

*I support the free speech of the Danish people*

# 10 Myths About Islam

## 4th Edition

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## Introductory Comments

It has been said that knowledge is power. Certainly, we can know that ignorance (the lack of knowledge) renders one absolutely powerless. The truth of the Word of God shines out on American Christendom in the light of Hosea 4:6, “..my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...”, indicting us for our complacency and laziness in educating ourselves about the trends that present themselves in these latter days. One of these is the rise of Islam in the United States and the Western world. How much does your average professing Christian even know about the religion of Mohammed? How can church-goers know how to sort through the varying images and claims which present themselves to us about Islam? What is truth, and what is falsehood, as far as is being told to us about the Muslim religion? How can we know the lies that will invariably be told to us, and avoid them? I submit this work below as a means of enlightening us all; my fellow Americans and others, Christians or not; concerning the religion of Islam and its implications for America and the West. I have attempted to debunk many of the common myths which are taught about Islam, and to expose them in the blinding light of truth.

I apologise for variant spellings of Arabic words which may appear in this work. I have attempted to standardise my spellings, but have retained variant spellings in quotations made from other works.

### **Explanation of terms:**

*Qur’an* - The primary religious text in Islam. It is held by Muslims to be perfect, complete, and heavenly. The Qur’an forms the primary and most important source of authoritative doctrine in orthodox Islam.

*Ahadith (sing. Hadith)* - Collections of sayings, teachings, and doctrines formulated attributed to Mohammed, narrated by several of his companions, and collated by various compilers. Also considered a source of authority for doctrine, as they contain the sayings of Allah’s prophet, Mohammed. Many Muslim scholars even refer to several of what are widely held to be authentic ahadith as “second inspiration”, and place them nearly on par with the Qur’an as sources of doctrine and practice. Among this body of hadithic literature, the collections of Bukhari, Muslim, Malik, Tirmzi, Abu Dawud, Nasa’i, and Ibn Majah are the most widely viewed as authentic, and therefore canonical. However, examination of the ahadith and the sunnat (below) over the past few decades have cast serious doubt onto the absolute authenticity of these traditional records and commandments. The evidence put forth by scholarship suggests that at least a large portion even of the canonical collections listed above were probably invented, or at least embellished, during the socio-political struggles between Muslim factions which occurred in the two centuries following Mohammed’s death. Therefore, when the records of the ahadith are used to support a point made about Islamic dogma or practice, it must be implicitly understood that this work does not rely on these sources for their absolute authenticity. Rather, they are looked to because they serve as a record of what the views, beliefs, and actions of Muslim tradition were ideally meant to be in the eyes of the Muslim reciters and collectors who attempted to give their creations added legitimacy through appeal to the authority of Mohammed and/or his Companions.

*Sunnah (pl. Sunnat)* - Very similar to the ahadith, these are collections of rules which were said to be laid down by Mohammed, and which he lived his life by. The ahadith, on the other hand, are narrations about Mohammed's life which provide object examples for Muslims. The Sunnah are very important to most orthodox Muslims, and they are also considered to be a prime source of Islamic jurisprudence. Most orthodox Muslim teachers consider both the Qu'ran and the sunnah/ahadith to be indispensable in the lives of good Muslims.

*Surah (pl. Surat)* - A division of the Quranic text which most closely approximates the concept of "chapter" in Western literature. There are 114 surat in the Qur'an as it now exists. Each surah is named after a different topical heading, though this is not necessarily related to the main point of the surah.

*Ayah (pl. Ayat)* - A subdivision of the surahs, an ayah is approximate to a verse as found in the Bible. Together, references in the Qur'an are most commonly given in the form of (Surah number:ayah number)

**Deo Vindice!**

## The Qur'an

### ***Myth #1 The Qur'an is Preserved and Unchanged Revelation from Allah***

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Most people are probably familiar with the place accorded to the Qur'an by Islam, that it is the "holy book" of the Muslim religion. Perhaps foremost among Muslim claims concerning the Qur'an is the belief that it was given to Mohammed by direct revelation from Allah. The ahadith state that the angel Gabriel transmitted the Qur'an word for word to Mohammed from Allah, and that Mohammed then recited these words to his companions, who memorised, and sometimes transcribed, these *qira* (recitations) which form the Qur'an<sup>1</sup>. Further, this revelation from Allah has remained the same, never changing across all the centuries of transmission and transcription. A typical presentation of the orthodox Muslim claim can be found in the statement of the Pakistani revivalist and religious authority Maududi below,

"The original texts of most of the former divine Books were lost altogether, and only their translations exist today. The Qur'an, on the other hand, exists exactly as it had been revealed to the Prophet; not a word - nay, not a dot of it - has been changed. It is available in its original text and the Word of God has been preserved for all times to come."<sup>2</sup>

And further,

"So well has it (the Qur'an) been preserved both in memory and in writing, that the Arabic text we have today is identical to the text as it was revealed to the Prophet. Not even a single letter has yielded to corruption during the passage of the centuries. And so it will remain forever, by the consent of Allah."<sup>3</sup>

Many Muslims claim that after Mohammed's death, fear that portions of these teachings of Allah would be lost due to battle and deaths of those who had heard the words of Mohammed motivated early Muslim rulers to begin compilation of the revelations which Mohammed claimed to have received. The end result of this compilation, began by Mohammed's successor Abu Bakr, and finished by Caliph Uthman (644-656 AD), is said to be the Qur'an in its present form<sup>4</sup> (though what usually remains unmentioned is that Uthman is reported in the traditions to have also carried out the destruction by fire of all variant readings which did not conform to his compilation.)

### **The Tangible Evidences**

Textual and archaeological evidences, however, do not support these claims. Most of the actual evidence which has been found post-dates Uthman by at least a century, and additionally differs

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from the present “standard” version of the Arabic Qur'an on a number of points. This divergence is true even for that evidence which is chronologically nearer to this Caliph.

To begin, Muslim scholars claim to have uncovered 7th century copies of the original Quranic manuscript, sent throughout the newly formed Arab Empire by Uthman, these being the Topkapi MSS in Istanbul, and the Samarkand MSS in Tashkent. However, manuscript experts have ruled out that possibility, and instead date these manuscripts as being from the late 8th century, at the earliest. Their reason for doing so is that these two manuscripts were copied in what is known as the *Kufic* script, a style which originated in the Iraqi city of Kufah and was largely used from the late 8th to the 11th centuries, only gradually finding widespread use in the rest of the Muslim world until it was replaced generally by the Naskh script<sup>5</sup>.

In addition to the anachronistic Kufic script used, other evidence from examination of the Samarkand codex suggests a later date. This manuscript bears artistic ornamentation between many of the *surat*, as well as medallions containing kufic-style numerals gauging progress through each individual *surah*, all of which suggests an 8th or 9th century age for the manuscript. Islamic calligraphy expert Safadi says,

“It is significant that, until the beginning of the 9th century, Kufic Qur'ans received little illumination, but once this initial reluctance was overcome, various ornamental devices were evolved, many of which served necessary functions. Notable among these were the *Unwan* (title pages), *Surah* (chapter) headings, verse divisions, verse counts, section indicators, and colophons.”<sup>6</sup>

The same sort of ornamentation appears on the Topkapi codex as well, likewise indicating its later date. Further, in contradiction to the claim that this manuscript is one of the original copies sent out by Uthman to the various Muslim centres, the Samarkand codex is very eclectic, with the text from page to page alternating between careful copying and hasty, untidy transmission; and some pages containing flowing broad text, while on others the text is cramped and compressed. This evidence seems to discount the notion that a single scribe copied the whole manuscript, and even calls into question whether the whole manuscript would have been copied at one time.

Further, in the Samarkand codex, several differences in reading exist with respect to the “standard” Quranic text existing today and said to date directly back to Mohammed's revelations. Perhaps the most well-known example is found in the difference on Surah 37:103. In the Samarkand manuscript, this *ayah* reads “wa ma aslamaa...”, which translated means “and they did not submit” (i.e. become Muslims). Yet, the present Arabic “standard” Qur'an reads “Falammaa aslamaa..” which when translated means “and they submitted”<sup>7</sup>. Thus, the change of one word alters the meaning of the passage to a diametrically opposite meaning! Additionally, other differences between the Samarkand codex and the present Arabic version had been noted. They amount to the same sort of changes in consonantal readings (the Samarkand is without vowel pointings) and even the changing of whole words, in Surat 2:15, 2:57, 2:284, 5:99, 6:11, 7:27, 7:69, 18:83, 19:72, 20:3, 20:79, 20:108, 36:20-21, 38:26, as well as other *ayat*<sup>8</sup>. This shows us, despite the claims made by many Muslim scholars and theologians (those quoted above, for instance) that **no** changes were ever introduced into the Quranic manuscript history and that the

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Arabic Qur'an has always remained the same, that there were indeed alterations in Quranic manuscripts during the early years of Islam and that the original Arabic readings have not been preserved intact in each daughter manuscript. Thus, the Muslim apologetic argument which points to the "perfect and uncorrupted" Qur'an as a proof of the finality and truth of Islam, since it has "obviously" been protected by Allah throughout its history, rests on shaky ground.

It is notable that as yet, no such study has been allowed on the Topkapi codex, which has been kept under wraps except for brief glimpses. Even photographic record of this codex is forbidden, which has made objective analysis of the readings of this document impossible.

A very ancient manuscript, perhaps slightly earlier than the aforementioned two manuscripts, was housed in the British Museum in London, and was written in the *Ma'il* style of script, which was indigenously used around the Hijaz, which includes Mecca and Medina. This manuscript, however, has been dated by Dr. Martin Lings (himself a practicing Muslim) to around the end of the 8th century, and is said to be one of the two oldest known Quranic leaves<sup>9</sup>. In fact, only the Sana'a manuscripts, a cache of ancient Quranic leaves found in a sealed room of an antiquated Yemen mosque, seem to date earlier than the first quarter of the 8th century<sup>10</sup>. These leaves and fragments date towards the end of the 7th century, but also contain several readings which differ from the standardised text used today, as was reported fairly recently in *The Atlantic Online*<sup>11</sup>. The evidences from these texts are important for two reasons. First, they falsify the Muslim claims to having found the "original" copies made of Uthman's recension, and thus cannot be used as a proof for the early uniformity of the Quranic text. Second, their readily apparent divergences from the present standard text show that such uniformity did not even exist in the early Qur'an anyway.

Other tangible evidence of the Qur'an's mutability exists. Cook mentions the existence of Quranic quotations on early Muslim coins which differ from the present Qur'an,

"Equally, when the first Koranic quotations appear on coins and inscriptions towards the end of the seventh century, they show divergences from the canonical text. These appear trivial from the point of view of content, but the fact that they appear in such formal contexts as these goes badly with the notion that the text had already been frozen."<sup>12</sup>

Essentially, he is saying that the appearance of divergent readings on what are really official, state-sponsored documents, indicates that the Quranic text was still in a state of flux, even after the time of Uthman. This lack of uniformity has likewise implied to scholars that the Qur'an was not invested with the same air of authority with which it is held by Muslims in our day. As we have seen, there is not any really solid evidence that the Qur'an existed in its final, edited form for at least a century or more after the rise of the Arab Empire. It can perhaps be rightly suggested that rather than the Qur'an being the beginning of Islam (as is often claimed), Islam was the finisher of the Qur'an.

"Schacht's studies of the early development of legal doctrine within the community demonstrate that with very few exceptions, Muslim jurisprudence was not derived from the contents of the Qur'an. It may be added that those few exceptions are themselves hardly evidence for the existence of the canon, and further observed that even where doctrine was alleged to draw upon



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scripture, such is not necessarily evidence of the scriptural source. Derivation of law from scripture...was a phenomenon of the ninth century...A similar kind of negative evidence is absence of any reference to the Qur'an in the Fiqh Akbar I."<sup>13</sup>

Thus, we see that from the evidence of the 8th century AD legal creed represented in the Fiqh Akbar I, with its lack of reference to the Qur'an, that the Qur'an probably had minimal to no impact on early Muslim society. Indeed, if the Qur'an had existed in its present form, and was imbued with the gravitas of authority as the revelation of God's law, it seems very strange that it would hardly have been mentioned in a foundational legal document for the Muslim community. Only over time did it develop sufficient status to become a source of law and practice.

Schacht further states in this vein,

"...the first considerable body of legal traditions from the Prophet originated towards the middle of the second [Islamic] century, in opposition to slightly earlier traditions from Companions and other authorities and to the "living tradition" of the ancient schools of law....the evidence of legal traditions carries us back to about the year 100 A.H. only; at that time Islamic legal thought started from late Umayyad administrative and popular practice."<sup>14</sup>

He continues,

"Muhammedan law did not derive directly from the Koran but developed...out of popular and administrative practice under the Umayyads, and this practice often diverged from the intentions and even the explicit wording of the Koran....Apart from the most elementary rules, norms derived from the Koran were introduced into Muhammedan law almost invariably at a secondary stage. This applies not only to those branches of law which are not covered in detail by the Koranic legislation - if we may use this term of the essentially ethical and only incidentally legal body of maxims contained in the Koran - but to family law, the law of inheritance, and even cult and ritual."<sup>15</sup>

Crone also notes that the early caliphs were more or less free to make and unmake the *Sunna* (Muslim traditions concerning precepts supposedly set forth by Mohammed), doing so under their own authority as "God's representative", not because of any traditions stemming from the Qur'an or from the example set by Mohammed or his companions<sup>16</sup>. Only later, as Hinds and Crone have also argued, did the religious elite of the second or third Islamic centuries lend a divine authority to this body of *Sunna*. Indeed, in another work, Crone points out that, far from being handed down by Allah in the Qur'an, the Islamic *shari'a* is merely a reshaped version of the provincial law that existed in the Near East from Hellenistic times right down to the Byzantine period preceding the Arab Empire<sup>17</sup>. In effect, Islamic law was built on the substrate of law as had been found in the region for a millennium, adjusted it according to the custom and preference of the early caliphs, and finally set it in stone at the behest of the Muslim *ulama* (theologians) as the veritable word of Allah, not to be questioned, only to be obeyed.

Thus, the Qur'an appears to have had only a marginal effect on the body of Islamic law which was building up in the first centuries of the Arab Empire. Of much greater impact were the popular practice of the people themselves and the expedients of governing needed to manage the

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new order, and these helped to mold the legal system of Islam in preparation for the eventual Quranic overlay onto the system. In other words, the Qur'an was developed and invested with its authority as "scripture" through a process of evolution in Muslim culture, instead of the traditional view that the Qur'an laid the foundation for Muslim society in the *ummah*. It was not until the 9th century that the Qur'an began to be invested with the authority with which later Islam would view it.

Indeed, it should be noted that even as late as the middle part of the 8th century, contemporaneous sources exhibit a knowledge of the existence of only a part of the Qur'an. John of Damascus was a Syriac Christian priest who lived in the 8th century, during and after the Arab takeover of Syria. In his work *De Haeresibus* (c. 750 AD), John reveals that he had an intimate familiarity with many Arab traditions. Among these traditions are certain books which he attributes to "this Mohammed". From John's apologetic defences, it has become apparent to scholars that he was only familiar with surat 2-5 of what is presently the Qur'an<sup>18</sup>. In addition, John deals at length with another book, which he refers to by title as the "book on the Camel of God", which does not appear in the present Qur'an, but yet which he refers to as one of the books of the "Ishmaelites". He lists this book in parallel with "the book of the Table" (Surah 4), "the book of the Heifer" (Surah 2), and the "book of the Woman" (surah 3), dealing with them in the same way to refute the heresy taught within them<sup>19</sup>, which suggests that they were viewed by the "Ishmaelites" with whom he was dealing as just as scripturally authoritative as the other books which now do appear in the Qur'an. The Qur'an also makes passing references to this Book of the Camel of God (see Surat 7:73,77; 91:13-14), but this book failed to make it into the final compilation of the Arab holy writings.

Another witness to the status of the Arab religious texts from the 8th century would be the Emperor Leo III of Byzantium (r. 717-741 AD). Leo was in a position to be familiar with the religious status of the Syria-Palestine area, as he was raised on the frontier of Syria, and was even reputed to be bilingual in Greek and Arabic, and thus would almost surely have become acquainted with the religious teachings of the Arabs, whether oral or from a holy book, who were increasingly putting pressure onto what was left of the Byzantine Empire in Asia Minor. In a correspondence which he wrote to the Caliph Umar II (r. 717-720 AD), he issued a defence of Christianity against the doctrines of the particular Arab monotheism which was developing. In this defence, he does not mention the Qur'an (indeed, in the older text of his letter, an Armenian text dating from somewhere in the late 8th century<sup>20</sup>, the Qur'an is not even quoted)<sup>21</sup>. In his letter, Leo refers primarily to Surat 2-5, while making a handful of scattered references which can be interpreted as pointing to other *surat* of what is now the Qur'an. Overall, however, the impression is that Leo knew of written compilations of Surat 2-5, but was relying upon oral tradition and/or other more unofficial writings, which had either not yet been assembled into a form of religious compilation by the Arabs, or else had only very recently been assembled and was still in a state of flux as far as its form and order were concerned<sup>22</sup>.

Scholars have noted the great amount of influence which Judeo-Christianity, here defined as those sects present in Palestine, Syria, and Iraq which accepted Christ as a Messiah-figure, but who rejected His deity (e.g. the Nazoreans, Ebionites, etc.), had upon the initial development of Islam. Indeed, many beliefs of these groups coincide with those later held by Islam, including a belief that Jesus Christ was not a member of the Godhead, but was instead a subordinated

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prophet of God, and the emphasis upon Abraham as the first “man of knowledge” who had the knowledge of God conferred upon him by an angel<sup>23</sup>. Other aspects of these Judeo-Christian groups which were later adopted by the Arabs into their developing monotheism after their military expansion into these regions included the denial of the crucifixion, the obligation to observe the sabbath and other elements of the Mosaic law, the *qiblah* (direction of prayer) towards Jerusalem, which was the initial direction recorded in Islamic tradition before it was changed to Mecca. The Arabs, of course, would have been exposed to the religious beliefs of these groups, as well as those of the Jews and the various Christian sects, due to the presence of some of these in Arabia, as well as through trade relations. After the Arabs expanded their conquests into Persia/Mesopotamia and the eastern end of the Byzantine Empire, it would not be surprising that these doctrines were accepted into the larger aegis of the developing state monotheism, especially as the Arabs sought to differentiate themselves from both the Jews and the Orthodox Christians of the Byzantine Empire.

This would explain the large amount of borrowing of material in the Qur'an from Christian, Jewish, and especially Judeo-Christian sources. It is likely that the Arabs formulated the belief system of Islam only after leaving the Arabian desert and coming into contact with these Judeo-Christian groups (primarily) and other belief systems outside of Arabia. Wansbrough points out that the internal allusions in the Qur'an itself seem to indicate that it arose against the backdrop of sectarian strife with other religious groups found in Syro-Palestine and Iraq (and thus, was not a product of central Arabian revelation),

“Qur'anic allusion presupposes familiarity with the narrative material of Judaeo-Christian scripture, which was not so much reformulated as merely referred to....Taken together, the quantity of reference, the mechanically repetitious employment of rhetorical convention, and the stridently polemical style, all suggest a strongly sectarian atmosphere in which the corpus of familiar scripture was being pressed into the service of as yet unfamiliar doctrine.”<sup>24</sup>

Thus, these Judeo-Christian scriptures were relied upon to formulate and validate the arising Arab monotheism, and the Qur'an as a body of scripture saw its evolution impressed upon by the traditions and teachings of the Judaeo-Christian world which existed outside of Arabia. These traditions and knowledge entered into the consciousness of the Arabs' new religion from the conquered Christian lands (along with the large Jewish populations) taken in Yemen, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. Likewise, the trace of Zoroastrian tales in the Qur'an most likely entered the Islamic realm after the subjugation of the revived Persian Empire under Yazdegird III, the last Sassanid Shah. Coming into contact with the higher civilisations of Constantinople and Ctesiphon, each with their own established monotheistic religion, it is not surprising that the Arabs would desire to invest their new religion with the same sort of traditions. As Ibn Warraq points out, the formulation of the Qur'an likely occurred out of a desire to provide Mohammed, said to be a prophet of the Mosaic model, with his very own Holy Writ. Just as Moses received the Word of God from God, so must Mohammed, to legitimise the Arab claims about his prophethood. In fact, it has been pointed out that Muslim philologists have systematically tried to manipulate the evidence from Arabian poetry so as to give a pre-Islamic appearance for such poetry (patterned along the lines of the Qur'an), for the purpose of giving the Qur'an a more Arabian flavour and thus substantiate the claim that the Qur'an was given to an Arabian prophet in pure Arabic, from God<sup>25</sup>.

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In fact, the very importance of Mohammed as the true moving force behind the original Arab religion is questionable. Scholars have shown that pretty much all the biographical information about Mohammed presented by early Islamic tradition is of questionable trustworthiness. As Cook states,

“False ascription was rife among the eighth-century scholars, and...in any case Ibn Ishaq and his contemporaries were drawing on oral tradition. Neither of these propositions is as arbitrary as it sounds. We have reason to believe that numerous traditions on questions of dogma and law were provided with spurious chains of authorities by those who put them into circulation; and at the same time we have much evidence of controversy in the eighth century as to whether it was permissible to reduce oral tradition to writing. The implications of this view for the reliability of our sources are clearly rather negative. If we cannot trust the chains of authorities, we can no longer claim to know that we have before us the separately transmitted accounts of independent witnesses; and if knowledge of the life of Muhammed was transmitted orally for a century before it was reduced to writing, then the chances are that the material will have undergone considerable alteration in the process.”<sup>26</sup>

Three eminent scholars of Islam, Michael Cook, Patricia Crone, and Martin Hinds, on very valid logical and evidential grounds, reject the whole Islamic history of Mohammed which was supposedly presented “in the clear light of history”:

“[They] regard the whole established version of Islamic history down to at least the time of Abd al-Malik (685-705) as a later fabrication, and reconstruct the Arab Conquests and the formation of the Caliphate as a movement of peninsular Arabs who had been inspired by Jewish messianism to try to reclaim the Promised Land. In this interpretation, Islam emerged as an autonomous religion and culture only within the process of a long struggle for identity among the disparate peoples yoked together by the Conquests: Jacobite Syrians, Nestorian Aramaeans in Iraq, Copts, Jews, and (finally) peninsular Arabs.”<sup>27</sup>

Thus, there is a strong and growing scholarly contention against the traditional (and uncritically accepted) view of Mohammed and very early Islamic history, including the origination of the Qur'an. Concerning Mohammed specifically, this will be revisited in chapter 5.

