari: 1034) “The sun eclipsed and the Prophet got up, being afraid that it might be the Hour (i.e. Day of Judgment). He went to the Mosque and offered the prayer with the longest Qiyam, bowing and prostration that I had ever seen him doing. Then he said, ‘These signs which Allah sends do not occur because of the life or death of somebody, but Allah makes His worshipers afraid by them. So when you see anything thereof, proceed to remember Allah, invoke Him and ask for His forgiveness.’” (al-Bukhari: 1059) “Aisha said, ‘If the Prophet saw a cloud in the sky, he would walk to and fro in agitation, go out and come in, and the color of his face would change, and if it rained, he would feel relaxed.’ So Aisha knew that state of his. So the Prophet said, ‘I don’t know (am afraid), it may be similar to what happened to some people referred to in the Holy Qur’an in the following Verse: - Then when they saw it as a dense cloud coming towards their valleys, they said, ‘This is a cloud bringing us rain! Nay, but, it is that (torment) which you were asking to be hastened a wind wherein is severe torment. (46.24)’” (al-Bukhari: 3206)

At the time of his death, Muhammad had no assurance of salvation and was calling on Allah to forgive him. His wife Aisha reported, “I heard the Messenger of Allah saying at his death: ‘O Allah, forgive me and have mercy on me, and join me with the Highest Company’” (at-Tirmidhi: 3496; see also al-Bukhari: 4440, 5674).

Since even Muhammad had no assurance of salvation, no Muslim can possibly have any assurance of his or her eternal destiny. Recall that according to Q. 33:56 believers and even angels are to pray for Muhammad. This leaves the question: If Muslims have to pray for Muhammad, who is going to pray for them?

4. Allah is neither holy nor just. As we saw earlier, Christianity has a “high view” of sin (i.e., sin ultimately and primarily is against God) because Christianity has a high view of God’s holiness (i.e., God is perfectly holy and therefore cannot abide the presence of sin) and a high view of humanity (i.e., people have been “created in the image of God” and sin tarnishes that image because it is contrary to Godlikeness); as a result, God’s forgiveness was costly. In contrast, Islam has a “low view” of sin, which necessarily means that Islam has a low view of Allah’s holiness. Thus, the Qur’an indicates that human sin has no effect on Allah at all: “And if any strive (with might and main), they do so for their own souls: for Allah is free of all needs from all creation” (Q. 29:6; see also Q. 14:8; 22:64; 35:15; 47:38). In commenting on this verse, Ali states, “When we speak of serving Allah, it is not that we confer any benefit on Him. For He has no needs, and is independent of all His Creation (Cf. 14:8). In conforming to His Will, we are seeking our own good, as in yielding to evil we are doing harm to ourselves.” (Ali 2006: Q. 29:6n.3428) The Dictionary of Islam quotes famous Islamic scholar Muhammad al-Baghawi (c.1041-1122) as saying that Allah “receives neither profit nor loss from whatever may happen. If all the Infidels became believers and all the religious pious, He would gain no advantage. On the other hand, if all Believers became infidels, He would suffer no loss.” (Hughes 1895: 146) Allah’s being completely indifferent to and unaffected by human sin (or salvation) is confirmed in the Hadith: “He said to those who were on his right side: Towards Paradise and I don’t care. He said to those who were on his left shoulder: Towards the fire and I don’t care.” (Al-Tabrizi 1939: 3:117-18, no. 454w; see also no. 455w) In other words, our sin is only against our own souls but is not a sin against God (see Q. 7:23; 39:53; 41:46; 47:38). These passages and Islam’s views of sin and salvation mean that Allah is unholy and unjust in at least four ways:

- First, since Allah “doesn’t care” about whether people are righteous or sin, and sin has no effect on him in any event, he is unholy because sin essentially means nothing to him and therefore he is unjust to judge people for their actions.
- Second, to the extent that salvation is a weighing of one’s good deeds against one’s bad deeds, it shows that Allah is unholy and unjust because he is accepting *temporal and imperfect* deeds (which by their very nature do not transform a sinful person into a holy person) in satisfaction for sin which has *permanently* corrupted the person’s soul, affected others, and affected the world.
- Third, since by pre-decree and active intervention Allah is the *direct* cause of human sin, he is unholy for directly causing people to sin and is unjust to judge people for the sin he both decreed and caused.
Kathir states, “The majority of scholars said that Shaytan was originally prohibited from entering Paradise, but there were times when he sneaked into it in secret. For instance, the Tawrah stated that Iblis hid inside the [Eve] astray on his way out of Paradise. Some scholars said that he led Adam and Hawwa’ astray when he was between being admitted to Paradise, and I chose intercession, because it is more general and more sufficient. Do (Shayesteh 2003: 72) Muhammad admitted this when he discussed his intercession: “I was given the choice between being admitted to Paradise, and I chose intercession, because it is more general and more sufficient. Do not you think it is for the pious? No, it is for the impure sinners.” (Ibn Majah: vol. 5, book 37, no. 4311) The situation is worse even than that: Satan has access to Islamic Paradise! In his commentary on the Qur’an, Ibn Kathir states, ‘The majority of scholars said that Shaytan was originally prohibited from entering Paradise, but there were times when he sneaked into it in secret. For instance, the Tawrah stated that Iblis hid inside the snake’s mouth and entered Paradise. Some scholars said that it is possible that Shaytan led Adam and Hawwa’ [Eve] astray on his way out of Paradise. Some scholars said that he led Adam and Hawwa’ astray when he was on earth, while they were still in heaven, as stated by Az-Zamakhshari.’” (Ibn Kathir 2003: Q. 2:36, comment)

Additionally, the inhabitants of Islamic Paradise are free to indulge in activities that are specifically forbidden and considered vices on earth. Yahiya Emerick admits that “nearly all of the pleasures of Earth are regulated or even forbidden for a Muslim, so their reward for obeying God in this life is guilt-free indulgence in the next” (Emerick 2004: 38). For example, the Qur’an limits Muslim men to marrying up to four wives (Q. 4:3). However, in Paradise Muhammad said, “There is no one whom Allah will admit to Paradise but Allah will marry him to seventy-two wives, two from houris [beautiful companions; see Q. 44:54; 52:20; 55:72] and seventy from his inheritance from the people of Hell, all of whom will have desirable front passages and he will have a male member that never becomes flaccid (i.e., soft and limp)” (Ibn Majah: vol. 5, book 37, no. 4337). The incoherence of Islamic law is seen in the fact that the very things that send someone to Hell nevertheless will be rewards in Paradise! Q. 5:90 (Hilali-Khan) says, “O you who believe! Intoxicants (all kinds of alcoholic

123) Not surprisingly, there is no corresponding promise made to the women who may make it to Paradise.
drinks), gambling, AlAnsab, and AlAzlam (arrows for seeking luck or decision) are an abomination of Shaitan’s (Satan) handiwork. So avoid (strictly all) that (abomination) in order that you may be successful.” In the Hadith, Muhammad said, “Allah has forbidden Khamr [intoxicants], and every intoxicant is unlawful” (an-Nasa’i: 5700; see also al-Bukhari: 5579; Muslim: 2003b; Abi Dawud: 3685; Ibn Majah: vol. 4, book 30, no. 3390). However, in Paradise there will be “rivers of wine, a joy to those who drink” (Q. 47:15). Thus, the Qur’an and the Hadith do not set forth a moral code at all; they are simply arbitrary rules that can be changed at Allah’s (or Muhammad’s) whim. The inescapable conclusion is that the Islamic “Paradise” will be even worse than life on earth because it will be full of full of inhabitants who will have natures just as sinful as they had on earth but will be able to indulge in their wildest fantasies and freely engage in activities now viewed as abominations from Satan.

IV. Sin and Salvation: Conclusion

Sultan Muhammad Khan raised the issues that go to the heart of every religion: the issues of sin and salvation. Christianity and Islam present two diametrically opposed views on these issues. The Christian position is internally coherent. It recognizes that sin fundamentally is rebellion against God and the breaking of relationship with God which affects everything else. Christianity offers a realistic assessment of the nature of mankind and provides a plausible explanation for why humanity has an inherently sinful disposition. It accurately acknowledges that human beings are not able to rid themselves of their sinful nature no matter how much they try. It therefore admits that if people are going to be saved and their natures are to be transformed, then only God can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Christianity also has a coherent and high view of God: God is holy, merciful, and just. Christianity recognizes that forgiveness is costly: it is the wronged party bearing the cost and paying the price of the wrongdoer’s sin. In God’s becoming a man in the person of Jesus Christ and taking humanity’s sins upon himself as our representative on the cross, the Christian view alone is able to harmoniously resolve all of the above matters. As Sultan Khan said, “If Christ had promised salvation without giving His life, the demands of mercy would certainly have been fulfilled. In order to satisfy the demands of justice also, Christ paid the ransom, which was His precious blood. In this way God has manifested His love for us.” (Khan 1992: 26)

Finally, Christianity enables people to appropriate salvation and a new life here on earth where it is most needed. This gives Christians the peace that comes from the assurance of their salvation. It also gives Christians a unique motivation to live righteous lives. As Timothy Keller said, “Religion operates on the principle ‘I obey—therefore I am accepted by God.’ But the operating principle of the gospel is ‘I am accepted by God because He loved me first.’” (Keller 2007: 130)

124 In addition to forbidding alcohol, Muhammad commanded, “Do not wear silk or brocade and do not drink [from] vessels of gold and silver, and do not eat in the dishes made of them (i.e., gold and silver), for these are for them (the non-believers) in this world” (Muslim: 2067g; see also 2065b, e, 2067a; al-Bukhari: 5832, 5833, 5837; an-Nasai: 5136, 5301; Abi Dawud 3723; Ibn Majah: vol. 4, book 30, no. 3414); however, in Islamic Paradise, the inhabitants will be “dressed in fine silk and in rich brocade” (Q. 35:33); see also Q. 18:31; 22:23; 76:12, 21); and “To them will be passed round, dishes and goblets of gold” (Q. 43:71; see also Q. 76:15 [‘And amongst them will be passed round vessels of silver’]). Another hadith says, “I was sitting with the Prophet [SAW] when a woman came to him and said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, two bracelets of gold.’ He said: ‘Two bracelets of fire.’” (an-Nasai: 5142; see also Abi Dawud: 4236; at-Tirmidhi: 637); however, in Islamic Paradise the inhabitants “shall be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and pearls” (Q. 22:23; see also Q. 35:33). Muhammad also said, “Any woman who puts on a necklace of gold, Allah will put something similar of fire around her neck” (an-Nasai: 5139; see also Abi Dawud: 4238); however, Allah will emancipate some people from Hell “and they will have (golden) necklaces, and then they will enter Paradise” (al-Bukhari: 7439).

125 That Islamic Paradise mirrors the inequities of earth begins with Allah himself, who actually mocks people of the lowest status (there are different levels of status in Islamic Paradise): “I know the last of the people of Hell who will be brought forth from it, and the last of the people of Paradise to be admitted to Paradise. (It is) a man who will emerge from Hell crawling, and it will be said to him: ‘Go and enter Paradise.’ He will come to it and it will be made to appear to him as if it is full.’ Allah will say: ‘Go and enter Paradise.’ He will come to it and it will be made to appear to him as if it is full. So he will say: ‘O Lord, I found it full.’ Allah will say: ‘Go and enter Paradise.’ He will come to it and it will be made to appear to him as if it is full. So he will say: ‘O Lord, I found it full.’ Allah will say: ‘Go and enter Paradise, for you will have the like of the world and ten times more, or you will have ten times the like of the world.’ He will say: ‘Are You mocking me, or are You laughing at me, when You are the Sovereign?’ He said: ‘And I saw the Messenger of Allah smiling so broadly that his molar teeth could be seen.’ And he used to say: ‘This is the lowest of the people of Paradise in status.’” (Ibn Majah: vol. 5, book 37, no. 4339) Even the houris (heavenly maidens) have spiteful characters; they exhibit jealousy over their future “husbands” and call for the death of those husbands ‘earthly wives: “The Messenger of Allah said: No woman annoys her husband but his wife among houris (of Paradise) says: ‘Do not annoy him, may Allah destroy you, for he is just a temporary guest with you and soon he will leave you and join us.’” (Ibn Majah: vol. 3, book 9, no. 2014; see also at-Tirmidhi: 1174; al-Nawawi, Riyad: book 1, no. 287).
through what Christ has done—therefore I obey.’” (Keller 2008: 179-80) The God of the Bible does not merely “forgive” the Christian, he actively equips the Christian to live as they should by giving the Christian a new heart, the mind of Christ, and the indwelling Holy Spirit. Christians are thereby changed from the inside-out, and God progressively works in them so that the “fruit of the Spirit” (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control) become more and more manifest (see Gal 5:22-23) as they become “conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29).

Islam, on the other hand, is inconsistent on essentially all matters relating to sin and salvation. Its official position that people are born pure and naturally are predisposed to good is not a realistic assessment of human nature. Islam cannot account for the universality of human sin. Consequently, much Islamic authority contradicts its official doctrine and admits that all human beings are fundamentally flawed and predisposed to sin. Both in the Hadith and otherwise, Islam admits the Christian doctrines of the “fall” of mankind and the inheritance of our sinful natures from Adam and Eve (i.e., “original sin”).

Islam also has an incoherent view of Allah. While Allah, like the God of the Bible, is called “holy,” “merciful,” and “just,” a large body of Islamic authority attributes human sin directly to Allah’s pre-decree and to his active intervention in people’s lives thereby causing them to sin. Further, unlike the biblical God of love, the Hadith reveals that Allah “doesn’t care” whether people go to Paradise or Hell. All of this leads to incoherent views of how people are saved. Some Islamic lines of authority talk about weighing one’s good deeds against bad deeds, while other lines of authority speak of Allah’s forgiving or not forgiving people for reasons of his own, unrelated to people’s deeds or simply basing people’s eternal destinies on Allah’s pre-decree.

In Islam the issue of one’s salvation is not determined until after death. Therefore, no Muslim—including Muhammad himself—can have any assurance that his or her sins will be forgiven and that he or she will go to Paradise instead of Hell. A corollary is that Allah does not change Muslims from the “inside-out” like the biblical God who works in Christians by his Spirit. Indeed, because Islamic morality is based on obeying without question the commands and prohibitions of the Qur’an and the Hadith, including their many commands to wage war and deceive non-Muslims, Islam offers no prospect to bring peace on earth or goodwill to men, except the peace of the grave brought about by the sword. Further, despite the promises of bliss in Paradise, the Islamic Paradise would contain all the flaws and evil of this world because the people inhabiting Paradise will be no different than their “fallen” or sinful natures are now.

Ultimately, Islam’s incoherence and inadequate, non-transforming views of salvation stem from the fact that Islam has inadequate doctrines of both God and mankind. As John Stott puts it, “If we bring God down to our level and raise ourselves to his, then of course we see no need for a radical salvation, let alone for a radical atonement to secure it. When, on the other hand, we have glimpsed the blinding glory of the holiness of God, and have been so convicted of our sin by the Holy Spirit that we tremble before God and acknowledge what we are, namely ‘hell-deserving sinners’, then and only then does the necessity of the cross appear so obvious that we are astonished we never saw it before.” (Stott 1986: 109) Theology thus has important implications not only for one’s destiny after this life is over but also for one’s life and for the state of society now. In all of these regards, the differences between Christianity and Islam are profound and fundamental.

4. YAHWEH AND ALLAH

I. Introduction

Q. 29:46 (Hilali-Khan) says, “Argue not with the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), unless it be in (a way) that is better (with good words and in good manner, inviting them to Islamic Monotheism with His Verses), except with such of them as do wrong, and say (to them): ‘We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you: our Ilah (God) and your Ilah (God) is One (i.e. Allah), and to Him we have submitted (as Muslims).’” Christianity and Islam are the world’s two largest monotheistic religions. In some respects, they both come from the same roots. The Bible says, “The Lord is our God, the Lord is one” (Deut 6:4; Mark 12:29); the foundational concept of Islam (tauhid) is that Allah is One (Q. 4:171). 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; and he who memorized them all by heart will enter Paradise.’ To count something means to know it by heart.” (al-Bukhari: 7392; see also 2736, 6410; Muslim: 2677a, b; at-Tirmidhi: 3506, 3508; Ibn Majah: 3860) Islamic commentators have supplied the names. 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF ALLAH AND CITATION TO QUR'AN</th>
<th>SIMILAR BIBLICAL ATTRIBUTE OF YAHWEH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 AL-MALIK (The Sovereign Lord [or The King]) – Q. 20:114; 23:116; 59:23</td>
<td>Sovereign – Ps 103:19; Isa 43:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 AL-QUDDUS (The Holy) – Q. 50:38; 59:23</td>
<td>Holy – Isa 6:3; 43:15; Rev 4:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 AL-ALIM (The All-Knowing) – Q. 2:158; 3:92; 4:35</td>
<td>All-Knowing – Job 41:11; Ps 44:21; Matt 6:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 AS-SAMI (The All-Hearing) – Q. 2:127; 8:17; 49:1</td>
<td>All-Hearing – Ps 34:17; 69:33; 1 John 5:14-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 AL-BASIR (The All-Seeing) – Q. 4:58; 17:1; 42:11</td>
<td>All-Seeing – Gen 16:13; 1 Sam 16:7; Matt 6:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 AL-HAKAM (The Judge) – Q. 22:69</td>
<td>Judge – Job 21:22; Ps 7:8; John 8:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 AL-MUTA’ALI (The Most Exalted) – Q. 13:9</td>
<td>Most Exalted – Exod 15:1; Ps 97:9; Isa 6:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68 AS-SAMAD (The Eternal – Q. 112:2</td>
<td>Eternal – Gen 21:33; Deut 33:27; Rom 16:26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73 AL-AWWAL (The First) – Q. 57:3</td>
<td>The First – Isa 41:4; 44:6; Rev 1:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74 AL-AAKHIR (The Last) – Q. 57:3</td>
<td>The Last – Isa 43:10; 44:6; Rev 1:8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 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).

However, “There is no universal agreement among Muslims as to what exactly counts as a name of God, and what does not. Additionally, while some names are only in the Quran, and others are only in the hadith, there are some names which appear in both. Different sources give different lists of the 99 names.” (“Names of God” 2019: List of Names) A generally agreed list is set forth at APPENDIX C—THE NAMES OF ALLAH (Asma al-Husna). The names of Allah in the comparative table in the main text are from Appendix C.
• **He sent the prophets:** “I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, sending them again and again, saying: ‘Turn now every man from his evil way and amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to worship them’” (Jer 35:15); “We assuredly sent amongst every People a messenger, (with the Command), ‘Serve Allah, and eschew Evil’” (Q. 16:36).

• **He answers prayer:** “O You who hear prayer, To You all men come” (Ps 65:2); “O ye who believe! seek help with patient perseverance and prayer” (Q. 2:153).

• **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 comprehensively:** “Whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops” (Luke 12:3); “That Day shall ye be brought to Judgment: not an act of yours that ye hide will be hidden” (Q. 69:18).

• **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: Then Moses said to God, “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?’” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ God, furthermore, said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.” The “I AM” in Hebrew is YHWH, pronounced Yahweh, which is derived from the verb hayah (“to be” and “to become”).

“Allah” was the proper name of a pagan god worshiped 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; Schirrmacher 2011: 11).127 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)128

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127 “Allah was the supreme pagan Arabian god. In fact, Muhammad’s father, who died before Islam, was called Abdullah, which means ‘servant (or slave) of Allah’ possibly because his family served Allah at the pagan shrine in Mecca—Muhammad’s birthplace. . . . Unlike the other gods, Allah had no visual representation in that pagan shrine. The idea of an invisible god called Allah was therefore not new or unique to Islam.” (Sundiata 2006: 297).

128 While Arabic-speaking Christians “affirm that Allah is not an exclusively Muslim name for the supreme being but is a generic term dating from pre-Islamic times that is now shared by Christians, Muslims and others. . . the biblical translations of the Bible into Arabic and other languages used by the majority Muslim communities in the Middle East, Africa and Asia have generally not used Allah to translate the Hebrew tetragrammaton YHWH. . . . In Arabic translations it is transliterated
On the other hand, “Allah” is Arabic for “the God” (Gilchrist 1994: 4; Prince 2011: 4-5; Schirrmacher 2011: 11). According to Bible scholar and mission strategist Rick Brown, “the Arabic name Allāh is an adaptation of the Aramaic word for God, Alāh or Alāhā” (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; Schirrmacher 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.129

B. Yahweh and Allah: their knowability

The God of the Bible desires to be known. Jer 9:23-24 says, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,’ declares the LORD” (see also Isa 11:9; Jer 24:7; Hab 2:14). In promising the New Covenant through the prophet Jeremiah, God said, “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the LORD” (Jer 31:34). 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).

The Bible reveals that, from the beginning, not only has Yahweh desired to be known by people, but he has made sure of that by personally revealing himself in different ways to human beings. God revealed himself by personally speaking directly to the patriarchs and prophets (e.g., Gen 35:1; Exod 3:4; 1 Kgs 19:12-18; Jer 1:4-5). He appeared in various forms so that his presence was with the people (e.g., Gen 28:12-16 [in a dream]; Gen 32:24-30 [as a man]; Exod 3:2 [in a burning bush]; Exod 13:21 [as a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire]; 1 Kgs 8:10-12; 2 Chron 5:13-14 [as a cloud in the tabernacle and temple]; Isa 6:1 [in a vision]). Finally, 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). Jesus is “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15) and is “the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Heb 1:3; see also Matt 11:27; John 8:19; 14:6-9; 1 John 2:13).

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.” Q. 42:11 says, “There is nothing whatever like unto Him” (see also Q. 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 2004: 87) Muhammad Asad similarly comments, “The phrase ‘there is nothing like unto Him’ implies that He is fundamentally - and not merely in His attributes – ‘different’ from anything that exists or could exist, or anything that man can conceive or imagine or define . . . and since ‘there is nothing that could be compared with

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129 Georges Houssney 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.” (Houssney 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)
Him’ (112:4), even the ‘how’ of His being ‘different’ from everything else is beyond the categories of human thought.” (Asad 1980: Q. 42:11n.10) Even “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.” Professor Fadlou Shehadi states that “the usual orthodox formula used by Ibn Hanbal (d. 855 A.D.) and after him by al-Ash’aris that these attributes may be applied to God ‘bila kayfa wala tashbih’ i.e. without asking how and without comparing” (Shehadi 1964: 10). 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) 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.130 For all any Muslim knows, Allah’s attributes mean the exact opposite of the meanings commonly understood by such words.

Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), one of the most famous Islamic theologians and philosophers, wrote extensively on the subject of the utter uniqueness and difference of Allah, saying, “He is not like anything nor is anything like Him”; “His attributes are unlike those of any creature just as His Essence unlike the essence of any created thing”; “(one must) deny similarity (between God and other things) absolutely”; “God’s knowledge is absolutely unlike that of His creatures”; “These Names [of Allah] are like the corresponding attributes of Adam (i.e. man) in name only, the uttered word”; and Allah’s attributes are “above [men’s] attributes of perfection just as He is above their attributes of imperfection, nay of every attribute conceivable by men, as well as what is like it (the attribute) or similar to it” (Shehadi 1964: 17-18, quoting various works of Ghazali). Professor Shehadi, who has analyzed Ghazali’s work in depth, concludes, “If God [Allah] is a unique kind of being unlike any other being in any respect, more specifically, unlike anything known to man, it would have to follow by Ghazali’s own principles that God is utterly unknowable. For, according to Ghazali, things are known by their likenesses, and what is utterly unlike what is known to man cannot be known. Furthermore, God would have to be unknowable, completely unknowable, not only to the ‘man in the street’, but to prophets and mystics as well. This is a conclusion that Ghazali states very explicitly and not infrequently.” (Ibid.: 21-22, emph. in orig.) In short, as Muslim apologist Yahiya Emerick admits, “He [Allah] does not reveal Himself to people” (Emerick 2004: 49).

C. Yahweh and Allah: their relationship with humanity

The fundamental difference between the fact that the God of the Bible can be known versus the unknowability of Allah of the Qur’an logically entails a fundamental difference between whether or not human beings can have a personal relationship with God or Allah. God cares about people. Only human beings are said to have been created “in the image of God” (Gen 1:26-27); God spoke personally with them and blessed them (Gen 1:28-30). 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).

God’s desire for and pursuit of personal relationship with his people has persisted even after humanity fell into sin. After Adam and Eve sinned, Gen 3:8-9 tells us that God “was walking in the garden in the cool of the day” and called out to Adam, “Where are you?” God did not ask that because he didn’t know where Adam and Eve were but because their relationship with him had been broken through sin, and God wanted to give Adam the opportunity restore the relationship. Similarly, despite Israel’s many sins and its pursuit of false gods, Yahweh pursued her and pleaded with her to return to him and be restored (e.g., Neh 1:9; Isa 44:22; 65:2; Jer 4:1-2; 24:7; Joel 2:12-13; Amos 4:6-5:15; Zech 1:3; Mal 3:7). Likewise Jesus said, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem,

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130 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)
who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling” (Matt 23:37).

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). This had always been part of God’s plan and had been prophesied by Jeremiah and Ezekiel over 500 years before the coming of Jesus into the world (Jer 31:33-34 [“I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people”]; Ezek 36:26-28 [“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God”]; see also Ezek 11:19).

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 affection. Slaves were not permitted to address the head of the family by this title (Vine, Unger, and White 1940: Abba). “It [Abba] expressed the newly found relation to God as father, a relationship assured by the presence of the Spirit” (Beardslee 1993: 4). 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). In fact, in commenting on Q. 5:18 (“The Jews and the Christians say: 'We are sons of Allah, and his beloved’”), Muslim apologist Tiger Chan states, “The Qur’an finds that such a claim attributing just any form of sonship to God is repugnant and erroneous. . . . God has no need of any sonship. Except that He needs all his creatures to be his slaves/servants as we have ‘Abdullah’ i.e., the slave/servant of God. The term ‘Ibnullah’ i.e., son of God is not acceptable to God.” (Chan 2003: n.p.) 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 pattern of communication, Allah did not appear or speak directly to his prophets, even to Muhammad, but deals only through angelic intermediaries (Q. 2:97; 15:8; see al-Athari 2005: 88-89; as-Suha yarn 2006: 180-82; Ali 2006: Q. 81:19n.5988). Contrary to God’s becoming a man, Islamic writer Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi states that Allah is “AL-HULUL: It means ‘Entering’. Nothing enters into Allah nor does He enter into anything or anybody. Therefore, the belief of incarnation in any form is abhorrent to the conception of Divinity.” (Rizvi 1994: 62) Contrary to God’s sending the Holy Spirit to indwell people so that he may have a direct, personal relationship with them, the Research Division of Darussalam Publishers states,“It is not as some people think that Allah is present everywhere — here, there and even inside the breasts of men” (Darussalam 2002a: 229). 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

131 Because the Qur’an incorporates stories from the Bible (albeit often with substantial changes), Q. 4:164 (Hilali-Khan) acknowledges that “to Musa (Moses) Allah spoke directly.” Mawdudi comments, “This unique privilege of Moses is mentioned in the Bible as well, and in much the same manner. It mentions that the Lord used to speak to Moses ‘face to face, as a man speaks to his friend’ (Exodus 33: 11).” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.; Q. 4:164n.206)

132 This is an example of the names/attributes of Allah essentially being nothing but meaningless words.
Fear of God becomes the 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.)