Moving on to a later age, the earliest definitive appearance of the Qur'an in its present form dates from the 10th century, when the text as it now stands was compiled from seven different versions of the Quranic text to form an amalgamated, mutually acceptable text made easier to understand because of the addition of vowel and diacritical marks to the Arabic script (where they had previously been lacking, and hence made the texts harder to read)<sup>28</sup>.

Many Muslims claim, however, that Mohammed had already compiled a complete Quranic manuscript before his death in 632 AD, and that following manuscripts agreed with this first text perfectly. The claim is made that there were no conflicting manuscripts produced. These assertions are contradicted both by evidence from scholarly study, and by variant Muslim assertions, mentioned above and articulated more fully below, which claim that Mohammed's followers compiled the Quranic teachings after his death.

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“One thing only is certain and is openly recognized by tradition, namely, that there was not in existence any collection of revelations in final form, because, as long as he was alive, new revelations were being added to the earlier ones.”<sup>29</sup>

Scholars assert that at Mohammed's death, there was no singular codex for the Qur'an<sup>30</sup>. Indeed, as has been noted above, there probably was not even a codex of the Qur'an until after the middle part of the 8th century (the leaves mentioned earlier are single pages, not comprising a whole collection of writings). Given the late appearance of complete Quranic texts, this appears to bear witness to the truth. However, as was seen above, many Muslim scholars make the claim that the Qur'an has existed exactly as it was handed down to Mohammed, even to this day.

Yet, scholarship finds that there was no single copy of the Qur'an even in existence until long after that year ascribed as Mohammed's death. However, there may have been portions of the Qur'an which had been written down at various points, even in the very early years of Islam (most likely the Surat 2-5 observed by John and Leo, as well as a few others). However, not all Muslim traditions teach that the Qur'an was completed in codex form at the time of Mohammed's death. Indeed, one of the more prominent traditions records the compilation of the Qur'an (assumed, of course, to be the **whole** Qur'an) from various sources (including bones and palm fronds) upon which the recitations has been inscribed. They were these portions, according to the Muslim traditions themselves, along with the portions of the Qur'an present in the memories of various companions of Mohammed, which Zaid ibn Thabit (a companion of Mohammed who produced a compilation of the Qur'an) sought out to make his compilation of the Qur'an codex for Abu Bakr, the first Caliph and successor of Mohammed.

### Manufacturing the Qur'an

As was remarked upon before, many Muslims will claim that the Qur'an was handed down in its present and complete form to Mohammed and has remained unchanged since (thus circumventing the traditional process of collection and collation discussed below). However, if such were the case, there would have been no need for the collection of the texts and recitations which Zaid performed for Abu Bakr as indicated in the most generally reliable of the hadith traditions (and which other close companions of Mohammed had also been doing, independently). Why send out a man to make the compilation if you already have the complete and perfect text before you? If nothing else, this affirms the notion, articulated by Cook above, that the body of early Muslim traditions, usually set down in writing over a century and a half after the events which they purport to chronicle, are very untrustworthy as sources for drawing up historical reconstruction of the early Muslim era. These traditional sources, produced as they were within the framework of internecine fighting amongst different factions hoping to gain ascendancy in the Arab Empire, are naturally polemical and written with the aim of bolstering the positions and legitimacy of the factions. Hence, there can be several different versions of the same story, each one placing a different general or other important personage with whom the faction wishes to identify, at the site of an important event<sup>31</sup>.



## Myth #1 The Qur'an is Preserved and Unchanged Revelation from Allah

Let us now look at the most generally accepted tradition of the Quranic inception, which I will relate in its details. Note that even this tradition seems to contain some contradictory teachings, and in the very least some conceptual flaws. Muslims will often claim that the memories of several hundreds of the close companions of Mohammed were all supernaturally enhanced so as to allow them all to memorise the Quranic recitations, so that the Qur'an was preserved perfectly in their witness as well. But again, this begs the question of why Zaid would have to range far and wide to search out every last *ayat* if they were readily available in the memories of any one of hundreds of companions who were readily on hand? The fact that these men did NOT have the Qur'an memorised, and that the recitations were scattered all over the place seems evident from the hadith literature itself.

Narrated Zaid bin Thabit:” So I started looking for the Qur'an and collecting it from (what was written on) palm-leaf stalks, thin white stones, and also from the men who knew it by heart, till I found the last verse of Surat at-Tauba (repentance) with Abi Khuzaima al-Ansari, and I did not find it with anybody other than him.” <sup>32</sup>

Note, this tradition says two things: That Zaid had to scrounge up portions of the Qur'an from all over the place (palm leaves, stones, etc.) as well as from the memories of men. Also, it says that Zaid found a verse of the Qur'an which was known by only ONE companion. Thus, the idea that hundreds of companions knew the Qur'an perfectly by heart is not supported even by this tradition.

The truth is that Zaid probably did not get the entirety of the original Quranic recitations into his compilation. Hadithic tradition demonstrates this by informing us that many of the reciters were killed at the battle of Yamama (a battle waged to re-subdue several Arab tribes who revolted from Islam following Mohammed's death) and that many portions of the Qur'an were irretrievably lost.

“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.” <sup>33</sup>

Hence, possibly large portions of the original revelation attributed to Mohammed simply ceased to exist (perhaps the Book of the Camel of God would be included in this category?) It was, in fact, the knowledge of this that prompted Abu Bakr to initiate Zaid's mission to compile the Qur'an.

Eventually, Zaid got as much of the Qur'an as he could find compiled together. Once this happened, as Gilchrist reports, the compilation was concealed, receiving no publicity for several years <sup>34</sup>.

Then a crisis arose. Nineteen years after Mohammed's death, a Muslim general, Hudhayfah, campaigning in northern Syria, reported back to Caliph Uthman that the troops in his army, some from Syria and some from Iraq, were using different readings of the Qur'an. The reason for this was because two other companions of Mohammed, Abdullah ibn Mas'ud and Ubayy ibn Ka'b,

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had each prepared their own compilations of the Qur'an independently of each other and of Zaid. They were also close companions of Mohammed who knew much of the Qur'an and had found much of the rest. The problem was that each was propagating a different text from the other.

Caliph Uthman's solution to this problem was to bring the Zaid codification out of hiding, establish IT as the "standard" Quranic text for all Muslims, and he then tried to burn all other codices which differed from the Zaid text. He also had the Zaid text standardised to conform to Quraish-style Arabic (spoken around Mecca, and the dialect Mohammed used). Zaid himself was from Medina, and his dialect and language was slightly different from that of the Quraish.

Narrated Anas (ra): "Uthman called Zaid bin Thabit, Abdullah bin az-Zubair, Sa'id bin Al-'As and 'Abdur-Rahman bin Al-Harith bin Hisham, and then they wrote the manuscripts (of the Qur'an). 'Uthman said to the three Quraishi persons, 'If you differ with Zaid bin Thabit on any point of the Qur'an, then write it in the language of Quraish, as the Qur'an was revealed in their language'. So they acted accordingly."<sup>35</sup>

Thus, these three Quraishis went over Zaid's text, and altered it at any point at which it was not conformable to the Quraish dialect. Further Muslim historiography reports,

"Abu Amr states that he received the following revelation from Katada as-Sadusi: "When the first copy of the Qur'an was written out and presented to [the khalif] Othman Ibn Affan, he said: 'There are faults of language in it, and let the Arabs of the desert rectify them with their tongues.'"<sup>36</sup>

It appears then that Uthman was still not satisfied with the purity of the language, and relied upon the Bedouin (traditional arbiters on questions of Arabic grammar, both before and after the advent of Islam, due to the prestige of the Bedouin speech and its place as the pure language of poetry<sup>37</sup> to resolve some issues. In relating the above tradition from Muslim sources, the general sense of unreliability for these traditions must again be emphasised. However, in a garbled form and fashion, the traditions may relate legitimate details about the collection of the Qur'an. While it may not have happened in the manner described by the historiographers, the details of the collation and correction of the Qur'an may well reflect analogous events occurring during the solidification of the Arab Empire and the development of the Arab monotheism, especially from the tumultuous years of the early civil wars. Indeed, the kernel of truth most likely is there, surrounded by the shuck of later literary exaggeration and ornamentation.

Many Muslims will argue that the differences mentioned above between the various compilations, were due to pronunciation differences, and that no difference in the actual text existed. One Muslim apologist with whom I have had much discussion said it this way, "Although minor in nature, yet the differences in the pronunciation were seen with concern by the cautious Caliph who feared they could develop into different versions with the possibility of different meanings. It was required that just like a standard text, a standard pronunciation should also be decided."

The problem with this thesis is that differences in pronunciation between various compilations would not APPEAR in the text, as the use of pointing to mark vowels was not yet in use for the

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Qur'anic text. This is because Arabic is a language, like all Semitic languages, based on consonantal word roots, with the weak vowels supplied either by tacit knowledge and context, or (as in later times) by diacritical marks called "pointing", that indicate which vowel is used with each consonant. The same base consonantal root can be used, but have different pointing marks to indicate different tenses, number, gender, etc. Hence, it would be possible to have different pronunciations, yes, based upon regional accents and dialects. BUT, these differences in pronunciation would not appear in the various texts. The texts could all say the same thing as far as the actual consonants which were written down, and still be pronounced differently. The fact that there were significant enough differences in the texts themselves (which would be INDEPENDENT of pronunciation) to cause Uthman to seek to eliminate all competitors to the Zaid text immediately tells us that these readings, the actual WORDS, represented significant differences between texts.

And differences there were between the texts. For instance, the hadithic tradition records the following:

Narrated Ibrahim: "The companions of 'Abdullah (bin Mas'ud) came to Abi Darda', (and before they arrived at his home), he looked for them and found them. Then he asked them, "Who among you can recite (Qur'an) as 'Abdullah recites it?" They replied, "All of us." He asked, "Who among you knows it by heart?" They pointed at 'Alqama. Then he asked Alqama. "How did you hear 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud reciting Surat Al-Lail (The Night)?" Alqama recited:

'By the male and the female.' Abu Ad-Darda said,

"I testify that I heard me Prophet reciting it likewise, but these people want me to recite it:--

'And by Him Who created male and female.' But by Allah, I will not follow them."<sup>38</sup>

Thus, we see that the text of Surah 92:3 taught and recited by Abdullah ibn Mas'ud differed from that used by other Muslims, not just in pronunciation, but in the words themselves, in a way which changes the meaning of the verse (in this case, eliminating a reference to Allah). Note also, the reading which it is claimed was spoken by Mohammed himself is **not** the one presently found in the Qur'an.

Gilchrist and others report likewise that much controversy was engendered through the years by reports that ibn Mas'ud left out Surat numbers 1, 113, and 114 from his compilation.

Four notable differences between the Zaid text and the ibn Mas'ud text are detailed by Gilchrist<sup>39</sup>.

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Surah 2:275 - Zaid text - Allahiina yaakuluunar-ribaa laa yaquumuun - "those that devour usury will not stand"



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Mas'ud text - Allahiina yaakuluunar-riibaa laa yaquumuun yawmal qiyaamati - "those that devour usury will not stand IN THE RESURRECTION DAY."

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Surah 5:91 - Zaid text - Fasiyaamu thalaathati ayyaamin - "fast for three days"

Mas'ud text - Fasiyaamu thalaathati ayyaamin mutataabi'aatin - "fast for three SUCCESSIVE days"

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Surah 6:153 - Zaid text - Wa anna haathaa siraatii - "Verily this is my path"

Mas'ud text - Wa haathaa siraatu rabbakum - "This is the path OF YOUR LORD"

Incidentally, the text of Ubayy ibn Ka'b also has this reading, except that the word "rabbakum" is replaced with "rabbika".

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Surah 33:6 - Zaid text - Wa azwaajuhuu ummahaatuhuu - "and his wives are their mothers"

Mas'ud text - Wa azwaajuhuu ummahaatuhuu wa huwa abuu laahum - "and his wives are their mothers AND HE IS THEIR FATHER."

The ibn Ka'b text has these same words, but reverses the statements about Mohammed's wives being mothers and he being fathers to the "ummah", placing the statement about Mohammed first.

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Hence, there WERE very definite differences between these early renderings of the Qur'an, which cannot be explained away by appeals to pronunciation. These that I have mentioned are only four of the differences between early compilations of the Qur'an. Arthur Jeffery's book, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'an*, contains over 350 pages of details concerning variant readings between early Quranic compilations of the time. Further, the eminent scholar of Islam, W. Montgomery Watt, makes this remark,

"No copies exist of any of the early codices, but the list of variant readings from the two just mentioned is extensive [ed. note - obtained from the various works of early Muslim historiographers who quote these variants], running to a thousand or more items in both cases."  
<sup>40</sup>

Hence, there appear to have been MANY variations in early Quranic texts, despite the claims of perfection and invariance which are made for the Qur'an.

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It must be understood what is the place and significance of all that has been said above. Christianity, once it reached a position to be able to investigate this type of field with evidence and scientific methodology, has been able to investigate the textual history of the Bible in a systematic way. This has enabled Christians to ascertain what were the readings of the original biblical autographs, even though said autographs no longer exist today. This has also allowed Christianity to establish and eliminate spurious alterations or omissions made from individual manuscripts, thus maintaining a pure text while yet acknowledging the obvious presence of disparate readings between individual manuscripts. Thus, through recourse to the examination of the sum total of the manuscript evidence, along with concurrent evidence from other ancient versions and the quotations of patristic writers from the early years of the faith, Christians can be certain that the words of God have been preserved for them throughout the ages and are available to them today, even without having the original autographs.

The same assurance cannot be had by the Muslim, who has been barricaded into accepting as the “orthodox” position the view that the Qur'an has never once changed since its original inception, and that the Qur'an does not even HAVE a textual history. Whether a Muslim believes that the Qur'an was handed down intact and whole to Mohammed and has not changed since, or that the Qur'an was preserved in the compilation of Zaid and Uthman and has not changed since, he or she is still placed into the same logically and factually untenable position. Whereas Christianity has been realistic about the matter, has accepted that individual manuscripts can and will become altered over time (whether accidental or purposeful makes no difference), and has developed a fairly simple yet scientific method for discerning the true from the false (even if this method has been abused by those seeking to promote the spurious Alexandrian manuscripts over and above the vast majority of Traditional Text mss.), Islam does not have this recourse. Because of the record of Uthman's destruction and suppression of alternate Quranic versions, the Muslim has no means by which to truly and scientifically determine whether the readings in his present Qur'an are REALLY the original readings. All that can be truthfully said is that the present readings were those of Uthman's purported version. Yet, because of the destruction of so much authentic source material, there is no way to judge to what extent, numerically and geographically, the variant Qur'ans of ibn Kaab, ibn Mas'ud, and other compilers were found. The Muslim cannot in any rational way state that certain readings found, for instance, in the Mas'ud version were definitely not the TRUE revelation received by Mohammed. As noted above, the Mas'ud reading of Al-Lail 92:3 as recorded in the hadithic record is said to be that which was obtained from Mohammed himself. YET, this reading does not appear in the present Qur'an, which suggests that an authentic pronouncement of the prophet of Islam was lost in Uthman's zeal to establish a uniform standard. How can the Muslim EVER know (aside from blind faith) that the current reading of 92:3 is the right one? Islam, with its untenable approach to the textual issue coupled with the artificial standardisation of a pre-approved text, has trapped itself into a seemingly inescapable conundrum.

### **Garbled in Transmission**

Thus, from what we have seen above, the text of the Qur'an cannot rationally be considered to have arrived in its present form without any changes from when Mohammed claimed to have

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received it from Allah. Portions of the Qur'an were (according to Muslim tradition itself) lost forever at Yamama, there were variant readings all over the Muslim world until Uthman reigned them in and established the Zaid/abu Bakr text (after Quraishi revision) as the "standard" text for all Muslims. Even now, many Shi'ite Muslims will maintain that Caliph Uthman had up to a quarter of the original Qur'an removed for political reasons: the *ayat* spoke of Ali, with whom Uthman had a personal grudge.

But then, what of the other major claim made by many Muslims concerning the Qur'an, which relates to its present perfection and divine authorship? The same Muslim apologist which I quoted earlier had this to say, "That Qur'an is authoritative in Islam, which you'll find in your nearest bookstore. The presence of a SINGLE text of the Qur'an in the whole Muslim world is the proof of this." Is this true? Is there a single text of the Qur'an in Arabic used today the world over?

The answer is, of course, no. The Arabic Qur'ans have come to the present day through a series of what are called "transmissions". Essentially, there were in the second century AH (After Hijra, roughly the 9th century) seven men who were considered authoritative "readers" of the Qur'an, and their recitations were written down (transmitted) by other scholars, and these readings have come down to us today as the various transmissions. Properly speaking, the two main transmissions used today are the "Hafs" and "Warsh" transmissions, though two others (the Qalun and the Al-Duri) are also in print. The Hafs is the most commonly used transmission, though the Warsh is (or at least used to be until recently) the most common in North Africa.

For the Muslim assertion to be true, it would have to be shown that there are NO differences between these various transmissions. It would have to be true that even though there were seven different reciters and several different transmitters, they all recite and wrote the same text with no variance, and this would transmit to us today. Hence, the Hafs and Warsh ought to be identical.

Yet, they are not. Samuel Green, in his work, *The Different Arabic Versions of the Qur'an*, makes a note of many of the differences in reading between these two particular transmissions, some of which I'll give below. Please note, the difference in ayat references are due to the difference in the numbering systems between the two Qur'ans, but they refer to the same words used in the same ayat/verse:

Surah 3:133 (Hafs) - wasaari'uu

Surah 3:133 (Warsh) - saari'uu

Surah 2:140 (Hafs) - taquluna

Surah 2:139 (Warsh) - yaquluna

Surah 3:81 (Hafs) - ataytukum

Surah 3:80 (Warsh) - ataynakum

Surah 2:259 (Hafs) - nunshizuhaa

Surah 2:258 (Warsh) - nunshiruhaa

Surah 2:9 (Hafs) - yakdhibuuna

Surah 2:9 (Warsh) - yukadhdhibuuna

Surah 2:184 (Hafs) - ta'aamu miskiin

Surah 2:183 (Warsh) - ta'aami masakiina

These are not merely differences in pronunciation, but instead differences between transmissions both in diacritical marks (for vowels) and also consonantal sounds. So, no, the Muslim claim that there is a single Quranic text used the world over is not substantiated by fact. In short, if the question is asked: Is the Qur'an uniform and unchanged, we would have to answer with a negative in both cases.

## Home Grown Inspiration

As was mentioned earlier, after the establishment of the Zaid text as the canon standard across Islam, Caliph Uthman attempted to carry out the complete destruction of all variant readings by fire. Why did Caliph Uthman feel the need to carry out the destruction of manuscripts which conflicted with his compilation? Was Uthman's fear that earlier copies of the Qur'an contradicted his and would reveal his own text to be deficient in authority because of the addition and subtraction of material?

Addition and subtraction to the Quranic text there seems to have been, too. Guillaume reports that many of the original verses of the Qur'an were lost, either to deliberate removal, or to accidents. One surah originally had 200 verses in the time of Ayesha (one of Mohammed's wives), but by the time of Uthman's recension, it had only 73 verses, for a total of 127 verses subtracted<sup>41</sup>. In fact, in the scholarly realm, that verses have been removed from the Qur'an throughout its history is almost universally accepted. Many of the Quranic renderings which Uthman destroyed contained verses which Uthman did not approve of, probably indicating an overall tendency towards early addition to and subtraction from what was supposed to be the final, complete word of Allah. Shi'ite Muslims even today claim that Uthman left out nearly 25% of the original verses in the Qur'an for political reasons<sup>42</sup>.