In Christianity, God is, before anything else, the Father. His love transcends His Justice. In Qur’anic thought, the idea of that sort of relationship with Allah is not only incomprehensible, but absurd.” (Houssney 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. 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.” “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 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, act with policy, practice stratagem” (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

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133 A footnote to this paragraph states, “I am aware that some exceptions exist such as the Sufis, elements of Shiism, various other types of mystical Muslims, and moderate Muslims who have borrowed attractive concepts from Christianity into their Islamic identity. What I have described here is mainstream Islamic theology.” (Houssney 2010: 85n.8)


135 For more on the doctrine of abrogation see below, section 5.VIII. The Doctrine of Abrogation.
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 tamkar from the same root discussed above]). Sam Shamoun discusses the grammar of these and other words the Qur’an uses that reveal Allah to be a deceiver and concludes, “Muhammad’s deity is a deceiver who cannot be trusted since he lies without hesitation. A Muslim may contend that Allah only deceives unbelievers who deserve it. The problem with this assertion is that the Muslim scripture teaches that Allah doesn’t merely deceive unbelievers but also his followers.” (Shamoun, “Greatest Deceiver,” n.d.: n.p.; see also Cornelius n.d.) Remember that, according to Q. 157-58, Allah deceived the followers of Jesus by (purportedly) substituting an innocent man for him on the cross. It is therefore ironic (to say the least) that one of Allah’s 99 names is Al-Haqq – “The Truth.”

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

As with Jesus and Muhammad, to understand what Yahweh and Allah are truly like we need to consider their “character.” While it might seem strange to consider the character of God or Allah (and a Muslim might say that it is impermissible to even attempt to do so), the self-disclosure of God in the Bible and of Allah in the Qur’an give sufficient data for us to make reliable conclusions regarding what they are really like.

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). Thus, God said through Jeremiah, “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jer 31:3). 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). Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). 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. The complete list of those whom the Qur’an says Allah “loves” is as follows: those who do good (Q. 2:195; 3:134; 5:93); those who turn to him constantly (Q. 2:222); those who believe and work
deeds of righteousness (Q. 19:96); the righteous (Q. 9:4, 7); the fair and just (Q. 5:42; 49:9; 60:8); those who are kind (Q. 5:13); those who keep themselves pure and clean (Q. 2:222; 9:108); those who fight in his cause in battle (Q. 61:4); and those who love him (Q. 3:31; 5:54). There are also a host of Qur'anic passages that describe the types of people Allah does not love: transgressors (Q. 2:190); mischief makers (Q. 2:205; 28:77); the ungrateful and wicked (Q. 2:276); the treacherous (Q. 8:58); wasters (Q. 5:87; 6:141; 7:31); tresspassers (Q. 7:55); wrongdoers (Q. 3:140; 42:40); arrogant boasters (Q. 31:18; 57:23); those who exult (in riches) (Q. 28:76); those who reject faith (Q. 30:45); traitors (Q. 22:38); and those given to perfidy and crime (Q. 4:107). In each case, Allah's love or lack of love for people is based on their prior behavior.

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) In short, short, love is not part of Allah's identity and character as it is with the God of the Bible. Thus, nowhere does the Qur'an say that “Allah is love” like the Bible says “God is love.” Nehls and Eric quote Al-Ghazali as saying, “Love is to sense a need of the beloved, and since Allah cannot be said to have a need or an experience of a need, it is therefore impossible that Allah should love” (Nehls and Eric 2009: 144).

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” (Sundati 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 unbelievers, 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 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.” Q. 5:72-73 adds, “They do blaspheme who say: 'Allah is Christ the son of Mary.' But said Christ: 'O Children of Israel! worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.' Whoever joins other gods with Allah,- Allah will forbid him the garden, and the Fire will be his abode. There will for the wrong-doers be no one to help. They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One Allah. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them” (see also Q. 5:17; 23:91).

Alhaj A. D. Ajijola is typical of Muslim apologists who attack the idea of the Trinity when he states,

136 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).

137 “Not that two different Gods actually exist, of course, but that Muslim and Christian understandings of the one God are radically different” (McDermott 2013: n.p.).
“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.; see also Calvin 1960: 1:481 [2<XIII.4]) As we previously discussed (see above, section 3.II.D. Salvation according to Christianity: what Christ accomplished on the cross), 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.

In considering the Trinity, we will first discuss how Islam is correct to reject the “false trinity”; second, we will consider the basic Islamic misconceptions or misrepresentations of the Trinity; third, we will show how the concept of the Trinity clearly arises from the Bible; fourth, we will endeavor to show how the concept of the Trinity is not illogical or as incomprehensible as one may think; and fifth, we will consider some implications of the doctrine.

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

In seventh century Arabia, there were various heretical Christian groups. Palestinian Anglican bishop Riah Abu El-Assal states that “distortion of the [Christian] faith took such forms as worship of the wood of the cross and of images of holy men as well as extreme forms of Mariolatry. One sect, the Collyrian, allowed the Virgin to share the Godhead.” (El-Assal 2002: n.p.; see also Karim 2013) Various gnostic groups also had a God Triad consisting of Father, Mother, and Son (Gilchrist 2015: 115-19). This apparently is what the Qur’an is responding to when 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).’”

Additionally, although neither Q. 4:171 nor Q. 5:73 specify the Trinity as consisting of God, Jesus, and Mary as does Q. 5:116-17, Tafsir al-Jalalayn, in commenting on both Q. 4:171 and Q. 5:73, assumes that the Trinity consisted of God, Jesus, and Mary (Jalal 2017: Q. 4:171, comment; Q. 5:73, comment). 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 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). Mawdudi summarizes: “They [Christians] are urged to abandon the trinitarian doctrine, regardless of the form in which it was found. The fact is that the Christians subscribe simultaneously to the unity and the trinity of God. . . . The Christians, therefore, find it impossible to deny that monotheism is the very core of true religion. But the original confusion that in Jesus the Word of God became flesh, that the Spirit of God was incarnate in him, led them to believe in the godhead of Jesus and of the Holy Ghost along with that of God. This gratuitous commitment gave rise to an insoluble riddle: how to combine monotheism with the notion of trinity. . . . Moreover, it is logically impossible to maintain belief in trinity without impairing belief in One God. This problem has arisen because of the extravagance in which the Christians have indulged. The easiest course to get out of the morass is to give up the innovated belief in the godhead of Jesus and of the Holy Ghost, acknowledge God as the Only God, and accept Jesus as His Messenger rather than as God’ partner in godhead.” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 4:171n.215; see also Ali 2006: Q. 4:171n.676). Dirks adds 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: 116

138 The true Trinity was, in fact, well known to the Christians of Arabia shortly before the rise of Islam. An Arabic inscription by a Christian king in connection with repairs to the dam of Marib in southern Arabia begins, “By the power of the Merciful One (Rhmnn), and His Messiah (w-Mshhw), and of the Holy Spirit (rh quds)” (Gilchrist 1994: 11-12).
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” (Sundia 2006: 184; see also Reynolds 2018: 194). Regarding the thalathah, it is clear that the Qur’an is unaware of the essential unity of the Christian doctrine of God. It is therefore wrong for the Qur’an to claim that Christians believe that ‘Allah is Jesus the son of Mary’—we do not.” (Sundia 2006: 184; see also Reynolds 2018: 208 (“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. Thus, Dirks states that Christians who believe in a triune godhead cannot legitimately recite the first part of the Shahadah (“there is no god but Allah”) because it “incorporates by implication the concept of ‘La Sharika’, i.e., ‘no partners or associates’ with Allah” (Dirks 2008: 204) 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.” (Sundia 2006: 183-84)

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, as has been discussed above, primarily in section 2.VI.

Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: Jesus is the “Son of 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.”

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139 Q. 5:73 only says “They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three.” The words “in a Trinity” have been added; Hilali-Khan’s translation makes that clear by putting those words in parentheses. Reynolds notes that 5:73 actually addresses a statement that no orthodox Christian would make. The wording in v.73 (“third of three”) “suggests that the Qur’an’s concern in this verse, as in the previous verse, is Christ (‘one of three’ persons of the Trinity). In other words, vv. 72-73 should be thought of as one unit; in both cases the Qur’an is speaking of those who declare that ‘God is Christ.’” (Reynolds 2018: 208) Regarding Q. 4:171, 5:73, and 5:116, Gilchrist comments, “The word used here for ‘three’ is thalathah, a common Qur’anic word appearing nineteen times in the book. It always means ‘three’ and cannot be translated or rendered ‘Trinity’. ... By contrasting the oneness of God with the threefold Christian deity it is clear that the Qur’an is unaware of the essential unity of the Christian doctrine of God. ... The distinction, yet again, is purely between one and three with no allowance for a threefold unity. ... When Muslims challenge the doctrine of the Trinity and will not allow that it is an expression of divine unity in a different form to the Unitarian concept of the Qur’an it is important to raise these texts as evidence, firstly, that the Qur’an misinterprets the doctrine completely and, secondly, that it is the source of the erroneous Muslim conviction that we believe in three separate gods.” (Gilchrist 2002: 78-80)

140 Sundia 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’.”))
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 1x1x1 [or, for that matter, 1+1+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 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 x 1 x 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 x 1 x 0 = 0).” (Pratney 1988: 261) In short, the Qur’an’s view that the Trinity amounts to joining other gods or adding partners to Allah does not accurately represent or describe the Trinity at all.

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 is by his very nature is unique and beyond our finite ability to fully understand and describe. Both the Qur’an and the Bible, in describing Allah and Yahweh respectively, say “there is nothing whatever like unto Him” (Q. 42:11) and “I am God, and there is no one like Me” (Isa 46:9; see also Exod 15:11). “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) Different lines of biblical evidence establish the doctrine of the Trinity. In this regard, it must be remembered that the truths of the Bible were progressively revealed. What was hinted at in the OT is made clear in the NT.

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 eloim 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).

Although some might suggest that elohim is a “plural of majesty,” Klaas Runia points out that elohim “cannot be explained as a ‘plural of majesty’; this was entirely unknown to the Hebrews” (Runia 1982: 166). Gleason Archer adds, “This first person plural can hardly be a mere editorial or royal plural that refers to the speaker alone, for no such usage is demonstrable anywhere else in biblical Hebrew” (Archer 1982: 359). Further, in the context of the above verses, the plural pronouns cannot refer to angels or anyone other than God himself (Ibid.; see also Feinberg 2001: 450).

In this regard, Job 35:10; Ps 149:2; Eccl 12:2; Isa 54:5 all speak of God as the creator or maker of human life and of Israel. In all those passages the Hebrew words translated “creator” or “maker” are in the plural (Feinberg 2001: 455). All of these grammatical examples point to plurality in the Godhead.

3. OT passages regarding Yahweh’s “Son,” the “Angel of the Lord,” the Messiah, and the Spirit of God. Both Ps 2:4-7 and Prov 30:3-4 appear to ascribe a Son to Yahweh, which suggests plurality within the one God. Since in other passages (Exod 4:22; 2 Sam 7:14; Job 2:1; Hos 11:1) obviously non-divine people, beings, or entities are called God’s “sons,” the conclusion that the “Son” of Ps 2:7 and Prov 30:4 is a divine

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141 Interestingly, in the Qur’an, plural pronouns for Allah are used far more often than are singular pronouns (see, e.g., Q. 6:114; 50:4-16; 74:31; 75:3-4, 18-19; 77:16-18; 92:12-13). Muslims claim that this is a “plural of majesty” (Haleem 2005: xx), although neither the Qur’an nor the Hadith make that claim. As St. Clair-Tisdall said, “In the use of the plural, the Qur’an agrees with the Bible, since we find, for instance, in Gen. i. 26; iii. 22; xi. 7, the very same expression used. Those parts of the Bible which teach the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity may possibly explain the reason of this, as far as the Bible is concerned. If the Qur’an was revealed to confirm the Torah and the Injil, perhaps this is one of the points in which it does so.” (St. Clair-Tisdall 1904: 154) In fact, “the Quran goes so far as to use a plural noun for Allah, Allahhumma, a word which even Muslims believe corresponds to the Hebrew word Elohim” (Shamoun, “Plurality” n.d.: n.p.; see Q. 3:26; 5:114; 8:32; 10:10; 39:46). These facts, combined with the evident misunderstanding of the Trinity in the Qur’an, could be bridges to Muslims to help them realize that Trinity is not tri-theism and that Christianity is a truly monotheistic faith.

142 In the NT, Ps 2:7 is quoted or alluded to at Jesus’ baptism (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22), his transfiguration (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35), and in connection with his resurrection and exaltation (Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5), thus identifying Jesus as the true “Son of God.”
person is accentuated. Apart from referring to angels in general, the OT speaks of “the angel of the Lord.” On some occasions “the angel of the Lord” is identified as God (Gen 16:7-13; 22:11-16; 31:11-13; Exod 3:2-6; Judg 13:6-22; Isa 63:9 ["the angel of His presence"]); on other occasions, “the angel of the Lord” appears to be distinguished from God (Num 22:22-35; Judg 13:8-9). These passages “warrant saying that while there is only one God, in some sense there is plurality in the Godhead, for the angel of the Lord is called God and yet is distinguished from God” (Feinberg 2001: 453).

Similarly, although the Messiah was to be a human being (e.g., Gen 3:15; Isa 11:1-5; 42:1-6; 59:20; Jer 30:18-22; 33:14-15), some passages suggest that the Messiah would be divine (e.g., Ps 2:6-12; 110:1-7; Isa 9:6; Jer 23:5-6; Mic 5:2; Zech 14:9). Thus, as with the angel of the Lord, given OT monotheism, the Messiah must be identical to Yahweh or he would not be called God; yet there is a distinction. This again suggests that the Godhead is more complex—plurality in unity—not a solitary unity. This same pattern exists with the OT’s reference to the Spirit of the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Some passages suggest the identity of the Spirit with God (e.g., Gen 1:1-2; 6:3; Job 33:4; Ps 139:7-10); other passages show a distinction (e.g., Exod 31:3-3; Ps 51:11; Isa 48:16; 61:1; 63:7, 10). The names, attributes, and actions of Yahweh’s “Son,” “the Angel of the Lord,” the Messiah, and the Spirit of God indicate that they are divine—God himself—but the passages indicate distinctions from Yahweh as well. All of these passages, therefore, suggest that there is plurality in the Godhead.

4. 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, ^ indicate direct quotes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Title/Attribute</th>
<th>God the Father</th>
<th>God the Son</th>
<th>God the Spirit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>Ps 45:6-7; 1 Cor 8:6</td>
<td>Heb 1:1; Eph 1:17,20</td>
<td>Acts 5:3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord</td>
<td>Isa 3:15; 42:1-6</td>
<td>Mark 1:2-4; Phil 2:10-11</td>
<td>2 Cor 3:17-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eternal</td>
<td>Ps 90:2; Isa 43:10, 13</td>
<td>Mic 5:2</td>
<td>Heb 9:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator</td>
<td>Gen 1:1; Ps 102:25-27</td>
<td>John 1:10; Col 1:16</td>
<td>Gen 1:2; Job 33:4; Ps 104:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omniscient</td>
<td>Job 21:22; Ps 33:13-15</td>
<td>Heb 1:12</td>
<td>John 16:13; 1 Cor 2:10-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omnipresent</td>
<td>Prov 15:3; Jer 23:24</td>
<td>Eph 1:20-22; Heb 1:3</td>
<td>Ps 139:7-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does miraculous signs</td>
<td>Exodus 14:22; Dan 3:23-27</td>
<td>Matt 18:20; 28:20; Eph 4:10</td>
<td>Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 12:7-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raised Jesus from the</td>
<td>Gal 1:1; Eph 1:17,20</td>
<td>Mark 6:45-52; John 20:30</td>
<td>Rom 8:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dead</td>
<td>Matt 26:39; Eph 1:11</td>
<td>John 2:19</td>
<td>1 Cor 12:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is True</td>
<td>1 Sam 2:2; John 17:11</td>
<td>John 14:6</td>
<td>John 14:26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Holy</td>
<td>Ps 34:8</td>
<td>Acts 3:14; Heb 7:26</td>
<td>Ps 143:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Good</td>
<td>Eph 2:4-5</td>
<td>John 10:11</td>
<td>John 3:8; Rom 8:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives spiritual life</td>
<td>Ps 28:7-8; 46:1-2; 133:3</td>
<td>John 1:4; 5:21</td>
<td>Eph 3:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthens people</td>
<td>2 Cor 6:16</td>
<td>Phil 4:13</td>
<td>John 14:17; Rom 8:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indwells believers</td>
<td>1 John 1:3</td>
<td>Eph 3:17; Col 1:27</td>
<td>2 Cor 13:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowships with</td>
<td>John 17:17</td>
<td>1 John 1:3</td>
<td>1 Pet 1:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctifies believers</td>
<td>Gen 6:6; Ps 78:40</td>
<td>John 12:48-50; 16:1, 4, 19-25</td>
<td>Isa 63:10; Acts 4:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks to people</td>
<td></td>
<td>Isa 53:3; Mark 3:5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>May be grieved</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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.

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

- **Isa 48:16**: “And now the Lord God has sent Me, and His Spirit.”
- **Isa 61:1**: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me.”
- **Matt 23:8-10**: “But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.”
- **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

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143 Jesus quoted Isa 61:1-2 in Luke 4:18-21 as specifically applying to himself (i.e., he is the “me” referred to).
144 In John 14:26, Jesus said that the role of the Holy Spirit is to “teach you all things.”
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.”
- **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.”
- **Acts 10: 36, 38:** “The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all) . . . You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.”
- **Acts 20:28:** “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”
- **Rom 8:1-4:** “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”
- **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.”
- **Rom 8:11:** “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”
- **Rom 15:15-16:** “But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”
- **Gal 4:6:** “Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’”
- **2 Thess 2:13-14:** “But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus...
Coptic Pope Shenuda III began the explanation of how the triune God does not involve separation into three persons; rather, the Holy Spirit comes from the Father without leaving Him. He comes out of Him and yet remains in Him, which leads to the doctrine that the Holy Spirit, while distinct and personal, maintains a unity with the Father and Son.

The doctrine of the Trinity is neither incoherent (i.e., internally self-contradictory) nor illogical. The late Edward Bickersteth concludes, “The one whom the psalmist calls upon us to worship is the same One whom, he says, the Israelites provoked [see also Isaiah 63:10; Acts 7:51 which speak of Israel’s grieving and resisting the Holy Spirit]. This One the parallel passages assure us was eminently the Eternal Spirit. . . . While establishing the personal Deity of the Spirit, we must not forget his essential unity with the Father and the Son. To those who believe this, every simple command ‘worship God’ embraces worship of the Holy Spirit.” (Ibid.: 134)

6. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all to be worshipped as God. We have previously discussed that the Bible makes it absolutely clear that only God is to be worshipped (Exodus 20:3-5; Deuteronomy 5:7-9; John 1:1-14; 5:22-23; Acts 2:36; 7:59-60; 20:28; 20:28; 20:28; 20:28; 20:28; 20:28; Acts 2:36; 7:59-60; 20:28; Romans 3:5-8; Philippians 2:5-11; Titus 1:9-10; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 2:13; Revelation 5:1-14). The worship of mere mortals or even angels is idolatrous and sinful (Exodus 20:1-5; Deuteronomy 5:6-9; Romans 1:18-23). Nevertheless, in Matthew 2:11; 14:33; 28:9, 16-17; Luke 24:51-52; John 1:1-14; 5:22-23; Acts 3:14-30; Acts 13:5; Luke 20:21; Acts 2:36; 7:59-60; 20:28; Romans 3:5-8; Philippians 2:5-11; Titus 1:9-10; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 2:23; Revelation 5:1-14 people worshipped or prayed to Jesus as they would to God Himself, and Jesus accepted that worship. That alone indicates plurality in the Godhead and is a pointer to the Trinity. The last aspect of the worship of the true God, therefore, involves worship of the Holy Spirit. This is seen particularly as one compares different passages of Scripture.

In Isaiah 6:5 Isaiah says, “Woe is me, for I am ruined. . . . For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” In Isaiah 6:8-13 “the voice of the Lord” then commissions Isaiah to go and prophesy to the people of Israel. John 12:40 quotes Isaiah 6:10. John 12:41 then applies all of Isaiah 6 to Jesus by saying, “These things Isaiah said because he saw His [Jesus’] glory, and he spoke of Him.” In Acts 28:26-27 Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 but, in Acts 28:25, introduces the quotation from Isaiah by saying, “The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, saying, . . .” Thus, it was Yahweh, the Lord of hosts, who spoke to Isaiah; but John reveals that Isaiah spoke of Jesus who was the manifestation of the glory of Yahweh; and Paul reveals that the voice of Yahweh, the Lord of hosts, was the Holy Spirit. Edward Bickersteth observes, “Now we decipher the true significance of the threefold adoration of the veiled seraphim [in Isaiah 6:3]. ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts,’ and dimly apprehend why it was asked [by the Lord in Isaiah 6:8], ‘Who will go for us.’ The angels of light, therefore, worship the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son.” (Bickersteth 1957: 132)

Psalm 95:6-9 says, “Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me, They tried Me, though they had seen My work.” Psalm 95 calls on the people to “worship and bow down” to the Lord God whom they had tested and tried in the wilderness. Hebrews 3:7-9 quotes Psalm 95:7-9 and reveals that the people had tested and tried the Holy Spirit in the wilderness: “Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years.’” Bickersteth concludes, “The One whom the psalmist calls upon us to worship is the same One whom, he says, the Israelites provoked [see also Isaiah 63:10; Acts 7:51 which speak of Israel’s grieving and resisting the Holy Spirit]. This One the parallel passages assure us was eminently the Eternal Spirit. . . . While establishing the personal Deity of the Spirit, we must not forget his essential unity with the Father and the Son. To those who believe this, every simple command ‘worship God’ embraces worship of the Holy Spirit.” (Ibid.: 134)

The above biblical evidence should be sufficient to demonstrate that God is Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Much more could be said to biblically demonstrate that fact, but many resources, including several readily available online, deal with this in detail (see, e.g., Bickersteth 1957: 9-176; Feinberg 2001: 437-98; Pratney 1988: 255-430; “The Trinity” n.d. [list of online resources]).

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 persons 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

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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)

This leads to how we identify and classify things. A “sortal” is a general term that denotes objects of a particular kind (e.g., “dog,” “color,” “man”). For example, a person might have a farm and a business. When counting occupations and people, there would be two occupations but only one person. Consider two statements about the identity of Jesus: “(1) ‘Jesus is the same God as the Holy Spirit’; and (2) ‘Jesus is the same person as the Holy Spirit.’” The sortal noun in (1) is ‘God’ and the sortal in (2) is ‘person.’ . . . Sentence (1) is true and (2) is false. Relative to the sortal ‘God,’ Jesus and the Holy Spirit are the same. Relative to the sortal ‘person’ . . . Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not the same. . . . God is one relative to the sortal ‘deity’ and three relative to the sortal ‘person,’ and such claims are logically consistent. This shows how it is possible for God to be one and three at the same time without contradiction.” (Feinberg 2001: 494, 496)

Various analogies may make the nature of the Trinity more understandable:145

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 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,

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145 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.
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) Jeremy Begbie observes, “Many
depictions of the Trinity have been essentially static and still, whereas to speak of three strings mutually
resonating instantly introduces a dynamism which is arguably far truer to the trinitarian, living God of the New

Building on the above three-in-one nature of a musical chord, Begbie and others have suggested that
God as Trinity can be likened to a polyphonic musical piece (i.e., where different melodies and countermelodies
sound simultaneously in a unity of musical composition). Begbie states, “Returning to the Trinity, instead of a
chord, might it not be more appropriate to speak of God’s life as three-part polyphony. . . . This more readily
suggests response, giving and receiving, particularity of persons, even the joy of God.” (Begbie 2000: 150; see
also Jenson 1997: 236) All three members of the Trinity have their distinctive “melodies” which are played and
heard simultaneously: they do not detract from God’s unity but make that unity far more dynamic, deeper, and
richer than a simplistic monolithic or monad-like singularity.

5. The nature of space: the difference between one, two, and three dimensional objects. A one
dimensional object (a straight line) has only length. A two dimensional object has length and width; a square
consists of four lines but is only one square. A three dimensional object has length, width, and height; a cube
consists of six squares and twelve lines but is only one cube (see Lewis 1996: 142-43). Further, 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 or 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 x 1 x 1
each is the whole! For in such multiplication each unit multiplies and permeates every part of the whole. . . . The
Trinity is not an inert division of God into three parts. . . . It is a living, active, intensive mode of being, in which
each of the Three interacts, penetrates, intensifies, lives in the other Two, and each is the Whole. One x One x
One produces an intensive, multiplied Unity, deeper, greater, more One, than simple Unity could be. God is
more deeply, infinitely One than He could ever be if He were not also Three.” (Wood 1978: 175-77, 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,
particly 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. . . . 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).146

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). Physics professor Michael Bozack identifies seven similarities between the triple point and the Trinity: (1) The triple point and the Trinity both possess a singular nature with three coequal but distinct subsistences. While the three states of matter at the triple point are conjoined by a common molecular structure, the phases are quite different when viewed macroscopically. (2) The triple point and the Trinity are both equilibrium states. Equilibrium is that condition in a thermodynamic system when the properties of the system do not change with time. . . . The analogous property of the Godhead is the principle of immutability, meaning that the nature and attributes of the persons of the Trinity are invariant with time. (3) Neither the triple point nor the Trinity is a tritheism. The triple point is incompatible with tritheism because, at the triple point, there are not three phases in the sense of taking solid, liquid, and gas from separate locations and combining them mechanically. There is unity of essence at the triple point, with the phases tied together at a particular set of thermodynamic conditions. (4) Neither the triple point nor the Trinity is a trimodality. Once the triple point is established, simultaneous exercise of the three concurrent phases is guaranteed. No grounds exist for the action of one phase apart from another. (5) The phase relationships at the triple point are similar to relationships between the trinitarian persons. No one state of matter is more fundamental than another, nor does the thermodynamic substance lose its identity because it exists in three concurrent forms. Thermodynamically, each phase at the triple point derives and sustains its character by mutual collaboration with the other two phases. The triple point phases cannot exist independently but are interlocked at equilibrium. (6) The triple point and the Trinity both have ontological properties. There is . . . a natural ordering of phase relations, specified by nature's universal desire to seek the state of lowest energy. During energy minimization, phase changes may occur and one phase may be considered to “beget” or “proceed from” another. (7) The triple point and the Trinity both have economic properties. Under idealized conditions it is possible for the triple point to be involved in applications that depend on the joint effort of all three phases but where only one phase is featured. (Bozack 1993: 67-70)

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

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146 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).
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—whereby: “(1) There will be exactly three distinct interdependent, essential elements. (2) No one element can be any of the others. (3) No element can exist without the other two. Put symbolically: \( 1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1 \) and \( 1 \times 1 \times 0 = 0 \).” (Pratney 1988: 267) 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 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 doctrine of the Trinity therefore is neither incoherent nor illogical. The Triune nature of the God of the Bible manifestly presents an adequate reason for the triune structure of the universe, its various components, and the nature of human beings; conversely, the triune structure of the universe, its various components, and the nature of human beings present universal confirmations of the Divine Triunity. In fact, 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.

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147 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.
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]”).

This sharply contrasts with the triune God of the Bible, “The Trinity, as it exists in itself, apart from its relation to the created universe, is self-complete, involving as it does the equal ultimacy of unity and plurality” (Van Til 1974: 223). The true biblical God “did not need to create; God does not need the universe as the relation to the created universe, is self-complete, involving as it does the equal ultimacy of unity and plurality” and communicate”; consequently, Allah “needed the universe as much as the universe needed [him]”).

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 Hadith reflects the impersonality of Allah by saying that Allah “created” mercy when he created the world: “Allah created one hundred (parts of mercy) and He distributed one amongst His creation and kept this one hundred excepting one with Himself (for the Day of Resurrection)” (Muslim: 2752b; see also 2753c; al-Bukhari: 6469; at-Tirmidhi: 3541; Ibn Majah: vol. 5, book 37, no. 4294). Because it is “created,” mercy is not an intrinsic part of Allah’s essential being. When each surah except surah 9 begins by calling Allah “merciful,” those statements are therefore not telling us anything about Allah’s essential nature. Another hadith says, “Allah created Satan, and he created good and created evil” (Abi Dawud: 4618). Because it is “created,” goodness is not an intrinsic part of Allah’s essential being (nor is evil intrinsic to his essential being). The fact that neither good nor evil are intrinsic to Allah’s essential being confirms that intrinsically he is an *impersonal* being, since both good and evil are inherently personal attributes. Further, as we saw previously, Allah’s “love” for people is conditional and is only based on their prior behavior. That is not real love. Allah cannot love people unconditionally because love is not an intrinsic part of his being. The Islamic teaching that Allah is unknowable is a reflection of his impersonal nature.

There is a practical implication of this for human relationships. **John 16:14; 17:4-5** say that the Holy Spirit, the Son, and the Father all “glorify” each other. Keller says, “To glorify something or someone is to praise, enjoy, and delight in them. . . . To glorify someone is also to serve or defer to him or her. . . . Each person of the Trinity loves, adores, defers to, and rejoices in the others. That creates a dynamic, pulsating dance of joy and love. . . . This astonishing, dynamic conception of the triune God is bristling with profound, wonderful, life-
shaping, world-changing implications.” (Keller 2008: 214-15) Feinberg elaborates this: “The doctrine of the Trinity offers an example for interpersonal relationships, not the least of which is family relations. Even as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit deeply love one another, work together to accomplish their goals in our universe, and when needed submit their individual wills to the wishes and plans of the other members of the Godhead (e.g., Matt 26:39, where Jesus says not his will but the Father’s), we find our model for interpersonal relations.” (Feinberg 2001: 441-42) This leads to relationships characterized by deferring to and glorifying others in joy and love, mirroring the relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That is not and cannot be true of Allah, who governs humanity not by personal example but through fear and by the inconsistent dictates of his shari’ah. Timothy Keller clearly grasps the implications for human interaction that flow from this fundamental difference between the triune God of the Bible and the solitary oneness of Allah: “A unipersonal God was power, sovereignty, and greatness from all eternity, but not love. Love then is not of the essence of God, nor is it at the heart of the universe. Power is primary.” (Keller 2008: 216) To the extent that people act in conformity to their conception of God, their interpersonal relationships will tend to be characterized by these two fundamentally different sets of values and traits.

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. Additionally, Allah does not particularly care for people but deceives them, and his ultimate decree is unknowable and unpredictable. Allah’s essentially impersonal nature and unknowability contribute to the inability to have any assurance of salvation. 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. This in turn raises the issue of the origin and relationship of unity and diversity (or as it is also called, “the one and the many”), including such questions as: How do we know the many do not exist simply as unrelated particulars? and How can we obtain a unity that does not destroy the particulars? Pantheism (which includes Hinduism and Buddhism) is based on the philosophy of monism which holds that “all is one.” Such religion holds that “the metaphysical and the real are thoroughly merged. It upholds the unity of the macrocosm and the microcosm” (Vohra 2014: 94). Pantheism in any form cannot coherently account for diversity-particularity—the many. On the other hand, polytheism cannot coherently account for the underlying unity of the universe. Materialism—naturalism-atheism cannot coherently account for the underlying unity of the universe or for the existence of personality, because everything is said to be based on unplanned, random, impersonal forces.

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). Yahweh and Allah are fundamentally different insofar as their ability to account for existence is concerned. 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 Trinity “is not a blank unity, which would be impersonal. Rather, he is a unity of persons.” (Frame 1995: 65) Consequently, “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. As Wood says, “Trinity in the image of the Triune God is the principle and explanation of the universe. It is the organizing principle of all things. It is the structure and pattern of the universe.” (Wood 1978: 103) “The truth of Christianity is that it is true to what is there” (Schaeffer 1982: 290).

V. Yahweh and Allah: Conclusion
Yahweh and Allah share many attributes, primarily those relating to their transcendence. It is in their immanence (i.e., their presence in the created universe), their natures, and characters as they have revealed themselves that they radically and fundamentally differ. While they are both “one God” who have no “partners,” Allah’s oneness is a solitary oneness whereas Yahweh’s oneness is the oneness of Trinity. Sundiata makes the following comparisons: “The Islamic concept of a creator is simpler because it is humanistic—not because it is true. It may be simpler to tell a child that the earth is a stationary platform because it feels and looks that way. That is easier to ‘experience’—it fits better into a child’s level of knowledge and experience than the complex facts of planetary motion (which is the reality). But telling a child that the earth is a stationary platform would not be true. . . . The Christian concept also identifies the supreme Being, but it goes much further to describe the manner in which the supreme Being exists in His realm. Compared to the Christian concept, the Islamic concept is rudimentary and simplistic and invariably has aspects that do not conform to reality.” (Sundiata 2006: 195, 182-83) 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 cannot be manipulated but 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, and the Qur’an “has nothing in common with the Bible as far as structure, tone, voice, grammar, or orientation is concerned” (Emerick 2004: 89). Nevertheless, it refers to various books, people, and stories of the Bible. Virtually every prophet named in the Qur’an is a figure from the Bible (Ibid.: 16-18); of all the Prophets and Messengers of Islam, only the biblical characters Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus are considered to be “messengers of strong will” along with Muhammad (Hilali and Khan 1998: 686 n.2; Haleem 2005: Q. 46:35n.a). 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.148 “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

148 F. F. Bruce points out that “the books of the Hebrew Bible are traditionally twenty-four in number, arranged in three divisions. . . . These twenty-four books are identical with the thirty-nine of the Protestant Old Testament; the difference in reckoning arises from counting the twelve (‘minor’) prophets separately and dividing Samuel, Kings, Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah into two each.” (Bruce 1988: 29, 29n.4) It should be noted that the Roman Catholic Church includes as part of their canon a number of books written after the books that constitute the Hebrew Bible were completed and before the NT books were written; these books were not part of the Hebrew canon of scripture but were included in the Septuagint (the translation of the OT into Greek) and are typically referred to as the Apocrypha or deuterocanonical books.
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 (the Jews, of course, do not recognize the NT), 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). Toward the end of the first century AD, Jewish historian Josephus wrote that “we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine” (Josephus c.97: 1.8).149 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).

With respect to the NT, “Although the vast majority of books that are now included in the New Testament clearly functioned with canonical authority from the time they were written, there were a few books whose inclusion in the New Testament canon was disputed. These included Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. There were also several books vying for canonical status that were not included. The overwhelming majority of these were spurious works written by second-century Gnostic heretics. These books were never given serious consideration. (This point is missed by critics who allege that over two thousand contenders yielded a list of twenty-seven. Then they ask, ‘What are the odds that the correct twenty-seven were selected?’)151 In fact, only two or three books that were not included ever had real consideration. These were I Clement, The Shepherd of Hermas, and The Didache. These books were not included because they were not written by apostles, and the writers themselves acknowledged that their authority was subordinate to the apostles.” (Sproul 1992: 22)

Barker, Lane, and Michaels observe, “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,

149 Bruce notes, “When Josephus speaks of twenty-two books, he probably refers to exactly the same documents as the twenty-four of the traditional Jewish reckoning, Ruth being counted as an appendix to Judges and Lamentations to Jeremiah” (Bruce 1988: 33).
150 In this regard, see n.34, above, and associated text.
151 That is the type of argument made by Muslim apologist Jerald Dirks. He lists 41 apocryphal gospels and concludes that “only forty of over 45 gospels found their way into the New Testament, a meager 9% of what was possible” (Dirks 2008: 82-83). Dirks does not mention that his 41 apocryphal “gospels” fail every one of the criteria for authenticity (see text, above). He even includes one text in his list, the Gospel of Barnabas, a forgery which dates from the 1600s! (“Gospel of Barnabas" 2019: Textual history). Even Muslim scholar Mahmoud Ayoub admits that the Gospel of Barnabas “is most probably a late work, written under Islamic influence” (Ayoub 1980: 113; see also “What about the Gospel of Barnabas?” n.d.: Gilchrist 2002: 135-47; Geisler and Saleeb 2002: 303-07; Sundiata 2006: 173-80 for details on the Islamic background of the Gospel of Barnabas). Dirks’s arguments against the crucifixion similarly rely heavily on Gnostic texts from 200 or more years after Jesus rather than dealing with the primary evidence discussed above at section 2.IV. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: The Crucifixion.
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;152 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 pervverted 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.” (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) Athari summarizes the standard Islamic position, “When Allah, the Exalted, the Almighty revealed these Books—apart from the Qur’an—He did not guarantee to preserve them; rather He left the task of preserving them to the rabbis and priests, but they failed to preserve them or take proper care of them, so they became altered and distorted” (al-Athari 2005: 93-94; see also As-Suhaym 2006: 182-83). Ultimately, the Islamic “test” for what has been “corrupted” boils down to one thing: “Whatever in these Books accords with the Qur’an is from God, and whatever is not in conformity with it is from human beings” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 5:48n. 79).

152 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. Mawdudi states that “Injil [Gospel] signifies the inspired orations and utterances of Jesus (peace be on him), which he delivered during the last two or three years of his life in his capacity as a Prophet. There are no certain means by which we can definitively establish whether or not his statements were recorded during his lifetime.” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 3:4n.2, emph. added) He goes on to say, concerning the written gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, that “the Injil consists of those statements by Jesus which form part of these Gospels. Unfortunately we have no means of distinguishing the fragments of the original Injil from the pieces written by the authors themselves. All we can say is that only those sections explicitly attributed to Jesus, for example in statements such as: ‘And Jesus said’ and ‘And Jesus taught’, constitute the true Injil. It is the totality of such fragments which is designated as the Injil by the Qur’an, and it is the teachings contained in these fragments that the Qur’an confirms.” (Ibid., emph. added) Yusuf Ali similarly says, “The original Gospel (see 3:48) was not the various stories written afterwards by disciples, but the real Message taught direct by Jesus” (Ali 2006: Q. 3:49n.390). Q. 4:163 states, “We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him: we sent inspiration to Abraham, Isma’il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms.” Ali comments, “Note that what is spoken of here is Inspiration, not necessarily a Book” (Ali 2006: Q. 4:163n.668). For a discussion of the true meaning of the “gospel,” see n.155, below.
IV. Responses to the Islamic View of the Bible


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 Qur’an 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). Occasionally it also refers to the “Psalms” (Zabur, Q. 4:163; 17:55; 21:105). 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)

Certain ahadith demonstrate that “Torah” was used by Muslims in its broader sense of meaning the entire OT, not just the Pentateuch (Shamoun, “Quranic Witness,” n.d.: n.p.).153 Asad even translates Q. 4:153 as “The followers of the Old Testament.” He explains this in a footnote, “As is evident from the sequence, the term ahl al-kitab (‘followers of earlier revelation’) refers here specifically to the Jews, which justifies its rendering as ‘followers of the Old Testament’” (Adas 1980: Q. 4:153n.164). That broader usage of the term “Torah” (or “Law”) by the Jews, by Jesus, and by the NT writers also is reflected in the Bible.154

Concerning “the Gospel” as designating the entire NT, “at a very early date it appears that the four Gospels were united in one collection. They must have been brought together very soon after the writing of the Gospel according to John. This fourfold collection was known originally as ‘The Gospel’ in the singular, not ‘The Gospels’ in the plural; there was only one Gospel, narrated in four records, distinguished as ‘according to Matthew’, ‘according to Mark’, and so on.”155 About AD 115 Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, refers to ‘The Gospel’

153 See al-Bukhari: 2511 which quotes from and paraphrases Isa 42:1-3, 6-7 as being part of the Torah; see also an-Nasa’i 1346 in which Muhammad quotes a purported prayer of David as being in the Torah even though David does not appear in the Pentateuch. Tafsir Ibn Kathir, in its comment on Q. 7:157, quotes al-Bukhari as saying “It was common in the speech of our Salaf [pious ancestors] that they describe the Books of the People of the Two Scriptures as the Tawrah, as some Hadiths concur. Allah knows best.”

154 See, e.g., John 10:34 (“Jesus answered them, ‘Has it not been written in your Law, I said, you are gods’”): that statement is not in the Pentateuch but is from Ps 82:6. John 12:34 (“The crowd then answered Him, ‘We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever’”). The Law does not, in fact, talk about Christ remaining forever; that is indicated in Ps 110:1, 4 and Dan 7:13-14. John 15:25 (“They hated Me without a cause”): that statement is not found in the ‘Torah, per se, but alludes to Ps 35:19 and 69:4. Rom 3:10-19 allude to Ps 5:9; 10:7; 36:1; 14:1-3; 51:4; 53:1-3; 59:7-8; 140:3; and Ecc 7:20 as parts of “the Law.” 1 Cor 14:21 says “In the Law it is written” and then quotes from Isa 28:11-12.

155 The word “gospel” is a Greek word (euaggelion) meaning “good news” (Danker 2000: euaggelion, 402; Green and McKnight 1992: 282). The background of the term “is thoroughly rooted in the OT” (Green and McKnight 1992: 283): “The very word ‘Gospel’ was taken by the earliest Christians from [Isa 40:9]” (Bauckham 1999: 48). Historically, “The Greek term ‘gospel’ (ev-angelion) distinguished the Christian message from that of other religions. An ‘ev-angel’ was news of a
as an authoritative writing, and as he knew more than one of the four ‘Gospels’ it may well be that by ‘The Gospel’ sans phrase [i.e., without exceptions or qualifications] he means the fourfold collection which went by that name.” (Bruce 1960: 27 [ch.3 online])

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; see also Sundiata 2006: 70 [Injil “was borrowed from the word which early Syrian Christians used to describe the New Testament”]; Gilchrist n.d.: ch.2 [“distinguished (Muslim) commentators like Baidawi and Zamakshari openly admit that Injil is not an original Arabic word but is borrowed from the Syriac word used by the Christians themselves to describe the Gospel”]). 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 [“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”]; 6:92; 28:43). Consequently, Muslims are required as a cardinal element of Islam to believe in the Bible. Q. 2:285 (see also Q. 2:136) states the first four articles of Islamic belief: “The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messengers.” Q. 4:136 similarly 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.” 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 is similar. That verse 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 great historical event, such as a victory in war or the ascension of a new king, that changed the listeners’ condition and required a response from the listener. So the gospel is news of what God has done to reach us. It is not advice about what we must do to reach God.” (Keller n.d.: 1) What is this “good news”? It is that “God has entered the world in Jesus Christ to achieve a salvation that we could not achieve for ourselves which now 1) converts and transforms individuals, forming them into a new humanity, and eventually 2) will renew the whole world and all creation. This is the ‘good news’—the gospel.” (Ibid.) Gary Habermas and Michael Licona similarly summarize what the gospel is: “Gospel is defined by a minimum of three essential facts in the book of Acts [see Acts 1-5, 10, 13, 17] and Paul’s letters [see Rom 1:2-4; 10:9; 1 Cor 15:1-4; 2 Tim 2:8-9]: (1) the deity of Jesus; (2) the death of Jesus in our place; and (3) the resurrection of Jesus. Other facts are involved, but these three are always present or implied. The good news to the world is that the sovereign Lord of the universe has overthrown the powers of darkness by conquering death.” (Habermas and Licona 2004: 25-26, emph. in orig.) Thus, the gospel is all about who Christ is and what Christ has done—it is not a set of rules of what God demands that we do to achieve salvation.

Reynolds notes that “in 5:47 and 7:157 the Qur’an seems to use Injil to refer to the Christian scriptures” (Reynolds 2018: 109).
and in that which came down to you” (see also Q. 2:4; 3:3-4, 119; 5:59; 42:15). Two things should be noted here. First, 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.” Q. 2:121 also says, “Those to whom We have sent the Book study it as it should be studied: They are the ones that believe therein: Those who reject faith therein, - the loss is their own.” One could not possibly “study it as it should be studied” if the Bible no longer was in existence or if the text had been corrupted.

Additionally, the Hadith confirms the existence of “the Gospels” in Arabic and that Muhammad himself knew about them: “Narrated Aisha: The Prophet returned to Khadija while his heart was beating rapidly. She took him to Waraqa bin Naufal who was a Christian convert and used to read the Gospels in Arabic.” (al-Bukhari: 3392) Note that what is being referred to here is not some lost, non-existent “Gospel book” that was given to Jesus, but “the Gospels,” which can only be a reference to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The existence of the Gospels was obviously well-known to Aisha and Muhammad. Another hadith has this to say about Waraqa bin Naufal, “Waraqa was the son of her [Khadija’s] paternal uncle, i.e., her father's brother, who during the Pre-Islamic Period became a Christian and used to write the Arabic writing and used to write of the Gospels in Arabic as much as Allah wished him to write” (al-Bukhari: 6982). This hadith not only mentions “the Gospels” but also indicates that “Allah wished him to write” of the Gospels and Waraqa did so. Therefore, the Gospels could not possibly have been corrupted, since Allah had Waraqa not only read them but write about them!

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 (’inda hum); 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; see also Gilchrist n.d.: ch.2)

Q. 3:78-79 says, “There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues: (As they read) you would think it is a part of the Book, but it is no part of the Book; and they say, ‘That is from Allah,’ but it is not from Allah: It is they who tell a lie against Allah, and (well) they know it! It is not (possible) that a man, to whom is given the Book, and Wisdom, and the prophetic office, should say to people: ‘Be ye my worshippers rather than Allah’s’: on the contrary (He would say) ‘Be ye worshippers of Him Who is truly the Cherisher of all: For ye have taught the Book and ye have studied it earnestly.’”

The meaning of Q. 3:78-79 manifestly is that some people were misinterpreting the Bible through what they said; but the passage “does not say that this group was able to change the written Scriptures, only their spoken interpretations of the Book were distorted” (Greeson 2007: 139; see also Reynolds 2018: 161 [the Qur’an nowhere asserts “that the Bible of the Jews and Christians is falsified (5:47 and 10:94 actually suggest that the Bible is reliable). Instead, the Qur’an argues that the Jews (in particular) have hidden or misrepresented (by ‘twisting their tongues’) their revelation.”]). Those people were unjustified in what they said for the very reason that they had God’s own Word and had studied it earnestly. Although some of the people may have been corrupt, the Bible itself was not corrupt; it was present and could be studied. These verses make no sense on any other basis. In fact, Q. 3:113 points out that some Christians and Jews were not corrupt: “Not all of them are alike: a party of the people of the Scripture stand for the right, they recite the Verses of Allah during the hours of the night, prostrating themselves in prayer.” This indicates that the Bible itself was not corrupt as of the time of Muhammad, since it was being recited by prayerful and godly people. Additionally, the whole context of Q.
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 2003: 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, because “How could the Jews and Christians of Muhammad’s day ‘observe the Torah and the Gospel’ if these books were not available and authentic?” (Sundiata 2006: 60; see also Aldelphi and Hahn 1993: pt. 1.6). Significantly, surah 5 is considered one of the final revelations of the Qur’an (see **APPENDIX A—CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF SUHAHS**).

**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.” 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). Similarly, **Q. 40:53-54** calls the Torah “the (Book of) Guidance” and “a Guide and a Message to men of Understanding.” Similarly, **Q. 11:17; 46:12** call the Torah “a guide and a mercy” (see also **Q. 17:2; 28:43; 32:23-24**). **Q. 21:48** calls the Torah “the criterion (for judgment), and a Light and a Message for those who would do right.” **Q. 19:12** (Hilali-Khan) says, “O Yahya (John)! Hold fast the Scripture [the Taurat (Torah)].” It could not say that if the Torah had been corrupted when John the Baptist was alive. Similarly, **Q. 66:12** says that Mary “(also believed in) His Scriptures.” Again, the Qur’an could not have said that if the OT had been corrupted as of the time of Mary and Jesus.

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.” Q. 2:75 also calls the Torah “the Word of Allah.” 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.” 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 acknowledges the reliability and authoritativeness of the Bible.

Many commentators go beyond this and maintain that “the Book” refers to all books revealed by Allah (including the Bible), not just the Qur’an. In his comment on Q. 5:48, Mawdudi says that “the Qur’an and all those Books sent down by God at various times and in different languages in reality constitute one and the same Book” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 5:48n.78; see also Ali 2006: Q. 3:23n.366; Q. 10:94n.1475).

In sum, all of the above verses indicate that the Bible is either “the Book,” “the Word,” or a part of “the Book” of Allah. 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 calls the OT and the NT “Our Signs.” The Qur’an affirms the incorruptibility of the text of the Bible by calling the Torah (OT) and the Gospel (NT) “Our signs.” It says this because it claims that the Torah and the Gospel predicted the advent of Muhammad: “My mercy extendeth to all things. That (mercy) I shall ordain for those who do right, and practise regular charity, and those who believe in Our signs: Those who follow the messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (scriptures),- in the law and the Gospel” (Q. 7:156–57). Those statements and promises are in the present tense, i.e., they talk about Allah’s promise of mercy to people who believe in the signs of the Torah and Gospel when the Qur’an was given. They only make sense if both the Torah and the Gospel were available and were uncorrupted. Indeed, to reject “our signs” (or “our verses”) as the word “biyāyātina)” is frequently translated (see “Quran Dictionary”) will result in the person being sent to hell (Q. 7:36).

6. 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, watchet, custodian of previous Scriptures (5:48), not the abrogator of previous Scriptures.” (Adelphi and Hahn 1993: pt.1.6)

7. 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.”

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157 The Arabic wording of Q. 5:48 is discussed in depth in Shamoun, “Quranic Witness” n.d. and “Quran Confirms” n.d.
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 Remembrance [Scriptures - the Taurat (Torah), the Injeel (Gospel)] if you do not know” (see also Q. 3:93; 16:43).

With respect to Q. 21:7, Tafsir al-Jalalayn states, “Ask the People of the Remembrance, those with knowledge of the Torah and the Gospel, if you do not know, this; for they will know it” (Jalal 2017: Q. 21:7, comment). None of these statements could have been made if the Bible had been corrupted. Robert Spencer summarizes, “Asking Muhammad to check with the Jews and Christians to assuage his doubts is perfectly reasonable in light of the Koranic assumption that his message was identical to the one they had received from their own prophets. . . . This assumes, of course, that uncorrupted versions of the Jewish (and Christian) Scriptures were available in Muhammad’s day—a contention that creates immense difficulties for the Islamic claim that they were corrupted at all, since copies that exist from that era are not different from the Jewish and Christian Scriptures that exist today.” (Spencer 2009: 79)

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 worshiping 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.

Ibn Ishaq, Muhammad’s early Muslim biographer, confirms that Muhammad affirmed the integrity of the Torah and the Gospel: “Rafi b. Haritha and Sallam b. Mishkam and Malik b. al-Sayf and Rafi b. Huraymila came to him and said: ‘Do you not allege that you follow the religion of Abraham and believe in the Torah which we have and testify that it is the truth from God?’ He replied, ‘Certainly, but you have sinned and broken
the covenant contained therein and concealed what you were ordered to make plain to man, and I disassociate myself from your sin.’ They said, ‘We hold by what we have. We live according to the guidance and the truth and we do not believe in you and we will not follow you.’ So God sent down concerning them: ‘Say O Scripture folk, you have no standing until you observe the Torah and the Gospel and what has been sent down to you from your Lord. What has been sent down to thee from thy Lord will assuredly increase many of them in error and unbelief. But be not sad because of the unbelieving people.’” (Ibn Ishaq 1955: 268, emph. added; the ayah referred to is Q. 5:68) Note that the Torah was not some lost Torah but was “the Torah which we have.” Muhammad positively and "certainly” affirmed that the Torah was in existence and “is the truth from God.” He referred to is C. Book. Hence, there is no evidence that Muhammad believed that the Holy Bible had been tampered with.”

(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.p.) 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. . . . The evidence shows that for 2300 to 3900 years the text of the proper names in the Hebrew Bible has been transmitted with the most minute accuracy. That the original scribes should have written them with such close conformity to correct philological principles is a wonderful proof of their thorough care and scholarship; further, that the Hebrew text should have been transmitted by copyists through so many centuries is a phenomenon unequalled in the history of literature.” (Wilson 1926: 69, 72, 82)

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. 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,

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158 These books still exist. Codex Vaticanus os located in the Vatican Library; Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Alexandrinus are located in the British Library in London.
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. 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)

On the other hand, because the Qur’an suggests that the Bible predicted Muhammad’s coming (Q. 7:157; 61:6), some Muslims suggest that Jews and Christians altered the Bible to delete references to Muhammad. Again, there is no evidence to support such a contention: “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 to Muhammad’s disadvantage, 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 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) Until orthodox Islamic scholarship as a whole similarly deals fairly with the historical facts concerning the Bible, it will be extremely difficult to engage in honest inter-faith dialogue, let alone come to greater mutual understanding and harmony.

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.” Q. 7:157 refers to “the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (scriptures),- in the law and the Gospel.” Hilali-Khan specifically identify the two primary prophecies which Muslims contend
prophecy 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).”

Abdul-Mohsin lists this as the third evidence of Muhammad’s prophethood (the others being the Qur’an, Muhammad’s alleged miracles, and Muhammad’s character). He summarizes its significance: “The prophecies (glad tidings) are the predictions and information given by the former Prophets and Messengers in their Books about the advent of the Prophet Muhammad. . . . These glad tidings are important for several reasons. First of all, they are necessary to refute the allegation of the people of the scripture that the Bible did not give prophecies of Muhammad. Secondly, the Prophet has used them as evidence and the Qur’an states that they were mentioned in the Holy Bible [citing Q. 61:6; 7:157]. . . . The Qur’an also states that the people of the scripture know the Prophet Muhammad very well because of his signs and allusions made about him in their Books [citing Q. 2:146] . . . . The glad tidings of the illiterate Prophet in the former Books are also important because they are evidence of the knowledge of the unseen which Allah revealed only to His chosen Prophets. In addition, they constitute an obligation for the Jews and Christians to believe in the Prophet because the Prophets that had preceded him knew the sign of Muhammad’s prophethood and informed their followers of his arrival.” (Abdul-Mohsin 2006: 197-99) Given the importance of this, we must consider whether or not it is true that the Bible prophesied the advent of Muhammad.

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) Finally, “More important still, the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:18 clearly states that God says ‘I will put my words in his mouth’, and this again referred to the unlettered Muhammad who was taught the Qur’an by God through the agency of the Archangel Gabriel” (Laylah 2005: 44). 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). Thus, Deut 18:1-2 begins the discourse by saying, “The Levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the LORD’s offerings by fire and His portion. They shall have no inheritance among their countrymen [lit. ‘brothers’]; the LORD is their inheritance, as He promised them.” In v. 2 “they” is the Levites and “their brothers” obviously are the other tribes of Israel. That is the context of the prophecy 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. Sundiata points out, “There is no evidence anywhere (not even in the Qur’an) that the word ‘brothers,’ which Moses used in Deuteronomy 18:18 and elsewhere, remotely relates to Arabs. It makes no sense that Moses, the first national leader of Israel, in a national broadcast, with no Arabs in sight, would refer to Arabs as brothers. Besides their origin in Abraham, Jews and Arabs had very little else in common in the Bible and nothing in common in the context of the statements of Moses in the entire book of Deuteronomy.” (Ibid.: 261) 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. As Sundiata says, “After Jesus, no prophet could therefore be raised for the Jews in the Promised Land because there was no Israel between AD 73 and 1948” (Sundiata 2006: 266).