Further, there is evidence from the traditions which indicates to us that Mohammed himself made, or at least allowed, direct alteration of the revelation which supposedly came from Allah. The dissident Iranian scholar Dashti related one such tradition, about one of Mohammed's scribes in Medina, a man by the name of Abdollah Abi Sahr. This account relates that Abi Sahr had, "with the Prophet's consent, changed the closing words of verses. For example when the Prophet had said 'And God is mighty and wise' ('aziz, hakim), 'Abdollah b. Abi Sarh suggested

writing down 'knowing and wise' ('alim, hakim), and the Prophet answered that there was no objection. Having observed a succession of changes of this type, 'Abdollah renounced Islam on the ground that revelations, if from God, could not be changed at the prompting of a scribe..."<sup>43</sup> It is not surprising to find out that the tradition records that Abi Sahr was one of the first men whom Mohammed condemned to die after Mecca was conquered (though he pardoned him because of Abi Sahr's uncle Uthman's intercession, and upon Abi Sahr's reversion back to Islam)

There is evidence which suggests that the Hijaz, the region in the Arabian peninsula which includes Mecca, was not even the site of origin for the new Arab monotheistic religion which developed into Islam. Nevo and Koren note that the earliest appearance of classical Arabic (the Arabic in which the Qur'an was supposed to have been handed down in - the pure language of Allah) dates to around 40 AH (650 AD), found near Ta'if<sup>44</sup>. They further argue, on the basis of archaeological findings in the Hijaz and surrounding regions which show no evidence for the many pagan *Jahiliyya* cults attributed to the area by Muslim tradition in the 6th and 7th centuries, that the point of origin for the Arab monotheism was not in the Hijaz, but elsewhere<sup>45</sup>. The conclusion they draw from their investigations is that the point of origin for this new religion was in the conquered lands of Syro-Palestine, where the most interaction between the Arab invaders and the Christian/Jewish/Judeo-Christian subjects would take place. Later, the Arabs sought to establish a more independent identity for their new monotheism, thus creating a biography for Islam based in the Hijaz, the idealised Arab heartland. The information from the Muslim traditional historiography concerning the pre-Islamic pagan system in Mecca and the Hijaz might well have been "imported" from the pagan Arabs living in the frontier regions of Syria and Palestine, and transposed backwards as a programmatic example of the pagan systems which Islam was meant to root out, just as was done in the ideal history of Mecca. The positive argument from the appearance of Classical Arabic in the area nearly four decades AFTER the Qur'an was supposedly handed down and Islam started, is very convincing. It suggests that this Quranic language was brought into the region from the northern areas in Syria and Iraq, regions conquered and occupied by the Arabs, and which had the necessary ferment of religious interaction to cause the Arabs to desire a defining monotheism of their own. This perhaps complements the already-present trend towards monotheism which was growing stronger in Arabia at this time, and which would have flowed out of the peninsula with the invading tribes. Thus, the many high gods of the various Arab tribes would each be folded into the supreme god of the new monotheism, subjugated and assimilated into the developing state religion. The early holy books of the Arabs to which John of Damascus and Leo III allude may have originated in the area of Syro-Palestine, and the dialect began to be recognised more widely as the Arabic of the holy books of the state religion. However, caution must be employed, for we must again recognise that the Islamic traditions often are mutually contradictory and it is a difficult task to piece any coherent chain or chronology of events from them. It is best to draw general inferences of the sort of events which took place, and let archaeology and epigraphy fill in the details.

The early evolution of Muslim doctrine and practice further suggests that present Quranic and hadithic statements were not always viewed as inspired or received from Allah. Additionally, they do not all seem to have existed in Uthman's compilation. Instead, this phenomenon suggests the constant addition to and taking away from the Muslim holy books, and the end result is likely that several different authors over at least two centuries were responsible for the production of

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the Qur'an. This is entirely within the realm of possibility, given that the first verifiable texts of the Qur'an conformable to the reading of one of today's transmissions dates at its earliest back to the 10th century, while earlier texts (such as the Yemeni) contain variant readings and omissions. In short, the Qur'an appears to be a work which was authored and edited by the Arabs in Syria and/or Iraq which had several variant readings that were destroyed, and which took several centuries to appear in its final form available today.

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### End Notes

- (1) - S.N. Fisher, *The Middle East, a History*, p. 59
- (2) - S. Abul Ala Maudadi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, p.109
- (3) - *The Holy Qur'an, English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*, King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, p. v
- (4) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, p. 63; vol. 4, p. 709; vol. 6, p. 507, 510
- (5) - J. Gilchrist, *Jam' Al-Qur'an: The Codification of the Qur'an Text*, p. 144
- (6) - Y.H. Safadi, *Islamic Calligraphy*, pp. 10-11
- (7) - Brother Mark, *A Perfect Qur'an*, p. 67
- (8) - O.E. Sherif and M.A. Elhennawy, "Preserving and Protecting the Qur'an", published at <http://www.submission.org/quran/protect.html>
- (9) - M. Lings and H. Safadi, *The Qur'an*, pp. 17,20
- (10) - A. Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture*, p. 4
- (11) - [Toby Lester, "What is the Koran?"](#), *The Atlantic Online*, Jan. 1999
- (12) - M. Cook, *Muhammed*, p. 74
- (13) - J. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, p.44
- (14) - J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammedan Jurisprudence*, pp. 4-5
- (15) - J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammedan Jurisprudence*, pp. 224-225
- (16) - M. Hinds and P. Crone, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, p. 52
- (17) - P. Crone, *Roman, Provincial, and Islamic Law: The Origins of the Islamic Patronate*, p. 99

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(18) - see e.g. J. Meyendorff, "Byzantine Views of Islam.", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 18 (1964), pp. 117-118

(19) - see *Saint John of Damascus: Writings*, trans. F.H. Chase, pp. 157-159

(20) - per A. Jeffry, "Ghevond's Text of the Correspondence between 'Umar II and Leo III.", *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 37 (1944), pp. 269-332; see R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It: a Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, pp. 490-494 for his discussion supporting an **early** 8th century origin for at least some of the material in the text

(21) - Y.D. Nevo and J. Koren, *Crossroads to Islam*, p. 239

(22) - Y.D. Nevo and J. Koren, *Crossroads to Islam*, pp. 240-241

(23) - Y.D. Nevo and J. Koren, *Crossroads to Islam*, p. 193

(24) - J. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, p. 20

(25) - see Ibn Warraq, *The Origins of the Qur'an*, p. 25; J. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, p. 97

(26) - M. Cook, *Muhammed*, p. 65

(27) - R.S. Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, p. 83

(28) - S.N. Fisher, *The Middle East, a History*, p. 59

(29) - H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramers, *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, p. 271

(30) - C. Farah, *Islam: Beliefs and Observances*, p.28

(31) - see J.D. Nevo and J. Koren, *Crossroads to Islam*, pp. 87-168 for some examples of this phenomenon, as well as a general reconstruction of the events of the Arab takeover of Syria-Palestine as derived from contemporary literary sources and archaeological discoveries

(32) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 6, p.478

(33) - Ibn Abi Dawud, *Kitab al-Masahif*, p.23

(34) - J. Gilchrist, *Jam' al-Qur'an: The Codification of the Quranic Text*, Ch.2

(35) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol.4, p.466

(36) - Ibn Khallikan, *Biographical Dictionary*, p. 401

(37) - see G.E. von Grunebaum, "The Nature of Arab Unity Before Islam", *Arabica*, Vol. 10 (1964), p. 14

(38) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol.6, p.441-442

(39) - J. Gilchrist, *Jam' al-Qur'an: The Codification of the Quranic Text*, Ch.3

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(40) - M.W. Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'an*, p. 45

(41) - A. Guillaume, *Islam*, p.191

(42) - *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, eds. J. McClintock and J. Strong, Vol. V, p. 152

(43) - Ali Dashti, *Twenty-Three Years: A Study of the Prophetic Career of Mohammed*, p. 98

(44) - Y.D. Nevo and J. Koren, *Crossroads to Islam*, p. 174

(45) - Y.D. Nevo and J. Koren, *Crossroads to Islam*, pp. 173-174



## ***Myth #2 The Qur'an is Allah's Perfect and Complete Word***

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Islam teaches, as one would expect, that the Qur'an is perfect, the complete revelation of Allah to mankind. The Qur'an is held to be flawless, completely unassailable in what it says, both in fact and doctrine. Because of this perceived completeness, Islam is thus viewed to be the penultimate in religion, the culmination of religious advancement throughout man's history. With the completion of the Qur'an, Muslims believe, the need for revelation ended and Allah's message to man finalised.

“The guidance he has shown unto mankind is complete and flawless, and is enshrined in the Holy Qur'an....Secondly, God has completed His revealed guidance through Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him) and Islam is the complete religion for mankind. God has said that, ‘Today I have perfected your Faith - religion - for you, and have completed my bounty upon you,’ and a thorough study of Islam as a way of life proves the truth of these Quranic words.”<sup>1</sup>

Concurrently, Muslims believe that the Bible and the Torah are also revelations to man from Allah, but that these revelations were corrupted, changed by Jews and Christians away from their original readings. They believe that the Bible and Torah contain God's Word, but are mixed with the words and thoughts of men.

### **False Claims of Biblical Corruption**

However, Islam has always taken a somewhat double-minded position on the Bible. While teaching that the Bible is flawed, incomplete, and untrustworthy, Islam at the same time teaches that the Bible is to be followed by Muslims as a means of finding the truth. “And if thou art in doubt concerning that which We reveal unto thee, then question those who read the Scripture before thee. Verily, the Truth from thy Lord hath come unto thee.” (Pickthal translation, Surah 10:94) Thus, we see supposed divine revelation from Allah directing Mohammed and his followers to seek truth as a final authority from the Bible, from Christians who “read the Scripture before thee”, as a means of clearing up misunderstandings and doubts about Quranic ‘revelation’. It is from this that the strange duality arises whereby Muslims must teach that the Bible is corrupted by man, yet at the same time accept what it teaches (more or less) as being from God.

Further, a question which then arises is this: If Allah is directing Mohammed (and therefore Muslims in general) to seek guidance from the Bible, then did Mohammed REALLY consider the Bible to be corrupted in and of itself? As will be seen below, the proof texts from the Qur'an which Muslims use to maintain the teaching of Biblical corruption are somewhat less than conclusive on this point. But the crux remains for Muslims. When do they suppose the Bible to have been corrupted? Was it BEFORE Allah told Mohammed to seek out guidance in the Bible and from Christians, in which case Allah told Mohammed to seek spiritual wisdom from corrupt sources? Or was it AFTER Allah told Mohammed to seek Biblical guidance from Christians, a

fact which is refuted by the evidence from Biblical manuscripts in several languages which read the same in manuscripts dated from both before and after the rise of Islam (i.e. indicating that the texts are fundamentally the same throughout this time period)?

The corruption lies not with the Bible, but rather with the Qur'an, the creation of Arabs in need of a religious text to substantiate their developing monotheistic religion. Large parts of the Qur'an are direct transfers from the Bible. Many more parts of the Qur'an contain stories about personalities from the Bible, but often the stories are incorrect. The Qur'an states that Mary was Aaron's sister, that the great Flood of Noah occurred during the time of Moses, and that Joseph was bought as a slave by an Egyptian named Aziz (instead of Potiphar), to name a few. The evidence seems to point to an early acquaintance with the Christian scriptures during the early years of the Arab Empire, and also to the misunderstanding of much of what they heard and saw in them. The Arabs merely cobbled together their various impressions of what they had heard, and made them a part of the Qur'an.

Further, it ought to be noted that passages in the Qur'an which Islam points to as "proof" of the corruption of earlier texts really do not indicate that Mohammed taught the corruption of the texts themselves. Two primary Quranic passages used by Muslims to claim Biblical corruption are these:

"And there are among them illiterates, who know not the Book, but (see therein their own) desires, and they do nothing but conjecture. Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: "This is from Allah," to traffic with it for miserable price!- Woe to them for what their hands do write, and for the gain they make thereby." (Surah 2:78-79)

"Can ye (O ye men of Faith) entertain the hope that they will believe in you?- Seeing that a party of them **heard** the Word of Allah, and perverted it knowingly after they understood it." (Surah 2:75)

Neither of these passages indicate textual corruption. The first passage refers to people (illiterates, who wouldn't be able to read the Bible anyway) who act upon their own accord to *create* their own scriptures, and then try to pass them off as sacred writings. Of course, how illiterates create their own scripture is not explained. This aside, it does not refer to the corruption of the words of God, but rather to the development of competitors to the words of God, false teachings and new books. The second passage refers to people who heard preaching, and knowingly perverted what they had heard to something else. As Parrinder has noted, these *ayat* refer to misinterpreting scripture, and passing off something which is not scripture as if it were so, but say nothing about the text of the previous scriptures being corrupted<sup>2</sup>.

## God's Preservation of the Bible

While the falsity of Muslim claims for the revelation of the Qur'an and its subsequent lack of change have been previously exposed, the Muslim charges concerning the corruption of the Bible ought to be addressed briefly. Islam has yet to produce any textual evidence to demonstrate the corruption of the Biblical texts as a whole. Often, Muslims will try to point to differences in

readings between **individual manuscripts**, and use this to support their assertion. However, the science of textual criticism, as applied to the task of systematically examining the manuscript evidence, provides Christian scholars the ability to distinguish between true and spurious readings in individual manuscripts. The body of evidence, from Greek manuscripts, the manuscripts of other ancient versions (Old Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Latin Vulgate, etc.), and the quotations of early Christian writers allows us to determine the content of the original autographic texts with as yet unassailed certainty. It should be noted that, as was dealt with earlier, Islam cannot truthfully make the same claim, and in fact is logistically unable to even make the attempt because of the artificial standardisation of the Arabic Qur'an text by Uthman, and the subsequent destruction of most all contrary Quranic manuscript evidence. Thus, the Muslim assertion rests entirely on blind faith in what amounts to a tradition handed down through Islam for roughly 1500 years. Facts show, however, that the texts used to produce the King James Bible are the preserved, uncorrupted words of God.

The Old Testament was written originally in Hebrew (except for certain portions of Daniel and Ezra which are in Aramaic). Therefore, we must look at the history of the Hebrew texts to examine for corruption. Romans 3:1-2 tells us, "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." This passage clearly illustrates to us that it was the Jews who had been given the responsibility and privilege of passing on and protecting God's Word. This they did, too, through their Masoretic school. The Hebrew Masoretes followed a very prescribed, very rigorous means of transcribing copies of the Hebrew scriptures<sup>3</sup>. Among other things, they had to have an authentic copy of the texts before them when copying. They could not copy anything from memory, but had to have an authentic copy in front of them, sounding out each word before copying it. The copyist had to have the word on his lips, not just in his mind. Rules governed everything involved with the copying, even the colour of the ink used, the number of lines per column of text, the preparation of the parchment skins used, etc. Strict rules were followed which governed the style of letter formation, space between letters, the handling of the pen used to copy. Care was taken not just to transfer words, but to standardise them so rigorously that the copy was as nearly a perfect replica of the original as was humanly possible. The quality of copying from this method would compare favourably with what we would see from a copying machine today. Further, if one mistake was found on a sheet of parchment, the sheet was destroyed and the work started over. If three mistakes were found on any one page, the ENTIRE MANUSCRIPT was thrown out and copying began fresh. Thus, if a Masorete who was copying the entire text of the Hebrew Bible started in Genesis and got all the way to the end of II Chronicles (the last book in the original Hebrew ordering of the books) and made three mistakes on a page, the ENTIRE document was thrown out, along with months of work, and started anew.

This sort of effort was perpetuated by the Masoretes and protected God's Word in Hebrew from any sort of corruption. Islam cannot even begin to make the same sort of claim for the Arabic texts of the Qur'an, which evidence shows had already been corrupted by the time of Uthman. The result of the Masoretes' work was what was used to translate the Old Testament in the King James. The King James translators used the *Ben Chayyim* Masoretic text, produced by Rabbi Abraham ben Chayyim iben Adonijah, and published by Daniel Bomberg in 1524<sup>4</sup>. Thus, the King James Old Testament comes from a text that can be considered completely trustworthy and a preserved replica of the originals.

Likewise, the Greek New Testament underlying the King James remained uncorrupted. There are currently in the possession of scholars 5,255 copies, either partial or full, of the Greek New Testament, in various forms such as uncials, lectionaries, papyrus fragments, and cursive texts. Of these, **5,210** most generally agree with the Traditional Text (also called the "Syrian" or "Byzantine"), the text type underlying the Received Text (Textus Receptus) which is the Greek text from which the King James New Testament was translated<sup>5</sup>. Hence, 99.14% of all existing Greek New Testament texts are in fundamental agreement with one another and with the Textus Receptus which Beza edited in 1598. What this means is that the **vast bulk** of Greek manuscripts for the New Testament were transmitted accurately down throughout the entire Church Age, right up to the time when Beza collated his complete Greek text. Further evidence for the accuracy of their translation is the fact that around 60% of New Testament quotations from early church fathers who died before 400 AD were in the form of distinctive Traditional readings<sup>6</sup>. As Kenyon pointed out in his survey of Miller and Burgon's analysis, this preference for the Traditional Text increases to around 64% if the writers from the first three centuries are considered, and this further rises to 76% when a list of thirty highly important passages are considered from this group of patristics, chosen for their frequency of quotation and theological importance<sup>7</sup>.

The tiny remaining number of false Greek texts (that other 0.86%, or 45 manuscripts) all bear evidence of their being little used by the church of God. The two primary manuscripts of this class, Codex Aleph (aka "Sinaiticus") and Codex B (aka "Vaticanus"), both have earmarks of Gnostic corruption. Further, not only do they differ from the vast body of manuscript and patristic evidence against them, they also are so eclectic that they contradict each other in reading nearly as much as they agree. Pickering notes,

"The variation between two 'Byzantine' MSS will be found to differ both in number and severity from that between two 'Western' MSS or two 'Alexandrian' MSS -- the number and nature of the disagreements between two 'Byzantine' MSS throughout the Gospels will seem trivial compared to the number (over 3,000) and nature (many serious) of the disagreements between Aleph and B, the chief 'Alexandrian' MSS, in the same space."<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, they are touted by modern day textual critics as being the most trustworthy manuscripts. This is because of their greater age, both date from the middle to latter part of the 4th century, exceeding the age of the oldest extant Traditional manuscript by at least three centuries. However, one fact that needs to be borne in mind is this: When a text written on vellum is used constantly, it wears out and needs to be recopied. Conversely, when a text is never used, it remains in a more pristine condition. Further, there is much evidence to suggest that the worn out vellum manuscripts reached the point where they could not be used, they were "put to rest" through honourable destruction. This general point was first suggested over a century ago by Burgon, but was independently articulated by Lake, et al. nearly 50 years later<sup>9</sup>. These two points combined would explain the lack of very ancient Traditional manuscripts, and concurrently provide a reasonable explanation for the continued existence of Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. Given that the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus texts are the oldest, the obvious point is then that they were never used, and thus never had to be recopied. This doubly supports the notion that the Traditional texts have been preserved uncorrupted in that it tells us the early church and men of

God through the ages recognised THEM, and not the small minority of heretical texts, as being the authentic readings. It also tells us that no significant mistakes were made throughout the course of transcribing and re-transcribing the Traditional texts over the centuries, for them to all agree with each other by the thousands of manuscripts, spread across the old Roman world. A point that bears making is that it is the small number (45) of heretical texts from which the 'modern' versions of the Bible like the NIV, NASB, RV, Berkeley, Living Bible, etc. are translated. The textual support for these modern versions is very small, and certainly does not outweigh the vast textual support which the King James enjoys. These modern versions carry through many of the heresies that their parent manuscripts contained, such as denying or downplaying important doctrines like the efficacy of Christ's blood, His virgin birth, His resurrection, etc. Christians interested in having and studying the true Word of God would do well to dump their "modern" versions in the garbage can and get hold of a solid King James Version.

God has again preserved His Word, by retaining for us a text in Greek, the Textus Receptus, which has been copied and carried through for centuries without error. Combined with the protection He afforded to the Hebrew Masoretic texts, we see that God has preserved and protected His Word through the ages. This is not surprising though, as God has promised to us to preserve His Word. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: **but the word of our God shall stand forever.**" (Isaiah 40:8). Truly He has done this with His Word, the Bible, and truly the same cannot be said for the Qur'an!

### **Pre-Islamic Source Materials Used in the Qur'an**

Now let us turn to an examination of the "perfect and heavenly" Qur'an. Islam's claim that the revelation of the Qur'an was handed down from Allah to Mohammed in complete and final form does not seem to be possible, given the large amount of "borrowing" which is evident in the Qur'an. Many of the stories and teachings of the Qur'an originally were taught in a variety of pre-Islamic writings and among various pre-Islamic groups. To begin, there seems to have been a large amount of pre-Islamic Arabian mythology and legend that found its way into the Qur'an. This is not surprising as the Qur'an was, of course, developed by Arabs living in an evolving pre-Islamic Arabian society. This understanding has been sustained by many scholars who have studied Islam. For instance, one scholar writes, "Arabic legends about the fabulous jinns fill its pages" <sup>10</sup>. Indeed, much of what he included in the Qur'an from these sources was extremely fanciful:

- The story of the she-camel which leapt out of a rock and became a prophet was known in Arabia long before Muhammad (Surat 7:73-77,85; 91:14; 54:29).
- The story of an entire village of people who were turned into apes because they broke the sabbath by fishing was a popular legend in Muhammad's day (Surat 2:65; 7:163-166).
- The gushing 12 springs story found in Sura 2:60ff comes from pre-Islamic Arabian legends.



## Myth #2 The Qur'an is Allah's Perfect and Complete Word

- In what is called the "Rip Van Winkle" story, seven men and their animals slept for 309 years in a cave and then woke up perfectly fine (Surah 18:9-26)! This was also a popular story in Arabia at and before Mohammed's time. This legend was also found in Greek and Christian folks fables from that time and before.

- The fable of the pieces of four dead, cut-up birds getting up and flying was well known in Muhammad's time (Surah 2:260).

Additionally, there appear to be several Jewish sources which Mohammed used when developing the Quranic revelation.<sup>11,12,13,14</sup> For instance, the source of Surah 3:35-37 is the apocryphal Jewish work, *The Protevangelion of James the Lesser*. Other examples of Jewish contribution to the Qur'an have been identified by scholars:

- The *Second Targum of Esther* supplied the non-biblical details of the Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon (Surah 27:17-44).

- The *Testament of Abraham* provided the teachings of the Qur'an found in Surah 42:17 and Surah 101:6-9, which relate that on the judgment day, a scale of balance will be used to weigh good and bad deeds, and to make the determination of whether people will be sent to heaven or hell. This Jewish work is also apparently quoted in Surah 87:19.

- The story of the murderous brother and the raven (Surah 5:30-31) is found in several Jewish writings, these being the *Pirke of Rabbi Eleazer*, the *Targum of Jonathan ben Uziah* and the *Targum of Jerusalem*, all of which pre-date the Qur'an.

- The tale of Abraham being delivered from Nimrod's fire (Surat 21:51-71; 29:16, 17; 37:97,98) originated in the Midrash Rabbah.

- The Talmud provided to the Qur'an the story of Moses' resurrection (Surah 2:55-57)

- The story of the golden calf which was made by Israel in the wilderness, in which the image actually leaps out of the fire and moos, comes from the *Pirke of Rabbi Eleazer*.

- Lastly, the seven heavens and hells described at various points in the Qur'an can similar be found in the Zohar and the Hagigah.

Heretical Christian sources also provided a source of inspiration to Mohammed. The fingerprints of Gnostic and heretical sects can be seen at several points in the teachings of Mohammed. For example, the Quranic definition of the Trinity, consisting of God, Jesus, and Mary, was a doctrine held by a small Arabian pseudo-Christian group known as the Collyridians, with whom the Arabs apparently had some contact. That heretical Christian groups exerted a strong influence on the developing Arab theology and beliefs has been demonstrated repeatedly by scholars of Islam<sup>15,16</sup>. Two examples of fanciful stories which were taught by heretical groups and which found their way into the Qur'an are the story of Jesus' speaking from the cradle as an infant (Surat 3:49, 100:110) and the story of Jesus moulding a bird from clay and then breathing life into it (Surah 5:110). These were stories passed down from various Gnostic sources.

## Trappings of Paganism Introduced into Quranic Teaching

Related to the above, we must also note that Mohammed introduced many pagan rituals and activities into his new religion, the large share of these finding root in the pagan pre-Islamic days of Arabia. The Sabeans, an Arabian group whose religion was centred about the worship of astral bodies, saw much of their worship style mimicked by Islam.

“Muhammad incorporated parts of the religion of the Sabeans into Islam.” <sup>17</sup>

This included such well-known Muslim worship activities as worshipping at sacred stones (the Kaabah, for Islam), praying five times a day towards a sacred geographical location (Mecca, for Islam), and fasting for part of a day for an entire month (Ramadan, for Islam).

Less certain, but also suspected, is that the Muslim activity of throwing stones at Satan finds its origins in a pre-Islamic pagan ritual in which stones were thrown to symbolically drive away jinn and other evil spirits. Muslim tradition itself indicates to us that Mohammed had much to do with the jinn, as he was a shaman who could control the spirits which resided in rocks, trees, and bodies of water. <sup>18</sup> Mohammed himself was even said to have been at various times bewitched and under satanic inspiration <sup>19</sup>. These evidences provide additional support to the contention that much of Islam is repackaged pre-Islamic Arabian paganism.

## Mistakes, Inconsistencies, and Imperfections in the Qur'an

Any book making the claim to be God's Word ought therefore to be free from demonstrable error. The Bible has withstood every test of literary, logical, historical, archaeological, and scientific truth and accuracy brought against it by sceptics and unbelievers. Can the same be said for the Qur'an?

The answer as can be shown is NO. Muslims claim the Qur'an is preserved and inspired, and point to Surah 85:21-22 as proof, “Nay, this is a Glorious Qurán, (Inscribed) in a Tablet Preserved!” The Qur'an is claimed, as an impregnable dogma, to be written in perfect Arabic, said to be “Allah's language”, as a basis of its absence of error. This claim is made in Surah 13:37,

“Thus have We revealed it to be a judgment of authority in Arabic. Wert thou to follow their (vain) desires after the knowledge which hath reached thee, then wouldst thou find neither protector nor defender against Allah.”

This claim is further refined,

“We know indeed that they say, “It is a man that teaches him.” The tongue of him they wickedly point to is notably foreign, while this is Arabic, pure and clear.” (Surah 16:103)

Surah 12:2 and Surah 41:41,44 are also often used to support this dogma, with the notion being that if Allah does something, it must be perfect, so his revelation of the Qur'an in Arabic means that the text in Arabic must be perfect. However, study of the Quranic Arabic shows this to not be true. Critical Muslim scholar Ali Dashti makes this comment concerning the Quranic text,

“The Qur'an contains sentences which are incomplete and not fully intelligible without the aid of commentaries; foreign words, unfamiliar Arabic words, and words used with other than the normal meaning; adjectives and verbs inflected without observance of the concords of number and number; illogically and ungrammatically applied pronouns which sometimes have no referent; and predicates which in rhymed passages are often remote from the subjects <sup>20</sup>.....To sum up, more than one hundred Qur'anic aberrations from the normal rules and structure of Arabic have been noted <sup>21</sup>.”

The Qur'an has many grammatical errors in the Arabic, a partial listing being errors in Surat 2:177, 3:59, 4:162, 5:69, 7:160, and 63:10. A detailed exposition of the errors in the Arabic has been provided by Dr. Anis Shorosh, a Palestinian Christian and native Arabic speaker <sup>22</sup>. These errors demonstrate the fallibility of the Arabic text of the Qur'an. In a further exposition on the subject, Rafiqul-Haqq and Newton have provided detailed demonstrations of how the Qur'an uses grammatically unsound Arabic at several points (Surat 2:177, 3:59, 4:162, 5:69, 7:56, 7:160, 21:3, 22:19, 41:11, 49:9, 63:10, and 91:5) and provide the correct readings according to standard rules of classical Arabic grammar<sup>23</sup>.

Additionally, the Quranic Arabic cannot be considered “pure” because of the inclusion of many foreign words into the text. These words include “*Pharaoh*” (Egyptian, repeated 84 times), “*Haroot, Maroot, sirat, hoor, tilmeeth, jinn, and firdaus*” (Persian/Farsi words), “*heber, sakinah, maoon, turat, and jehannim*” (Hebrew words), “*taboot, taghouth, zakat, and malakout*” (Syriac words), and “*injl*”, (Arabisation of ‘eua[n]ggelion’, Greek word for ‘good news’, referring to the Gospels) <sup>24</sup>. In his foundational study of Syriac influences on the Qur'an, Mingana noted several points where the Qur'an had either directly borrowed words from Syriac (a Christian liturgical tongue used throughout Syria, Mesopotamia, and Northern Arabia at the time), or else adopted foreign meanings for native words which were derived from their cognate usage in Syriac<sup>25</sup>. Many of these words which entered into the Qur'an were drawn directly from Christian usage, including terms such as “resurrection” and “Messiah”. Despite the age of Dr. Mingana's research, it still remains foundational to understanding on this point, as his evidences and conclusions have been little assailed by the intervening decades of Quranic research.

If Arabic is the language of Allah, and therefore perfect, than why the need for the inclusion of words from other languages, when there are perfectly viable Arabic alternatives for each word listed above which could have been used?

The Qur'an contains several outright scientific errors:

- In Surah 23:14, the embryo is said to be formed from a joining of the sperm with a clot of blood. This incorrect view entirely ignores the equally important presence of the female ova (egg), and the process of fertilisation which occurs between the egg and the sperm. Further, in Surah 86:6, the Qur'an informs us that semen originates in a region of the body between the



kidneys and the spine, which is obviously wrong, but which yet reflects a widespread belief of the time which originated with the Greek physician Hippocrates in the 5th century BC, and continued after him for many centuries.

- In Surah 18:86, the Qur'an says that a traveler sees the sun sets in a spring of murky water, and in 18:90 this same traveler finds the specific point at which the sun rises. We know, of course, that the sun does not set into a murky spring of water, and further that the earth is not flat, which is presupposed by the finding of specific places where it rises and sets.

- In Surah 51:49, the Qur'an claims that Allah made everything in pairs. However, we know that there are several species of plants, animals, and monerons which reproduce asexually through parthenogenesis, and which have only one gender, or really no gender at all.

- Surat 21:31 and 31:10 both seem to claim that mountains exist to prevent earthquakes, something which both science and simple observation demonstrate to be false.

-In Surah 25:61, the Qur'an intimates that the moon gives its own light. In this verse, the word *muneer* is used to describe the light of the moon. The phrase used here in the Arabic is "feeha sirajan waqamaran muneeran". It appears as the bold portion of the verse, "Blessed is He Who made constellations in the skies, and placed **therein a Lamp and a Moon giving light**". In this verse, the sun is referred to as the "siraj", a word meaning "a bright lamp or light". However, "muneer" is an adjective which describes the light produced by an object. Four times in the Qur'an, the word "muneer" is used to describe the light of illumination or enlightenment provided by the Qur'an itself (in a figurative sense, of course), in Surat 3:184; 22:8, 31:20, and 35:35. Would Muslims suggest that the Qur'an reflects the enlightenment from another, or rather that it is the **source** of enlightenment? Further, in Surah 33:46, the enlightenment which Mohammed was said to bring is described as "wasirajan muneeran", thus demonstrating that "muneer" is an adjective describing "siraj". Thus, the "muneer" of the moon, from the way these words are used elsewhere in the Qur'an, can be said to originate from the moon itself, an obvious scientific error.

However, this has not stopped Muslim apologists from trying to "prove" miraculously prognostic scientific knowledge in the Qur'an. Most all of these claims are so tendentious and strained in their exegesis that the average reader could easily see through the arguments. Some of the more modern claims, in fact, rely on blatant misunderstanding of science, or misinterpretation of science to make it appear to correlate with the Qur'an. A couple of these are presented for the reader's examination below:

- Certain Muslim apologists will claim that Surah 79:30 (based upon what has been shown to be a mistranslation of the word *dahaha*) states that the earth is egg-shaped. The claim is that this statement shows that the Qur'an gives advanced knowledge of the slightly non-spherical shape of the earth. However, the earth is an oblate spheroid (having an equatorial radius greater than the polar radius, i.e. a "squashed" sphere). A bird's egg, the type which can at least be inferred from other Quranic usage of the term "egg", is a prolate spheroid (having an equatorial radius less than the polar radius, i.e. an "elongated" sphere). Thus, the earth's shape actually departs

from the shape of a true sphere in the opposite direction from what is claimed by some Muslim apologists.

- In Surah 57:25, many Muslim apologists will claim that the reference to Allah "sending down iron" is a miraculous foreknowledge of modern scientific understanding concerning the appearance of iron in the solar system. Since the latest cosmological theories state that iron entered the solar system from outside, as the sun is not hot enough to produce iron *in situ*, the "sending down" of iron reflects this. Of course, such an interpretation, which presupposes the truth of the evolutionary bases which underlie the scientific theory, flatly contradicts the instantaneous creation taught by the Qur'an (Surah 2:117) where Allah says, "Be! And it is." Even disregarding this, the argument is flawed if we assume the cosmological theories to be true. These theories state that the solar system formed from the gravitationally-induced aggregation of pre-existing elements (from the Big Bang, previous supernovae, take your pick) which over time formed the planets, moons, the sun, etc. Now, if iron were present in the solar system at the time of its theoretical formation, then it would have been incorporated into the earth at that time. Yet, the phraseology "we sent down" (using the Arabic term *nazal*, meaning "to bring down, to cast down") presupposes that the earth was already in existence at the time of the sending down of iron (else there would be nothing to send it down to, as the plain understanding of the Arabic clearly says). Hence, the apologists' argument as an attempt to ingratiate Islam to modern science does not stand firm in the face of reasoned investigation.

On a further note, I have actually seen some Muslim apologists go beyond this and claim that it is miraculous that the Surah containing this verse (entitled *Al-Hadid*, "The Iron") is numbered (in the order of how the surat are arranged) the same as the atomic weight of iron. However, since *Al-Hadid* is the 57th surah in the current arrangement, and the atomic weight of iron is 55.847 daltons (which we can charitably round to 56), the argument seems to be mooted. Even in the face of this, some apologists will yet argue that, if one does not count *Al-Fatiha* (the opening surah of the Qur'an, Surah 1), then *Al-Hadid* is number 56 and thus falls into line with the atomic weight of iron. I find this interesting because at **no other time** would any sort of modern orthodox Muslim suggest ignoring or removing any surah of the Qur'an!

Interestingly, this claim that Allah (or other deity) sent down iron to mankind did not originate in the Qur'an. Instead, this belief that iron was sent down from heaven has a long history among many ancient peoples all around the Mediterranean and the Near East. This belief, as pointed out by Bauval<sup>26</sup>, likely originated from the meteoritic origin of the iron which probably formed the first major sources of iron for ancient man. Among the ancient Egyptians, iron was known by the word "*Bja*", a word which also had the meaning "material of which heaven was made", indicating a belief on the part of the Egyptians of a divine origin for iron<sup>27</sup>. McCall tells us that the Phrygians of the 7th century BC worshipped a cone-shaped iron meteorite<sup>28</sup>, and Bauval also gives several examples of stones which "fell to earth" that were venerated by ancient peoples, including the black meteorite enshrined in the Muslim Ka'abah. Hence, this story in the Qur'an has clear pre-Islamic pagan origins.

The Qur'an holds within its pages some historical inaccuracies, as well:

## Myth #2 The Qur'an is Allah's Perfect and Complete Word

- In Surah 28:38, Pharaoh (the king of Egypt) orders Haman to begin making baked bricks in a kiln out of clay, this during the time of Moses. Historical evidence demonstrates that the Egyptians at this time built their buildings out of two materials: cut stone and **sun-dried** bricks. The Egyptians would not have baked their bricks (a practice not introduced to Egypt until the Roman era), but made them and dried them in the heat of the sun <sup>29</sup>.

- In Surah 20:87 and 20:95, the Jews are said to have made the golden calf idol at the behest of the Samaritans, a group of people who did not exist until around the time of the Post-Exilic period, nearly eight centuries after the Exodus.

The Qur'an in several points also makes mistakes regarding the beliefs of non-Muslims groups with whom Mohammed had contact. One example which was discussed above is the erroneous Quranic teaching on the Trinity, or more properly, what Christian beliefs about the Trinity supposedly are. The Qur'an says that Christians join two gods with Allah, and that the Trinity is composed of God, Jesus, and Mary. This composition is not the historic Trinity which was accepted by the vast bulk of Christendom. Instead, this "Trinity" which Mohammed railed against in the Qur'an was a heretical construction of the Collyridians, who were steeped in Mariolatry. The historical trinitarian understanding of the Trinity (as was later defined in the Athanasian Creed) was quite broadly established throughout Christendom at least two centuries before Mohammed, and evidence for the trinitarian belief exists from the very start of the churches. However, Allah somehow missed the teaching of the vast bulk of the early churches, which was that the Trinity is God being ONE in essence while THREE in persons, and instead revealed to Mohammed that Christians believed the Trinity to be God, Jesus, and Mary. In other words, Allah apparently made a mistake, and did not understand what was the true teaching of Christianity, and what was the false teaching of heretics.

Further, we note that in Surah 9:30, the Qur'an attributes to the Jews the belief that Ezra (Uzair) was the son of God. This is not a belief which has been expounded by Jewish theologians and teachers, however, and is thus another error which Allah purportedly makes concerning the beliefs of a non-Muslim group.

Also, we must note the Quranic fascination with referring to Jesus as "Isa". Muslims maintain, based upon the authority of the Qur'an, that Isa is the true name for Jesus in the Arabic language. However, this is not the case. Instead, "Yasu" is the Arabic form of Jesus, (itself a Hellenisation of the Hebrew "Yeshua"). The Arabic form of Jesus is clearly shown to us to have been "Yasu" among Arabians who lived even before Mohammed's time:

"Mr. G. Lankaster Harding, Chief Curator of Antiquities Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan, kindly sent me copies of a little more than five hundred Thamudic inscriptions....It is the inscription [Harding No. 476] that interests us here....Below the circle there are four letters: a y, a sh, a <sup>c</sup>, and again a y. These letters are so placed that they can be read from right to left or from left to right y-sh-<sup>c</sup>, probably pronounced Yashû<sup>c</sup>, and this name is the same as Yêshûa<sup>c</sup>, the Hebrew form of the name of Christ. It is known that Yêshûa<sup>c</sup>, is the later pronunciation of Yêhoshûa<sup>c</sup> or Joshua; it was used after the Exile in order to avoid the immediate sequence of two dark vowels (o and u). Of course, it is well known that the Christians whose language is Arabic commonly use the form Yasû<sup>c</sup>." <sup>30</sup>

Further, in page 18 of this article, Littman says that the form "Yasuc" represents "the ancient Arabic name of Jesus", and "Inscription Harding No. 476 is the oldest native document of Christianity of Northern Arabia known so far."<sup>31</sup>

What this means to us is that this form, "Yasu", is the name by which Jesus was known in the most ancient inscriptions in the Arabic language, of which Thamudic is an archaic form. This construction appears amazingly similar to the Hebrew "Yeshua" or "Yehoshua", and the Aramaic "Yeshua" (seen in Ezra 5:1, a passage written in Aramaic, which appears in the English Bible as Jeshua, and is the same name with the same meaning "Jehovah saves"). Hence, initially, the Arabs appear to have referred to Jesus with the name Yasu, not Isa as Muslims and the Qur'an claim.<sup>32</sup>

Where did the name "Isa" come from then? Isa is the Arabic form of the name "Esau". That this is true is even admitted by Muslim apologists:

"The Holy Quran refers to Jesus as "Eesa", and this name is used more times than any other title, because this was his "Christian" name. Actually, his proper name was "Eesa" (Arabic), or "Esau". (Hebrew); classical "Yeheshua", which the Christian nations of the West Latinised as Jesus. Neither the "J" nor the second "s" in the name Jesus is to be found in the original tongue - they are not found in the Semitic language....The word is very simply - "E S A U" - a very common Jewish name, used more than sixty times in the very first booklet alone of the Bible, in the part called "Genesis". There was at least one "Jesus" sitting on the "bench" at the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin. Josephus the Jewish historian mentions some twenty five Jesus' in his "Book of Antiquities". The New Testament speaks of "Bar-Jesus" - a magician and a sorcerer, a false prophet (Act 13:6); and also "Jesus-Justus" - a Christian missionary, a contemporary of Paul (Colossians 4:11). These are distinct from Jesus the son of Mary. Transforming "Esau" to (J)esu(s) - Jesus - makes it unique. This unique (?) name has gone out of currency among the Jews and the Christians from the 2nd century after Christ. Among the Jews, because it came to be the proper name of their God(?) - their God incarnate. The Muslim will not hesitate to name his son - "Eesa" - because it is an honoured name, the name of a righteous servant of the Lord."<sup>33</sup>

While Deedat makes some mistakes in his analysis above (such as claiming that Esau is a "common Jewish name", the sixty times which the name is used in the Old Testament all refer to one individual, the brother of Jacob), the essential point of his writing is evident -- Isa is the name for Esau. The rest of his analysis is inaccurate, as he is trying to show that the name "Esau" was the name which Jesus came from in the New Testament. Both the Greek "Jesus" and the Hebrew/Aramaic "Yeshua" mean "Jehovah saves", while Esau means "hairy". However, his admission to the truth of Isa equaling Esau speaks volumes.

What was the source of Isa being applied to Jesus in the Qur'an? Nobody knows for sure, though the most plausible explanation to date is that certain Jews with whom the Arabs had contact, in an effort to insult the Lord Jesus, told them that the Son of God worshipped by Christians was "Isa", thereby applying the name of Jacob's hated brother Esau to the hated Christian Saviour. This claim, however, rests on much hearsay, and thus should be taken with a grain of salt.

## Myth #2 The Qur'an is Allah's Perfect and Complete Word

Perhaps the Arabs at the time of the infiltrations into Syro-Palestine simply misunderstood the hearing or reading of the name, and began to refer to Jesus as "Isa" out of simple mistaken understanding. What should be clear to us, though, is that the Quranic use of "Isa" rests upon a name for Christ which was NOT His name, even in the Arabic. Is it really likely that an omnipotent, omniscient deity such as Allah is claimed to be would make such a simple error as to misname one of his prophets?

The Qur'an also contains many internal self-contradictions and logically problematic statements:

- The heavens and the earth were created by Allah in six days, according to Surat 7:54, 10:3, 11:7, and 25:59; but it took eight days, according to Surah 41:9-12.
- In Surah 22:47, Allah's day equals 1000 human years, but in Surah 70:4, a day to Allah is reckoned as 50,000 human years.
- Evil that befalls human beings is alternatively viewed to be from Allah (Surah 4:78), from ourselves (Surah 4:79), and from Satan (Surah 38:41), with two of these contradictions occurring side by side!
- The punishment for adultery is flogging with 100 stripes for both sexes in Surah 24:2, versus lifelong house arrest for the woman and no punishment upon repentance for the man in Surah 4:15-16.
- Satan is viewed as misleading and misguiding people in Surah 4:119-120, but Allah is said to perform this in Surah 16:93.
- Surah 2:256 claims that there must be no compulsion in religion, yet Surah 8:38-39 commands Muslims to fight until all religion but Islam is done away with. Similarly, Surah 45:14 tells Muslims to forgive unbelievers, while Surah 9:29 commands them to fight unbelievers.

In addition to this short list, there are literally dozens of other contradictions which point to the Qur'an as being a flawed book. See a more complete listing [here](#).

In conclusion, we see that the Qur'an cannot legitimately claim divine inspiration and/or preservation. It has many errors, inconsistencies, and a history of corruptions. The Qur'an is an imperfect book, and cannot be claimed as the work of a perfect and complete God. The same charges cannot be made against the Bible, however, which has withstood every attack upon it made by unbelievers.