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,
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 his words 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 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).

4. The larger context of the prophecy is God’s covenantal relationship with Abraham which passed through the line of Isaac, not Ishmael. God established his covenant with Abraham (the “Abrahamic Covenant,” Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; 22:15-18), which he confirmed to Abraham’s son Isaac (Gen 26:1-5, 24) and to Isaac’s younger son Jacob (Gen 28:3-4, 13-15; 35:11-12). The covenantal line did not pass through Ishmael. This is reflected in Q. 29:27 which says, “And We gave (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob, and ordained among his progeny Prophethood and Revelation.” The prophecy in Deut 18:15-19 is made to Israel in the covenantal context of Israel. Tafsir Ibn Kathir admits that “all of the Prophets of the Children of Israel were from among his [Isaac’s] descendants,” whereas “there is no Prophet from the line of Isma’il besides [Muhammad]” (Ibn Kathir 2003: Q. 29:27, comment; see also A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 29:27n.47). Thus, contextually and covenantally, Muhammad cannot be the prophet referred to in Deut 18:15-19 because he is not from the covenantal and prophetic line of Isaac; Jesus was (Matt 1:1-2, 16; Luke 3:23, 34).

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 Parak₇ētos which means “one called alongside to help; or Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor” (NASB 1995: John 14:16n.1; see Danker 2000: paraklēotos, 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 ‘Pericylotos’, which is almost a literal translation of ‘Muhammad’ or ‘Ahmad.’” (Ali 2006: Q. 3:81n.416) Ali adds, “‘Ahmad’, or ‘Muhammad’, the Praised One, is almost a translation of the Greek word Pericylotos. In the present Gospel of John, 14:16, 15:26, and 16:7, the word ‘Comforter’ in the English version is for the Greek word ‘Paracletos’, which means ‘Advocate’, ‘one called to the help of another, a kind friend’, rather than ‘Comforter’. Our doctors contend that Paracletos is a corrupt reading for Pericylotos, and that in their original saying of Jesus there was a prophecy of our Prophet Ahmad by name. Even if we read Paraclete, it would apply to the Prophet, who is ‘a Mercy for all creatures’ (21:107) and ‘most kind and merciful to the Believers’ (9:128).” (Ibid.: Q. 61:6n.5488)

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)

Dirks claims that since “the Holy Spirit was already present and active in the world, i.e., had already been sent by Allah, prior to the time Jesus reportedly spoke the above quoted words, the only way the above verses make conceptual sense is to interpret the ‘Advocate’ and the ‘Holy Spirit’ [as] two different entities” (Dirks 2008: 127) Dirks quotes Jesus’ discourse from John 14:25-31, emphasizing v. 30, “I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.” Dirks concludes, “The Advocate is a coming, temporal ‘ruler of this world’. . . . Unfortunately, the followers of Jesus may have trouble in recognizing the Advocate, and in believing in the revelation received by the Advocate. Therefore, Jesus must warn his followers about the coming of this Advocate, who will also be ‘the ruler of this world’. While Muslim readers will probably be quick to identify the only person who can possibly fit this identification, it is now gently suggested to Christian readers that the only person after Jesus who can even vaguely fit this identification is Prophet Muhammad.” (Ibid.: 128) 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.” D. A. Carson explains, “The Holy Spirit, even as Jesus spoke with his disciples, was living with them inasmuch as Jesus was present with them, for to him the Father had given the Spirit without limit (John 3:34). But the time would come, after Jesus had been glorified and had petitioned his Father to send ‘another Paraclete’, when the Spirit himself would be in the disciples themselves.” (Carson 1991: 510)

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)159 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. Muslims contend that

159 “Inasmuch as the Paraclete is given as, in certain respects, a personal replacement for Jesus . . . John does not hesitate to use the personal masculine pronoun of him even though the word ‘Spirit’ in Greek is formally neuter” (Carson 1991: 510).
“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. . . . What is to come refers to all that transpires in consequence of the pivotal revelation bound up with Jesus’ person, ministry, death, resurrection, and exaltation. . . . The Paraclete by his ministry brings glory to Jesus; that is his central aim. His means is the unfolding of Jesus’ person and work: i.e. taking from what is mine and making it known to you does not simply mean that the Paraclete passes on what Jesus declares, but that all revelation bound up in Jesus’ person and mission are pressed home on the disciples.” (Carson 1991: 539-41) 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 Paracletos is a corruption of Periclytos is absolutely without foundation. Muslims claim that “Paracletos 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)

If one were to substitute periklutos [“Praised One”] here, one should also substitute it in 1 John 2:1 which is where paraklētos also appears: “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not
That is seen not only from the context here but from the other places where Jesus used that phrase: “judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (John 12:31). That is clearly untrue. First, Jesus is a true prophet.

That is a Hebrew idiom like that “frequently used in legal contexts, ‘he has no claim on me’, ‘he has nothing over me’” (Carson 1991: 508-09). More importantly, the “ruler of the world” clearly is Satan! That is seen not only from the context here but from the other places where Jesus used that phrase: “Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (John 12:31); “and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged” (John 16:11). Muslims therefore should seriously reconsider their misuse of the Bible lest they identify Muhammad as Satan himself.

5. Dirks’s claim that the Paraclete is a temporal “ruler of the world” is false. In John 14:30 Jesus says, “I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.” Jerald Dirks maintains that “the Advocate [Paraclete] is a coming, temporal ‘ruler of this world’” (Dirks 2008: 128). That is clearly untrue. First, Jesus is contrasting himself with the “ruler of the world” when he says “he has nothing in Me.” That is a Hebrew idiom like that “frequently used in legal contexts, ‘he has no claim on me’, ‘he has nothing over me’” (Carson 1991: 508-09). More importantly, the “ruler of the world” clearly is Satan! That is seen not only from the context here but from the other places where Jesus used that phrase: “Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (John 12:31); “and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged” (John 16:11). Muslims therefore should seriously reconsider their misuse of the Bible lest they identify Muhammad as Satan himself.

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). Heb 1:1-3 says, “God, after He spoke long ago in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” 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. Adelphi and Hahn expose the irony of the situation: “The Quranic verses themselves [Q. 7:157; 61:6] have served as a deterrent in many instances to the wholesale charge that the Jews and Christians have corrupted the Scripture texts themselves (tahrif-i lafzi). For if it be supposed that Jew and Christian possessed such an enmity against their Muslim neighbours that they would resort to tahrif-i lafzi, would not these texts within the Bible [i.e., Deut 18:15-19; John 14:16], which many Muslims claim to refer to Muhammad, be the first to be expunged? And if they were expunged, would not this negate the current validity of the Quranic passages just quoted? Yet the search continues. Is there not within this search a tacit Muslim admission that both Jew and Christian sufficiently honour the Scriptures to refrain from changing them in such an arbitrary fashion? (Adelphi and Hahn 199: pt.1.11) 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.

160 The biblical data for Jesus as the fulfillment of the biblical storyline are summarized at Menn 2009-2018: 26-93.
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.

1. Changing the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to the Kab’ah in Mecca (Q. 2:125). “Narrated Umar (bin Al-Khattab): . . . ‘O Allah’s Messenger, I wish we took the station of Abraham as our praying place (for some of our prayers)’ . . . So came the Divine Inspiration: ‘And take you (people) the station of Abraham as a place of prayer (for some of your prayers e.g. two rak’at of Tawaf of Ka’ba)’ (2.125).” (al-Bukhari: 402; vol. 6, book 60, no. 10; Muslim: 2399)

2. Not offering funeral prayers for non-believers (Q. 9:84). “When Abdullah bin Ubayy died, his son came to the Prophet and said: ‘Give me your shirt so that I may shroud him in it, and (some and) offer the (funeral) prayer for him, and pray for forgiveness for him’. So he gave him his shirt then he said: ‘When you have finished, inform me and I will offer the (funeral) prayer for him.’ But Umar stopped him and said: ‘Hasn’t Allah forbidden you to offer the (funeral) prayer for the hypocrites?’ He said: ‘I have two options. Whether you ask forgiveness for them (hypocrites) or ask no forgiveness for them.’ So he offered the (funeral) prayer for him. Then Allah, Most High, revealed: ‘And never pray (funeral prayer) for any of them (hypocrites) who dies, nor stand at his grave.’ So he stopped offering the (funeral) prayer for them.” (an-Nasa’i: 1900, 1966; see also al-Bukhari: 1269, 5796; vol. 6, book 60, no. 192, 194; Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 6, no. 1523) Jami at-Tirmidhi adds, “I was amazed at myself and my daring to talk like that to the Messenger of Allah, while Allah and His Messenger know better. But by Allah! It was not long until these two Ayat were revealed: ‘And never pray for any of them who dies nor stand at his grave...’ (9:84) until the end of the Ayah. He said: ‘So afterwards the Messenger of Allah did not perform the Salat for a hypocrite, nor would he stand at his grave until Allah took him.’” (at-Tirmidhi: vol. 5, book 44, no. 3097)

3. Forgiveness for those who fought for Islam (Q. 16:110). “It was narrated that Ibn Abbas said concerning Surat An-Nahl [Q. 16:106]: ‘Whoever disbelieved in Allah after his belief, except him who is forced thereto and whose heart is at rest with Faith; but such as open their breasts to disbelief, on them is wrath from Allah, and theirs will be a great torment.’ This was abrogated, and an exception was made, as Allah said: ‘Then, verily, your Lord for those who emigrated after they had been put to trials and thereafter strove hard and fought (for the Cause of Allah) and were patient, verily, your Lord afterward is, Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful’ [Q. 16:110].’ This was Abdullah bin Sa’d bin Abi As-Sarh who was the governor of Egypt and used to write to the Messenger of Allah [SAW]. The Sha’itan misled him and he went and joined the unbelievers. So he (the Prophet

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Christians, while believing the Bible to be God’s Word, nevertheless have been active in investigating the Bible’s historical development and subjecting it to critical inquiry. The typical Muslim approach is considerably less open to objective or historical analysis of the sources, development, and compilation of the Qur’an: “For many centuries Muslims have been taught to believe that the Qur’an has been preserved in its original Arabic text right from the time of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, down to this very day absolutely intact without changes, deletions or additions of any kind and with no variance in reading. At the same time they have also been taught that this suggested textual perfection of the book proves that the Qur’an must be the Word of God. No one but Allah, it is claimed, could have preserved the text so well. This sentiment has become so strongly established in the Muslim world that one will rarely find a Muslim scholar making a critical analysis of the early transmission of the text of the Qur’an and, when such analyses do appear, they are predictably unwelcome... The popular Muslim sentiment that the divine origin of the Qur’an is proved by its absolutely perfect transmission leads, perforce, to the fear that if it can be proved that the Qur’an was not so transmitted, then its supposed divine origin must immediately fall to the ground. As a result Muslim writers cannot come to this subject in a spirit of objectivity or purely factual enquiry. There is a determination, a priori, to prove the popular sentiment: the hypothesis that the text of the Qur’an has been perfectly preserved.” (Gilchrist 1989: Introduction)
[SAW] commanded that he be killed on the day of the Conquest of Makkah. Then, Uthman bin Affan sought protection for him, and the Messenger of Allah [SAW] granted him protection.” (an-Nasa’i: 4069)

4. The dress code for women (Q. 24:31; 33:59). “Narrated Umar: I said, ‘O Allah’s Messenger! Good and bad persons enter upon you, so I suggest that you order the mothers of the Believers (i.e. your wives) to observe veils.’ Then Allah revealed the Verses of Al-Hijab.” (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 313) This is confirmed in other ahadith: “The wives of the Prophet used to go to Al-Manasi, a vast open place (near Baqi’ at Medina) to answer the call of nature at night. Umar used to say to the Prophet ‘Let your wives be veiled,’ but Allah’s Apostle did not do so. One night Sauda bint Zam’a the wife of the Prophet went out at Isha’ time and she was a tall lady. Umar addressed her and said, ‘I have recognized you, O Sauda.’ He said so, as he desired eagerly that the verses of Al-Hijab (the observing of veils by the Muslim women) may be revealed. So Allah revealed the verses of ‘Al-Hijab’ (A Complete body cover excluding the eyes).” (al-Bukhari: 146; see also vol. 6, book 60, no. 10; Muslim: 2399)

5. The call to prayer (Q. 62:9). “Some people suggested the use of a bell like the Christians, others proposed a trumpet like the horn used by the Jews, but ‘Umar was the first to suggest that a man should call (the people) for the prayer; so Allah’s Messenger ordered Bilal to get up and pronounce the Adhan for prayers” (al-Bukhari: 604).

6. Muhammad’s threat to divorce his wives (Q. 66:5). “Narrated Umar (bin Al-Khattab): . . . Once the wives of the Prophet made a united front against the Prophet and I said to them, ‘It may be if he (the Prophet) divorced you, (all) that his Lord (Allah) will give him instead of you wives better than you.’ So this verse (the same as I had said) was revealed. (66.5).” (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). At the beginning of Islam, there were 360 idols in and around the Kab’ah (al-Bukhari: 2478; “The Holy Kaaba” 2011: n.p.) Even after the beginning of Islam, it was still the center of idol worship, and “following a period of eight years in Madina, [Muhammad] returned, to cleanse the House of Allah from idols” (“The Holy Kaaba” 2011: n.p.). In fact, Muhammad said that he would have destroyed and rebuilt the Kab’ah except for the fact that the Quraish tribe was only recently converted to Islam and he was afraid they would have disliked that (al-Bukhari: 1583-1585). 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 in the Qur’an were 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). Islam then prohibited pagans from performing the hajj and eliminated the pagan custom of circumambulating the Kab’ah naked (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 179; Ibn Ishaq 1955: 87-88). Walking or running between two small hills near the Ka’bah is part of the hajj ritual. Asad notes, “It is in commemoration of Hagar’s running in distress between As-Safa and Al-Marwah that the Mecca pilgrims are expected to walk, at a fast pace, seven times between these two hillocks. Because of the fact that in pre-Islamic times certain idols had been standing there, some of the early Muslims were reluctant to perform a rite which seemed to them to be associated with recent idolatry.” (Asad 1980: Q. 2:158n.127) Q. 2:158, which permits Islamic pilgrims to ambulate between Safa and Marwah, appears to have been revealed precisely because Muslims considered it sinful to do so inasmuch as the practice was a pagan custom (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 22, 23).
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) St. Clair-Tisdall goes on to document that Muhammad’s ascent to heaven (see [Q. 17:1](#Q.17.1); Muslim: 162a, 164a; al-Bukhari: 3207, 3887, 7517; an-Nasa’i: 448, 450) bears a “singular resemblance” to a similar tale from a Persian Zoroastrian book called *Artâ Virâf nâmak*, written approximately 400 years before the *hejira* (St. Clair-Tisdall 1901: 76-81).

The narrow bridge, *sirat*, over which people must pass at the time of the judgment (described above in section 3.III.E. **Salvation according to Islam**) “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) St. Clair-Tisdall quotes the ancient Zoroastrian book *Dinkart* which says, “It is good for me to abide in the Bright way, lest I arrive at the severe punishment of Hell, that I may cross over Chînavad and may reach that blest abode, full of odour, entirely delightful, always bright” (Ibid.). Even the words are related: “It is difficult to explain in English how Chênavad became *Sirât*; but it comes from the varied sound of the letters—*ch* being turned into sharp *s*.” (Ibid.: 88n.1).

**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).

Several other aspects of Islamic belief evidently stem from Zoroastrianism, particularly with respect to the description of Paradise “with its Houries and youths, the King of Death, etc. . . . Their origin is to be found altogether in Zoroastrian Sources. . . . The books of the Zoroastrians and Hindus, however, are full of them; and these bear the most extraordinary likeness to what we find in the Qur’an and Tradition. Thus in Paradise we are told of ‘Houries having fine black eyes,’ and again of ‘Houries with large black eyes, resembling pearls hidden in their shells.’ . . . The name *Houry* too is derived from an Avesta or Pehlavi Source, as well as *Jinn* for Genii, and *Bihisht* (Paradise), signifying in Avestic ‘the better land.’” (St. Clair-Tisdall 1901: 82-83)

3. **The OT, Jewish commentary, and Jewish mythology.** Muslim scholar Mahmoud Ayoub admits, “Before Islam there were Jews in Yemen and Madâina who continued to play an important role in forming the Islamic faith and world view” and there was a “vast literature known as *Israelîyât* (Israeli 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). Gilchrist observes that there is a “substantial presence of Jewish historical and mythical material in the Qur’an.” Indeed there is so much of it that whole books have been written on the subject and it is striking to find how heavily Muhammad relied on his Jewish contacts for the passages and teachings he ultimately set forth as part of the divine revelation. . . . Virtually all the Qur’anic records which are reliant on Jewish sources can be traced either to the Bible or to Talmudic records such as the Midrash, Mishnah, etc. . . . Whether Muhammad was illiterate or not cannot be truly established - what is certain, however, is that he could read neither the scriptures of the Jews nor their folklore as contained in the Midrash and other Talmudic records. If he had been able to do so he would hardly have confused the two as often as he did.” (Gilchrist 1986: ch.2.5.B.1)\(^{162}\)

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:

- Cain and Abel ([Gen 4:1-16](#Gen.4.1-16); compare [Q. 5:27-30](#Q.5.27-30));
- Joseph’s dreams, his being sold into slavery, and his becoming ruler in Egypt ([Genesis 37, 39-45](#Genesis.37,39-45); compare [Q. 12:3-101](#Q.12.3-101));
- Moses in the bulrushes and killing the Egyptian ([Exod 2:1-14](#Exod.2.1-14); compare [Q. 20:36-40](#Q.20.36-40));
- Moses and the burning bush ([Exod 3:1-4:9](#Exod.3.1-4.9); compare [Q. 20:9-35; 27:7-12](#Q.20.9-35;Q.27.7-12)).

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\(^{162}\) On the other hand, al-Bukhari: 2699 indicates that Muhammad was able to write: “Allah’s Messenger took the document and wrote, ‘This is what Muhammad bin Abdullah has agreed upon: No arms will be brought into Mecca except in their shells, and nobody from the people of Mecca will be allowed to go with him (i.e. the Prophet) even if he wished to follow him and he (the Prophet) will not prevent any of his companions from staying in Mecca if the latter wants to stay.’”
• Moses and Pharoah, 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]).

Jewish commentaries and other writings also are the evident sources for some Qur’anic material. For example, Q. 5:31 says that after Cain killed Abel, “Allah sent a raven, who scratched the ground, to show him how to hide the shame of his brother.” Gilchrist tells us, “Once again one finds a striking parallel between the Qur’an and a Jewish book of myths and fables. The Pirke Rabbi Eliezer, a typical rabbinical writing from the Midrash, contains this story.” (Gilchrist 1986: ch.2.5.B.2)

Q. 5:32 states, “We ordained for the Children of Israel that if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people.” This statement was lifted directly from the Mishnah, a major compilation of Jewish oral traditions compiled during the first and second centuries after Christ. Mishnah Sanhedrin 4.5 states that “man was first created as one person [Adam], to teach you that anyone who destroys a life is considered by Scripture to have destroyed an entire world; any who saves a life is as if he saved an entire world.”

Q. 21:51-70; 37:91-98 is a story of Abraham challenging his father and his people concerning their idolatry and breaking their idols. That story is “a remarkable reproduction of a story found in the Midrash Rabbah, an old Jewish book containing much folklore embellishing Biblical material” (Gilchrist 1986: ch.2.5.B.2).

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). Several other aspects of the Qur’an and Islam are derived from Jewish myths and are discussed in the sources listed in note 161, above.

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 1:24-24, 57-66; compare Q. 3:38-41); and the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:26-38; compare Q. 3:42-48). A number of phrases and descriptions are drawn directly from the Bible:

• “And on that day we shall let some of them surge against others, and the Trumpet will be blown. Then We shall gather them together in one gathering” (Q. 18:99); compare “And He will send forth His angels with a GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the

163 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 litigator’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)

164 Ironically, however, this statement in the Qur’an is part of the Qur’an’s “anti-Jewish polemic: the decree `whoever kills a soul’ is imposed only on the Israelites, whom the Qur’an (anachronistically) blames for the murder of Abel” (Reynolds 2018: 199).
sky to the other” (Matt 24:31).

- “The Day that We roll up the heavens like a scroll rolled up for books” (Q. 21:104; compare “And all the host of heaven will wear away, and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll” (Isa 34:4; see also Rev 6:14).
- “Verily a Day in the sight of thy Lord is like a thousand years of your reckoning” (Q. 22:47); compare “with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day” (2 Pet 3:8; see also Ps 90:4).
- “When the sun (with its spacious light) is folded up; When the stars fall, losing their lustre; When the mountains vanish (like a mirage)” (Q. 81:1-3); compare “The sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.” (Rev 6:12-14)

Several Qur’anic stories are based on heretical or apocryphal Christian stories. Gerhard Nehls points out, “It was relatively easy for Mohammed to have access to these stories, simply because many a Christian sect had found refuge in the Arabian Peninsula from the Roman Church, which persecuted them. Because of their heretical teachings they did not gain the approval of the early Church. One of Mohammed’s concubines, Mary the Copt, could have related these stories to him. Significant is the fact that the Apocryphal writings that had been rejected as non-apostolic and lacking in authenticity by the Church, were the main source of information to these sects. This is undeniably reflected in the Quran.” (Nehls 1987: The Sources of Islam)

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,165 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).166 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.167 Q. 5:116-17 appears to describe the “Trinity” as consisting of Allah, Jesus, and Mary. This stemmed from the heretical Collydian sect which was in Arabia at the time of Muhammad, which worshipped Mary as part of the Godhead (El-Assal 2002: n.p.; see also Karim 2013). 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.168

From the above examples, it should be obvious that the Qur’an did not spring in pristine form from Gabriel to Muhammad but in significant part was plagiarized or adapted from pre-existing biblical and other accounts, stories, and religious myths current in Arabia during Muhammad’s lifetime, while claiming that they were historical and factual accounts. It is therefore not surprising that on more than one occasion Muhammad was accused of recycling myths and stories as new “revelations from Allah”: “When Our Signs are rehearsed to them, they say: ‘We have heard this (before): if we wished, we could say (words) like these: these are nothing but tales of the ancients.’” (Q. 8:31); “Such things have been promised to us and to our fathers before! they are nothing but tales of the ancients!” (Q. 23:83; see also Q. 25:5; 68:15).

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)

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165 See n.20, above.
166 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).
167 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).
168 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. See also the resources listed in n.161, above.
C. Some passages in the Qur’an stem from issues in Muhammad’s personal life

In section 2.IX, The Character of Muhammad, we saw how 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 2003: Q. 4:128, comment).

Other aspects of Muhammad’s personal life were the subject of special revelations. On one occasion his wife Aisha was suspected of adultery. The event is related at Sahih al-Bukhari: 2661. That hadith reveals that Muhammad had a special revelation in which “Allah has declared your innocence.” Q. 24:11 was revealed to Muhammad at that time and is directed to “Those who brought forward the lie.” It goes on to state that “to every man among them (will come the punishment) of the sin that he earned, and to him who took on himself the lead among them, will be a penalty grievous.” A hadith even reports that an “after the fact” revelation (Q. 59:5) came to justify Muhammad’s having cut down some palm trees: “Ibn Umar said The Apostle of Allah burned the palm tree of Banu Al Nadr and cut (them) down at Al Buwairah. So, Allah the exalted sent down ‘the palm trees you cut down or left’” (Abi Dawud: 2615).


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. 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). Ajijola 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” (Ajijola 1972: 158). Dirks similarly says, “The revelation of Allah to Prophet Muhammad through a span of about 22 years is preserved without blemish in the Qur’an. As such, the Qur’an remains a true and unadulterated recording of the literal words of Allah.” (Dirks 2008: 191) 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”]). During Muhammad’s time portions of the Qur’an were “kept in tablets of hearts [i.e., memorization], on parchments, papers, leaves and skins.” (Karim 1939: 3:664; see also Laylah 2005: 45 [“palm-leaves, skins, and even on shoulder-bones”]). 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

169 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)
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! Muslim writer Ali al-Imam adds, ‘Also, if the differences between them were dialectal, ‘Umar and Hisham would not have been reported as having differed in reading, because both men belonged to the same Qurayslii tribe’ (Ali al-Imam 1998: 103). 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:

1. 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.’” (al-Bukhari: 4996; see also 4991, 4992) 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! Muslim writer Ali al-Imam adds, “Also, if the differences between them were dialectal, ‘Umar and Hisham would not have been reported as having differed in reading, because both men belonged to the same Qurayslii tribe’” (Ali al-Imam 1998: 103). 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)

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One problem is that, since the Qur’an was not written down in Muhammad’s lifetime, Muhammad admitted that no one perfectly remembered it. Indeed, Q. 87:6-7 (Sahih) states, “We will make you recite, [O Muhammad], and you will not forget, except what Allah should will.” Consistent with that verse, Muhammad said, “It is a bad thing that some of you say, ‘I have forgotten such-and-such verse of the Qur’an,’ for indeed, he has been caused (by Allah) to forget it. So you must keep on reciting the Qur’an because it escapes from the hearts of men faster than camel do.” (al-Bukhari: 5032) Muhammad admitted that his own memory of the Qur’an was faulty: “Allah’s Messenger heard a man reciting the Qur’an at night, and said, ‘May Allah bestow His Mercy on him, as he has reminded me of such-and-such Verses of such-and-such Suras, which I was caused to forget.’” (al-Bukhari: 5038; see also 5042; Muslim: 788a; Abi Dawud: 3970) Sahih Muslim adds that Muhammad’s companions were unsure of what was to be included in the Qur’an or not: “Ibn Abbas reported Allah’s Messenger as saying: If there were for the son of Adam a valley full of riches, he would long to possess another one like it, and Ibn Adam does not feel satiated but with dust. And Allah returns to him who returns (to Him). Ibn Abbas said: I do not know whether it is from the Qur’an or not; and in the narration transmitted by Zuhair it was said: I do not know whether it is from the Qur’an, and he made no mention of Ibn Abbas.” (Muslim: 1049, emph. added) Since Muhammad and his companions could not remember the entire Qur’an there is no assurance that anyone could assemble it it perfectly and in its entirety.

In any event, Zaid 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 [memories of] men who knew it by heart, till I found the last Verse of Surat at-Tauba (Repentance) with Abi 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 Hafsia, 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 [the third caliph], disputes among the readers became so heated that they were accusing each other of unbelief (kufr). Many complaints were brought before Uthman, 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 Quraisyi 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)

Some Muslim apologists claim that Uthman’s revision of the Qur’an primarily was to standardize “minor differences in dialect among the Arab-speaking Muslims of the time” (Dirks 2008: 45; see also Emerick 2004: 240). That clearly is not true: “Pronunciation, recitation and intonation relate only to a verbal recital of the text and such differences would never have appeared in the written texts. Yet it was the destruction of these written texts that Uthman ordered. We need to consider further that, in the earliest days of the codification of the Qur’an in writing, there were no vowel points in the texts. Thus differences in recitation would never have appeared in the written codices. Why, then, did Uthman burn them? . . . 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.)

Another point is significant. The hadith quoted above indicates that a group of four were commissioned by Uthman to “rewrite” Zaid’s compilation of the Qur’an. Zaid himself admitted that, at the time this new version of the Qur’an was being prepared, only then did he notice that he had omitted a verse: “I missed an Ayah of Surat Al-Ahzab that I heard the Messenger of Allah reciting: Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allah, of them some have fulfilled their obligations, and some of them are still waiting (33:23) - so I searched for it and found it with Khuzaimah bin Thabit, or Abu Khuzaimah, so I put it in its Surah” (at-Tirmidhi: vol. 5, book 44, no. 3104). Since at the last moment one ayah was added, one can only wonder how many others had been missed. Additionally, “During the caliphate of Abd al-Malik [685-705] in the first century of Islam the governor of Iraq, al-Hajaj ibn Yusuf, took steps to correct Uthman’s text. He is said to have made eleven direct changes to the Qur’an text as it stood in its consonantal form, all of which are reflected in the Qur’an as it stands today.” (Gilchrist 1989: ch.5.2, citing Arabic source)

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.” (Glassé 2013: Qir’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, have also 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 Hafs. . . . 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 Hafs, 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 Hafs 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)

There is yet another type of difference among the Qur’ans, the Basmalah. The Basmalah is the phrase, “In the Name of Allah, the Ever-Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy” at the beginning of every surah except surah 9. This is significant because “The four Imams who founded the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi’i and Hanbali schools disagree as to whether the Basmalah is part of the revelation at the start of each sura. Imam ash-Shafi’ee and Imam Ahmad believed that it was, while Imam Maalik and Aboo Haneefah believed it was not. As a result the different Readers who come from these schools have different views too. . . . Therefore, while both of the Qur’ans we are examining contain the Basmalah, in the Hafs Qur’an it is considered part of the revelation, while in the Warsh Qur’an it is not considered part of the revelation but du’a. This is a significant difference because the Basmalah appears 113 times at the start of the surahs and has 4 words, which means there are 452 extra words in the Qur’an according to Imam Hafs than the Qur’an of according to Imam Warsh.” (Ibid.: Basmalah Differences) Thus, the idea that there is only one Qur’an that has been perfectly preserved as it was originally given is without any factual and historical basis.

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)

In another hadith, Umar, the second caliph (634-644), said, “Allah sent Muhammad with the Truth and revealed the Holy Book to him, and among what Allah revealed, was the Verse of the Rajam (the stoning of married person [male & female] who commits illegal sexual intercourse), and we did recite this Verse and understood and memorized it. Allah’s Messenger did carry out the punishment of stoning and so did we after him. I am afraid that after a long time has passed, somebody will say, ‘By Allah, we do not find the Verse of the Rajam in Allah’s Book.’” (al-Bukhari: 6830; see also 6829 and 6828 which call for 100 lashes for the man and death by stoning for the woman) On that occasion, another hadith records Umar as saying, “By He in Whose Hand my self is, had it not been that people would say that Umar ibn al-Khattab has added to the Book of Allah ta-ala, we would have written it. ‘The full-grown man and the full-grown woman, stone them absolutely.’ We have certainly recited that.” (Malik: book 41, no. 10) Even though Umar had heard Muhammad recite the verse of the Rajam as part of the Qur’an, it is not in the Qur’an today.\(^{170}\)

Sunan al-Bukhari reports Umar mentioning another verse missing from the Qur’an: “And then we used to recite among the Verses in Allah’s Book: ‘O people! Do not claim to be the offspring of other than your fathers, as it is disbelief (unthankfulness) on your part that you claim to be the offspring of other than your real father’” (al-Bukhari: 6830). That verse is still missing from the Qur’an. Sunan al-Bukhari also reports other differences and omissions among the original reciters of the Qur’an without giving the specifics (al-Bukhari: 5001, 5005).

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’ (lxii 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]). al-Suyuti (1445-1505) lists multiple verses and even surahs that had been recited as part of the Qur’an “before Uthman altered the Scripture” (al-Suyuti n.d.: Nasikh and Mansukh 13-15 [61-63/428]; see also Ali al Imam 1998: 49-57).

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. “Even though the codices were eliminated, the variant readings between them were recorded and well-known” (Gilchrist 1989: ch.2.4). One of these was by Abdullah ibn Mas’ud of whom Muhammad said, “Learn the recitation of Qur’an from four from Abdullah bin Mas’ud -- he started with him -- Salim, the freed slave of Abu Hudafia, Mu’adh bin Jabal and Ubai bin Ka’b” (al-Bukhari: 3808; see also 3758, 4999). Mas’ud himself said, “By Allah other than Whom none has the right to be worshipped! There is no Sura revealed in Allah’s Book but I know at what place it was revealed; and there is no Verse revealed in Allah’s Book but I know about whom it was revealed. And if I know that there is somebody who knows Allah’s Book better than I, and he is at a place that camels can reach, I would go to him.” (al-Bukhari: 5002) Muslim writer Ali al Imam states that “one hundred and twenty-three differences have been claimed between the Uthmanic masahif [codex of the Qur’an] and the personal codices of the Companions” (Ali al Imam 1998: 86). In fact, the number is far larger. 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

\(^{170}\) In a hadith, Aisha explained why the verses concerning stoning and breastfeeding are missing, “The Verse of stoning and of breastfeeding an adult ten times was revealed, and the paper was with me under my pillow. When the Messenger of Allah died, we were preoccupied with his death, and a tame sheep came in and ate it.” (Ibn Majah: 1944, emph. added). It is incredible to claim that Allah guaranteed to protect the Qur’an if he could not prevent a sheep from eating it!
in the Qur’an, it will prove that it is adds anything to it or takes anything out of it” (al-Athari 2005: 97). The Qur’an itself says, contradictions.”

56:77-80

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. (Ibid.: 79)

In light of the multiple canonical qira’at (readings) of the Qur’an, even contemporary Muslim commentators admit the existence of variant wordings among the Qur’an as it exists today. For example, Yusuf Ali in his comment on Q. 33:6 (“The Prophet is closer to the Believers than their own selves, and his wives are their mothers”) admits that in the codex produced by Muhammad’s companion Ubayy ibn Ka’ab “occur also the words ‘and he is a father of them’, which imply his spiritual relationship and connection with the words ‘and his wives are their mothers’” (Ali 2006: Q. 33:6n.8674). He cites other wording differences between various versions of the Qur’an concerning Q. 21:4 and 23:112 (Ibid.: Q. 21:4n.2666; Q. 23:112n.2948). Because the many Qur’anic manuscripts are not identical, Ali, like other Muslim translators, simply chooses what he considers the best reading from among the alternatives.

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.” On the other hand, if he is a jinn “this creates another difficulty beyond the fact that he is repeatedly called an angel: why is he blamed in sura 7 and its cognate passages for disobeying a command Allah gave not to the jinns, but to the angels?” (Spencer 2009: 43)

- Peace or war in matters of religion? Q. 2:256 says, “Let there be no compulsion in religion.” Q. 109:6 (Hilali-Khan) says, “To you be your religion, and to me my religion (Islamic Monotheism).” Q. 6:108 (Hilali-Khan) says, “Insult not those whom they (disbelievers) worship besides Allah, lest they insult Allah wrongfully without knowledge.” Q. 29:46 (Hilali-Khan) similarly says, “And argue not with the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), unless it be in (a way) that is better (with good words and in good manner, inviting them to Islamic Monotheism with His Verses), except with such of them as do wrong.”

On the other hand, multiple passages command exactly the opposite attitude and approach toward non-Muslims: Q. 48:29 (Hilali-Khan) says, “Muhammad (SAW) is the Messenger of Allah, and those who are with him are severe against disbelievers, and merciful among themselves” (see also Q. 5:54; 66:9). Q. 8:12 adds, “Remember thy Lord inspired the angels (with the message): ‘I am with you: give firmness to the Believers: I will instil terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers: smite ye above their necks and smite all their finger-tips off them.’” Q. 9:29 goes beyond that and says, “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” (see also Q. 2:191; 4:89; 9:5, 123). Q. 8:39 (Sarwar) adds, “Fight them so that idolatry will not exist any more and God’s religion will stand supreme. If they give up the idols, God will be Well Aware of what they do.” (see also Q. 2:193)

- 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.”

- Who suffers if Muhammad goes astray? Q. 34:50 tells Muhammad, “Say: ‘If I am astray, I only stray to the loss of my own soul.’” Multiple verses command Muslims to emulate Muhammad in everything: e.g., “And verily, you (O Muhammad SAW) are on an exalted standard of character” (Q. 68:4, Hilali-Khan); “Indeed in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad SAW) you have a good example to follow for him who hopes in (the Meeting with) Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much” (Q. 33:21, Hilali-Khan).

On the other hand, Q. 16:25 (Shakir) indicates that whoever leads another astray does, in fact, bear some portion of the burden: “That they may bear their burdens entirely on the day of resurrection and also of the burdens of those whom they lead astray without knowledge; now surely evil is what they bear” (see also Q. 29:12).

The contradiction among these verses is clear and deadly: “Muhammad is considered the perfect and
divinely endorsed role model, and he is followed in the minutest details of life. To claim, therefore, that if he goes astray it will still not result in any harm to those who follow him in everything (S. 34:50), is hardly coherent. . . . These verses make it clear that ‘following those who lead you astray’ does not absolve you from your own responsibility. . . . Nobody will be able to excuse himself completely with ‘but I only followed this or that false prophet or teacher’. S. 16:25 seems to indicate that some part of the burdens of those who were led astray may be put on the one who had misled them, but it still shows that the remainder has to be shouldered by the person who followed the false prophet into transgression and disobedience to God. Thus, those who lead astray cause their followers to suffer divine punishment and eternal loss. Therefore, Sura 34:50 (‘If I go astray, I go astray only to my own loss’), together with the many verses that command believers to follow and obey Muhammad, strongly and obviously contradicts Sura 16:25 and 29:12. (“A Plain Error” n.d.: The Contradiction, bold emph. in orig.)

- 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 warners: and there never was a people, without a warners 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 Kab’ah!

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 warners had come before thee: in order that they may receive admonition. If (We had) not (sent thee to the Qurash), 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 sent us a messenger? We should then have followed Thy Signs and been amongst those who believe.” Q. 32:3 similarly says, “Or do they say, ‘He has forged it’? Nay, it is the Truth from thy Lord, even as thou mayest admonish a people to whom no warners has come before thee: in order that they may receive guidance.” Q. 36:3-6 (Hilali-Khan) adds, “Truly, you (O Muhammad SAW) are one of the Messengers. . . . In order that you may warn a people whose forefathers were not warned, so they are heedless.”

- 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)

- Kindness to parents? Multiple passages in the Qur’an tell children to be kind to their parents, e.g., Q. 17:23-24 says, “Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour. And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: ‘My Lord! bestow on them thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.’” (see also Q. 6:151) Q. 31:14-15 applies the rule of being good to parents even if they are not Muslims and strive to make the child worship others besides Allah: “And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear the command), “Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: to Me is (thy final) Goal. But if they strive to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration), and follow the way of those who turn to me (in love).” (see also Q. 29:8)

In direct contradiction to these commands, Q. 9:23 commands, “O ye who believe! take not for protectors your fathers and your brothers if they love infidelity above Faith: if any of you do so, they do wrong.” That the word auliya (translated “protectors” in 9:23) means “friends” is clear from Q. 10:62, “Behold! verily on the friends [auliya] of Allah there is no fear, nor shall they grieve.” Q. 58:22 goes further and warns, “Thou wilt not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day, loving those who resist Allah and His Messenger, even though they were their fathers or their sons, or their brothers, or their kindred. For such He has written Faith in their hearts, and strengthened them with a spirit from Himself.

171 The Quraish were “a mercantile Arab tribe that historically inhabited and controlled Mecca and its Ka’aba. The Islamic prophet Muhammad was born into the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraysh tribe.” (“Quraysh” 2019: Introduction).
And He will admit them to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow, to dwell therein (for ever). Allah will be well pleased with them, and they with Him. They are the Party of Allah. Truly it is the Party of Allah that will achieve Felicity.” Mawdudi comments that Q. 58:22 makes clear the “matter of principle” that “faith in the true Religion and love of the opponents of the Religion are contradictory things, which cannot conceivably co-exist in one and the same place” (A’la Mawdudi n.d.: Q. 58:22n.37). He goes on to point out that in this verse “Allah has not just stated the principle but has also presented the actual fact as a model before those who professed the Faith. The true believers had in actual fact severed all connections that clashed with their relationship with Allah’s Religion. . . . Hadrat Abu ‘Ubaidah killed his father, ‘Abdullah bin al-jarrah. Hadrat Mus‘ab bin ‘Umair killed his brother, ‘Ubaid bin ‘Umair; Hadrat Umar killed his maternal uncle, ‘As bin Hisham bin Mughirah; Hadrat ‘Abu Bakr became ready to fight his son ‘Abdur Rahman Hadrat ‘Ali, Hadrat Hamzah and Hadrat ‘Ubaidah bin al-Harith killed ‘Utbah, Shaibah and Walid bin ‘Utbah, who were their close kinsmen” (Ibid.; see also Ibn Kathir 2003: Q. 58:22, comment).

Shamoun and Katz conclude, “What type of kindness is this, which actually prohibits Muslims from even loving, let alone befriending, their parents? Note, as well, that Q. 58:22 says that ‘For such He has written Faith in their hearts’ which implies that the Muslims not loving even their parents is ‘the mark of a true believer,’ being a sign that Allah has put faith in their hearts! Basically, this means that faith in Islam results in a believer receiving strength and determination to hate anyone who opposes Muhammad, even if they happen to be the closest of relatives!” (Shamoun and Katz, “Quran Difficulty” n.d.: n.p.)

- What were 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.)

- What were the jinn created from? Q. 21:30 says, “Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation), before we clove them asunder? We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?” On the other hand, Q. 15:27 says, “And the Jinn race, We had created before, from the fire of a scorching wind.” Note that Q. 21:30 does not make an exception for the jinn but speaks of “every living thing” without exception.

- 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.”

- Is the Day equivalent to 1000 or 50,000 years? Q. 32:5 says, “He rules (all) affairs from the heavens to the earth: in the end will (all affairs) go up to Him, on a Day, the space whereof will be (as) a thousand years of your reckoning.” Q. 70:4 contradicts this by saying, “The angels and the spirit ascend unto him in a Day the measure whereof is (as) fifty thousand years.”

- Heaven and earth: originally together and then separated or vice versa? Q. 21:30 says, “Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation), before we clove them asunder?” Q. 41:11 gives exactly the opposite description, “Moreover He comprehended in His design the sky, and it had been (as) smoke: He said to it and to the earth: ‘Come ye together, willingly or unwillingly.’ They said: ‘We do come (together), in willing obedience.’”

- 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.”

- Is alcohol prohibited or not? Q. 2:219 gives an equivocal but primarily negative assessment of alcohol: “They ask thee concerning wine and gambling. Say: ‘In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; but the sin is greater than the profit’”; Q. 4:43 (Sahih) only addresses intoxication but not drinking per se: “O you who have believed, do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying or in a state of jannah, except those passing through [a place of prayer], until you have washed [your whole body]”; Q. 5:90 (Hilali-Khan) condemns all alcoholic beverages: “O you who believe! Intoxicants (all kinds of alcoholic drinks), gambling, AlAnsab, and AlAzlam (arrows for seeking luck or decision) are an
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:

**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-Qarnayn! Either punish or show them kindness.”

- **The relationship of the moon to the stars.** Q. 71:15-16 says, “See ye not how Allah has created the seven heavens one above another, and made the moon a light in their midst, and made the sun as a (Glorious) Lamp?” Q. 37:6 unscientifically says, “We have indeed decked the lower heaven with beauty (in) the stars.” This is not some minor error: “The Qur’an seems to teach that there are seven heavens, one above the other, whether it was imagined to be like storeys in a high building (flat layers) or like shells or the layers of an onion. . . . The Qur’an specifically assigns the stars to a lower or even the lowest heaven, while it states the relationship of the moon to the totality of the seven heavens is that it is ‘in them’ (fehinna). This gives the impression that the moon is at least as far away as the stars if not further. But everyone knows today that the stars are much much further away from the earth than the moon. This is not a small difference, it is an issue of several magnitudes.” (“The Location” n.d.: n.p.)

- **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.).

- **Calf made by Samaritans before Samaritans existed.** Q. 20:85-87 (Arberry), in discussing the Israelites’ worship of the golden calf at the time of the Exodus from Egypt, say “Said He, ‘We have tempted thy people since thou didst leave them. The Samaritan has misled them into error.’ Then Moses returned very angry and sorrowful to his people, saying, ‘My people, did your Lord not promise a fair promise to you? Did the time of the covenant seem so long to you, or did you desire that anger should alight on you from your Lord, so that you failed in your tryst with me?’ ‘We have not failed in our tryst with thee,’ they said, ‘of our volition; but we were loaded with fardels, even the ornaments of the people, and we cast them, as the Samaritan also threw them, into the fire.’” Jochen Katz asks, “How can a Samaritan have led the Israelites astray at the time of Moses [about 1400 B.C.] when the city of Samaria was founded by King Omri in about 870 B.C. (see 1 Kings 16:24)? But ‘the Samaritans’ as a distinct people only emerged after the exile of the Northern kingdom of Israel and the resettlement of the area under king Sargon II in after 722 B.C. with non-Israelites which then adopt a syncretism [mixture] between the religion of the Jews and their own polytheistic background. Hence, it is historically impossible that a Samaritan could have led the Israelites into idolatry in the time of Moses.” (Katz, “Moses” n.d.: n.p.) Katz adds, “It is interesting to notice that while Yusuf Ali attempts to change this word to ‘Samiri’ and Pickthall to ‘As Samirii.’ Arberry in the English, and Kasimirski in the French both correctly translate it ‘Samaritan.’ . . . If ‘as-Samirii’ does not mean ‘the Samaritan’, how else would you express ‘the Samaritan’ in Arabic? . . . Every once in a while, knowledgable Arab Muslims who have not been contaminated yet by the apologetics around this issue naturally confirm that ‘as-Saamiri’ indeed means ‘the Samaritan’. It never crossed their mind that this would
mean anything else.” (Ibid.)

- **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. The Hasmonean Dynasty ruled Palestine in the century before John the Baptist appeared on the scene. Palestine at that time was very Hellenized and Greek became the main language. One of the priest-king of the Hasmonean Dynasty was John Hyrcanus, well attested to in many historical and classical sources. Josephus talks about a John the Essene who served as a general of the rebel force in Timn (Jewish War, 2.125). 1 Maccabees 2:1 tells us of ‘Mattathias son of John son of Simeon’. Mattathias also has a son called John (1 Maccabees 2:2). John’s brother, Judas, led the Jews in rebellion against Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Simon also has a son named John (1 Maccabees 16:19). All these Johns lived before John the Baptist. John was indeed a very common name.” (“John the Baptist” n.d.: n.p.)

  Yusuf Ali purposely changed his translation of the end of the verse to “on none by that name have We conferred distinction before.” He did that precisely because he knew that to correctly translate it demonstrated that the Qur’an was in error in asserting that no one named “John” existed before John the Baptist. In his comment on the verse, Ali stated that the verse “does not mean that the name was given for the first time, for we read of a Johanan the son of Careah in II Kings, 25:23, an otherwise obscure man. It means that Allah had, for the first time, called one of His elect by that name” (Ali 2006: Q. 19:7.n.2461). “In other words, Yusuf Ali knew that the verse is historically incorrect, and therefore changed the translation, or did he think that the Quran verse does not mean what it literally means? How can one take such liberty in translation? Doing so casts a great deal of doubt upon the accuracy of his translations and his intentions.” (“John the Baptist” n.d.: n.p.) More honest Muslim commentators admit, “‘Never before have We made anyone his namesake’, that is, [never has there been] anyone with the name ‘John’” (Jalal 2017: Q. 19:7, comment); “there was no one before him whose name was John” (Ibn Abbas 2016: Q. 19:7, comment).

- **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) Gen 22:1-19 says that Abraham was tested by God to sacrifice his son Isaac; Q. 37:100-112 does not name the son Abraham was prepared to sacrifice but indicates that it was Ishmael, not Isaac. Emerick states the orthodox Muslim position: “The boy who was going to be sacrificed is not Isaac but Ishmael, which is opposite from the Biblical account of this story. Islam asserts that this story took place in or near the Valley of Baca and that because God spared Ishmael and tested Abraham’s faith, a great shrine would be built by the pair in celebration. This would be the forerunner of the present-day Ka’bah.” (Emerick 2004: 165, emph. added; see also Q. 2:127) That latter aspect of the story also contradicts the Bible which says that Abraham was to offer Isaac on one of the mountains in the “land of Moriah” (Gen 22:2), which 2 Chron 3:1 identifies the site where Solomon’s temple was built in Jerusalem.
(e) Exod 2:1-10 says that Moses was adopted by Pharoah’s daughter; Q. 28:7-9 says that Moses was adopted by Pharoah and his wife.
(f) 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. The above contradictions and errors should be sufficient to demonstrate that the Qur’an could not be God’s (Allah’s) word along with the Bible, since God (Allah) then would be contradicting himself, but is “from other than Allah” (Q. 4:82, Hilali-Khan). 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) 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?” Q. 13:38-39 says, “For each period is a Book (revealed). Allah doth blot out or confirm what He pleaseth: with Him is the Mother of the Book.” Q. 16:101 adds, “When We substitute one revelation for another,- and Allah knows best what He reveals (in stages).” they say, ‘Thou art but a forger’: but most of them understand not.”

The Qur’an was revealed by stages to Muhammad over a period of 23 years: “(It is) a Qur’an which We have divided (into parts from time to time), in order that thou mightest recite it to men at intervals: We have revealed it by stages” (Q. 17:106); “Those who reject Faith say: ‘Why is not the Qur’an revealed to him all at once?’ Thus (is it revealed), that We may strengthen thy heart thereby, and We have rehearsed it to thee in slow, well-arranged stages, gradually.” (Q. 25:32) Some Muslims try to style the doctrine of abrogation as an aspect of “progressive revelation” (Dirks 2008: 31; Ali 2006: Q. 2:106n.107). “Progressive revelation” is a legitimate appeal in cases where later revelation augments, but does not fundamentally contradict, earlier revelation. Abrogation, however, is different. Abrogation means that one verse or passage fundamentally contradicts other

172 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). Additionally, the doctrine of abrogation invalidates Muslim efforts to find contradictions in the Bible, since Allah would be free to abrogate verses in his former Book as he is in his latter Book.
verses or passages in the Qur’an. As such, abrogation is not a legitimate instance of “progressive revelation” at all.\(^\text{173}\) 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); “(This was Our) way with the messengers We sent before thee: thou wilt find no change in Our ways” (Q. 17:77); That was the Way of Allah in the case of those who passed away of old, and you will not find any change in the Way of Allah” (Q. 33:62, Hilali-Khan; see also Q. 35:43; 48:23).

We have already discussed multiple examples of frank contradictions within the Qur’an. 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). Al-Araby concludes, “One cannot help but wonder; why was there a need for changes in the Quran, if it really contained God’s words? If Allah is indeed all-powerful and all-knowing, why would he need to revise and correct himself so often?” (Al-Araby n.d.: Conclusion) 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 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; see also von Denffer 1981: 48) 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.

Further, it is not obvious from the Qur’an which verses have been abrogated or the reason for the

\(^{173}\) On the other hand, the Bible is a legitimate example of progressive revelation. It was revealed, progressively in stages, over approximately 1500 years. The Bible has a fundamental unity: ultimately the entire Bible is about Jesus Christ—he is its central character and integrating theme (Luke 24:25-27, 44-45; John 5:39-40, 46; Acts 3:18, 24; 10:43; 26:22-23; 2 Cor 1:20; 1 Pet 1:10-12; Heb 1:1-3). The OT is the preparation of the gospel of Christ; 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. Because the Bible ultimately is the story about Jesus Christ, who is not mentioned by name in the OT but is explicitly revealed only in the NT, the NT writers generally look at the OT in a “typological” way, i.e., OT prophecies and OT Israel, its laws, ceremonies, and institutions, were “types,” “symbols,” “shadows,” “copies,” or “examples” of NT realities that were fulfilled and superseded in Christ and his church (see Matt 5:17; 1 Cor 10:1-6; 2 Cor 3:12-16; Gal 3:23-4:7, 21-31; Col 2:16-17; Heb 1:1-2; 8:1-10:22).

In the Bible the OT is, indeed, superseded by the NT. The reason is that the Old Covenant was a typological pointer to the New Covenant and in Christ and the church the Old has now been fulfilled. Consequently, when fulfillment happens, the institutions that were types or symbols of a greater reality are no longer necessary; they are superseded by the reality to which they pointed. The Qur’an, on the other hand, was all revealed to one man during the course of only 23 years. Those verses that are said to have been “abrogated” were not symbols or pointers to anything greater than themselves that is now fulfilled by the abrogating verses. Instead, in the Qur’an, different verses simply conflict with and contradict each other; there is no underlying unity or unifying theme, and there is nothing theologically or spiritually “progressive” that underlies the contradictions.
abrogation. For example, Q. 2:284 says, “To Allah belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth. Whether ye show what is in your minds or conceal it, Allah Calleth you to account for it. He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and punisheth whom He pleaseth, for Allah hath power over all things.” In a hadith, Ibn Umar narrated, “This Verse:--‘Whether you show what is in your minds or conceal it…’” (2.284) was abrogated” (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 68). That hadith indicates that only the part of the verse beginning with the second sentence has been abrogated. No reason is given. The abrogating verse is not given. Are other similar verses also abrogated? There does not appear to be anything aberrant in the teaching of the verse. The fact that it has been abrogated could have significant implications concerning people’s accountability to Allah and the Judgment.

The next hadith also speaks of the abrogation of Q. 2:284. In that hadith, Marwan Al-Asghar narrates, “A man from the companions of Allah’s Messenger who I think, was Ibn Umar said, “The Verse:-- ‘Whether you show what is in your minds or conceal it....’” was abrogated by the Verse following it.”” (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 69). However, the next verse (at least in the Qur’anic order) does not even discuss the same subject matter as Q. 2:284. Q. 2:285 says, “The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messengers. ‘We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His messengers.’ And they say: ‘We hear, and we obey: (We seek) Thy forgiveness, our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys.’”

One problem is that most abrogated verses remain in the Qur’an. Q. 2:240 says, “Those of you who die and leave widows should bequeath for their widows a year’s maintenance and residence; but if they leave (The residence), there is no blame on you for what they do with themselves, provided it is reasonable. And Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.” Concerning this verse, a hadith states, “Narrated Ibn Az-Zubair: I said to Uthman bin Affan (while he was collecting the Qur’an) regarding the Verse:-- ‘Those of you who die and leave wives...’ (2.240) ‘This Verse was abrogated by another Verse. So why should you write it? (Or leave it in the Qur’an)’” Uthman said. ‘O son of my brother! I will not shift anything of it from its place.’” (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 53) This makes it extremely difficult to determine which verses have been abrogated and which verses are doing the abrogating.

The difficulty is compounded by the fact that even Muhammad’s companions appear to have disagreed about which verses were abrogated. Q. 2:184 says, “(Fasting) for a fixed number of days; but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number (Should be made up) from days later. For those who can do it (With hardship), is a ransom, the feeding of one that is indigent. But he that will give more, of his own free will, it is better for him. And it is better for you that ye fast, if ye only knew.” One hadith says, “Narrated Ata: That he heard Ibn Abbas reciting the Divine Verse:-- ‘And for those who can fast they had a choice either fast, or feed a poor for every day.’” (2.184) Ibn Abbas said, ‘This Verse is not abrogated, but it is meant for old men and old women who have no strength to fast, so they should feed one poor person for each day of fasting (instead of fasting).’” (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 32)

The next hadith disagrees: “Narrated Nafi: Ibn Umar recited: ‘They had a choice, either fast or feed a poor for every day...’” and added, ‘This Verse is abrogated’” (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 33). Umar did not indicate which verse did the abrogating. However, the next hadith says, “Narrated Salama: When the Divine Revelation: ‘For those who can fast, they had a choice either fast, or feed a poor for every day,’ (2.184) Ibn Abbas said, ‘This Verse is not abrogated, but it is meant for old men and old women who have no strength to fast, so they should feed one poor person for each day of fasting (instead of fasting).’” (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 34)

The next verse, Q. 2:185, says, “Ramadhan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur’an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (Between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting, but if any one is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (Should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful.” It is unclear if Q. 2:185 is the “succeeding” verse referred to in the hadith. It is also impossible to tell from the Qur’an itself that Q. 2:184 has been abrogated. Since even Muhammad’s companions appear to have been unsure about which verses were abrogated, how can anyone today make that determination? And if a verse immediately following another verse can abrogate the first verse, then the coherence of the Qur’an essentially is at an end.