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## End Notes

- (1) - S. Abul Ala Maudadi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, pp. 81-82

## Myth #2 The Qur'an is Allah's Perfect and Complete Word

- (2) - G. Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qur'an*, p. 147
- (3) - Dr. D.A. Waite, *Defending the King James Bible*, pp. 24-25
- (4) - Dr. D.A. Waite, *Defending the King James Bible*, p. 27
- (5) - Dr. D.A. Waite, *Defending the King James Bible*, p. 56
- (6) - J. Burgon, *The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels Vindicated and Established*, pp. ix-x
- (7) - F.G. Kenyon, *Handbook of the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, pp. 321-322
- (8) - W.N. Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, p. 54
- (9) - K. Lake, R.P. Blake, and S. New, "The Caesarian Text of the Gospel of Mark," *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 21 (1928), p. 349
- (10) - C.G. Pfander, *The Mizan-ul-Haqq: Balance of Truth*, p. 283
- (11) - *The Concise Dictionary of Islam*, ed. Cyril Glassé, p. 229
- (12) - J. Jomier, *The Bible and the Quran*, pp. 59ff
- (13) - Canon Sell, *Studies in Islam*, pp. 163ff
- (14) - A. Guillaume, *Islam*, p. 13
- (15) - R. Bell, *The Origin of Islam in Its Christian Environment*, pp. 110ff, 139ff
- (16) - Canon Sell, *Studies in Islam*, pp. 216ff
- (17) - *Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. M. Eliade, pp. 303ff
- (18) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, no. 470; vol. 5, no. 199
- (19) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 4, nos. 400, 490
- (20) - Ali Dashti, *23 Years: A Study of the Prophetic Career of Mohammed*, p.48
- (21) - Ali Dashti, *23 Years: A Study of the Prophetic Career of Mohammed*, p.50
- (22) - A. Shorrosh, *Islam Revealed: A Christian Arab's View of Islam*, pp. 199-200
- (23) - M. Rafiqul-Haqq and P. Newton, *The Qur'an: Grammatical Errors*, <http://debate.domini.org/newton/grammar.html>
- (24) - A. Shorrosh, *Islam Revealed: A Christian Arab's View of Islam*, p. 199
- (25) - A. Mingana, "Syraic Influence on the Style of the Koran", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. 11 (1927), p. 84-5, 87 - A detailing of these can be found in my essay specifically addressing this issue at <http://www.studytoanswer.net/islam/purearabic.html>

## Myth #2 The Qur'an is Allah's Perfect and Complete Word

- (26) - R. Bauval, "Investigation on the origins of the Benben Stone: Was It An Iron Meteorite?", *Discussions in Egyptology*, Vol. 14 (1989)
- (27) - see G.A. Wainwright, "Iron in Egypt", *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, Vol. 18 (1931), p. 11
- (28) - G.J.H. McCall, *Meteorites and Their Origins*, p. 17
- (29) - G. Maspero, H. Grevel, *Manual of Egyptian Archaeology*, p. 3
- (30) - E. Littman, "Jesus in a Pre-Islamic Arabic Inscription," *Muslim World*, 1950, vol. xi, p. 16.
- (31) - E. Littman, "Jesus in a Pre-Islamic Arabic Inscription," *Muslim World*, 1950, vol. xi, p. 18.
- (32) - please note - the <sup>◌</sup> used in the above is a graphical representation of the "ayin", a soft guttural semi-consonant found in most Semitic languages, very difficult for Westerners to imitate as there is no real analogue in most Indo-European languages. It can be approximated by elongating an "ahh" sound in the back of the throat.
- (33) - A. Deedat, *Christ in Islam*, Ch. 2

## Theology

### ***Myth #3 Allah is the Same as the God of the Bible***

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This statement is usually made by those who attempt to associate Christianity and Islam together in the spirit of ecumenism, with perhaps the eventual goal of unity between the two. Often, the claim is also made by Muslims who seek to assuage Christian opposition to Islam, often as a prelude to *dawah*, extending an “invitation” to accept Islam. To promote this, the superficial characteristic of monotheism is emphasised, while the vast differences between God and Allah are ignored.

### **The Attributes of God in the Bible versus Allah in the Qur’an**

There are many differences between the attributes of God and of Allah. First, there is the attribute of knowability, the idea that human beings may know God and enjoy a personal relationship with the Creator. God, as He is revealed in the Bible, allows Himself to be known and fellowshiped with on a personal basis by those who have trusted in Him through His Son Jesus Christ. John 17:3 says, “And this is life eternal, that they might *know* thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” The Bible presents God as a being who reveals Himself to man, and who encourages us to learn of Him and enter into ever closer fellowship with Him. The Bible presents God who had a personal relationship with Abraham such that Abraham was called “The friend of God.” The God of the Bible wants for mankind to come to Him, be cleansed of their sins, and enjoy this close personal fellowship. “Draw nigh unto God, and *he will draw nigh to you*. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.” (James 4:8)

Contrast this with the Quranic description of Allah as unknowable. Indeed, in Islam, it is considered blasphemous to “presume” that one can know God or claim any sort of close, personal fellowship with Allah. This theological view developed early in Islam, being espoused by al-Ghazali. Shehadi summarises al-Ghazali’s teachings on this point,

“The end result of the knowledge of the *`arifin* [ed. note - a term denoting “the knowers”] is their inability to know Him, and their knowledge is, in truth, that they do not know Him and that it is absolutely impossible for them to know Him.”<sup>1</sup>

This view is also understood among modern Islamic scholarship, where the statement of al-Faruqi is representative,

“He [God] does not reveal Himself to anyone in any way. God reveals only His will. Remember one of the prophets asked God to reveal Himself and God told him, “No, it is not possible for Me to reveal Myself to anyone. “...This is God’s will and that is all we have, and we have it in perfection in the Qur’an. But Islam does not equate the Qur’an with the nature or essence of



God. It is the Word of God, the Commandment of God, the Will of God. But God does not reveal Himself to anyone. Christians talk about the revelation of God Himself - by God of God - but that is the great difference between Christianity and Islam. God is transcendent, and once you talk about self-revelation you have hierophancy and immanence, and then the transcendence of God is compromised. You may not have complete transcendence and self-revelation at the same time.”<sup>2</sup>

Allah is considered unknowable, transcendent, so exalted that he would never lower himself to treat with man on a personal level of friendship and fellowship. Allah is thus presented in the abstract, and ends up becoming little more than a mental exercise in theology.

Related to the above is the characteristic of God's personal nature. God, as revealed in the Bible, is a person, not a force. God has emotions, a will, an intellect, He reasons, He can be entreated, He speaks, and so on. As such, God deals with mankind on a personal basis, and this forms the backbone of the fellowship described above. The God of the Bible has chosen to reveal Himself to mankind and to involve Himself in the affairs of mankind in such a way, thus dealing personally with the creations whom He loved enough to send His Son to die for. Thus combined, the personality of God and the desire for fellowship with His creations who are separated from Him by sin, these find their culmination in Christ's work on the cross. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1) Through Christ's death and resurrection, man is able to trust in His sacrifice and be saved to a relationship of peace and fellowship with God. God has willed that man should come to peace with God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Allah in the Qur'an is a non-personal deity. He is a deity to which Islam considers it blasphemous to attribute personhood. Allah is taught to be so transcendent that to try to understand him as a personal being is to lower him to the level of a man and deny his godhood. Allah is presented in the Qur'an as being far-off and aloof, transcendent and impersonal, to be worshipped and feared, but never fellowshiped with or approached in a personal, familiar manner. Even when Allah is described as being “nearer to him than (his) jugular vein” (Surah 50:16), this is more a reference to Allah's omnipresence than it is to his personal care or concern. These differences can be shown in the disparity between the prayers of Christians and those of Muslims. Christians are told to “pray without ceasing” (I Thessalonians 5:17) and can approach God at any time as His children, crying out to Him as a child would to a parent. Christians may cry “Abba [daddy], Father!” (cf. Romans 8:15) and know that their heavenly Father hears and cares about their needs and concerns. Muslims, on the other hand, are required to make ritual prayers five times in a day, prayers which are repetitious and memorised, perfectly designed for addressing and appeasing a transcendent force with no personal interest in its creatures. Additional prayers from a Muslim must still be addressed to an unknowable, impersonal being of whom there is no certain knowledge that he cares or takes notice.

God, as revealed in the Bible, is a God of love who cares for and desires the best for His creations. He is merciful, full of grace and compassion, and seeks to restore a humanity alienated from him by sin. “For God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) We are told in the Bible that God does not desire the damnation of any soul, but wants all to come to Him through

Christ for forgiveness of their sins and reception of eternal life. It is God “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (I Timothy 2:4). God, in his great mercy towards mankind, has provided to mankind an advocate before His heavenly throne, Jesus Christ, who intercedes on behalf of the Christian before the Father, and who shed His blood to free lost and sinful men and women from the wrath of God against sin. “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” (I John 2:1-2) These verses illustrate the position and activity of Christ as both Saviour and Advocate. He is the propitiation for our sins, meaning that the shedding of His sinless blood in sacrifice for us satisfied the demands of God’s wrath against sin, and that this act of grace was performed for the whole world, for every man, woman, and child who has lived and ever will live. Likewise, He is the advocate, the one who stands before the throne of the Father and pleads His own righteousness on behalf of those who have trusted in Him as Saviour, if we sin.

This contrasts with the Quranic Allah, who hates sinners and has made no provision for their reconciliation to him. “.and Allah loveth not those that do wrong.” (Surah 3:140) - “Contend not on behalf of such as betray their own souls; for Allah loveth not one given to perfidy and sin.” (Surah 4:107) - “Those who reject Faith and do wrong,- Allah will not forgive them nor guide them to any way- Except the way of Hell, to dwell therein for ever. And this to Allah is easy.” (Surah 4:168-169) - “And if they turn away, be assured that for some of their crime it is Allah’s purpose to punish them. And truly most men are rebellious.” (Surah 5:49) - “The Unbelievers will be addressed: “Greater was the aversion of Allah to you than (is) your aversion to yourselves, seeing that ye were called to the Faith and ye used to refuse.” (Surah 40:10) As presented in the Qur’an, Allah is a vindictive deity who desires to afflict sinners, not save them. This understanding of Allah seems to be the orthodox Islamic position. Note the passage below:

“This is the covenant which you make with Allah as soon as you recite *La ilaha illallah*, and in doing so you make the whole world your witness. If you violate this covenant, your hand and feet, the minutest hair on your body and every particle of the earth and of the heaven before which you made that false declaration, will render evidence against you in the court of Allah where you will be in the dock in such a helpless condition that not a single defence witness will be available to you. No Advocate or Barrister will be there to plead your case....”<sup>3</sup>

As demonstrated here, breaking the covenant made with Allah, which is the covenant to live and abide by Islamic law and practice, will result in being hauled before the court of Allah completely defenceless, with no hope of ever being either redeemed from your sin or of being saved from the wrath of Allah. Of course, the way in which this covenant is broken is by apostatising from Islam, not by committing some other gross or negligent personal sin. Indeed, the main thrust of the Quranic verses mentioned above seems to be the condemnation of those who “betray their own soul” and who were “called to the faith” and refused, essentially choosing to reject Islam.

Further, the Qur’an contains a great deal about the types of people who Allah hates, usually understood to be those who have rejected Islam, or who will not convert to it:

Transgressors (2:190)

Ungrateful and wicked creatures (2:276)

Those who reject faith (3:32; 30:45)

Those who do wrong (3:57, 140; 42:40)

The arrogant, the vainglorious (4:36; 16:23; 31:18; 57:23)

One given to perfidy and crime (4:107)

Those who do mischief (5:64; 28:77)

Those given to excess (5:87)

Wasters (6:141; 7:31)

Those who trespass beyond bounds (7:55)

Treacherous (8:58)

Ungrateful (22:38)

Those who exult in riches (28:76)

This does not reconcile with the God of the Bible who, while hating sin and the performance of sin, also loves sinners and seeks to turn them from their wicked ways. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while *we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) This passage illustrates to us God’s amazing love, His willingness to send His Son Jesus Christ to die in our place, to take the wrath against sin upon ourselves, even though we are all sinners. Further, God’s attitude toward the damnation and punishment of sinners is shown in Ezekiel 18:23, “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways and live?” While Allah may hate all who are not righteous and even seek their damnation, God loves them and has made abundant provision for them to receive forgiveness and eternal life. Truly, human beings go to hell **in spite of** the undeserved grace which God seeks to give to them.

Lastly, but yet very importantly, we note that the God of the Bible is a *holy* God. By this term is meant that God is completely and unalterably separated from sin. In fact, it is this complete holiness which lies at the very foundation of the necessity of the Christian Gospel. As the Bible tells us, “there is none as holy as the LORD...” (I Samuel 2:2) When the Bible says “none”, it really does mean “none”:

“For there is NONE righteous, no, not one: There is NONE that understandeth, there is NONE that seeketh after God.” (Romans 3:10-11)

“For ALL have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

These statements are directed to each of us, individually. ALL of us are sinners, by nature and by practice, and hence fall short of this glory of God, which is embodied by His holiness, His complete separation from sin. It is this holiness that keeps all of us, sinners that we are, from being able to naturally enter into God’s presence, and which keeps us from being able to enter into heaven when we pass from this earth.

However, the Bible also tells us that God provided a way for us to be saved, for us to receive the gift of eternal life and eternal fellowship with Him, in a way that both upholds His holiness while simultaneously exercising His love for mankind, His creation. This is through Jesus Christ, very God yet very man, God incarnated in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet without sin, so that He could take OUR place under God’s wrath against sin.

“But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ DIED FOR US.” (Romans 5:8)

Jesus Christ, who is God, was completely sinless, and He came to earth to take our place, to provide the sacrifice in our place which was needed to propitiate (satisfy) God’s wrath against sin. Whereas man cannot ever satisfy God because of our sinfulness, Jesus who is sinless, was able to do so, and faith in His sacrifice and in His resurrection (whereby He also defeated death and hell, and provides eternal life to sinner) is the requirement for the extension of God’s grace of salvation to the lost sinner. Further, true repentance is necessary for a sinner to receive grace. It is not enough for a person to merely come to Jesus and say “I’m sorry”. There must be a true, heart-felt attitude of repentance, of a desire to not only be cleansed of sin, but also to turn away from it and put it away from your life. Hence, we see the resolution of the seeming paradox between God’s love for man and desire for man’s fellowship and the fact that man is separated from God because of our sin and is under God’s wrath against sin.

In Islam, this is a paradox that never occurs, because sin is not something which Allah is especially concerned about. In Islam, Allah is not presented as “holy”, in the sense in which Christianity conceives of the idea. The term is used, certainly, but not in the same way as was traditionally understood by the Hebrews concerning Jehovah for thousands of years before Islam, and which was carried into Christianity at its inception. According to Muslim theology, Allah has never provided a way for the sin problem of mankind to be dealt with so that man can be made clean in God’s eyes. In fact, Islam does not even recognise that man is a sinner by nature (as odd as this conclusion may appear to anyone who reads the news). Instead, sin is considered to be a “mistake” which people make, and which Allah will forgive when asked (if one is already a Muslim). So yes, Islam does engender an element of seeking God’s forgiveness for wrongdoing, just as Christianity does, BUT the differences are much more important than this superficial similarity. The Islamic teaching on getting right with Allah completely ignores true repentance. There is nothing said about making a complete change of life when a person gets right with God. There is nothing about making a conscious choice to avoid sin because that is what God wants and because we are to be holy as God is holy (cf. I Peter 1:15-16). According to Biblical teaching, repentance is summed up as such,

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth **and forsaketh** them shall have mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)

However, in Islam the primary sins which a person can commit and not receive easy forgiveness from Allah seem to be apostasy from Islam and the refusal to convert to Islam (as was seen above in Maududi’s statement). For these there is little remedy, and much attribution of moral reprobacy and “obvious” inferiority. Indeed, it seems that the teaching of Islam on sin is more designed to assure that people do not reject Islam as a politico-religious system than to encourage them to keep themselves from sin. The Islamic teachings on apostasy/disbelief versus other sins appears to be more concerned with advancing Islam as a human system than on turning people towards Allah in any meaningful way.

In Islam, a person commits a sin, and can have this sin forgiven merely by asking, but then can go out and commit the same sin over and over again, each time asking for forgiveness, and having it given. This attitude is quite similar to the attitude exhibited through the confessional by many Roman Catholics. This is also why we see so much violence and corruption in the Muslim world.

“For these, there is hope that Allah will forgive: For Allah doth blot out (sins) and forgive again and again.” (Surah 4:99)

Jehovah, as presented in the Bible, does bear long with man, and will forgive us our sins again and again, BUT the difference is that when a person has trusted Christ, the Spirit of God will work in them to make them more Christ-like, which includes sinning less, and certainly not having a life which is characterised by sin.

“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.” (I John 3:6)

In this verse, the word “sinneth” is translated from a Greek construction which indicates an on-going state of affairs, as opposed to single instances. What this verse says is that a person who is truly saved, who truly abides with Christ, will not have a life characterised by on-going sin and a corresponding lack of repentance. This is, in fact, a way which is provided for Christians to be able to distinguish between true brethren and false brethren who are only saying that they are Christians.

The Islamic view does not take this into account. Saying “I’m sorry” is enough for Allah. There is no provision in Islam made for the removal of that person’s sin, the washing away of the sin stain from the heart, as God has made through the blood of the Lamb of God, Christ Jesus. In fact, Allah is unholy because he does not NEED, according to Islam, such a provision. Allah is not separated from sin, and will allow unwashed sinners into his presence for all eternity, indicating that Allah really has no separation from sin which comes from pure holiness. Instead of a God-given provision for the removal of sin, Allah is satisfied merely with man’s works and man’s own “goodness”.

“O Prophet! say to those who are captives in your hands: “If Allah findeth any good in your hearts, He will give you something better than what has been taken from you, and He will forgive you: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Surah 8:70)

In this passage above, it is taught that Allah will forgive captive prisoners of war who fall into Muslim hands, IF these prisoners have good in their hearts, usually understood to be a willingness to accept Islam. Thus, it is taught that inherent goodness in men (or at least some men) will be enough to provoke Allah’s forgiveness. This teaching basically affirms the Muslim contention that man is inherently good, and that sin is not truly a barrier which separates man from God. The Islamic teaching is essentially MAN-CENTRED, not God-centred.

This Islamic teaching that man can be good at heart contradicts what God says in Jeremiah 17:9,

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

Further, the Qur’an teaches that not all sin needs to be actively forgiven. Merely staying away from the major sins (Islam’s equivalent to mortal sins?) will automatically result in your “small” sins (Islam’s venial sins?) being overlooked by Allah:

“If you shun the great sins which you are forbidden, We will do away with your small sins and cause you to enter an honorable place of entering.” (Surah 4:31, Pickthal translation)

Hence, as long as you do not murder (at least outside of jihad, one supposes) or rape or blaspheme, it is acceptable for you to lie a little bit or to maybe sneak an adulterous glance every now and then, so the logical conclusion of the teaching seems to be. What we see is that the combination of these teachings yields a sanctioning of sin in a person’s life. After all, stay away from the major sins, and the minor ones are automatically forgiven. If you do commit a major sin, then merely asking for forgiveness (even if you do not have true repentance, and just want to get out of the supernatural punishment for your sin) gets you off scot-free.

Islam’s teachings on sin, like those of every other world religious system aside from Bible Christianity, is engineered to appeal to worldly, sinful people through its teaching that human beings really are not that bad (and can be inherently good!), that God will look the other way for some sins, that sin is not a big deal which we have to go changing our way of life over, etc. It is designed, just as with much of the rest of Islamic theology, to appeal to carnal people and to tickle the ears of the unrepentant sinner.

## **Traces of Pre-Islamic Paganism in Attitude and Practice**

Indeed, this Islamic attitude towards sin and forgiveness is typical of the pre-Islamic pagan attitudes which existed in the ancient Semitic world. In this sense, Allah is little different from the gods of the pagans before Islamic times. Smith notes concerning this attitude in pre-Islamic paganism,

“To reconcile the forgiving goodness of God with His absolute justice, is one of the highest problems of spiritual religion, which in Christianity is solved by the doctrine of the atonement. It is important to realise that in heathenism this problem never arose in the form in which the New Testament deals with it, not because the gods of the heathen were not conceived as good and gracious, but because they were not absolutely just. This lack of strict justice, however, is not to be taken as meaning that the gods were in their nature unjust, when measured by the existing standards of social righteousness; as a rule they were conceived as sympathising with right conduct, but not as rigidly enforcing it in every case. To us, who are accustomed to take an abstract view of the divine attributes, this is difficult to conceive, but it seemed perfectly natural when the divine sovereignty was conceived as a kingship precisely similar to human kingship.”<sup>4</sup>

This conception of deity contains an imperfectly just god because it is patterned off of the imperfect justice of a temporal, human ruler. Just as a human ruler may at times fail to act against a crime, for whatever reason, so might the gods. Indeed, the imperfect justice of the gods meant that no reconciliation may need to be made between the sinner and the god because the god might not punish the sinner for his evil deeds. Indeed, the justice, when applied, might be perverted towards favourites of the ruler or the god. That this is implied even in the Qur’an can be seen,

“Whether thou 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.” (Surah 9:80)

Whereas the God of the Bible is “no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34) not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (cf. II Peter 3:9), Allah guides not those who are “rebellious”, instead seeking their damnation. If you have not been the recipient of Allah’s apparently capricious favour, then there is no remedy for you.

Other aspects of pre-Islamic pagan religious systems were transferred into the Arab religion as it developed. The setting aside of *haram*, sanctuaries or sacred precincts devoted to a certain god or gods, was a common trait in all primitive Semitic religion. These were regions in which human cultivation or other agricultural activity were prohibited, because the area was sanctified to the god of the *haram* and could not be soiled by human labour. The *haram* often were associated with settled regions, and would generally be overseen by a hereditary priest who was not necessarily associated with the dominant tribe or tribes of the area. Despite their nomadic nature, the Beduoin tribes would frequent these areas for worship and other religious duties. Concerning Beduoin worship at these sanctuaries, Rodinson says,

“...Homage was paid to the divinity with offerings and the sacrifice of animals and perhaps, occasionally, of human beings. Certain sanctuaries were the object of pilgrimage (hajj) at which a variety of rituals were performed, consisting notably of ceremonial processions around the sacred object. Certain prohibitions had to be observed during these rituals, such as in many cases abstention from sexual relations. Magic was common. People feared the evil eye and protected themselves with amulets.”<sup>5</sup>



This sort of ritualism was carried over into Islam, at the *haram* in Mecca known as the Kaabah. We can see the precursors of the Muslim *hajj*, the fasting of Ramadan (which includes sexual abstinence during daylight hours), the kissing of the sacred black stone at the Kaabah in many of the reported details of early Arabian paganism. For instance, the Muslim *hajj* to the Kaabah, involving the circumambulation of that structure, was a well-known pagan practice in pre-Islamic times, where it was recorded that Mohammed's own tribe would circle the Kaabah and sing hymns to "the daughters of Allah"<sup>6</sup>.