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-Nāṣikh-wal-Mansūkh, by Ibn Khuzaymah, 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). Muslim scholar Ibn Juzayy similarly states that Q. 9:5 abrogates “every peace treaty in the Qur’an” (Ibn Juzayy n.d.: Q. 9:5, comment).

Haqq shows that Q. 2:256 (“Let there be no compulsion in religion”) and Q. 109:6 (Hilali-Khan) (“To you be your religion, and to me my religion (Islamic Monotheism)”) have been abrogated by the Sword verse, and Q. 29:46 (Hilali-Khan) (“And argue not with the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), unless it be in (a way) that is better (with good words and in good manner, inviting them to Islamic Monotheism with His Verses), except with such of them as do wrong”) has been abrogated by the Fighting verse (Haqq 1926: 19, 54, 73). Consequently, Fouda, Taha, and Al Akkad conclude that “no one should believe that the Qur’an calls for peace and human and women’s rights.” (Al-Araby n.d.: Introduction)

The abrogation of the “peace” and “tolerance” verses is consistent with the Islamic position that Q. 2:62 (“Those who believe [in the Qur’an], and those who follow the Jewish [scriptures], and the Christians and the Sabians;—any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve”) has been abrogated by Q. 3:85 (“If anyone desires a religion other than Islam [submission to Allah], never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost [All spiritual good!”). That is the position of several leading Muslim commentators: Tafsir Ibn Kathir states, “Allah does not accept any deed or work from anyone, unless it conforms to the Law of Muhammad that is, after Allah sent Muhammad. Before that, every person who followed the guidance of his own Prophet was on the correct path, following the correct guidance and was saved.” (Ibn Kathir 2003: Q. 2:62, comment; see also Hilali and Khan 1998: 14n.1; Madani 2005: 1:67)

The abrogation of the “peace” and “tolerance” verses also is consistent with a well-attested hadith (at-Tirmidhi: 1568) which reports that in Q. 47:4 only the portion that permitted mercy to captives taken in jihad was abrogated by Q. 2:191. The two verses are as follows: “If you encounter the disbelievers in a battle, strike-off their heads. Take them as captives when they are defeated. Then you may set them free as a favor to them, with or without a ransom, when the battle is over. This is the Law. Had God wanted, He could have granted them (unbelievers) victory, but He wants to test you through each other. The deeds of those who are killed for the cause of God will never be without virtuous results.” (Q. 47:4, Sarwar) “And kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out. And Al-Fitnah is worse than killing. And fight not with them at Al-Masjid-al-Haram (the sanctuary at Makkah), unless they (first) fight you there. But if they attack you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers.” (Q. 2:191, Hilali-Khan) “Most Muslims fully understand that the few Quranic verses that seemingly promote equality, peace and justice are more often than not overridden/nullified by later verses that validate such things as terrorism and legalistic restrictions on routine human and women’s rights.” (Al-Araby n.d.: Introduction)

**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).

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174 Western Muslim apologist Yahiya Emerick deceptively appeals to Q. 2:256 (“Let there be no compulsion in religion”) twice in his book *Understanding Islam* in an effort to make Islam appear peaceful, tolerant, and reasonable. Needless to say, he never mentions that that verse has been abrogated.
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 in section 5.IV. Responses to the Islamic View of the Bible, 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 unsubstantiable: “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 ayat to exist in the Quran stating that such are abrogated.” (Ibrahim n.d.: n.p.) Gilchrist adds, “In Surah 2:106 the text speaks the books (kitab), or specifically Torah and Injil, or scriptures given to Musa or Isa. I found no such ayat to exist in that various ahadith also indicate that Muhammad’s own statements and actions can abrogate each other. “Abu al- ‘Ala’ b. al-Shikhkhir said: The Messenger of Allah abrogated some of his commands by others, just as the Qur’an abrogates some part with the other.” (Muslim: 344). “It is the last word of the Messenger of Allah which is accepted as (final as it abrogates the previous ones)” (Muslim: 1113b; see also 1113c, 1113d). “Narrat Mikhnaf ibn Sulaym: We were staying with the Messenger of Allah at Arafat; he said: O people, every family must offer a sacrifice and an atirah. Do you know what the atirah is? It is what you call the Rajab sacrifice. Abu Dawud said: ‘Atirah has been abrogated, and this tradition is an abrogated one.’” (Abi Dawud: 2788) The requirement to follow the Imam in how he stands, sits, bows, and raises his head in leading prayers was also abrogated (al-Bukhari: 5658; see also at-Tirmidhi: 391).

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 (as compounded by the conflicting views among the Muslim scholars) makes it impossible to do so.

IX. The Bible and the Qur’an: Conclusion

The Bible was written by approximately 40 authors, from varying backgrounds and cultures, over a period of approximately 1500 years. The Qur’an depends upon the credibility of one man. The nature of the two books is different. 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)

175 von Denffer states that, among Muslim scholars, there are actually three conflicting views concerning abrogation: “According to some scholars the Qur’an abrogates only the Qur’an. . . . According to them the Qur’an does not abrogate the sunna nor does the sunna abrogate the Qur’an. . . . Others are of the opinion that the Qur’an may abrogate the Qur’an as well as the sunna. . . . There is also the view that there are four classes of naskh [abrogation]: Qur’an abrogates Qur’an. Qur’an abrogates sunna. Sunna abrogates Qur’an. Sunna abrogates sunna.” (von Denffer 1981: 47) This dispute has existed for hundreds of years. Jalaludin Suyuti (1445-1505) refers to it in his famous book Al-Iṣqān fī ‘Ulm Al-Qur’an (al-Suyuti n.d.: Nasikh and Mansukh, 2 [50/428]). Note that none of these views contends that the Qur’an or the sunnah abrogates the Bible.
The Bible has a progressive storyline and an underlying, unifying theme. Ultimately, its underlying focus and unity is derived from Jesus Christ: the OT typologically pointed to him; the NT revealed him and how he fulfilled of the “types” and “shadows” of the OT. On the other hand, the Qur'an has an almost cyclical view of history. In its view, “history constantly repeats itself, above all in the sending of a series of prophets as heralds of Islam, beginning with Adam and ending with Muhammad” (Schirrmacher 2011: 30). While the Qur’an repeatedly emphasizes tauhid (the oneness of Allah), it is plagued by multiple internal contradictions and historical and factual errors.

Both books are considered to be the Word of God, but they record the words of two diametrically different gods. The Bible is the revelation of Yahweh whose character is seen in the person of Jesus Christ, who “is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Heb 1:3). The Qur’an is the revelation of Allah. While Muslims and the Qur’an deny that Muhammad is divine as the Bible asserts of Jesus, nevertheless, Allah’s character is seen in the person of Muhammad since Muhammad is “a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in Allah” (Q. 33:21) and “He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah” (Q. 4:80; see also 4:14, 69; 48:10; 33:36). The substantial differences between Jesus and Yahweh compared to Muhammad and Allah were seen in the chapters on Jesus in the Bible and Muhammad in the Qur’an.

However, the different hermeneutical approaches (i.e., the principles people use to understand what something means and what it implies for our lives) of Christians to the Bible compared to that of Muslims to the Qur’an highlights the greatest practical difference between the two books and has the greatest implication for humanity. Christians revere the Bible as God’s Word. 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. Muslims believe that the Qur’an is immutable, eternally existing on a tablet in heaven (Q. 85:21-22). Thus, it is “intended for all times and all places” (Haleem 2005: ix). As a result, Islam, unlike Christianity, has never developed the art and science of textual criticism, and pays virtually no attention to genre, historical, and cultural context. Ahmed Deedat is typical of the Muslim approach to the Qur’an: “The Muslim believes this categorical Quranic statement to be from God. Hence he asks no questions and seeks for no proof.” (Deedat 1984: 4, referring to Q. 4:157’s assertion that Jesus was not crucified) This approach stems from the Qur’an itself which says, “It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger to have any option about their decision: if any one disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path” (Q. 33:36). 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)

These different approaches to the Bible and the Qur’an affect Christians and Muslims in profoundly different ways. “Christians welcome fact-based (instead of the usual emotionally charged) challenges to their faith and face them honestly. We have no taste for a faith which cannot stand up to the facts on its own.” (Sundiata 2006: 148) Further, given its structure and nature, there is an inner logic to the Bible that allows its adaptation to new and different cultural and historical situations. On the other hand, the Qur’an is viewed as being immutable, which makes it extraordinarily difficult to interpret and adapt its commands and prohibitions to the vastly different circumstances around the world today. Consequently, Islam has never experienced a Reformation such as Christianity experienced in the 1500s. More ominously, “Religious criticism exists at most in the private sphere, and indeed at times is dangerous even there, as various attacks carried out against Muslim writers and intellectuals in past years have shown. Muslim voices critical of Islam are heard for the most part from those persons in exile in the West, but never from the pulpits of Arab mosques, from universities, or from the midst of theological communities. Individual intellectuals and theologians, to be sure, even demand critical re-interpretation of Islam and its sources. But, to the present, no opening up of official theology or of influential doctrinal authorizes can be detected that might let one hope for a speedy re-interpretation of the Koran and of Islamic history.” (Schirrmacher 2011: 12) Indeed, “Islam puts a very low premium on integrity, honesty, and freedom of thought, but places a very high premium on censorship and blind commitment. This is why Islam advocates the death penalty for dissension. . . . These harsh measures have made it difficult for non-Muslims to
ask serious questions about Islam and impossible for Muslims to voice doubts about their beliefs in the presence of other Muslims.” (Sundiata 2006: 148)

This is illustrated by two recent examples of Islamic scholars who attempted to move, however hesitantly, away from the dominant Islamic view of the Qur’an. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (1943-2010) was an associate professor at Cairo University. He was promoted to full professor, but “Zayd's academic work on the Qur’an led to a lawsuit against him by conservative Muslim scholars. The subsequent a hisbah trial led to him being declared an apostate (murtadd) by an Egyptian court. Since under Sharia law it was not permissible for a Muslim woman to be married to a non-Muslim man, the court also declared he could not remain married to his wife—Cairo University French Literature professor Dr. Ibtihal Younis. This decision, in effect, forced him out of his homeland.” (“Nasr Abu Zayd” 2019: The Nasr Abu Zayd case) Zayd himself said, “I’m sure that I’m a Muslim. My worst fear is that people in Europe may consider and treat me as a critic of Islam. I’m not. I’m not a new Salman Rushdie, and don't want to be welcomed and treated as such. I’m a researcher. I’m critical of old and modern Islamic thought. I treat the Qur’an as a nass (text) given by God to the Prophet Muhammad. That text is put into a human language, which is the Arabic language. When I said so, I was accused of saying that the Prophet Muhammad wrote the Qur’an. This is not a crisis of thought, but a crisis of conscience.” (Ibid.: Case against decision) The court decision itself reflects the overwhelming Muslim attitude toward the Qur’an: “The defendant’s proposition that the requirement of Christians and Jews to pay jizyah (poll tax) constitutes a reversal of humanity’s efforts to establish a better world is contrary to the divine verses on the question of jizyah, in a manner considered by some, inappropriate, even for temporal matters and judgments notwithstanding its inappropriateness when dealing with the Qur’an and Sunnah, whose texts represent the pinnacle of humane and generous treatment of non-Muslim minorities. [And the questioning by Zayd of the permissibility of owning slave girls, is] contrary to all the divine texts which permit such provided that the required conditions are met” (Ibid.: Reasoning of judgement)

The second example is Sudanese theologian Mahmoud Mohammed Taha (1909-85) who attempted to interpret the Qur’an in light of its cultural context. “Taha built his interpretation on the conventional division of the Koran into two. The initial verses came down when Muhammad was a powerless prophet living in Mecca, and tend to be cosmological. Later verses came down when Muhammad was the ruler of Medina, and include many specific rulings. These commands eventually served as the basis for the Shari’a, or Islamic law. Taha argued that specific Koranic rulings applied only to Medina, not to other times and places. He hoped modern-day Muslims would set these aside and live by the general principles delivered at Mecca. Were Taha’s ideas accepted, most of the Shari’a would disappear, including outdated provisions concerning warfare, theft, and women. Muslims could then more readily modernize.” (Pipes 2006: n.p.) The tragic sequel is that “On 5 January 1985, Taha was arrested for distributing pamphlets calling for an end to Sharia law in Sudan. Brought to trial on 7 January he refused to participate. The trial lasted two hours with the main evidence being confessions that the defendants were opposed to Sudan’s interpretation of Islamic law. The next day he was sentenced to death along with four other followers (who later recanted and were pardoned) for ‘heresy, opposing application of Islamic law, disturbing public security, provoking opposition against the government, and re-establishing a banned political party.’” (“Mahmoud Mohammed Taha” 2018: Arrest and execution) He was executed on January 18, 1985.

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

The above analysis has demonstrated that, contrary to those who claim that Christians and Muslims “worship the same God” or that Christianity and Islam are kindred “religions of Abraham” which have more similarities than differences, there are in fact profound differences between the two religions on all of the most important and fundamental points. These differences go to the heart of both Christianity and Islam.
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; Abdulahugli 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

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176 Nehls and Eric remind us of an important caveat to the primacy of love as a witness: “Certainly a Muslim is attracted by a loving and caring person just like others! But a silent, timid witness is not perceived by Muslim[s] as a display of humility, but rather weakness. . . . Therefore the advice to avoid the use of apologetics altogether in favour of displaying a Christian lifestyle in humility and love to attract Muslims to Christ is simply based on the false assumption that Muslims think like Christians.” (Nehls and Eric 2009b: 84) They conclude, “Christian life-style without a clearly defined presentation of the Saviour Jesus Christ is no witness at all” (Ibid.).
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])

There is one other implication concerning conveying the truths of the Bible to Muslims in much of the Muslim world, namely, “Most Muslims are oral communicators. Either they cannot read at all or read poorly or do not have a strong functional literacy.” (Colgate 2008a: 140; see also Adams, Allen, and Fish 2009: 77 [“Among the consultation participants, 71 percent reported that the people group they work among were primarily oral learners’”]) This means that biblical truths and stories often may have to be told orally rather than read. This can be highly effective: “While doctrinal points presented analytically or didactically are often resisted by Muslims, they will usually enjoy listening to audio stories of the Biblical prophets, or hearing these stories recounted personally by a Christian friend” (Gray and Gray 2008: 133): “Teams at the consultation that communicated the gospel in a way that respected the learning preference of the people saw over 4 times as many faith communities emerge as compared to workers who ignore this factor” (Adams, Allen, and Fish 2009: 77; see also Colgate 2008b: 199-207; Morin 2007: 112-14).


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177 The importance of discipleship is highlighted by the fact that for Muslims to say the so-called “sinner’s 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 extemporary 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)

178 The ministry “Simply the Story” provides resources for becoming a better oral communicator of the Bible. It is located at http://simplythestory.org/oralbiblestories/.
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. 55 Muslim converts from Iran. Dr. Patrick Cate conducted a survey of 55 Iranian Muslims who converted to Christ before the Iranian revolution of 1979. Analysis of the results revealed a number of key factors that led the Muslims to Christ (Singer 1980: 1-16; see also Miller 2014: 23 for a summary of Cate’s study):

- The Bible. “About half of the converts cite the reading or studying of the Scriptures or the reading of tracts or booklets as a significant factor in leading them to Christ. Many testimonies bear witness to the superiority of Christ’s teachings and the encounter with His perfect character through such reading.” (Singer 1980: 5, no. 21)
- A Christ-like lifestyle by Christian witnesses. “A Christ-like lifestyle and testimony were the second most significant [factor] in winning Muslims to the Savior. Several received love from Christians as they had not previously known and another was taken up by the enthusiastic singing during a meeting in a missionary’s home.” (Ibid.: 6, no. 21) “The converts collectively viewed love and personal friendship as the two major ingredients for Muslim evangelism” (Ibid.: 12, no. 52)
- Dissatisfaction and discontent with Islam. “Dissatisfaction and discontent with Islam caused a few to be more open to the gospel” (Ibid.). “Islam’s failure to meet personal needs (31% of the thirty-six answering), “heavy laws” (28%), inconsistent adherents especially the leaders (19%), and place of women (11%) were the most significant reasons for rejecting Islam” (Ibid.: 4, no. 15).

4. 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).

5. 17 Muslim converts from Kenya. Reinhold Straehler’s doctoral dissertation analyzed why 17 urban Kenyan Muslims converted to Christ. “Almost all interviewees indicated that at some point during their conversion process they were attracted to Christ and the gospel” (Straehler 2009: 149-50), but “the commitment to Jesus Christ, which every one of the interviewees has made, did not come out of the blue but was prepared by various stages through which the person proceeded” (Ibid.: 141). Specific factors that brought about that commitment to Christ included:

- Christian witness, lifestyle, and love. “The first three factors with the highest frequency from the direct statements of the interviewees all had to do with ‘Christians’ (personal witness, attractive lifestyle, and love/friendship shown)” (Ibid.: 217). “As Muslims, the interviewees grew up with a general negative attitude towards Christians, either being hostile or despising them. . . . The negative attitude gradually changed as they interacted more closely with Christians and their faith. . . . For most interviewees the first conscious encounter with Christians played a major role in their conversion process. . . . Phase 4 is the time when the final decision is taken and a commitment to Christ is made. . . . Even though the awareness of the Christian faith and the information about it may have come through media or supernatural ways, the final step of making a commitment to Christ seems to be influenced mainly by personal contacts with Christians and their verbal communication.” (Ibid.: 151-52, 212)
- Bible reading and dissatisfaction with Islam. “The next two most frequently mentioned factors in direct statements were ‘reading the Bible’ and ‘dissatisfaction with Islam’” (Ibid.: 217). As to the Bible, one of the converts said, “By reading the Bible I got to see the picture, that this is it! . . . And this guy [Jesus] never committed sin, that means he was committed to God’s will, fully. So the only life to emulate was his. First,
before I used to think that I am supposed to emulate Muhammad’s life. But after reading some verses in the Qur’an that particularly said Muhammad sinned, I decide to say, the person to emulate is Jesus.” (Ibid.: 163)

As to dissatisfaction with Islam, “eight interviewees indicated that at one time they questioned Islam and 14 indicated that their dissatisfaction with Islam served as a factor that pushed them closer to the Christian faith. . . . For example the experience of M6 shows who found that the Qur’an could not answer his questions (M6: 232-235). M4 practised his religion faithfully and felt fulfilled. At the same time he was not sure whether he was doing everything right and God would accept him (M4: 160). In a similar way F1 tried in desperation to practice Islam correctly, hoping it would give her what the Christians offered, but it was in vain (F1: 152).” (Ibid.: 209, 158-59)

- **Supernatural acts of God.** “Finally, there were also supernatural ways through which people became aware of an alternative faith, either through specific supernatural communication (e.g., hearing a voice) or through what interviewees expressed as the ‘general influence of God’.” (Ibid.: 211).

6. **22 Muslim converts from Palestine.** Anthony Greenham interviewed and obtained detailed questionnaires from 22 Palestinian Muslim converts to Christ (11 male; 11 female). Greenham found, “There is no question of a single factor applying exclusively to any convert. Each individual was significantly influenced by several conversion factors.” (Greenham 2010: 171) Key conversion factors were tabulated (Greenham 2010: 150). They included:

- **The Person of Jesus (22/22).** “The most significant conversion factor is the person of Jesus. Every respondent emphasized him, without exception.” (Ibid.: 169) Additionally, “at least half the converts affirmed they considered Jesus because of the Qur’an’s teaching about him” (Ibid.: 154).

- **The Truth of Jesus’ message (15/22).** “Some had a prior curiosity or desire for the truth about Jesus. However, they all discovered the truth about him, whether they were consciously seeking it or not . . . and their lives were transformed.” (Ibid.: 164)

- **God’s miraculous involvement (14/22).** “God’s miraculous involvement is a product of God himself. While he remains the same and the nature of conversion remains the same, he deals with each individual differently [experiences included miraculous healing, answers to prayer, and personal transformation]” (Ibid.: 166) Additionally, “a number of respondents had dreams or dream-like experiences associated with their conversions. . . . Most of these dream-like experiences took place when the individuals were awake.” (Ibid.: 166-67)

- **The lives/roles of believers (13/22).** “It appears all converts saw a (positively) different quality in the believers they encountered” (Ibid.: 162).

- **Reading the Bible (10/22).** “Each one [who emphasized reading the Bible as an important factor] had a transforming encounter with Christ, either in the midst of his or her Bible-reading or as a result of it. Reading the Bible thus constituted a crucial avenue of conversion for almost half the group as a whole.” (Ibid.: 161).

7. **24 Muslim converts from Palestine (the West Bank).** Craig Dunning interviewed 24 Muslim converts to Christ from the West Bank. In Dunning’s study, “Apart from Respondent Sixteen who believed the first time she heard the gospel, all of the respondents’ testimonies can be described as a struggle against believing the gospel. Their context programed them to struggle against the gospel. . . . Some respondents said that while they were resisting conversion, they also felt like they were being drawn toward Jesus or the advocate in a way that was overpowering their resistance. . . . [These] respondents reported being in process from weeks to years, usually with several encounters with an evangelist or after extensive reading of the Bible.” (Dunning 2013: 262, 273) Major factors mentioned by the Muslim converts included:

- **Kindness and compassion of believers.** “The respondents frequently commented on the kindness and compassion of their advocates. This compassion was grounded in the life of Jesus who regularly showed compassion for those who were suffering as well as the advocates’ own personal history of suffering.” (Ibid.: 280-81)

- **Good works of believers and personal crises of the Muslim.** The two primary things that connected Muslims to the gospel were: “Christians’ good works and crises. . . . All respondents who initiated contact with a Christian did so because of a crisis. These crises might be categorized as particularly difficult hardships that caused a person to be in distress at the apparent impossibility of resolution of their problem. Another type of crisis that all respondents encountered was the result of an advocate engaging them with the gospel and may be categorized as a religious crisis. Although some had prior problems with some elements of Islam, here, I refer to a religious crisis that was directly related to becoming aware of the claims of Jesus. Is he really the Son of God? Was he really God in human flesh? Is it true that Jesus died to pay for sin and
that he rose from the dead? While they may offer great hope, such claims directly contradict Islamic theology and caused the respondents to seek the truth.” (Ibid.: 281-82)

- **The search for truth. John 14:6 (“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me”)** “was one of the central elements of advocacy that my respondents heard repeatedly. It was used to headline gospel tracts. It was referenced repeatedly in Bible studies and discussions. It appeared in Respondent Twelve’s dream. This constant reference to the truth became the theme of their journey to faith in Jesus, which they labeled or described in some way as a pursuit of the truth.” (Ibid.: 283)

- **Bible reading.** “The most important element of advocacy among these respondents was Bible reading. . . . Reading the Bible was the main means of persuasion and validation for this group of respondents. Many spoke of reading the Bible in large quantities and thus being drawn to Jesus or to read the Bible more.” (Ibid.: 284)

- **Dreams.** “For half of the respondents dreams were an important experience that helped them confirm the claims of Christ. In these dreams, the respondents saw different symbols or a person of light, or they heard a voice. Regardless of the content, the dreams functioned as confirmation or direction.” (Ibid.: 285)

- **Answered prayer.** Almost 60% of respondents mentioned being prayed for and/or praying themselves: “In many cases, the advocates prayed for the respondents’ eyes and ears to be opened to the truth, which . . . was very important from the respondents’ perspective. Additionally, the advocates prayed for the respondents’ physical needs, and when those issues were resolved, the respondents’ understood the results as confirmation of the advocates’ message. The same is true for those who had emotional and other problems resolved. Prayer requests for medical issues were the most common type of request mentioned, but another type stood out as well: a challenge prayer. After her advocacy appeared to stall, a female evangelist challenged two ladies to pray, ‘God of this earth, show me who you are. Is Muhammad the way, or is Jesus?’ Both said that God answered their prayer in a dream, which led them to place their faith in Christ.” (Ibid.: 286)

8. 100 Muslim converts from Central Asia. Hasan Abdulahugi is himself a Central Asian convert to Christ from Islam. He then became a church leader and church planter in his native country. He personally interviewed close to 100 converts from Islam in his country who told him the following (Abdulahugi 2005: 157-66):

- 53% said it was the changed life of a friend or spouse that brought them to faith.
- 41% said that an answered prayer, a miracle, or a healing convinced them to come to Christ.

These two processes often work together: “Many converts are first drawn to Christ through supernatural experiences [including dreams]. . . . Yet after unbelievers see the changed lives of people they know and trust in their social networks, and then hear the gospel, they seem to believe more quickly.” (Ibid.: 163)

All of these studies are consistent. They apply to Muslims from around the world who have come to Christ from a variety of backgrounds. They demonstrate the convergence of God’s action and ours and the importance of the convergence of our words and our lifestyle. When these are all aligned, any barrier to someone’s turning to Christ can fall.

**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) The Fruitful Practices Research team has studied church planters across the Muslim world and identified a number of “Fruitful Practices” being used in outreach to Muslims and planting churches in Muslim areas (Allen, et al. 2009: 111-22; Daniels 2015: 37-42). 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 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)179

John Gilchrist points out, “I have heard it said that Christians must hate Islam but love the Muslim. May I suggest it would be more appropriate to love all Muslims and to strive to understand Islam. The more you learn about the Muslim faith, the more you will learn to respect it (I speak from personal experience) and the more Muslims will respect you and be willing to listen to you. When Christians show that they have gone to much trouble to find out sincerely what Muslims believe and to become acquainted with the Qur’an and the Islamic heritage, Muslims invariably respond by becoming more inclined to enter into serious discussion rather than sheer debate and argument. We need to earn the right to be heard.” (Gilchrist 2002: 10) He adds that one should think of “I-S-L-A-M” as standing for “I Shall Love All Muslims” (Ibid.).

- **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)

In connection with this, “Two of the strongest associations with fruitfulness are that the workers are ministering in the local or ‘heart language’ of the people to whom they were called, and that teams include at least one person who is highly fluent in the ministry language [i.e., has high language skills in being able to present the gospel]” (Adams, Allen, and Fish 2009: 76-77; see also Liverman 2008: 23 (“In order for the message of hope to be communicated effectively, it must be communicated in the language of the recipient culture”)). Even providing Bibles or New Testaments that include Arabic script can greatly facilitate their being accepted (see Eric 2005: 155; Decker and Injiiru 2012: 75-82).

- **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

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179 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)
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; the previous sections of this book that deal with those issues; and section 6.III.E. Dealing with questions and objections, below). As one discusses Jesus and the gospel, the truth will emerge and the Muslim will understand (see Naja 2013a: 28; Naja 2013b: 156).

Also, avoid being dragged into irrelevant and divisive debates about Israel and American foreign policy (Hammond 2010: 157; Michael and McAlister 2010: 121; Nehls and Eric 2009b: 100). At the same time, many Muslims believe that all Westerners are Christians, and they may have a negative attitude toward Christianity because they oppose Western immorality. It is proper and important to point out that not all Westerners are Christians, and true Christians disagree with and do not practice immoral lifestyles (Goldmann 2004: 138, 143-44). Remember, the issue is the truth of the gospel.