Another aspect of this ritualistic worship in the Kaabah bears some attention. This is the veneration of the black stone of the Kaabah, reputed in some Muslim traditions to have fallen from heaven, after which it served as the centre about which Abraham built the original Kaabah. The veneration of sacred stones or pillars was common to ancient Semitic religious systems. Henninger discusses this,

"One detail which already impressed the Greek authors was the role played by sacred stones.....the material object is not venerated for itself but rather as the dwelling of either a person being (god, spirit) or a force."<sup>7</sup>

Dussaud agrees with this assessment, denying this veneration any overtly litholatric character, and instead recognising that the worshippers were really directing their honour towards the deity who inhabited or could be contained within the stone<sup>8</sup>. Hitti stated that among the Nabataeans Dushara, the Nabataean high god, was worshipped through an obelisk of rough-hewn black stone<sup>9</sup>. He also reports that black, conical stones were venerated in the Baalbek temple in Syria in the later Roman period<sup>10</sup>. At Emesa, another city in northern Syria, a black meteorite associated with the solar deity Elagalabus was given reverence<sup>11</sup>.

Thus, Islam demonstrates several traces of pagan practices which were widespread across the ancient Near East before the Arab advent. The toleration and even incorporation of pagan practices and concepts into the worship and conception of Allah is markedly different from the God of the Bible. Throughout the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites to reject and extirpate heathen practices from the nation. Indeed, many of the Old Testament laws which many Christians today think of as strange or overly legalistic (for instance, the prohibitions against marking or cutting the flesh, against the shaving of the head, etc.) were put in place because these were practices which went on in the pagan societies around Israel. God wanted to put a clear distinction between His holy people and their neighbours.

From this comparison of the attributes and attitudes of God and of Allah, we can and should conclude that the two are NOT one and the same. Allah is definitely NOT the God of the Bible.

### **Allah as the Pre-Islamic Arabian High God**

If Allah is not merely God repackaged under a new name, then who IS he? Who is this Allah which nearly a fifth of the world's population bows down to and gives reverence? The answer is somewhat surprising to those who have not studied or read about the pre-Islamic history of the Arabian peninsula or the Middle East.

Belief in Allah was widespread across the Arabian peninsula prior to the rise of Mohammed. However, the Allah worshipped in those days was not the monotheistic Allah which Muslims know today. Rather, Allah was just one of many gods, most often considered to be the highest or supreme god among many in a henotheistic system which was developing in Arabia over the centuries prior to Islam.

“The name Allah, as the Quran itself is witness, was well known in pre-Islamic Arabia. Indeed, both it and its feminine form, Allat, are found not infrequently among the theophorous names in inscriptions from North Arabia.” <sup>12</sup>

“Allah was known to the pre-Islamic Arabs; he was one of the Meccan deities.” <sup>13</sup>

Watt states concerning the pre-Islamic Arabian religious situation,

“In recent years I have become increasingly convinced that for an adequate understanding of the career of Muhammed and that of Islam great importance must be attached to the existence in Mecca of belief in Allah as a ‘high god’. In a sense this is a form of paganism, but it is so different from paganism as commonly understood that it deserves separate treatment.” <sup>14</sup>

However, when remarking that Allah was viewed as a “high god” in Arabia, this must not be understood to say that he was the **only** god worshipped by the pre-Islamic Arabs. Watt elsewhere states,

“The use of the phrase “the Lord of this House” makes it likely that those Meccans who believed in Allah as a high god – and they may have been numerous – regarded the Ka’ba as his shrine, even though there were images of other gods in it. There are stories in the Sira of pagan Meccans praying to Allah while standing beside the image of Hubal.”<sup>15</sup>

Zwemer tells us,

“But history establishes beyond the shadow of a doubt that even the pagan Arabs, before Mohammed’s time, knew their chief god by the name of Allah and even, in a sense, proclaimed his unity....Among the pagan Arabs this term denoted the chief god of their pantheon, the Kaaba, with its three hundred and sixty idols.” <sup>16</sup>

Indeed, though it is typical to think of “Allah” as a name, it is not. In fact, the term “Allah” is a title, a contraction of Arabic words meaning “the god”, indicating the general sense in which “Allah” was used prior to the rise of Islam. Wellhausen noted this nearly a century ago,

“The name ‘Allah’ (from ‘al-Ilah’ = the god or ‘al-Liah’ = the one worshipped) was well used in pre-Islamic times. It was rather a title than a name and was used for a diversity of deities.” <sup>17</sup>

Wellhausen’s observation has become commonly accepted. Lewis, et al. state,

“Ilah...appears in pre-Islamic poetry...By frequency of usage, al-ilah was contracted to allah, frequently attested to in pre-Islamic poetry.”<sup>18</sup>

This is corroborated by Esposito,

“The cult of the deity termed simply ‘the god’ (al-ilah) was known throughout Syria and Northern Arabia in the days before Islam -- Muhammed’s father was named ‘Abd Allah’ (Servant of Allah) -- and was obviously of central importance in Mecca, where the building called the Ka’bah was indisputably his house. Indeed, the Muslims’ ‘shahada’ attests to precisely that point: the Quraysh, the paramount tribe of Mecca, were being called on by Muhammed to repudiate the existence of all the other gods save this one. It seems equally certain that Allah was not merely a god in Mecca but was widely regarded as the ‘high god’, the chief and head of the Meccan pantheon, whether this was the result, as has been argued, of a natural progression toward henotheism, or of the growing influence of Jews and Christians in the Arabian peninsula....Thus Allah was neither an unknown nor unimportant deity to the Quraysh when Mohammed began preaching his worship at Mecca.”<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, the fact that Allah was at one time a single god among many in the pagan Arabian pantheon is accepted by orthodox Islam, which refers to the pre-Islamic period as the *Jahiliya*, the “times of ignorance”. However, Islam’s traditional teaching about the time of ignorance differs from the facts established by investigation into the history and archaeology of the Ancient Near East. Islam recognises that these other gods were at one time worshipped alongside Allah (termed *shirk*, or associationism). However, Islamic dogma also holds that Allah is the same God as which appears in the Bible, in other words, the original monotheistic being with whom mankind later associated false gods out of ignorance and rebellion. Yet, as will be shown below, there does not seem to have ever been a time when Allah (al-ilah) was conceived of as purely monotheistic prior to the rise of Islam, and further, al-ilah, as a title, was at various times applied to false gods whose origins are found in the earliest civilisations of Mesopotamia, and from whom the path to the current Arabian conception of Allah can be traced.

The Kaabah, known as *beit allah*, the “house of Allah”, is purported to have been a centre of pagan worship in the Hijaz region of Arabia for centuries prior to the appearance of Islam. Scholars recognise that it has served as a house of idolatrous worship for its entire traceable history. Gilchrist writes,

“There is no corroborative evidence whatsoever for the Qu’ran’s claim that the Ka’aba was initially a house of monotheistic worship. Instead there certainly is evidence as far back as history can trace the sources and worship of the Ka’aba that it was thoroughly pagan and idolatrous in content and emphasis.”<sup>20</sup>

Van Ess further states,

“In pre-Islamic days, called the Days of Ignorance, the religious background of the Arabs was pagan, and basically animistic. Through wells, trees, stones, caves, springs, and other natural objects man could make contact with the deity....At Mekka, Allah was the chief of the gods and the special deity of the Quraish, the prophet’s tribe. Allah had three daughters: Al-Uzzah (Venus)

most revered of all and pleased with human sacrifice; Manat, the goddess of destiny, and Al-Lat, the goddess of vegetable life....Hubal and more than 300 others made up the pantheon. The central shrine at Mekka was the Kaaba, a cube-like stone structure which still stands though many times rebuilt. Imbedded in one corner is the black stone, probably a meteorite, the kissing of which is now an essential part of the pilgrimage.”<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, there were many “al-ilahs” existing throughout the Semitic world, down to the time of Islam’s development. When the Arab Empire extended its control, first over Syria and Palestine, and later over Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the whole of the Arabian peninsula, it became necessary to fold the various religious beliefs among its new subjects into the bosom of the developing religion of Islam. For the pagan Arabian tribes, this included the syncretisation of the high gods of the various tribes with the “al-ilah” which had been established as the monotheistic god of Islam. Speaking of the various Arabian tribes, Wellhausen originally noted,

“All said, ‘Allah’, but each had its own deity in mind. The expression ‘the god’ (al-ilah), which became the only usage, became the bridge to the concept of an identical god which all tribes had in common.”<sup>22</sup>

Muller observes,

“How Muhammed decided to keep Allah is simply a matter of which god he thought would be universally least offensive to any particular tribe of Arabs around Mecca.”<sup>23</sup>

As will be discussed in Chapter 5, while it is extremely unlikely that Mohammed actually existed, at least in the role to which Islam assigned him in later centuries, there is a strong case to be made for the syncretism of the many pagan “al-ilahs” into Islam which is ascribed to Mohammed by these above. This Allah was the key which the early Muslims used to bring the pagan Arabians firmly into the fold. They introduced to these tribes a monotheistic version of the god al-ilah which they had already been worshipping for centuries, as the title for various gods differing by locality. As Hastings notes,

“In any case it is an extremely important fact that Mohammed did not find it necessary to introduce an altogether novel deity, but contented himself with ridding the heathen Allah of his companions, subjecting him to a kind of dogmatic purification.”<sup>24</sup>

Allah became the bridge for the Muslims to link all the Arabian tribes together under their new religion, Islam. Allah was a generic expression for the idols of Arabia, used by each tribe for its own particular high god, and these became amalgamated into the al-ilah of the state-sponsored religious system of the new Arab Empire.

Where did the “al-ilahs” of the tribes come from, and what were the deities to which these titles referred? What sort of gods were these deities? To begin to trace the development of the deity now known as Allah, we must look to Mesopotamia.

## Ilah and the Sumerian Origins of Allah

The quest for the historical Allah begins in Sumeria, over three millennia before Christ. The Sumerians had a well-organised and highly developed pantheon of gods which they worshipped. The greatest of the Sumerian gods after the distant sky-god Anu (who had little to do with human affairs) was the active and vigorous atmospheric god Enlil. The name “Enlil” is a compounded Sumerian word meaning “lord of the storm/air” (en = lord, lil = storm, air). It is from this god Enlil that we see the beginnings of Allah, for it is from this deity that we find the beginnings of the philological track which leads us to al-Ilah, which was mentioned above as the title (“the god”) which grew to be “Allah” by elision.

Enlil was the principle god of the Sumerian pantheon, ruler of the atmosphere, bringer of winds and storms, and was also known by the epithet of “the great mountain”, perhaps emphasising his great strength or connexion with the cosmic mountain, the seat of divine sovereignty<sup>25</sup>. As stated before, the name “Enlil” is a compound of “en” and “lil”. This latter particle, “lil” is of interest in this discussion because it is the source of the word “il/ilu” which came to mean “god” in the branch of Semitic languages, starting with Akkadian, from which the Arabic word “ilah” ultimately derived.

In the Akkadian civilisation, a Semitic group which occupied the northern part of Mesopotamia, and which was roughly contemporaneous with the Sumerians, Enlil was brought over and introduced to the Semitic world. In Akkad, the pronunciation of his name gradually changed to “Ellil” through assimilation of the *n*. The Akkadian word for “god” was “il” or “ilu”. It is likely that this meaning developed as a result of dropping the first syllable from the name of this high god “Ellil”, leaving behind the “il”. Because of “il”’s position at the head of the pantheon, it would be natural for the meaning of his name to expand beyond the idea of wind and storms to encompass a fuller understanding of his sovereign divinity. Thus, it is likely that the term later used to describe deity throughout Arabia originated from the Sumerian god Enlil as he passed down to later generations of Semites in Akkad and elsewhere.

The “il/lil” root appeared widely throughout Semitic Mesopotamia. It appears in the Semitic name for Babylon (which is a Greek term), “bab ilum”, meaning “gate of the gods”. Roberts demonstrated in his catalogue of the names of gods and goddesses in Sumero-Akkad the great prevalence which the “il” root enjoyed among divine names all the way up to the Ur III period (2115-2000 BC)<sup>26</sup>. Muller shows that this name-form still existed in Mesopotamia as far forward as the Persian period, beginning with the conquest of Babylon in 539 BC. He states that in or around 400 BC,

“...they wrote ‘Allah is exalted’ among other gods. This was found across the river from Babylon, but it shows how Allah had moved his influence well beyond Babylon.”<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the god “il”, often lengthened to “ilah” in northern Arabian languages which penetrated even into southern Mesopotamia by this time, was spreading from his Mesopotamian origins. Indeed, scholars have recognised the origin of the Arabian use of god-names with “il/lil”, and hence the origin of “al-ilah”, as Mesopotamian. Winnett and Reed point out concerning northern Arabian epigraphic finds dated to roughly 500 BC,

“Ancient Sumerian god names concurrently inscribed in the same epigraphs with much more recent god names, is in an inscription in stone from Al-Ula in Northern Arabia, circa 500 BC, just 1000 years before Mohammed. In the same Semitic language dialect, and in the same time frame, are two other names of the gods - Mar-Allah, meaning lord-god, and Adar’IL, a Sardonic contraction using the root form of the name for god from Sumer, Lil....This shows that the basic IL or LIL root form survived for 2500 years, appearing in both names in ancient and recent forms! In Jawf, in the same area and time frame, the feminine form for Allah is found commonly as in Ham’illat (ILAT is the goddess). Also, in inscriptions near oases, Allah and Allat (sometimes ILAT) appear with no descriptive attachments, either in appeals for help in travel, or as part of the signature of the suppliant (like Abdallah - IL root in name!). What does it mean? This means that IL and Allah shared the reverence of the ancient Sumerians, circa 3000 BC, and the Northern Arab tribes in 500 BC. Survival time - 2500 years.”<sup>28</sup>

Thus the term for deity based upon the “il” root became firmly established in Arabia, and many times was used as a personal name, rather than a titular epithet. That it did so to the detriment of the Western Semitic term “El” used by the Hebrews, Aramaeans, Canaanites, and others in the Syro-Palestine region (familiar to us from Biblical names such as Israel, Gabriel, etc.) is apparent from the earlier appearances of El in Northern Arabian artifacts which were gradually supplanted by Il,

“Among the Northern Arabs of early times, particularly in the region of Safa, the word El “God” was still very commonly used as a separate name of the Deity. The Il and Ilah formations come much later. This means that El was used by the Arabs at one time as the name of God. This would be verified in the Bible, where the father of the Arabs, Ishmael, was given a name with the name of God, El, in it.”<sup>29</sup>

Il/Ilah spread further to South Arabia, where he again appeared as a high god in their pantheons, just as he was in early Mesopotamia. Jamme says,

“There are many more inscriptions that show evidence of how the whole of Southern Arabia was saturated with the consciousness of the high god who was a Lil/Il derived deity.”<sup>30</sup>

It is important now to note that both Jamme and Hastings were very clear to identify the deity appearing in Arabia as Il or Ilah, differentiating this deity from the El of Western Semitic religion. Many Muslim apologists will attempt to associate the God of the Bible with Allah upon the basis of an argument that Allah is basically the same term as the Eloah of Biblical Hebrew (an intensive form of El) and the Alaha of Aramaic. However, what is forgotten is that Allah itself comes directly from “al ilah”, so the “al” in “Allah” comes from the article, and is not a part of the Arabic term for “god” itself. This is not the case with Eloah and Alaha, neither of which contain the article, and which are self-contained terms meaning “god”. Further, as has been shown above, it is widely recognised by scholarship that the El related terms for deity in the Western Semitic areas are not related to the Il/Ilah of Mesopotamia and Arabia. Hence, no direct connexion between El and Alaha can be made with Il/Ilah.



## Enter the Moon God

We now turn to another line of development which resulted in the Allah of Islam - ancient Near Eastern lunar idolatry. As is often the case when intercourse between proximate cultures occurs, conceptions of deity and even the deities themselves can be exchanged, syncretised, and amalgamated. The case of the ancient Near Eastern moon gods, their spread throughout the Fertile crescent, and their ultimate development in Arabia is no different.

Again, we must turn to Mesopotamia for a starting point. In Sumeria and Akkad, the god of the moon was Nanna, known also by the name Sin (a Semitic name probably derived from the Sumerian “Su’en”, also an epithet for Nanna). Nanna was traditionally considered to be the son of Enlil. Nanna/Sin was one of the most important deities in ancient Mesopotamia, and was one of the gods which were widely and generally worshipped throughout the region.

“Yet others, though more especially worshipped in certain towns, were by virtue of their nature the objects of a general cults. Such were, for instance, the moon-god Nanna (called Sin by the Semites), the patron-god of Ur, and his son the sun-god Utu (Semitic Shamash), the patron-god of Sippar and Larsa.”<sup>31</sup>

Ur, an ancient and prestigious Sumerian city, was especially devoted to the worship of the moon god. British archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley excavated the great moon temple of Ur, which yielded depictions of the moon god with the crescent moon symbol. On the Stela of Ur-Nammu (early 2nd millennium BC), the moon god Nanna/Sin was placed at the head of the register of gods mentioned, indicating his place of importance. In Ur, bread was even baked in the form of a crescent as an act of devotion to the moon god<sup>32</sup>.

However, as commonly occurs with gods which were widely revered, the conception of Nanna/Su’en developed far beyond the primitive view of him as just a moon god. In Mesopotamian mythology, he took on a plethora of divine properties, as shown by the titles which he accrued. Lambert has noted that Nanna/Sin bore titles such as “the fruitful life” (referring to his furthering of the well-being of cattle), “the lord of the fates”, “the splendour of heaven”, and “the universal lord”<sup>33</sup>. In many groups, Sin the moon god was often exalted to the position of highest god, and was ascribed with a number of properties not connected with his position as lord of the moon. He was the unfathomably wise god, the guardian and leader of mankind, the judge of heaven and earth, the lord of destinies, and the originator of life<sup>34</sup>. In many respects, the conception of Sin as the high god overtook the earlier dominance of Enlil. This makes sense, as his centre of worship was at Ur, and Ur was the single most important city in the Sumerian-Akkadian civilisation for millennia, often dominating the region militarily, and nearly always revered for its religious and cultural preponderance among the city-states. It is not surprising that Ur’s patron god would eventually take the place of Enlil as the most revered god, and would thus adopt the conceptions of deity and the status as *ilu* formerly enjoyed by his father Enlil. This transition seems to have taken place well within the development of Sumerian-Akkadian civilisation, and as such, the Il/Ilah discussed above is not surprisingly often equated with Sin and other moon gods in Arabia, as will presently be shown.

Devotion to the moon god was prevalent all over the Near East, and was intimately connected with the symbology of the crescent moon, which seems to have radiated outward from Mesopotamia throughout the region. The Canaanite city of Jericho was named after the Canaanite moon god Yariḥ, who can be directly traced to the Mesopotamian Sin by the fact that he was associated with a female consort, Nikkal, who is the same consort (also known as Ningal) assigned to Sin in the Mesopotamian myths. An excavation of a major temple to the moon god carried out at the Canaanite site of Hazor in Palestine in 1955-58 yielded an idol of the moon god, depicting a man-figure with a crescent moon carved into his chest. Also found at the site was a worship tablet depicting arms outstretched towards a crescent moon symbol<sup>35</sup>. In ancient Syria and Canaan, the moon god Sin was usually represented with the symbol of a crescent moon. His wife was the sun-goddess, and the stars were said to be his daughters<sup>36</sup>. This corroborates with the Arabian depiction of Allah with his three daughters, one of whom, was Al-Uzza who corresponds to Venus, the brightest “star” in the night sky. Depictions of the moon god from Egypt, Persia, Ugarit, and Ras Shamra (in northern Syria) all include the crescent moon symbology intimately connected with the moon god. Indeed, Arabia was as steeped in lunar idolatry as any place in the ancient Near East, perhaps more so. It was to Arabia that Nabonidus in the 6th century BC turned in his religious reforming efforts in which he sought to set the moon god at the head of the Neo-Babylonian pantheon (in place of Marduk). He was involved in building the great centre of moon-worship in northern Arabia at Tayma.

The worship of astral deities (those associated with the sun, moon, and other heavenly bodies) was common-place in Arabia and the Near East. In discussing the commonality of this sort of worship in Semitic paganisms, Henninger records,

“According to D. Neilsen, the starting point of the religion of the Semitic nomads was marked by the astral triad, Sun-Moon-Venus, the moon being more important for the nomads, and the sun more important for the settled tribes.”<sup>37</sup>

Neilsen is widely recognised to have overestimated the importance of astral reverence among the nomadic Beduoin peoples of Arabia, though he was closer to the truth concerning the religion of settled Arabian peoples, especially in the South, and also in more northerly centres of settlement such as Mecca. Particular to Arabia, Coon elucidates on this phenomenon of astral preference,

“Among the northern Semites the sun was the most important, as the promoter of fertility in vegetation; in southern Arabia, where the sun is too hot for comfort, and scorches and withers, the night is the time for coolness, and, in the moonlight, the time for travel and work. Nomads travel much at night, and the moon with its phases gives them their yardstick for measuring time. Thus, whereas the sun was the important god to the northern Semites, the moon was supreme among the southern groups, including not only the southern Arabian peoples, but also the pre-Islamic Arabs proper, who lived farther north in the peninsula.”<sup>38</sup>

There is much evidence to connect Allah with the worship of the moon god in Arabia. The moon god, whether by the name of Sin or by some other, was worshipped in temples all across the peninsula. The Sabaeans even had a moon god whose specific appellation was “Allah”<sup>39</sup>. Alfred Guillaume has observed that, in Arabia, the sun was viewed as a female goddess and the moon as the male god<sup>40</sup>, which follows the Mesopotamian conception of the moon god as male, but alters



the gender of the sun, which was also male in Sumero-Akkadian mythology. It has often been remarked upon that the ascription of an Arabian view of the moon as male and the sun as female is questionable due to the variance of this state of affairs from the male sun/female moon found in some Semitic mythological systems. However, Smith noted that it is common within Semitic mythologies to find female deities being adapted to take on the male gender<sup>41</sup>. Due to the patriarchal nature of Arabian societies, it is not surprising that the moon which they revered more than the sun, and viewed as the more powerful source of life, would take on male gender. Further, it has become apparent in the light of more recent archaeological and epigraphic discoveries that the moon deity in Arabia was unquestionably male.