- 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 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 itself—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. As Abraham Duran, who worked for several years in the Middle East and Central Asia, puts it, we need to build on what the people already know: “No one particular level of contextualization is useful for every society, but it is important to use some form of contextualization. In most cases, it is not good to try to present the gospel as something completely new—from an unknown prophet. . . . Muslims can better see the beauty of Jesus if the word we use for Jesus helps them to know that we are talking about one of their prophets, not one of the prophets of the Christians.” (Duran 2005: 268-69)

This approach is biblical. Kevin Greeson points out: “Jesus modeled the use of bridges in His own ministry drawing illustrations of God’s kingdom from agriculture, fishing and everyday life. . . . 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) He notes that “whenever we identify values, virtues or insights within Muslim culture we are not endorsing

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180 “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)
Islam, Mohammed or the Qur’an, but rather removing obstacles that might prevent them from seeing Jesus” (Ibid.).

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

“There are many examples in the research on fruitful practices of people who use the Quran in one way or another. Some of the interviewees just use the Quran as a conversation starter. . . . Still others have found it fruitful to use the Quran to overcome barriers to the gospel that they encounter in their ministry [e.g., using the Qur’an to establish that all people sin when that fact would not be admitted by Muslims if only the Bible was used].” (Burke 2010: 154) One particular way to use the Qur’an is called “The CAMEL Method,” which 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 Allah 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); E—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.

44 Behold! the angels said: “O Mary! Allah hath chosen thee and purified thee-chosen thee above the women of all nations. 45 O Mary! worship Thy Lord devoutly: Prostrate thyself, and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down.” 46 This 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). 47 Behold! the angels said: “O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus[l-masihu, Isa], the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah; 48 He shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. And he shall be (of the company) of the righteous.” 49 She 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!

44 And Allah will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel. 49 And (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. 51 It is Allah Who is my Lord and your Lord; then worship Him. This is a Way that is straight.’”

52 When 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.” 53 Our Lord! we believe in what Thou hast revealed, and we follow the Messenger; then write us down among those who bear witness. “ 54 And (the unbelievers) plotted and planned, and Allah too planned, and the best of planners is Allah.

55 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: 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.)

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 Allah”). 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. Remember also that the verse does not call Jesus the “word” from God because God created him by saying the word “Be!” (see section 2.VIII.B. Jesus, not Muhammad, is the “Word” of God n.76, above).
- 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 Messiah promised His people a deliverer and savior—a “Messiah.” No other prophet is called Messiah. Also, according to verse 45, Jesus will not only be held in honor in this world but also in the one to come.” (see sections 2.VIII.D. Jesus, not Muhammad, is “the Messiah” and 2.VIII.G. Jesus, not Muhammad, has the special blessing and honor of Allah in this world and the next, above)
- Regarding v. 46 (Jesus is “righteous”). Ask, “Did Jesus ever sin?” (The answer must be “No.”) A Muslim 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)

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.”

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182 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).

183 This is discussed in more detail above at section 2.VIII.E. Jesus, not Muhammad, is pure, holy, and without sin or error from his birth.

184 These same three points are used by Mike Shipman in his “Any 3” method of leading Muslims to Christ (see Shipman 2013b: 20). 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
According to verse 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 (for more on this, see section 2.VIII. A. Jesus, not Muhammad, had a miraculous conception, above). 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 Isa that blood line of Adam was cut! Isa was not of the blood line of Adam, for he had no earthly father. Isa was very different from all the other prophets. In fact, Isa was very different from all people who have ever been born! . . . Isa came from Allah.” (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 ayah 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 everything comes from Allah 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 (see note 86 and 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, above).

Additionally, v. 49 shows that Jesus knows the secrets of our hearts (see section 2.VIII.J. Jesus, not Muhammad, has supernatural knowledge). 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 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).
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 Allah’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: someone who has never been there or someone who knows the way and lives there now?” (Obviously, the 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 is the way to get us there.” (see Greeson and Owen 2005: 17; see also section 2.VIII.L. Jesus, not Muhammad, was raised to heaven alive where he still is)

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

185 Hilali and Khan obviously are aware of how important this verse is and how dangerous it is to Islam. Consequently, even though the verse talks about “those who follow thee,” which is in the second person, masculine, singular and therefore can only refer to Jesus (see “Quran Dictionary” 2009-2017: Q. 3:55, ittaba ḥa), they have mistranslated it to read: “I will make those who follow you (Monotheists, who worship none but Allah) superior to those who disbelieve [in the Oneness of Allah, or disbelieve in some of His Messengers, e.g., Muhammad SAW, 'Isa (Jesus), Musa (Moses), etc., or in His Holy Books, e.g. the Taurat (Torah), the Injeel (Gospel), the Quran] till the Day of Resurrection.”
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.\textsuperscript{186}

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)

If they tell you “the Qur’an,” you can say, “That is very interesting. Could you show me where? I would like to read it.” Often they will not know where it is, because it is not in the Qur’an. You can 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). As we saw above in Q. 3:42-55, the Qur’an acknowledges that only Jesus is perfectly pure, holy, and righteous. He alone is alive in heaven. In other words, he and he alone is the straight way, i.e., the way, the truth, and the life. Because only Jesus perfectly lived and followed the straight way, only he can show us the straight way (as it actually says in Q. 3:51). Consequently, as Q. 3:50 says, our duty is to obey Jesus. Only by knowing what Jesus says in the Injil (the NT) can we know the straight way in order to be able to follow it. 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 Houssney 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.” (Houssney 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!” The word for “righteousness” is taqwā. Although some translations translate it somewhat differently (e.g., “raiment of restraint from evil” [Pickthall]; “clothing that guards (against evil)” [Shakir]; “robe of piety” [Sarwar]; “garment of godfearing” [Arberry]; “garment of God-consciousness” [Hakeem; Asad]), the word means “righteousness” (“Quran Dictionary” 2009-2017: Q. 7:26, l-taqwā).

This ayah raises the issues of innate human sinfulness, the fact that none of us can become perfectly

\textsuperscript{186} See n.177, above.
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.

Mike Shipman has developed a five-step method for evangelizing Muslims called “Any 3: Anyone, Anywhere, Any Time—Lead Muslims to Christ Now!” which utilizes the story of Adam as part of the gospel presentation (Shipman 2013a [the book detailing the method]; 2013b [a summary of the book and method]). The five steps are: (1) Get connected; (2) Get to God; (3) Get to lostness; (4) Get to the gospel; (5) Get to a decision (Shipman 2013b: 19-20). Step four includes telling the story of “the first and last sacrifice,” i.e., Adam and Eve’s sin and God’s providing covering for them by sacrificing an animal to clothe them, which leads to Jesus’ coming as the Lamb who sacrificed himself for our sins (Ibid.: 20-21). This method is based on humanity’s universal sinfulness, the fact that despite all they do Muslims are not assured of their salvation, but Christians can know their sins are forgiven and why they can know that. By having a good understanding of section 3.II. Sin and Salvation According to Christianity, above, and how the implications of salvation in Christ contrast with the implications of the Islamic understanding of salvation, 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.187

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’”’ As discussed above in section 2.VIII. Jesus, not Muhammad, is a “Sign” for all people of the world, the fact that Jesus is a “Sign” for all people reinforces the fact that he also is the “Word” of God because the term translated “Sign” is āyatan, which is the same term for verses (ayat) of the Qur’an itself (“Quran Dictionary” 2009-2017: Q. 19:21, āyatan).

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.188

4. A study of the Prophets. Another bridge from the Qur’an to the Bible, the true Christ, and the gospel is to study the prophets mentioned in the Qur’an (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jonah, John the Baptist, and Jesus) (Gray and Gray 2009a: 27, 28n.3). The study tracks a theme among those prophets, i.e., “From the beginning of creation, it traces God’s grace, mercy, and His plan to provide salvation to mankind.” (Daniel 2010: 35) One writer summarizes the method: “A sign is essentially a message from God communicated through an event or a physical object... Muslims will say that every prophet brings a sign... It is from this point that we can begin to tell each story and explain the meaning in a new way from the Old Testament to Jesus.” (“The gospel as a story” n.d.: n.p.)

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:

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187 Their online addresses are in the Bibliography so that they can be accessed.
188 See also section 2.VIII. The Qur’an itself places Jesus higher than anyone else (including Muhammad) and essentially gives him divine status, above; see also “The gospel as a story” n.d.
### ADAM

God makes provision to cover our sin and shame

We must accept God’s provision

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**


- **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

We must accept God’s provision

God provides the sacrifice

In the depths for three days, then back to life

Jesus is the Word and Lamb of God

Q. 10:94-98; 37:139-48; Matt 12:38-42


- **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

God provides the sacrifice

We must apply the blood of the sacrificial lamb

In the depths for three days, then back to life

Jesus is the Word and Lamb of God

**Q. 3:83-113 (esp. 107); Gen 15:1-6, 8-10, 17-18; Rom 4:1-22; Gal 3:8-9**

**Q. 10:94-98; 37:139-48; Matt 12:38-42**


- **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

We must apply the blood of the sacrificial lamb

God provides the sacrifice

God’s chosen sacrifice

Q. 7:103-37; Exod 4:21-23; 12:1-14; 21-30, 38

**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**


- **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

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

Q. 10:94-98; 37:139-48; Matt 12:38-42


- **David**: In the Psalms David describes that the great sacrifice will be from his family and will undergo terrible suffering. Other prophesies say that this suffering will be done as a mercy on behalf of other people.

### JONAH

In the depths for three days, then back to life

Jesus is the Word and Lamb of God

God’s chosen sacrifice

Q. 10:94-98; 37:139-48; Matt 12:38-42


- **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 (YAHYA)

Isaiah

Isaiah

Jesus

Isaiah

Isaiah

Q. 10:94-98; 37:139-48; Matt 12:38-42


- **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 heaven now (see section 2.VIII. The Qur’an itself places Jesus higher than anyone else (including Muhammad) and essentially gives him divine status, above).

### 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 God 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?
3. Jesus—qurban

(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. 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:

(a) 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.

(b) The act of qurban is a picture of one who is innocent taking the punishment of one who is guilty.

(c) The act of qurban is a symbol of the punishment which we deserve for our sins.

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 (see sections 2.IV. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: The Crucifixion and 3.II.D. Salvation according to Christianity: what Christ accomplished on the cross, above).

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; section 2.V. Responses to the Islamic View of Jesus: The Resurrection, above).

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

(a) 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).

(b) 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 Abraham to show his love for God by sacrificing his precious son. In the same way, to show His love for us, God 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).

(c) 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).

(d) Fourth, if you believe in Jesus as your Savior and the true Lord of your life—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

The Fruitful Practices Research team has studied church planters across the Muslim world. Sixty-eight “Fruitful Practices” were described in a 2009 article (Allen, et al. 2009: 111-22). In 2010-12 the team did a second round of research focusing on sub-Saharan Africa and African church planters. This research caused the team to revise one of their Fruitful Practice statements from “Fruitful workers use the Qur’an as a bridge to sharing the biblical gospel” to “Fruitful workers use Islamic terms and thought patterns as a bridge to sharing the biblical gospel” (Daniels 2015: 39; see also Adams, Allen, and Fish 2009: 77, figure 4). While many evangelists and church planters use the Qur’an as a bridge to the gospel, the Fruitful Practices team concluded that “it is familiarity with terms and behaviors” and “the emotional power of familiarity with Islamic culture, rather than the content of the Qur’an itself, which function as a bridge to the gospel” (Ibid.; see also Adams, Allen, and Fish 2009: 77, 79). Some of those 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 (see section 2.II.C. According to Islam, Jesus was not crucified or resurrected, above). *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. *John 4* (the woman at the well) is an example of a person who had no *baraka* but who was transformed by her encounter with Jesus. 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). Because using blessing as a bridge to the gospel is based on identifying and addressing the core hopes, fears, and concerns of the culture, it “has the potential to touch every area of people’s lives” (Ibid.: 51).

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) Sidebotham then asks a highly important question, “In cultures where defilement looms larger than depravity, are our gospel presentations relevant?” (Ibid.)

   There is a biblical emphasis on defilement and shame which tends to be downplayed by Western Christians but is of tremendous significance in non-Western (including Muslim) cultures. Adam and Eve felt shame before they felt guilt, and that required the ritual covering of their nakedness first by their inadequate attempt to sew fig leaves together and then by God’s providing animal skins for them. The OT is full of ceremonial cleansing rituals, but 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 ablation 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; see also section 2.VIII. The Qur’an itself places Jesus higher than anyone else (including Muhammad) and essentially gives him divine status, above).

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). Thus, it is the Hadith that provides the answers to all of life’s questions.

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, “To Muslims, the hadith are familiar stories that play explanatory and practical roles in their daily lives. Making use of these, we have a bridge that makes spiritual conversations relevant and accessible. . . . 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

Muslims may raise various objections or questions. Probably the four most common objections 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.) A somewhat longer response would be to point out:

- **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). Consequently, Muslims are required as a cardinal element of Islam to believe in the Bible (Q. 2:285; see also Q. 2:136). Q. 10:94 commands Muhammad, “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: the Truth hath indeed come to thee from thy Lord: so be in no wise of those in doubt.” Q. 4:136 similarly 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. 2:4; 3:3-4, 119; 5:59; 29:46).

- The Bible is called Allah’s Book which cannot be changed. Q. 5:43-47 calls the Bible “Allah’s Book” and His “guidance” (see also Q. 2:75; 11:17; 17:2; 21:48 28:43; 32:23-24; 40:53-54; 46:12). Q. 6:34 says, “There is none that can alter the words (and decrees) of Allah” (see also Q. 6:115; 10:64; 15:9; 18:27).
- The Qur’an claims to confirm and guard the integrity of the Bible. Q. 5:48 states, “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.” 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). If the Bible is not trustworthy or has been corrupted, then the Qur’an itself is untrustworthy or is lying when it claims to confirm and guard the Bible.
- No plausible persons, motives, abilities, or opportunities to corrupt the Bible have ever existed or have ever been claimed. If no Muslim would ever dream of changing God’s word, why would any Christian dream of changing God’s word? “It is useful to challenge the Muslim to produce historical evidences to substantiate their argument that the Bible as we know it 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)

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.) A somewhat longer response would be to point out:

- Q. 4:157 does not say that Isa did not die. “It only says that the Jews did not kill Him. The Injil agrees! The Jews did not crucify Jesus. They did not have the authority to crucify Him. They were under Roman occupation and Roman authority. . . . They had to turn Jesus over to the Romans and hope that the Romans would crucify Jesus for them. And the Romans, not the Jews, did crucify Him.” (Greeson 2007: 141)


Similarly, regarding, Q. 5:117, Asad points out that Allah’s question to Jesus in Q. 5:116 (“O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah?”) must have taken place “‘after Jesus’ death”: this is fully evident from Jesus’ subsequent reference, in the past tense, to his own death (‘since Thou hast caused me to die’) in verse 117” (Asad 1980: Q. 5:116n.139). Q. 19:33 has the infant Jesus saying, “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)!” The statement at the end of Q. 19:33 “that I shall be raised up to life (again)” makes no sense unless he first had died.

- Remind your Muslim friend of Q. 10:94 where Muhammad was told to consult those who read the prior Scripture (i.e., the Bible) if there are any doubts or questions. The Bible makes perfectly clear that Jesus

189 “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)
did, in fact, die on the cross. That fact is confirmed by non-Christian historical sources, both Jewish and Roman (see section 2.IV.G. Confirmation by hostile and non-Christian sources, above).

- A Muslim may argue, “How could God let his son die? If you saw a group of thugs about to kill your own son, wouldn’t you rescue him? Don’t you love your son? If you would do that for your own son, that is precisely what a good heavenly Father would do for His son.” You can point out, “God spared the son of Abraham but he did not spare his own Son. God showed, in commanding Abraham to give the best proof of his love for God by sacrificing his son, just what he was going to do by giving the greatest manifestation of his love for us. Christians know that in the cross God has done the very best he could for us. Does Islam have anything to compare with this? Has Allah ever matched Abraham’s supreme example of sacrificial love?” (Gilchrist 2002: 15-16)

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.) A somewhat longer response would be to point out:

- The Muslim idea that Jesus as the “Son of God” means that Allah had sexual intercourse with Mary fundamentally mistaken. No Christian believes or ever has believed that God had sex with Mary. The Bible does not teach that. In the biblical account, Gabriel explained to Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35; see also Matt 1:18-23). Note that it is Gabriel (whom Muslims consider to be reliable) who explained that Jesus’ being called the “Son of God” relates to his divine and supernatural conception—which itself is a part of Islamic belief. The biblical account is akin to the Qur’anic account which says, “And Mary the daughter of ‘Imran, who guarded her chastity; and We breathed into (her body) of Our spirit” (Q. 66:12; see also Q. 21:91 and notes 73, 75 and accompanying text where this is discussed at length).
- “Sonship” refers to the uniqueness of Jesus, his deity, and the intimacy of his relationship with the Father. You can point out the many ways in which Jesus is unique and essentially given divine status even in the Qur’an (even though the Qur’an asserts that Jesus was only a human being), because unlike anyone else who has ever lived: (1) Jesus had a miraculous conception from God; (2) Jesus is the “Word” of Allah; (3) Jesus is the “Spirit” from Allah; (4) Jesus is the “Messiah”; (5) Jesus was pure, holy, and without sin or error his entire life; (6) Jesus was protected from the influence of Satan; (7) Jesus has the special blessing of Allah in this world and the next; (8) Jesus is a “Sign” for all people; (9) Jesus performed miracles, including creating life and having power over death; (10) Jesus has supernatural knowledge, including knowing the secrets of our heart; (11) Jesus taught with divine authority, including changing Allah’s law; (12) Jesus was raised to heaven where he is alive today; and (13) Jesus is coming again to judge and to rule (see above, section 2.VIII. The Qur’an itself places Jesus higher than anyone else (including Muhammad) and essentially gives him divine status where these points are discussed at length).

- Greeeson suggests posing this question: “The first day a Muslim boy goes to school what two questions is he asked? The answer is: ‘What is your name and what is your father’s name?’ Now ask, ‘If Isa when to school the first day, how would He answer these two questions?’ He would surely answer the first question by saying, ‘My name is Isa.’ But how would he answer the second question? Of course, the only answer He can give is that God is His Father.” (Greeeson 2007: 143)

- The Muslim disbelief in the divinity of Jesus is based on the fundamental error that Christians are trying to turn a mere man into a god. Christians do not believe that a man became God but believe that God has the ability to become a man. It may be helpful to remind the Muslim that Islamic teaching suggests reasons why the Christian doctrine that God became a man is plausible:

1. Islam teaches that angels and spirits can become incarnate (see Q.19:17). Since that is true, and God is infinitely more powerful than angels or spirits, God could also become a man if he chose to (see Q. 39:4).


3. Q. 20:9-14; 27:7-9 relate the story of Moses and the fire, “But when he came to the fire, a voice was heard: ‘O Moses! . . . Verily, I am Allah’” (Q. 20:11, 14). Ali comments that “it was not an ordinary fire. It was a Burning Bush; a Sign of the Glory of Allah.” (Ali 2006: Q. 20:10n.2541) Daniel Shayesteh observes, “The Almighty God became a fire (a substance) and it did not seem blasphemous to the Qur’an. . . . Does
the kind of substance God chooses to dwell in make a difference for the Qur’an? If it does not, then why does it blame Christians for claiming that God became a man?” (Shayesteh 2004: 140)

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.) A somewhat longer response would be to point out:

- **No Christians believe or ever have believed in three gods.** The Bible repeatedly and uniformly teaches 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 (one God but three Persons in the Godhead) 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.** Because he is Trinity, God is self-sufficient in a way that the Islamic conception of Allah is not. Because God is Trinity, he did not need to create anything (see Acts 17:24-26). The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all in perfect, loving relationship from all eternity. However, because Allah is a simplistic unity (not the complex unity of the Trinity), that necessarily means that Allah is an insufficient being who is dependent upon creation. In other words, if the Trinity is not true, then Allah would have needed to create people and the world in order to communicate or express love. The true biblical God did not need to create anything because “the Persons of the Trinity communicated with each other and loved each other before the creation of the world” (Schaeffer 1982: 289).

- **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: “Why must their elementary school problem be stated as 1+1+1 rather than 1x1x1? . . . Furthermore, why should the numerical figure one (1) be the expression in mathematics that represents God? If any 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) Several trinitarian analogies are given in section 4.IV. The Trinity. You might use one or more of these to at least demonstrate the plausibility of the idea of the Trinity.

- **Remember:** “The issue between Christians and Muslims is not so much one of [God’s] identity but rather what we most urgently need to secure, namely to be forgiven by him, to receive his Spirit, to personally know him, to become his children and eventually inherit his kingdom. [Therefore,] it is better to use this subject as an opportunity for witness rather than one to be argued or proved.” (Gilchrist 2002: 74-78)

5. What do you say about Muhammad? Muhammad’s life was discussed at length in section 2.IX. The Character of Muhammad. However, 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 Jesus 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: that God is perfectly holy and he cannot be in the presence of sin, which means that none of us is qualified to enter heaven because we are sinners, and the problem is not just what we do but what
we are inside—there is something wrong with our heart, indeed, even the good things we do come from mixed motives. We can’t earn our way to heaven by obeying God’s law or doing good deeds because none of us can change our heart, none of us obeys perfectly all the time. But God saw what we are like, so he decided to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. That is why he became a man in the person of Jesus Christ. Only Jesus never sinned; only Jesus perfectly obeyed God all the time. That qualified him to “step into our shoes” and act as our representative. On the cross he paid the price for our sin—all the punishment in hell that we deserve was laid on him so that, for those who repent and receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, all the good that he deserves is imputed to us. Thus, salvation is not about what we do for God but is about what he has done for us; we are saved only by God’s grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9). As a result we are given new life. We have assurance of our salvation because Jesus rose from the dead and ascended back to the Father, which validates who Jesus is and everything he said.

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). New Muslim believers are encouraged “to retain their socio-religious identity to an extent that allows them to remain within their social networks as witnessing followers of Jesus Christ” (Gray, et al. 2010: 94; see also Naja 2013b: 156 “The followers of Jesus in these two movements are insiders on a cultural level, but outsiders on a theological and religious level. . . . Some 80% of these disciples identify themselves as Muslims in a qualified sense, namely, Muslims who follow Isa al-Masih.”); Tennant 2013: 28 [Tennant estimates that in Islamic cultures there are 200,000 or more Muslims who worship Jesus, but “do not belong to any visible, formal church, and do not call themselves Christians, because of the strong cultural association surrounding the term” but meet in small fellowships in homes]; see also Travis 2000: 53-59).

Remaining culturally “Muslim” while having a new allegiance to Jesus Christ “appear[s] more conducive to the development of movements. Interviews with participants revealed that a significant factor in these results was that contextualization allowed the followers of Jesus to retain more of their culture and social identity. This in turn allowed them to remain in their social networks as confessing followers of Jesus, enabling their faith communities to witness, grow and multiply along pre-existing lines of their social networks.” (Brown, et al. 2009: 22-23; see also Adams 2013: 24; Chandler 2008: 11-14; Gray, et al. 2010: 89-95; Dutch 2000: 15-24).

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. When we recognize that Christ

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190 Different levels of contextualization and types of “Christ-centered Communities” were first characterized as the “C1 to C6 Spectrum” by John Travis in 1998 (Travis 1998: 407-08). Muslims who have come to Christ but meet in small home fellowships, remain culturally “Muslim,” and refer to themselves as “Muslims who follow Isa the Messiah” are known as C5 believers (Ibid.: 408). Movements of C5 believers are known as “insider movements.” C5 believers and insider movements have generated much discussion and debate (see Travis and Travis 2005: 397-414; Qureshi 2016: 287-88 [Qureshi, a former Muslim, believes Muslims who come to faith in Christ should tell their families, hide nothing, and clearly proclaim the deity of Christ]). On at least four occasions since 2000, entire editions of International Journal of Frontier Missions have been dedicated to C5 believers and insider movements (see Massey, ed. 2000; Winter, ed. 2007a; Winter, ed. 2007b; Gill, ed. 2015).
“purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev 5:9; see also Rev 7:9) and in Christ “there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all” (Col 3:11; see also Gal 3:28), 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 SURAHS
Note: This table is taken from http://tanzil.net/wiki/Revelation_Order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surah Number</th>
<th>Surah Name</th>
<th>Chronological order received by Muhammad</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>Al-Alaq (The Blood-clot)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Meccan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Al-Qalam (The Pen)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Meccan</td>
<td>Except 17-33 and 48-50, from Medina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>Al-Muzzammil (The Enfolded One)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meccan</td>
<td>Except 10, 11 and 20, from Medina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Al-Muddaththir (The One Wrapped Up)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Meccan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Al-Fatiha (The Opening Chapter)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Meccan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>Al-Lahab (The Flame)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Meccan</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>At-Takwir (The Folding Up)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Meccan</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Al-‘A’la (The Most High)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Meccan</td>
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<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>Al-Layl (The Night)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Meccan</td>
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<td>89</td>
<td>Al-Fajr (The Dawn)</td>
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<td>Ad-Dhuha (The Glorious Morning Light)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Al-Sharh (The Expansion of the Breast)</td>
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<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Al-Asr (Time Through the Ages)</td>
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<td>Meccan</td>
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<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Al-Adiyat (Those That Run)</td>
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<td>Meccan</td>
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<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>Al-Kawthar (The Abundance)</td>
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<td>Meccan</td>
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<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>At-Takathur (The Piling Up)</td>
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<td>107</td>
<td>Al-Ma’un (The Neighborly Assistance)</td>
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<td>Only 1-3 from Mecca; the rest from Medina</td>
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<td>Al-Fil (The Elephant)</td>
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<td>Al-Falaq (The Daybreak)</td>
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<td>Al-Ikhlas (The Purity of Faith)</td>
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<td>An-Najm (The Star)</td>
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<td>Abasa (He Frowned)</td>
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<td>Al-Qadr (The Night of Power or Honor)</td>
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<td>Al-Shams (The Sun)</td>
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<td>85</td>
<td>Al-Buruj (The Constellation)</td>
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<td>Al-Tin (The Fig)</td>
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<td>Quraysh (The tribe of Quraysh)</td>
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<td>Al-Qari’a (The Great Calamity)</td>
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<td>Al-Qiyamah (The Resurrection)</td>
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<td>Al-Humazah (The Scandalmonger)</td>
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<td>Al-Mursalat (Those Sent Forth)</td>
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<td>Except 48, from Medina</td>
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<td>Qaf</td>
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<td>Except 38, from Medina</td>
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<td>Al-Balad (The City)</td>
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<td>Al-Tariq (The Night Star)</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>Al-Qamar (The Moon)</td>
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<td>Except 44-46, from Medina</td>
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<td>Sad</td>
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<td>Maryam (Mary)</td>
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<td>Ta Ha</td>
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<td>Al-Furqan (The Criterion)</td>
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<td>Except 68-70, from Medina</td>
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<td>Fatir (The Originator or Creation)</td>
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<td>Al-In’am (The Cattle)</td>
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<td>Al-Mulk (The Dominion)</td>
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<td>Al-Anfal (The Spoils of War)</td>
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<td>Al-Inshiqaq (The Rending Asunder)</td>
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<td>87</td>
<td>Al-Naba (The Great News)</td>
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<td>Al-Ghashiyah (The Overwhelming Event)</td>
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<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Al-Mumtahinah (That Which)</td>
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<td>Medinan</td>
<td>Except 281 from Mina at the time of the Last Hajj</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number</td>
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<td>Al-Nisa (The Women)</td>
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<td>99</td>
<td>Al-Zalzalah (The Earthquake)</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>Al-Hadid (Iron)</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>Muhammad</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>Medinan</td>
<td>Except 13, revealed during the Prophet's Hijrah</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Al-Ra’u’d (The Thunder)</td>
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<td>Medinan</td>
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<td>Al-Rahman (The Most Gracious)</td>
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<td>Al-Insan (Man)</td>
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<td>Medinan</td>
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<td>65</td>
<td>At-Talaq (Divorce)</td>
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<td>Al-Bayyinah (The Clear Evidence)</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>Al-Hashr (The Mustering)</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Al-Nur (The Light)</td>
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<td>Medinan</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage)</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>Medinan</td>
<td>Except 52-55, revealed between Mecca and Medina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Al-Munafiqun (The Hypocrites)</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>Medinan</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Al-Mujadilah (The Woman who Pleads)</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>Medinan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Al-Hujurat (The Chambers)</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>Medinan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>At-Tahir (Prohibition)</td>
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<td>Medinan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Al-Taghabun (The Mutual Loss and Gain)</td>
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<td>Medinan</td>
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<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Al-Saff (The Battle Array)</td>
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<td>Medinan</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Al-Jumu’ah (Friday)</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>Medinan</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Al-Fath (The Victory)</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>Medinan</td>
<td>Revealed while returning from Hudaybiyya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Al-Ma’ida (The Repast)</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>Medinan</td>
<td>Except 3, revealed at Arafat on Last Hajj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Al-Tawbah (The Repentance)</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>Medinan</td>
<td>Except last two verses from Mecca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>Al-Nasr (The Help)</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>Medinan</td>
<td>Revealed at Mina on Last Hajj, but regarded as Medinan surah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX B—A SAMPLE OF WHAT MUHAMMAD AND ISLAM REQUIRE AND FORBID MUSLIMS TO DO AND BELIEVE