The moon god was called by various names, one of which was Allah. Guillaume has noted that certain scholars believe that *Ilah* in Arabia was a title of the moon god,

“The relation of this name, which in Babylonia and Assyria became a generic term simply meaning ‘god’, to the Arabian *Ilah* familiar to us in the form Allah, which is compounded of *al*, the definite article, and *Ilah* by eliding the vowel ‘i’, is not clear. Some scholars trace the name to the South Arabian *Ilah*, a title of the Moon god, but this is a matter of antiquarian interest...it is clear from Nabataen and other inscriptions that Allah meant ‘the god’.”<sup>42</sup>

He states that this identification is of “antiquarian interest”, since this view of *Ilah* as a moon god existed prior to the development of the conception of *Ilah* into the high god of these Arabian cultures. A Hadramautic inscription on Delos was dedicated to *Sin Dhu Ilim*, roughly “Sin he of the gods”<sup>43</sup>, suggesting that in later periods, *Sin* was understood as a high god among Arabians. Further, Thompson uncovered a spectacular temple to the moon god in southern Arabia. In discussing her work, she revealed that the symbol of the crescent moon and 21 inscriptions made with the name “*Sin*” were found in this temple, along with a statue which she tentatively identified as the moon god<sup>44</sup>. Her findings were later corroborated by other scholars<sup>45,46</sup>. This finding is important in light of the fact that, as has been found in numerous inscriptions both at the Arabia site and elsewhere, while the name of the moon god was “*Sin*”, his title was “*al-ilah*”, the **same** *al-ilah* which was glossed to form “Allah” over time in Arabia.

## Bel, Baal, and Hubal

Let us now turn to another line of development for Allah, this one also originating in Mesopotamia. Among the epithets applied to Enlil in Akkad, one stands out in importance for future religious development in the ancient Near East: *Bel*. In Semitic Mesopotamia, Enlil was often known as “*Bel*”, meaning “lord”<sup>47</sup>. In the process of time, this title was transferred to the Babylonian deity Marduk, who was generally identified with Enlil, and to whom was ascribed a sovereignty and omnipotence indicative of monotheising tendencies. Interestingly, Marduk also was associated with astral religion, as Ringgren notes,

“In the ritual for the New Year Festival in Babylon Marduk is identified with a series of astral deities, and the prayer ends with the words” ‘My lord is my god, my lord is my ruler, is there any lord apart from him’ ?”<sup>48</sup>

Thus, we again see the familiar association of Mesopotamian henotheism, of the high god, with astral deities, which would include the moon god, Sin. Later, in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the worship of Bel spread to Palmyra, a caravan city in the Syrian desert. The population of Palmyra was mixed, with several distinct groups inhabiting the city and bringing their gods with them. Migrants from northern Mesopotamia and the surrounding regions brought the reverence for Bel with them. In Palmyra, Bel was a high god (termed a “cosmocrator”, ruler of the universe) and was associated with two astral gods, Yarhibol, a solar deity and Aglibol, a lunar deity<sup>49</sup>. Both of these gods carry names containing “Bol”, which is identified as a pre-Hellenistic name for Bel, to which the name was changed through the influence of the Bel-Marduk cult brought in by the Mesopotamian immigrants<sup>50</sup>. Teixidor notes that the cult of the triad of Bel, Yarhibol, and Aglibol arose in the first century AD as the result of both theological and political pressures that led to the association of these two astral deities with the Bel, who received a cosmic role. This association, unattested in the epigraphic evidence until a dedicatory inscription of 32 AD, appears to have developed through a slow process of assimilation which involved the divine patrons of specific groups which populated Palmyra<sup>51</sup>. As such, it can be surmised that Yarhibol and Aglibol, previously the patron gods of separate tribes or ethnic groups, may have been understood more than just as associates, but rather as subordinated personifications of the emergent supreme god Bel. This would tend to reinforce the henotheistic tendencies of Bel in later times, as well as the association of him with astral religion.

Closely related to the Mesopotamian Bel was a titular deity found in the Syro-Palestinian pagan systems - Baal. “Baal” is merely the West Semitic cognate of the Assyro-Babylonian “Bel”, and among the Western Semites the term was put to similar use, as much a title or epithet as a proper name. Indeed, the term “Baal” was often used to describe local high deities who were revered as high gods by local groups. For instance, we find Baal-Peor of the Moabites, Baal-Zebub of the Philistines, Baal-Shamin of the native Syrian Palmyrenes, and so forth. Evidence from the Al-Amarna documents and Ugaritic texts indicate that by the sixteenth or fifteenth centuries BC, Baal had taken on a broader scope than just as a title for local deities, and had grown to be understood as a god in his own right<sup>52</sup>. The local Baals were most likely understood to be localised manifestations of this Baal, perhaps as tutelary personifications particular to each individual city or region. These Baals usually took on the same characteristics of their Mesopotamian counterpart, primarily as atmospheric, vegetation, and fertility deities (see the discussion below of the equivalence of Baal with Hadad/Adad), but in later periods also were identified with astral spheres of influence. This astral character generally took on solar overtones<sup>53</sup>, but could at times also be lunar. Smith notes that in Phoenician mythology, even after the gods had become more pronounced in their astral character, they still retained their more primitive functions as the givers of rain and other atmospheric phenomena<sup>54</sup>. This broadly parallels the religious development in Mesopotamia from the original view of the storm and weather god Enlil as the highest god toward the exaltation of Sin, the moon god, into the role of high god, with a concurrent usurpation of much of Enlil’s former provenance. Further, the title could be applied directly to the astral deities. For instance, Teixidor notes that in Harran, a city in Paddan-Aram devoted to the moon god, Sin was known as the Baal of Harran<sup>55</sup>. This sometime merging of astral with atmospheric and agricultural functions in the gods will be revisited shortly.

In Arabia, Baal (Ba'l) was introduced into the settled agricultural centres, likely being borrowed from the Semitic groups north of Arabia at the same time that the arts of agriculture were introduced<sup>56</sup>. On the peninsula, Baal was more widely known in later periods as Hubal (meaning "the lord"). There is some controversy over whether Hubal was a traditional deity in Arabia, or if he was introduced at some point in the 3rd century or immediately thereabouts, by which he found his way to the Kaabah at Mecca, then a pre-Islamic pagan shrine. For instance, Zwemer states,

"Hubal was in the form of a man and came from Syria; he was the god of rain and had a high place of honour."<sup>57</sup>

Some scholars view Hubal as a newcomer to the Kaabah, based upon the tradition that Amr ibn Luhayy, a 3rd century Arab, brought the statue of Hubal to the Kaabah from Syria.

"Having asked the local inhabitants what was the justification of their idols, `Amr b. Luhayy is said to have received the following reply: .. these are the lords (arbab) whom we have chosen, having [simultaneously] the form of the celestial temples (al-hayakil al-`ulwiyya) and that of Human beings. We ask them for victory over our enemies and they grant it to us; we ask them for rain, in time of drought, and they give it to us". In the Ka'ba, Hubal must have preserved this original character of a stellar deity; but his most characteristic role was that of a cleromantic divinity. Indeed, it was before the god that the sacred lots were cast. The statue stood inside the Ka'ba, above the sacred well which was thought to have been dug by Abraham to receive the offerings brought to the sanctuary (al-Azraki, 31). Another Somewhat surprising fact indicates a connection with Abraham: in the mural paintings of the pre-islamic Ka'ba, Hubal, represented as an old man holding arrows, seems to have been assimilated with Abraham (al-Azraki, III)."<sup>58</sup>

Hence, after his appearance in Mecca, Hubal would have retained his earlier astral traits. Additionally, he would have gained his well-known oracular function by which suppliants would draw lots using arrows so as to obtain answers for important questions put to the god. Peters states that while Hubal grew to be an important deity in Mecca, he never replaced Allah as the Lord of the Kaabah, and bases his argument upon the fact that the Qur'an never raises a contention about Hubal being "lord of the house"<sup>59</sup>. This view, unfortunately, suffers from the traditional over-reliance upon later Muslim sources which are tainted with apologetic revision. As Coon has observed,

"Moslems are notoriously loath to preserve traditions of earlier paganism, and like to garble what pre-Islamic history they permit to survive in anachronistic terms."<sup>60</sup>

Hence, it must be understood that much of what is said about the late arrival of Hubal to the Kaabah, and the attempts to disconnect him from lordship over that House, is suspect because of the tendency of scholars in the earlier days of Islamic studies to rely upon Islamic sources themselves for information pertaining to the Jahiliyya, the pre-Islamic pagan period. Peters, mentioned above, makes his arguments with the dichotomy of Allah versus Hubal in mind. Yet, the possibility must be explored that Allah **was** Hubal, and that the initial understanding of Hubal as the local *al-ilah* falls right into line with the tendency, mentioned above, for the developing Arab monotheism to incorporate local high gods into the state sponsored high god.

With the advent of independent information obtained from direct archaeological and epigraphic studies, it is being more widely recognised that Hubal was not a late arrival to the Kaabah, but was instead long resident there and was himself the Lord of the Kaabah, probably arriving not long after the Christian era began. On the originality of Hubal at the Kaabah, Rodinson writes,

“The Ka’ba at Mecca, which may have initially been a shrine of Hubal alone, housed several idols; a number of others, too, were gathered in the vicinity.”<sup>61</sup>

Ruthven states further,

“Although originally under the aegis of the pagan god Hubal, the Makkan haram which centered around the well of Zamzam, may have become associated with the ancestral figures of Ibrahim and Isma’il as the Arab traders, shedding their parochial backgrounds sought to locate themselves within the broader reference-frame of Judeo-Christianity.”<sup>62</sup>

According to Lewis, et al., the earliest appearance of Hubal in the epigraphic record is in an inscription from Nabataea (a region in northwest Arabia, roughly present-day Jordan), in which he is associated with Manawat, which is cognate with the name of the daughter of Allah, Manat<sup>63</sup>. Peters notes that some of his sources also indicate the origin of the Hubal idol (and presumably the cult which came to Mecca) to be from Jordan<sup>64</sup>.

There is ample evidence to suggest that Hubal was the “Lord of the Kaabah”. Armstrong provides an interesting piece of information, though she still tends to be too reliant upon Islamic tradition instead of scientific facts,

“The Ka’aba was dedicated to al-Ilah, the High God of the pagan Arabs, despite the presiding effigy of Hubal. By the beginning of the seventh century, al-Ilah had become more important than before in the religious life of many of the Arabs. Many primitive religions develop a belief in a High God, who is sometimes called the Sky God...But they also carried on worshipping the other gods, who remained deeply important to them.”<sup>65</sup>

The question which must logically be asked is whether this dedication of the Kaabah to the high god al-Ilah perhaps was not “despite” the presiding effigy of Hubal, but rather **because** of it? As noted before, “Hubal” is really a title (considered by many to be of Aramaic origin and imported into the early Arabic dialects) which simply means “the lord”, and as such, is no different from the usage of the Baal/Ba’l terminology found all over Syria, Palestine, and northern Arabia. This association of Hubal with Baal is noted by al-Saeh,

“As well as worshipping idols and spirits, found in animals, plants, rocks, and water, the ancient Arabs believed in several major gods and goddesses whom they considered to hold supreme power over all things. The most famous of these were Al-Lat, Al-Uzza, Manat, and Hubal. The first three were thought to be daughters of Allah (God) and their intercessions on behalf of their worshippers were therefore of great significance. Hubal was associated with the Semitic god Ba’al and with Adonis and Tammuz, the gods of spring, fertility, agriculture and plenty....Hubal’s idol used to stand by the holy well inside the Sacred House. It was made of red

sapphire but had a broken arm until the tribe of Quraysh, who considered him one of their major gods, made him a replacement in solid gold.”<sup>66</sup>

It seems very likely that this “al-Ilah” to which the Kaabah was dedicated was known also by the titular name Hubal, especially as the presiding idol of that house was Hubal’s, and it was before Hubal that decisions requiring oracular resolution were brought. Indeed, an excerpt from Ibn Ishaq (an early Muslim biographer of Mohammed, 704-767 AD), in a garbled and oblique manner, seems to suggest the validity of this view. He relates the following story about Mohammed’s grandfather ‘Abd’ul Muttalib,

“It is alleged, and God only knows the truth, that when ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib encountered the opposition of Quraysh when he was digging Zamzam, he vowed that if he should have ten sons to grow up and protect him, he would sacrifice one of them to God at the Ka’ba. Afterwards when he had ten sons who could protect him he gathered them together and told them about his vow and called on them to keep faith with God. They agreed to obey him and asked what they were to do. He said that each one of them must get an arrow, write his name on it, and bring it to him; this they did and he took them before Hubal in the middle of the Ka’ba. (The statue of) Hubal stood by a well there. It was that well in which gifts made to the Ka’ba were stored.

“Now beside Hubal there were seven arrows, each of them containing some words. One was marked ‘bloodwit’. When they disputed about who should pay the bloodwit they cast lots with the seven arrows and the one on whom the lot fell had to pay the money. Another was marked ‘yes’, and another ‘no’, and they acted accordingly on the matter on which the oracle had been invoked. Another was marked ‘of you’; another mulsaq, another ‘not of you’; and the last was marked ‘water’. If they wanted to dig for water, they cast lots containing this arrow and wherever it came forth they set to work. If they wanted to circumcise a body, or make a marriage, or bury a body, or doubted someone’s genealogy, they took him to Hubal with a hundred dirhams and a slaughter camel and gave them to the man who cast the lots; then they brought near the man with whom they were concerned, saying, ‘O our god this is A the son of B with whom we intend to do so and so; so show the right course concerning him’. Then they would say to the man who cast the arrows ‘Cast!’ and if there came out ‘of you’ then he was a true member of their tribe; and if there came out ‘not of you’ then he was an ally; and if there came out mulsaq he had no blood relation to them and was not an ally. Where ‘yes’ came out in other matter, they acted accordingly; and if the answer was ‘no’, they deferred the matter for a year until they could bring it up again. They used to conduct their affairs according to the decision of the arrows.

“‘Abdu’l-Muttalib said to the man with the arrows, ‘Cast the lots for my sons with these arrows’, and he told him of the vow which he had made. Each man gave him the arrow on which his name was written. Now ‘Abdullah was his father’s youngest son, he and al-Zubayr and Abu Talib were born to Fatima d.’Amr b.’A’idh b.’Abd b.’Imran b. Makhzum b. Yaqaza b. Murra b. Ka’b b. Lu’ayy b. Ghalib b. Fihir (113). It is alleged that ‘Abdullah was ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib’s favourite son, and his father thought that if the arrow missed him he would be spared. (He was the father of the apostle of God). When the man took the arrows to cast lots with them, **‘Abdu’l-Muttalib stood by Hubal praying to Allah.** Then the man cast lots and ‘Abdullah’s arrow came out. His father led him by the hand and took a large knife; then he brought him up to Isaf and Na’ila (T. two idols of Quraysh at which they slaughtered their sacrifices) to sacrifice him; but



Quraysh came out of their assemblies and asked what he was intending to do. When he said that he was going to sacrifice him, they and his sons said ‘By God! you shall never sacrifice him until you offer the greatest expiatory sacrifice for him. If you do a thing like this there will be no stopping men from coming to sacrifice their sons, and what will become of the people then?’ Then said al-Mughira b. ‘Abdullah b. ‘Amr b. Makhzum b. Yaqaza, ‘Abdullah’s mother being from his tribe, ‘By God, you shall never sacrifice him until you offer the greatest expiatory sacrifice for him. Though his ransom be all our property we will redeem him’. Quraysh and his sons said that he must not do it, but take him to the Hijaz for there was a sorcerer who had a familiar spirit, and he must consult her. Then he would have liberty of action. If she told him to sacrifice him, he would be no worse off; and if she gave him a favourable response, he could accept it. So they went off as far as Medina and found that she was in Khaybar, so they allege. So they rode on until they got to her, and when ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib acquainted her with the facts she told them to go away until her familiar spirit visited her and she could ask him. When they had left her ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib prayed to Allah, and when they visited her the next day she said, ‘Word has come to me. How much is the blood money among you?’ they told her that it was ten camels, as indeed it was. He told them to go back to their country and take the young man and ten camels. Then cast lots for them and for him; if the lots falls against your man, add more camels, until you lord is satisfied. If the lots falls against the camels then sacrifice them in his stead, for your lord will be satisfied and your client escape death. So they returned to Mecca, and when they had agreed to carry out their instructions, ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib was praying to Allah. Then they brought near ‘Abdullah and ten camels while **‘Abdu’l-Muttalib stood by Hubal praying to Allah.** Then they cast lots and the arrow fell against ‘Abdullah. They added ten more camels and the lot fell against ‘Abdullah, and so they went on adding ten at a time, until there were one hundred camels, when finally the lot fell against them. Quraysh and those who were present said, ‘At last your lord is satisfied ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib’. ‘No, by God’, he answered (so they say), ‘not until I cast lots three times’. This they did and each time the arrow fell against the camels. They were duly slaughtered and left there and no man was kept back or hindered (from eating them).”<sup>67</sup>

Thus we can see that this man was essentially praying to the idol of Hubal, while praying to Allah. As Hubal was the “Lord of the Kaabah” and the tutelary deity of Mecca (Surah 17:83), it is instructive to note that after the rise of the Arab Empire, Allah seems to have maintained his place as the Lord of that “House”, even if under a different name and innovated conception of deity. Indeed, the Kaabah was often known by the name *beit Allah*, “house of Allah”, even though it was presided over by Hubal.

Interestingly, we should note the early interest among the Muslims in (re)establishing the original religion of Abraham, at least as they conceived it. Arabic lore, extending into the period before Islam, held that Abraham himself had built the Kaabah, dug its well, and established its worship. In the centuries before the rise of the Arab Empire, there were many Arabs who, while not accepting either Christianity or Judaism, did conceive of the idea of establishing a pure monotheism to replace the paganism of their day. Many of these groups could have been called “Abrahamic”, as they desired to renew the *din*, the religion, of Abraham. This Abrahamism emphasised its link to Abraham as its founder, and was described by the Christian historian Sozomenus, writing circa 450 AD, as “Ishmaelite monotheists”<sup>68</sup>. Indeed, Pines notes evidence for Abrahamists as early as the time of Tertullian (~200 AD), who disputed with a group of

them<sup>69</sup>. The Abrahamists were one of many groups of *hanifiyya*, emergent monotheists who preceded Islam in Arabia. The monotheism of these groups engendered the belief in a high god who was without partners. It is likely that these *hanifiyya*, who were more or less independent of Judaism and Christianity, were the next natural step in the progression from pure paganism to the henotheistic “high god” to monotheism. As a result, it is likely that their views were arrived at by elevating one of their native gods at the expense of the others, and accepting him as the “only” god. That this seems to have been the case, at least with those who revered the Kaabah as the “house of Allah” (including, of course, local groups of Abrahamists), seems evident in the association of the oracular method of divining Hubal with Abraham. Rubin notes that the ritual of casting arrows before Hubal was itself Abrahamic (referring to the pre-Islamic religious system, not to the Biblical Abraham), and that when Mohammed conquered Mecca, he ordered the removal of a painting of Abraham holding arrows from within the Kaabah<sup>70</sup>. The *din* of Abraham, at least as it appeared to the Arabs both pagan and *hanif*, involved reverence for both the Kaabah and its lord, and this suggests that the god which they were monotheising was probably Hubal.

This understanding of the “lord of the Kaabah” as a high god again points to the familiar pattern of henotheism which can be found all across the Semitic world. Wellhausen considered Hubal to be an ancient name for Allah<sup>71</sup>. In this is meant the sense that he believed Allah to be an abstraction which originated in the many local gods (one of which was Hubal), and gave rise to a common word for the high god. This view has been judged as inadequate by many later scholars<sup>72</sup>. I would note, however, that much of the later impetus against Wellhausen’s initial view stems from the over-reliance of scholars upon Islamic sources for information concerning the period of *Jahiliyya*, the pagan period prior to Islam. It would seem natural that Islamic sources, produced two centuries or more after the fact, would present an artificially sanitised view of the pre-Islamic period. As noted above, this was common in early Muslim works for polemical purposes. We have seen earlier that it was common for cultures in the ancient Near East to hold up a high god, and to attribute to him various spheres of influence, depending on the prior nature of the henotheised deity. This would seem to support the arguments made above and by Wellhausen that the high god of the Arabs was not one original deity, but rather became such by the synthesis of the various local high gods of Arabia and the regions conquered by the Arabs.