**URINATION & DEFECATION**

- “Your Apostle teaches you about everything, even about excrement. He replied: Yes, he has forbidden us to face the Qibla at the time of excretion or urination, or cleansing with right hand or with less than three pebbles, or with dung or bone.” (Muslim: 262a)
- “Do not face towards the Qibla nor turn your backs toward it when defecating or urinating, rather face toward the east or the west.” (an-Nasa’i: vol. 1, book 1, no. 21; see also Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 320)
- “The Messenger of Allah saw me urinating while standing, and he said: ‘O ‘Umar, do not urine standing up.’ So I never urinated whilst standing after that.” (Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 308)

**BODILY MEMBERS & PARTS**

- “Let one of you eat with his right hand and drink with his right hand, and take with his right hand and give with his right hand, for Satan eats with his left hand, drinks with his left hand, gives with his left hand and takes with his left hand.” (Ibn Majah: vol. 4, book 29, no. 3266; see also Muslim: 2020a; at-Tirmidhi: 1800; Abi Dawud: 3776)
- “Clapping by women means that one should strike her left hand with the two fingers of her right hand.” (Abi Dawud: 942)
- “The people were ordered to place the right hand on the left forearm in the prayer. Abu Hazim said, ‘I knew that the order was from the Prophet.’” (al-Bukhari: 740)
- “Ibn Abbas reported Allah’s Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: ‘when any one of you eats food he should not wipe his hand until he has licked it himself or has given it to someone else to lick.’” (Muslim: 2031a, b, 2033b; see also Al-Bukhari: 5456; Abi Dawud 3847; Ibn Majah: vol. 4, book 29, no. 3269)
- “The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) forbade (us) to breathe into the venel [the vessel from which you are drinking], to touch the penis with the right hand and to wipe after relieving with right hand.” (Muslim: 267c; see also 267a; al-Bukhari: 5630; an-Nasa’i: vol. 1, book 1, no. 47)
- “Abdullah bin Mughaffal Al-Muzani who was one of those who witnessed (the event of) the tree, said, ‘The Prophet forbade the throwing of small stones (with two fingers).’” (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 365)
- “Jalbir b. Abdullah reported Allah’s Messenger as saying: ‘None of you should lie on his back and place one of his feet upon the other.’” (Muslim 2099e; see also Abi Dawud 4865)
HEALTH PRACTICES

- “Allah’s Messenger said, ‘The Jews and the Christians do not dye (their grey hair), so you shall do the opposite of what they do (i.e. dye your grey hair and beards).’” (al-Bukhari: 3462)
- “[The Messenger of Allah] fixed the time for us paring the mustache, trimming the fingernails, shaving the pubic hairs and plucking the underarm hairs - that we not leave it for more than forty days.” (at-Tirmidhi: vol. 5, book 41, no. 2759)

EATING & DRINKING

- “The Prophet said ‘If a house fly falls in the drink of anyone of you, he should dip it (in the drink) and take it out, for one of its wings has a disease and the other has the cure for the disease.’” (al-Bukhari: 3320; see also al-Asqalani n.d.: 14)
- “(The Prophet said), ‘Healing is in three things: A gulp of honey, cupping, and branding with fire (cauterizing). But I forbid my followers to use (cauterization) branding with fire.’” (al-Bukhari: 5680; see also 5681, 5683)
- “When someone hears a sneeze and says, ‘Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds,’ in every situation, he will never get a toothache or earache.” (al-Bukhari, Al-Adab: book 40, no. 926)
- “The climate of Medina did not suit some people, so the Prophet ordered them to follow his shepherd, i.e. his camels, and drink their milk and urine (as a medicine).” (al-Bukhari: 5686; see also 4192)
- “Narrated Abu Huraira: I heard Allah’s Messenger saying, ‘There is healing in black cumin for all diseases except death.’” (al-Bukhari: 5688; see also 5687)
- “Narrated Um Oais bint Mihsan: I heard the Prophet saying, ‘Treat with the Indian incense, for it has healing for seven diseases; it is to be sniffed by one having throat trouble, and to be put into one side of the mouth of one suffering from pleurisy.’” (al-Bukhari: 5692, 5693)
- “Narrated Anas: . . . The Prophet said, ‘The best medicines you may treat yourselves with are cupping and sea incense.’ He added, ‘You should not torture your children by treating tonsillitis by pressing the tonsils or the palate with the finger, but use incense.’” (al-Bukhari: 5696)
- “Narrated Ka’b bin Ujrah: The Prophet came to me during the period of Al-Hudaibiya, while I was lighting fire underneath a cooking pot and lice were falling down my head. He said, ‘Do your lice hurt you?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘Shave your head and fast for three days or feed six poor persons or slaughter a sheep as a sacrifice.’” (al-Bukhari: 5703)

WOMEN

- “The Prophet [SAW] said: ‘Raisins and dried dates are Khamr [equivalent to an intoxicant].’” (an-Nasa’i: 5546)
- “The Messenger of Allah forbade a man from eating while lying down on his face.” (Ibn Majah: vol. 4, book 29, no. 3370)
- “The Messenger of Allah forbade me from drinking while standing and from urinating while facing the Qiblah.” (Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 321; see also Abi Dawud: 3717)
- “That the Messenger of Allah said: ‘Whoever drinks wine, then lash him. If he returns to it, then on the fourth time kill him.’” (at-Tirmidhi: 1444)
- “Narrated Adi bin Hatim: I asked the Prophet (about the hunting dogs) and he replied, ‘If you let loose (with Allah’s name) your tamed dog after a game and it hunts it, you may eat it, but if the dog eats of (that game) then do not eat it because the dog has hunted it for itself.’ I further said, ‘Sometimes I send my dog for hunting and find another dog with it.’ He said, ‘Do not eat the game for you have mentioned Allah’s name only on sending your dog and not the other do.’” (al-Bukhari: 175)

- “The Prophet said, ‘After me I have not left any trial more severe to men than women.’” (al-Bukhari: 5096)
- “Once Allah’s Messenger went out to the Musalla (to offer the prayer) of ‘Id-al-Adha or Al-Fitr prayer. Then he passed by the women and said, ‘O women! Give alms, as I have seen that the majority of the dwellers of Hell-fire were you (women).’ They asked, ‘Why is it so, O Allah’s Messenger?’ He replied, ‘You curse frequently and are ungrateful to your husbands. I have not seen anyone more deficient in intelligence and religion than you. A cautious sensible man could be led astray by some of you.’ The women asked, ‘O Allah’s Messenger! What is deficient in our intelligence and religion?’ He said, ‘Is not the evidence of two women equal to the witness of one man?’ They replied in the affirmative. He said, ‘This is the deficiency in her intelligence. Isn’t it true that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menses?’ The women replied in the affirmative. He said, ‘This is the deficiency in her religion.’” (al-Bukhari: 304; see also 1462, 5196)
- “Narrated Aisha: The things which annul prayer were mentioned before me (and those were): a dog, a donkey and a woman. I said, ‘You have compared us (women) to donkeys and dogs.’” (al-Bukhari: 511; see also 514; Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 5, no. 949, 950, 951)
- “Narrated Abdullah bin Umar: I heard the Prophet saying, ‘Evil omen is in three things: The horse, the woman and the house.’” (al-Bukhari: 110; see also 2858, 2859, 2859, 5093, 5094; Abi Dawud: 3921)
- “Allah curses those ladies who practice tattooing and those who get themselves tattooed, and those ladies who remove the hair from their faces and those who make artificial spaces between their teeth in order to look more beautiful whereby they change Allah’s creation.” (al-Bukhari: vol. 6, book 60, no. 408; see also 5937, 5942, 5947; at-Tirmidhi: vol. 5, book 41, no. 2782)
- “Narrated Abdullah (bin Mas’ud): Allah’s Messenger has cursed the lady who uses false hair.” (al-Bukhari: vol. 2790)
Allah be pleased with him) said: ‘They are doomed and destroyed! (But) who are they, O Messenger of Allah?’ He said,

‘One whose lower garment trails, one who boasts of kindness shown to another; and one who promotes sale of his
business by taking false oaths.’” (an-Nawawi, Riyad: book 19, no. 57)

When the Prophet heard the news that the people of the Persia had made the daughter of Khosrau their Queen (ruler), he said, ‘Never will succeed such a nation as makes a woman their ruler.’” (al-Bukhari: 7099)

When the Messenger of Allah supplicated against the locusts, he said: ‘O Allah, destroy their large ones and kill their small ones, spoil their eggs and root them out. Take their mouths away from our livelihood and provision, for You are the One Who hears the prayers.’ A man said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, are you praying against one of the troops of Allah, that they may be rooted out?’ He said: ‘Locusts were sneezed out by the fish in the sea.’” (Ibn Majah: vol. 4, book 28, no. 3221)

Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) reported that Allah’s Messenger said: ‘When a woman spends the night away from the bed of her husband, the angels curse her until morning.” (Muslim: 1436a)

The Prophet said, ‘A woman is married for four things, i.e., her wealth, her family status, her beauty and her
religion. So you should marry the religious woman (otherwise) you will be a losers.’” (al-Bukhari: 5090)

When the Prophet called the Salamander, a mischief-doer, I have not heard him ordering that it should be killed. Sa’d bin Waqqas claims that the Prophet ordered that it should be killed.” (al-Bukhari: 3306)

Ibn Umar used to kill snakes but when Abu Lubaba informed him that the Prophet had forbidden the killing of
snakes living in houses, he gave up killing them” (al-Bukhari: 3312, 3313)

It was narrated from Jabir and Anas bin Malik that whenever the Messenger of Allah supplicated against the
locusts, he said: ‘O Allah, destroy their large ones and kill their small ones, spoil their eggs and root them out. Take their mouths away from our livelihood and provision, for You are the One Who hears the prayers.’ A man said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, are you praying against one of the troops of Allah, that they may be rooted out?’ He said: ‘Locusts were sneezed out by the fish in the sea.’” (Ibn Majah: vol. 4, book 28, no. 3221)

Allah’s Messenger said, ‘If a dog drinks from the utensil of anyone of you it is essential to wash it seven times.’” (al-Bukhari: 172)

Allah’s Messenger said: ‘When a man performs Salat, and there is nothing in front of him like the post of a
saddle, or a camel saddle, then his Salat is severed by (passing of) a black dog, a woman, and a donkey.’ It was said to Abu Dharr: ‘What is the problem with the black dog rather than the red or white one?’ He said: ‘O my nephew! I asked Allah’s Messenger just as you have asked me. He said: ‘The black dog is a Shaitan (devil).’” (at-Tirmidhi: 338; see also Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 5, no. 952; Abi Dawud: 702; an-Nasa’i: 750)

Allah’s Messenger ordered that the dogs should be killed.” (al-Bukhari: 3323)

Allah’s Messenger said, ‘If somebody keeps a dog, he loses one Qirat (of the reward) of his good deeds everyday, except if he keeps it for the purpose of agriculture or for the protection of livestock.’” (al-Bukhari: 3324; see also 3325)

If one of the members of his family died, Hudhaifa would say: ‘Do not inform anyone of it, for I am afraid that
that would be a public death announcement. I heard the Messenger of Allah with these two ears of mine forbidding
making public death announcements.”’ (Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 6, no. 1476)

The Messenger of Allah said: ‘Most of the torment of the grave is because of urine.”’ (Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 348)

The dead is punished in the grave because of wailing on it.” (Muslim: 927b; see also al-Asqalani n.d.: 589)

A believer’s soul remains suspended according to his debt until it is settled or paid off on his behalf.” (al-
Asqalani n.d.: 541; see also Ibn Majah: vol. 3, book 15, no. 2413)

A man said to the Prophet (p.b.u.h), ‘My mother died suddenly and I thought that if she had lived she would have
given alms. So, if I give alms now on her behalf, will she get the reward?’ The Prophet replied in the affirmative.” (al-
Bukhari: 1388)

‘There are three to whom Allah will neither speak on the Day of Resurrection nor will look at them nor purify
them (i.e., of their sins), and they will be severely tormented.’ When he repeated this (statement) thrice, Abu Dharr (May Allah be pleased with him) said: ‘They are doomed and destroyed! (But) who are they, O Messenger of Allah?’ He said, ‘One whose lower garment trails, one who boasts of kindness shown to another; and one who promotes sale of his business by taking false oaths.’” (an-Nawawi, Riyad: book 4, no. 16)

I was sitting behind the Messenger of Allah who was riding a donkey while the sun was setting. He asked: Do
you know where these sets? I replied: Allah and his Apostle know best. He said: It sets in a spring of warm water
(Hamiyah).” (Abi Dawud: 4002; see also Q. 18:83-86)
A believer eats in one intestine, whereas a non-believer eats in seven intestines.” (Muslim: 2061a; see also 2062a; Ibn Majah: vol. 4, book 29, no. 3256, 3257, 3258)

“The Messenger of Allah said: ‘If it is very hot, wait until it cools down before you pray, for intense heat is a breeze from Hell.’” (an-Nasa’i: vol. 1, book 6, no. 501; see also no. 502)

“When a man has intercourse with his wife through the vagina but being on her back the child will have squint, so the verse came down: ‘Your wives are your tilth; go then unto your tilth as you may desire’ (ii. 223).” (Muslim: 1435a)

“Narrated Anas: When the news of the arrival of the Prophet at Medina reached Abdullah bin Salam, he went to him to ask him about certain things. . . . Why does a child attract the similarity to his father or to his mother?” . . . The Prophet replied, ‘Gabriel has just now informed me of that. . . . As for the child, if the man’s discharge proceeds the woman’s discharge, the child attracts the similarity to the man, and if the woman’s discharge proceeds the man’s, then the child attracts the similarity to the woman.”’ (al-Bukhari: 3938)

“Ibn 'Umar reported the Messenger of Allah as saying: ‘Kill snakes, kill those which have two streaks and those with small tails, for they obliterate the eyesight and cause miscarriage.’” (Abi Dawud: 5252; see also 5253; Muslim: 2233a, b, c, h; Ibn Majah: vol. 4, book 31, no. 3535)

“The Prophet said, ‘Fever is from the heat of the (Hell) Fire, so cool it with water.’” (al-Bukhari: 3263; see also 3261, 3262, 3264)

“Allah’s Messenger, the true and truly inspired said, ‘The matter of the Creation of a human being is put together in the womb of the mother in forty days, and then he becomes a clot of thick blood for a similar period, and then a piece of flesh for a similar period.’” (al-Bukhari: 3208; see also 6594, 7454; Muslim: 2643a; Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 76).

Even Muslim physician and apologist Dr. Maurice Bucaille admits, “This description of embryonic evolution does not agree with modern data” (Bucaille 1976: 174).

PRAYER & OTHER RELIGIOUS RITUALS

“The Messenger of Allah forbade a man to perform prayer when he was suppressing (the urge to urinate or defecate).” (Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 617)

“It was narrated from Ibn ‘Umar that the Messenger of Allah forbade praying when the sun is rising or setting.” (an-Nasa’i: vol. 1, book 6, no. 565; see also no. 564, 566, 567)

“People should avoid lifting their eyes towards the sky while supplicating in prayer, otherwise their eyes would be snatched away.” (Muslim: 429; see also al-Nawawi, Riyad: book 18, no. 244)

“Allah’s Messenger said, ‘The angels keep on asking Allah’s forgiveness for anyone of you, as long as he is at his Musalla (praying place) and he does not pass wind (Hadath).’ They say, ‘O Allah! Forgive him, O Allah! be Merciful to him.’” (al-Bukhari: 445)

“Allah’s Messenger said, ‘The prayer of a person who does Hadath (passes urine, stool or wind) is not accepted till he performs the ablution.’ A person from Hadramout asked Abu Huraira, ‘What is Hadath?’ Abu Huraira replied, ‘Hadath means the passing of wind.’” (al-Bukhari: 135)

“The Prophet said, ‘Whoever performs ablution should clean his nose with water by putting the water in it and then blowing it out, and whoever cleans his private parts with stones should do it with odd number of stones.’” (al-Bukhari: 161; see also 162-65)

“The Prophet said: If anyone breaks his fast one day in Ramadan without a concession granted to him by Allah, a perpetual fast will not atone for it.” (Abi Dawud: 2396; see also Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 7, no. 1672)

“The Prophet said, ‘Whoever has eaten garlic or onion, should keep away from us, or should keep away from our mosque and should stay at home.’” (al-Bukhari: 7359)

ALLAH, SATAN, ANGELS, & JINN

“The Prophet [SAW] said: ‘Those who are just and fair will be with Allah, Most High, on thrones of light, at the right hand of the Most Merciful, those who are just in their rulings and in their dealings with their families and those of whom they are in charge.’ Muhammad (one of the narrators) said in his Hadith: ‘And both of His hands are right hands.’” (an-Nasa’i: 5379)

“Abu Hurayra reported that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, ‘Allah loves the sneeze and dislikes yawning. When one you sneezes and praises Allah, it is a duty for every Muslim who hears him to say, ‘May Allah have mercy on you.’ As for the yawn, it comes from Shaytan. When one of you yawns, he should repress it as much as possible. When one of you yawns, Shaytan laughs at him.’” (al-Bukhari, Al-Adab: book 40, no. 928; see also no. 919, 950; al-Bukhari: 3289)

“The Prophet said, ‘A good dream is from Allah, and a bad or evil dream is from Satan; so if anyone of you has a bad dream of which he gets afraid, he should spit on his left side and should seek Refuge with Allah from its evil, for then it will not harm him.’” (al-Bukhari: 3292)

“A person was mentioned before the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and he was told that he had kept on sleeping till morning and had not got up for the prayer. The said, ‘Satan urinated in his ears.’” (al-Bukhari: 1144)

“The bell is the musical instrument of the Satan.” (Muslim: 2114; see also al-Nawawi, Riyad: book 18, no. 181)

“When any one of you goes to sleep, the devil ties three knots at the back of his neck, sealing every knot with: ‘You have a long night, so sleep.’ So if one awakes and mentions Allah, a knot will be loosened; if he performs ablution two knots are loosened; and if he prays (all) knots will be loosened, and in the morning he will be active and in good
spirits; otherwise we will be in bad spirits and sluggish in the morning.’” (Muslim: 776)
• “The Prophet said, ‘If anyone of you rouses from sleep and performs the ablution, he should wash his nose by putting water in it and then blowing it out thrice, because Satan has stayed in the upper part of his nose all the night.’” (al-Bukhari: 3295)
• “Cover your vessels, tie your water skins, extinguish your lamps and lock your doors, for Satan does not untie a water skin, open a door or uncover a vessel. If a person cannot find anything but a stick with which to cover his vessel and mention the Name of Allah, then let him do so. And the mouse could set fire to the house with its people inside.” (Ibn Majah: vol. 4, book 30, no. 3410; an-Nawawi, Riyad: book 18, no 144)
• “Abu Sa’id reported that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, ‘When one of you yawns, he should put his hand over his mouth. Otherwise Shaytan might enter it.”’ (al-Bukhari, Al-Adab: book 40, no. 949)
• “Jabir bin ‘Abd Allah reported the Apostle of Allâahas saying ‘Do not send out your beasts when the sun has set till the darkness of the night prevailsthe devils grope about in the dark when the sun has set till the darkness of the night prevailsthe devils grope about in the dark when the sun has set till the darkness of the night prevails.”’ (Abi Dawud: 2604)
• “Angels do not accompany the travellers who have with them a dog and a bell.” (Muslim: 2113a; see also at-Tirmidhi: 1703; an-Nawawi, Riyad: book 18, no. 180)
• “The Prophet said, ‘When you hear the crowing of cock, ask for Allah’s Blessings for (their crowing indicates that) they have seen an angel. And when you hear the braying of donkeys, seek Refuge with Allah from Satan for (their braying indicates that) they have seen a Satan.”’ (al-Bukhari: 3303)
• Narrated Aisha: “I purchased a cushion with pictures on it. The Prophet (came and) stood at the door but did not enter. I said (to him), ‘I repent to Allah for what (the guilt) I have done.’ He said, ‘What is this cushion?’ I said, ‘It is for you to sit on and recline on.’ He said, ‘The makers of these pictures will be punished on the Day of Resurrection and it will be said to them, ‘Make alive what you have created.’ Moreover, the angels do not enter a house where there are pictures.’” (al-Bukhari: 5957; see also 5958-63, 3322 [“Angels do not enter a house that has either a dog or a picture in it”])
• “The Prophet prohibited to urinate in a hole. Qatadah (a narrator) was asked about the reason for the disapproval of urinating in a hole. He replied: It is said that these (holes) are the habitats of the jinn.” (Abi Dawud: 29; an-Nasa’i: vol. 1, book 1, no. 34)

MATTERS PERTAINING TO MUHAMMAD

• “The Prophet said, ‘Name yourselves after me, but do not call yourselves by my Kuniya’ [that portion of a name expressed by the use of abû, i.e., ‘father of’].’” (al-Bukhari: 3538; see also at-Tirmidhi: vol. 5, book 41, no. 2842)
• “Allah’s Messenger said, ‘… If a man believes in Jesus and then believes in me, he will get a double reward. . .’” (al-Bukhari: 3446)
• “None of you will have faith till he loves me more than his father, his children and all mankind.” (al-Bukhari: 15; see also an-Nasa’i: 5013, 5014, 5015; Ibn Majah: vol. 1, book 1, no. 67)

OTHER MATTERS

• “Whoever ties up his beard, or twists it, or hangs an amulet, or cleans himself (after relieving himself) with animal dung or bones, Muhammad has nothing to do with him.” (an-Nasa’i: 5067)
• “The people who will receive the severest punishment from Allah will be the picture makers.” (al-Bukhari: 5950; see also 2086, 2238, 5181, 5347, 5957, 5961, 5962)
• “The way for a believer to wear a lower garment is to have it halfway down his legs and he is guilty of no sin if it comes halfway between that and the ankles, but what comes lower than the ankles is in Hell. On the day of Resurrection, Allah will not look at him who trails his lower garment conceitedly.” (Abi Dawud: 4093; see also Ibn Majah: vol. 4, book 32, no. 3574; al-Nawawi, Riyad: vol. 4, no. 15)
• “It was narrated that ‘Ubadah bin Samit said: ‘I taught people from Ahlus-Suffah Qur’an and how to write, and one of them gave me a bow. I said: It is not money, and I can shoot (with it) for the sake of Allah. I asked the Messenger of Allah about it and he said: If it would please you to have a necklace of fire placed around your neck, then accept it.’” (Ibn Majah: vol. 3, book 12, no. 2157)
• “Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, ‘Were it not for Bani Israel, meat would not decay; and were it not for Eve, no woman would ever betray her husband.’” (al-Bukhari: 3399)
• “The Prophet of Allah took silk and held it in his right hand, and took gold and held it in his left hand and said: both of these are prohibited to the males of my community.” (Abi Dawud: 4057; see also an-Nasa’i: 5144, 5145, 5146, 5147; Ibn Majah: vol. 4, book 32, no. 3595)
• “I asked Al-Bara bin ‘Azib and Zaid bin Arqam and they said: ‘We were merchants at the time of the Messenger of Allah and we asked the Prophet of Allah about money exchange.’ He said: ‘If it is done hand to hand there is nothing wrong with it, but if it is done on credit then it is not right.’” (an-Nasa’i: 4576)
• “The Apostle of Allah saw sputum sticking to the Qibla of the mosque. He scratched it off with a pebble and then forbade spitting on the right side or in front, but (it is permissible) to spit on the left side or under the left foot.” (Muslim: 548a; see also 550a; al-Bukhari: 416, 532; Ibn Majah: 761)
• “It is better that one of you fill his insides with puss than to fill it with poetry.” (at-Tirmidhi: vol. 5, book 41, no. 2851)
• “People among my nation will drink wine, calling it by another name, and musical instruments will be played for
them and singing girls (will sing for them). Allah will cause the earth to swallow them up, and will turn them into
monkeys and pigs.” (Ibn Majah: 4020; see also al-Bukhari: 5590)
• “A man asked the Prophet: ‘What (kinds of clothes) should a Muhrim (a Muslim intending to perform ‘Umra or
Hajj) wear?’ He replied, ‘He should not wear a shirt, a turban, trousers, a head cloak or garment scented with saffron or
Wars (kinds of perfumes). And if he has no slippers, then he can use Khuffs (socks made from thick fabric or leather) but
the socks should be cut short so as to make the ankles bare.’” (al-Bukhari: 134)
• “Allah’s Messenger said, ‘He who eats seven ‘Ajwa dates every morning, will not be affected by poison or magic
on the day he eats them.’” (al-Bukhari: 5445)
• “Narrated Anas: When the news of the arrival of the Prophet at Medina reached Abdullah bin Salam, he went to
him to ask him about certain things. . . . ‘What is the first food which the people of Paradise will eat?’ . . . The Prophet
replied, ‘Gabriel has just now informed me of that. . . . As for the first meal which the people of Paradise will eat, it will
be the caudate (extra) lobe of the fish-liver.’” (al-Bukhari: 3938)

APPENDIX C—THE NAMES OF ALLAH (Asma al-Husna)

Note: This table is taken 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. See also
http://www.islamicity.com/Mosque/99names.htm for the names and citations to the Qur’an.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name (Arabic)</th>
<th>Meaning (English)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ALLAH</td>
<td>(The Name Of God)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>AR-RAHMAN</td>
<td>(The Beneficent)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>AR-RAHIM</td>
<td>(The Merciful)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>AL-MALIK</td>
<td>(The Sovereign Lord)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>AL-QUIDDUS</td>
<td>(The Holy)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>AS-SALAM</td>
<td>(The Source Of Peace)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>AL-MU’MIN</td>
<td>(The Guardian Of Faith)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>AL-MUHAYMIN</td>
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<td>(The Mighty)</td>
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<td>AL-JABBAR</td>
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<td>(The Majestic)</td>
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