As has been alluded to, Hubal seems to have also had a variety of characteristic spheres which he dominated. Zwemer above gave Hubal as a god of rain, which correlates well with the typical station of Baal among the Arabs’ northerly neighbours. Hubal also, however, had several marked astral stations among the Arabs. Hommel tells us that in southern Arabia, Hubal was to be identified with the planet Venus, understood by these groups to be male. In northern Arabia, including the region of Mecca, Hubal was understood to be a lunar god,

“First of all, as regards the religion of the South Arabians, as we find it in their inscriptions, it is a strongly marked star-worship, in which the cult of the moon-god, conceived as masculine, takes complete precedence of that of the sun, which is conceived as feminine. This is shown in the clearest fashion by the stereotyped series of gods (Minaean: ‘Athar, Wadd, Nakruh, Shams; Hadramawtic: ‘Athar, Sîn, Hol, Shams; Qatabanian: ‘Athar, ‘Amm, Anbai, Shams; Sabaeian: ‘Athar, Hawbas, Al-maku-hu, Shams); here we find throughout, a. ‘Athar (the planet Venus conceived as masculine...as symbol of the sky) the god of the heavens mentioned first, b. Wadd

or as the case may be, Sîn, ‘Amm or Hawbas the real chief god i.e. the moon; c. Nakruh (the planet Saturn or Mars), or Hol, Anbai (messenger of the gods, Nebo) or Almakhu-hu, his (the moon’s) servant or messenger, and finally, d. Shams, the daughter of the moon-god to whom women may have appealed by preference and who therefore stands at the end of the whole enumeration. Besides these, a certain part was played by a great Mother-goddesses, the mother and consort of the moon-god conceived as a personified lunar station, the Minaean Athirat, who was called Harimtu among the Sabaeans and who was in all probability universally known as Ilat (e.g. as a component part in names of persons, also in the shortened form Lat). We may also mention various lesser ‘Athar deities (confined later to the part played by Venus as morning or evening star), and among the West Sabaeans Ta’lab, a god of the bow who also bears merely the epithet Dhû Samawî ‘lord of the heavens’, and to whom especially camels (ibil) are sacred (hence in Midian but probably in South Arabia Habul or Hubal etc.). It is a particularly favourite mode of thought to conceive the two chief aspects of the moon (waxing and waning moon) as twin deities, in which connection sometimes the one and sometimes the other phase is specially favoured according to the locality....In North West Arabia from Mekka onwards to Petra and further onwards to the Syrian desert (Palmyra) and the Hawran, the same ideas prevailed, partly even appearing under the old names partly with new designations. Here we have especially to do with the cults of Mekka and of the whole Hidjaz shortly before Muhammad (al-Lat and Hubal, in certain cases also al-Lat, and Wudd, in addition al-’Uzza, a feminine form of...Aziz-Lat, the goddess of death Manat, a god Ruda and others) and at an earlier period the still more important cult of the Nabataeans. Among the latter also we find the moon divided into twin deities: Dhu Shara (‘He of the mountain’) and his Kharisha (the sun), the former especially in Petra, and Habul (or Hubal) and his consort Manawat...”<sup>73</sup>

Other scholars have also noted the place of Hubal as the moon god. Concerning Hubal Glassé writes,

“An idol, the god of the Moon...”<sup>74</sup>

Occhigrosso further illustrates,

“Before Muhammad appeared, the Kaaba was surrounded by 360 idols, and every Arab house had its god. Arabs also believed in jinn (subtle beings), and some vague divinity with many offspring. Among the major deities of the pre-Islamic era were al-Lat (“the Goddess”), worshiped in the shape of a square stone; al-Uzzah (“the Mighty”), a goddess identified with the morning star and worshiped as a thigh-bone-shaped slab of granite between al-Taif and Mecca; Manat, the goddess of destiny, worshiped as a black stone on the road between Mecca and Medina; and the moon god, Hubal, whose worship was connected with the Black Stone of the Kaaba.”<sup>75</sup>

Once again, we see that the high god of this locality was thus a moon deity, and yet also strongly connected with the realm of atmospheric phenomena and fertility through his being a bringer of rains and storms.



## Dushara - Proto-Islamic Arabian High God

Let us now turn to yet another pre-Islamic Arab god with close associations, both conceptual and through lineage, to the deities previously mentioned as precursors to Allah. This deity is Dushara, a god worshipped primarily in Nabataea and nearby regions in northern Arabia. Dushara, whose name appears in many cases to be titular, was worshipped as the supreme god among the Nabataeans, but may have been known by several other names<sup>76</sup>. Though the name Dushara is commonly understood to mean “he of the mountain”, indicating a local geographic extent as a mountain-god (but which also recalls the attribution as a lord of mountains to Enlil, seen above), it cannot be ruled out that the second part of his name describes a general characteristic of the god instead. One of the most prominent meanings suggested is that of vegetation<sup>77</sup>. Healey also suggests that Dushara may have had astral characteristics as well<sup>78</sup>, which was supported above by the statement of Hommel to the effect that Dhu Shara was one of two moon deities found among the Nabataeans, along with Hubal, though Healey himself notes a secondary solar role for this deity rather than a lunar, it is possible that both characters were combined in this god. The name itself is traced by some even further back than the Nabataeans, to the Mesopotamian divine name “Du-shar-ra” found in cuneiform records found in Mesopotamia. It has been suggested that this name entered into West Semitic mythology from Assyro-Babylonia<sup>79</sup>.

Among the Nabataeans and other Northern Arab tribes, Dushara was often known simply as ‘*lh*’, “the god”, *par excellence*<sup>80</sup>. There appears to have been the same tendency to both develop him into a high god, and to associate both lunar and fertility/atmospheric spheres together into his character, which parallels this same phenomenon as it occurred all across the ancient Near East.

## Hadad/Rimmon and the Islamic Rahman

Another aspect of this overall conjoining of astral, atmospheric, and fertility spheres is to be found with the deity known in Sumeria as Ishkur, and in the Semitic world as Adad or Hadad. This deity also was a storm, thunder, and weather god, and at various points in time was worshipped as the high or highest god of pantheons, especially among the Aramaeans. Adad appears in many cases to have been synonymous with Baal (another storm god), being also called Hadd at various points and associated in parallel with Hadad at one point in the Ras Shamra texts<sup>81</sup>. Kapelrud notes from texts from Ras Shamra that Ba’l as a name was applied to and eventually was used virtually in place of the name Haddu<sup>82</sup>. Adad was understood in Babylonian texts not simply to be a fearsome god of storms, but also (perhaps because of that) as the “lord of abundance, the controller of the floodgates of the earth”<sup>83</sup>. There naturally would seem to be a strong conceptual connexion between the weather/storm sphere of a god’s influence, and his capacity for producing fertility and agricultural abundance, especially in many places in Syria and Palestine which rely primarily upon rainfall for the sustenance of farming and flocks.

Just as Sin was often associated with Shamash (the sun) and Ishtar (representing Venus, and also a fertility goddess), so was Adad/Hadad<sup>84</sup>, known also by the epithet Rimmon (meaning “pomegranate”). This suggests a link between Sin and Adad/Rimmon, probably another example

of assimilation rather than a direct attribution of lunar province to Adad. Both were high gods worshipped in Mesopotamia and elsewhere in the North and West Semitic areas, and thus it is natural that both would essentially become the same deity, even if not specified as such, in the minds of their followers. Concerning Hadad, now with his epithet of Rimmon, we see the further development of a deity who was a manifestation also leading to Allah. Langdon states,

“It is interesting to find that Rammanu, who was Rimmon of Assyria, Brahman of India, and **Rahman of Islam**, was also known in Babylon as IL-HALLABU.” [emphasis mine] <sup>85</sup>

The Il-hallabu of Babylon is thus described as a title for Rammanu, a Akkadian/Babylonian cognate of Rimmon. Interestingly, this title contains the particle “Il”, the same Il/Ilu root from which the Arabian al-Ilah also came. Further, the particle “halla” may be linguistically related to the Arabic term “hilal”, which describes both the new and crescent moon, depending on context, and which is important in the Muslim calendar for determining the beginning of the Ramadan fasting period. Hence, this could suggest an association of the Rimmon/Hadad deity with lunar idolatry, a tendency which has been shown above for several weather and/or fertility gods.

But what of the proposed connexion between Rimmon and Rahman (which is presented as an epithet for Allah at several points in the Qur’an)? Some Muslim apologists will attempt to deny the association of Rahman with Rimmon/Rammanu. It is argued that Rahman (from the *rhm* root, having the meaning “compassionate”) cannot be related to Rimmon or Rammanu (from the *rmn* root, meaning “pomegranate”). They will argue that because the Semitic roots are different, there cannot be a connexion between Rahman and the ancient Syro-Babylonian storm god Rimmon/Rammanu. However, this argument does not take into account the fact that languages can change over time, diverging and converging, and that phonemes may evolve, causing words and roots (in the case of Semitic languages) to change over time. This can be seen in the comparison of the Arabic and Hebrew roots meaning “compassion”. In Arabic, the root is *rhm*, with the *h* indicating the letter “h’aa”, which has a sound approximated by a heavy, open “h” sound made from the soft palate at the back of the throat. In Hebrew, the root is *rhm*, where *ch* denotes the letter “cheth”, which has a sound approximated by the “ch” in the Scots pronunciation of “loch”. Same root, yet a somewhat different phoneme. Further, this argument ignores the fact that similar words can have divergent and/or multiple meanings across different cultures.

In the linguistic case of Rimmon and Rahman, it is important to first note that Rimmon/Rammanu was also known by the name “Ragimu” among Mesopotamian Semitic groups<sup>86</sup>. This is enlightening because both the “g” and “h” are sounds with very similar articulation. Both of these phonemes are velar sounds, produced by pushing air over the velum, or the soft palate which sits right in front of the uvula. The primary difference between these sounds is that the “g” is a stop (meaning that the flow of air is stopped after the initial sound is made), while the “h” is a fricative sound produced by forcing air through a narrow opening between the tip of the tongue and the velum, and hence can be extended. The shift from “g” to “h” would be the result of a process in Semitic phonetic development called “spirantisation”, in which a stop consonant changes into a fricative consonant. The point to this linguistic digression is that it is certainly very possible (and indeed likely from a phonetic standpoint) for the “g” in Ragimu to have developed into the “h” of Rahman in the course of the development of the set of

Arabian languages from their Mesopotamian Semitic precursors. After all, we see that Ragimu is related to Rammanu, probably developing through a process of epenthesis (a process in which a phoneme is inserted into the middle of a word to clarify or simplify pronunciation), so the theory proposed above is certainly not at all unlikely. The dropping of the final “n” in the course of the development from *rmn* --> *rgm* --> *rh̄m* is easily explained by noting that nasal sounds (such as “n”) tend to drop out from the end of words which find common use or have a systematic history of development, a form of apocope (a process where word final phonemes are dropped). This is seen in English, whereby many words ending in “ing” (the “ng” is a single nasal sound) tend to either lose that final “ng” completely, or else become the softer “n” sound, in everyday or hurried speech. Thus, the Muslim arguments against the identification of the very ancient Rimmon/Rammanu with the much later Raḥman are not necessarily valid.

Scholars have noted that the *rh̄m* root, usually said to mean “compassionate”, may have an earlier and/or alternative meaning. Ringgren notes that the epithet *rh̄m* can stress youthfulness, as well as the powers of life and generation, traditional roles of Ancient Near East fertility deities. He connects it with the Hebrew *rechem*, meaning “womb”<sup>87</sup>. It is likely that the later attachment of the ideas of mercy and compassion to *rh̄m* sprang forth from these earlier fertility aspects. It is entirely logical to postulate that a god who was responsible for bringing in the rains and causing the earth to bring forth fertility (as was the function of Rimmon/Rammanu and the implication of his name meaning “pomegranate”) would evolve into a god whose name was associated with compassion. One of the most compassionate things a god in the arid Near East could do was bring in the rains with some regularity. The connexion of this epithet with Allah is natural, then, and the appearance of Allah in pre-Islamic Arab myth as a rain-bringer is well-known<sup>88</sup>.

Indeed, this sort of connexion between the rain/storm god Rimmon/Adad and the compassionate god Raḥman is made in the literature,

“...If there were Umm-ar-Rahma, we would not hesitate a moment to choose the first solution; but the antiquated or archaic reading of Umm-Ruhm, specified by the authors, causes us to see in Ruhm a vestige of the old Semitic religion. Indeed, its Semitic root r’/h/hm tells us the opposite, that one of oldest Semitic names of the god Adad, expressing what characterizes it primarily, namely the rain which makes “soft” and “tender” the ground, the vegetation and, by analogy, the hearts of human, and also the thunder, source of rain, which symbolizes it. From the double significance of the root results the two series of names which are given to him, on the one hand, Ramman, Rihamun, Ramimu and Ragimu, expressing roaring thunder and the howling of the bull which symbolizes this aspect of it; in addition, Rh/hm, Rhman (Akk. remenu), which expresses the grace and the mercy of Ba’l of the sky. But, in this last direction, this epithet applied to other gods.”<sup>89</sup>

Fahd notes the dual development of Raḥman and Rimmon from this common Semitic root, even stating that Raḥman is the Akkadian “remenu”. Fahd goes further, showing that the *rh̄m* root was a specific epithet applied to a number of ancient Near East gods,

“The use of root RHM in Arab paganism, to qualify the divinity, is attested, in addition to the testimony of Ibn Durayd, by another no less significant, provided by the Palmyrene epigraphy, where a god RHM is named at the side of Allat. In addition, in Thamudic onomastics, a

theophore, Raham'il, confirms the existence of this use in Northern Arabia. These weak indications for the name were to enjoy in Islam a very vast expansion, in particular in the two forms of Abd ar-Rahman and Abd ar-Rahim, and are the echoes of an ancient usage, going back to Assyro-Babylonia, one of the principal hearths of Semitic paganism, where the 'merciful' epithet or the invocation 'have mercy upon me' was joined to the names of principle gods, such as Marduk, Ishtar, Sin, Shamash, Adad, and Assur. In the isolated state, 'Ri-mi-nu-u' became an epithet of Marduk."<sup>90</sup>

Again, the equation of *rh̄m* with *rmn* is taken for granted. Raḥman was applied to many deities, including both Adad the storm god, Sin the moon god, and Marduk, another name for Bel (identified by Fahd further above as Ba'l). Indeed, the god-name Ri.ḥa.mun appears on ancient god lists from ancient Assyro-Babylonia, attesting the antiquity of *rh̄m* far before the appearance of this god in Arabian mythology<sup>91</sup>. In one of these appearances, the name is accompanied by a descriptor meaning "he who holds the nose/bridle for Utu". Utu was an archaic Sumerian name (though apparently still being used in Babylonia at the time) for the sun-god Shamash. The description seems to indicate Ri.ḥa.mun as being in an inferior position, holding the horse of his master Utu/Shamash. This same combination of Raḥim with the sun god is noted much later in Palmyra, where Raḥim appears as an associated acolyte of Shamash, along with Allat as the third member of the triad<sup>92</sup>.

By the Roman period, the transition had been made of *rh̄m* from fertility/compassion deity to a more abstracted idealisation of mercy and compassion. Raḥim was a god of mercy in the Palmyrene, Dura-Europan, and Safaitic pantheons, and Raḥman was a god of compassion in the South Arabian pantheon of this period. Raḥman in the South gradually was raised to the position of being an epithet for the unique god appearing in the nascent South Arabian monotheism, and would seem to be a strong candidate for the entrance of this deity into the developing Islamic belief system after the Arabs had cemented their hold on the Arabian peninsula and needed a cohesive religious system to unify their conquests. Healey has postulated that the traditional South Arabian epithet *rh̄mn* (note - with the "n" remaining as part of the root) appearing in the monotheising cult of the Merciful One in South Arabia could easily have arisen from earlier pagan usage, as he notes that the worship of the Merciful One was widespread throughout Syria in the first century AD in a non-Christian and non-Jewish context, instead tracing to Mesopotamian cultural influences<sup>93</sup>. The appearance of the same sort of cult in South Arabia (as well as elsewhere in Arabia, including the Nabataeans), suggests the natural development of this view of *rh̄mn* applied to emergent native monotheism. It would further then seem natural that this Raḥman would be adopted into the theology of Islam as a way of bringing his worshipers in Southern Arabia into the fold of the developing monotheistic state religion. Indeed, both Raḥman and Raḥim appears as epithetic names for Allah in the Qur'an in numerous places.

## What Does It All Mean?

Essentially, we must understand and accept that Allah of the Islamic religion is NOT the same as the God of the Bible. Allah can be traced backwards through ancient Near Eastern religious history as the latest development in a series of astral and atmospheric deities in the ancient Semitic world, all the way back to very ancient Mesopotamia, the original seat of both

civilisation, and also idolatry. Muslims, when they worship Allah, are not worshipping the true Creator God, but are rather worshipping a false god, one whose worship is condemned in the Bible:

“...And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either, the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded.” (Deuteronomy 17:4)

“And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them all that burned offering unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.” (II Kings 23:5)

For the Muslim who wished to deny or ignore this evidence, the question is posed: Why does Islam have such a fixation with the crescent moon symbol, a symbol which is intimately and widely associated with the worship of the moon god throughout history, under whatever name, in Sumer, Akkad, Syria, Persia, Canaan, Egypt, and Arabia? Though many Muslims will argue that the crescent moon symbology entered Islam very late as a result of Turkish influence in the 15th century, this is simply not the case. The evidence for the crescent moon as a religious symbol in Islam goes back to 75 AH (696 AD), where it is used as a symbol on coins<sup>94</sup>. Why do many mosques and other Islamic religious buildings have depictions of the crescent moon on their spires and pinnacles? Why do the flags of twelve Muslim nations (Algeria, Azerbaijan, Brunei, Comoros, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Pakistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) go so far as to include this crescent moon symbol? Why is the knowledge of the timing of the *hila*, the crescent moon, so important for starting the Muslim holy month of fasting, Ramadan? All the evidence points to the fact of the moon symbol being important to the early Arabs among whom the religion of Islam gradually developed, and that this pre-Islamic pagan symbol was imported into Islam, along with the rest of the ancient trappings.

For the Muslim to be free of idolatry means, ultimately, that he or she must turn from Islam, with its worship of this created god, and turn to the True Creator God of the Bible, who has said that He will not share His glory with other “gods” (Isaiah 42:8).

In short, the notion that Allah is the same as the God of the Bible, and that Allah is just the fullest revelation of God who had previously been revealed in the Torah and the Bible, must be rejected. As Caesar Farah has said in his book about Islam,

“There is no reason, therefore, to accept the idea that Allah passed to the Muslims from the Christians and Jews”.<sup>95</sup>

The God of the Bible is not the same as the Allah worshipped in Islam. Instead, the roots of Islam’s deity are found in Middle Eastern mythology, and as such represent the latest manifestation of idolatry in that region, and wherever Islam has spread.

## End Notes

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- (53) - see, e.g. F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, n. 13, p.7, who notes the equivalence of Baal Shamen with Zeus Helios, a solar deity, in Nabataean inscriptions.
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- (59) - see F.E. Peters, *Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places*, p. 25
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## Myth #3 Allah is the Same as the God of the Bible

## **Myth #4 Muslims Reverence Jesus Christ**

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This is a claim which many Muslims in Western nations will often make, so as to encourage greater “dialogue” and openness toward Islam. Because Jesus Christ is mentioned in the Qur’an, it is said to follow that the Qur’an honours Him. Islam acknowledges that Jesus Christ was a prophet, that He was born of a virgin, and even that He was sinless. However, simply giving lip service to these facts does not necessarily mean that Muslims understand the significance of these points, or that they are therefore reverencing the Lord. This is because, in the process of mentioning and teaching about Jesus, Islam rejects and denies many truths about the Lord which are of vital importance.

### **A Short Synopsis of What Islam Teaches About Christ**

The Qur’an mentions quite a lot about Jesus Christ -- some of it truthful, and some of it rather outlandish. Islam teaches the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. “And Mary, daughter of ‘Imran, whose body was chaste, therefore We breathed therein something of Our Spirit. And she put faith in the words of her Lord and His scriptures, and was of the obedient.” (Surah 66:12, Pickthal translation) And also, “She said: ‘How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?’ 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’: It is a matter so decreed. So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place.” (Surah 19:20-22) In both of these Quranic passages, we can see that orthodox Muslim teaching holds to the fact that Christ was conceived in Mary, despite her being a virgin. Further, it is taught that Mary’s conception of Christ was a result of the action of the Spirit of Allah. The virginal conception of Jesus Christ is also explicitly stated to have been a sign to men and a mercy from Allah. Where Islam fails, though, is to understand what this sign pointed to and what the mercy of God through the Lord Jesus Christ really is.

The Qur’an also reports that Jesus Christ was sinless in His life on earth. “He said: I am only a messenger of thy Lord, that I may bestow on thee a faultless son.” (Surah 19:19, Pickthal translation) Christ was therefore described to Mary as faultless, indicating that He would be sinless. The Yusuf Ali translation of the Qur’an uses the word “holy” to describe Jesus, which is a word meaning “to be set apart and separated from sin”. This does indeed describe Jesus Christ, who is sinless and completely separated from any sin in His holiness.

Some of the events surrounding the birth of the Lord are taught as well. The Qur’an reports that Jesus spoke at birth. “But she pointed to the babe. They said: ‘How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?’ He said: ‘I am indeed a servant of Allah: He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet’...” (Surah 19:29-30) The Bible, though, makes no record of this event, which appears to be a later Muslim addition designed to strengthen the doctrine of Jesus’ prophethood by attributing this miracle to Him.

In Islam, Jesus Christ is acknowledged as having performed many miracles. He raised people from the dead and healed the sick and infirmed. He had supernatural knowledge of things which people kept secret. He is also reported to have fashioned a bird out of clay, breathed into it, and it came to life. “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;” (Surah 3:49) Some of these miracles are true to the Biblical record, the miracle of the clay bird is not. However, we can note that Islam does record Jesus as having performed miracles, through the power of Allah, and that these miracles were for the purpose of serving as signs so that the people might believe.

Islam will even go so far as to teach that Jesus Christ was the Messiah from God, and that He was God’s Word and mediator. In Surah 3:45, we see the Messianic nature of Jesus Christ supported, “And remember when the angels said: O Mary! Lo! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a word from him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, illustrious in the world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near unto Allah.” (Pickthal translation) The Arabisation of the corresponding Syriac word, translated as “Messiah” by Pickthal, is *al-masseh*, which literally means “the anointed one, the messiah”, just as does the word *Messiah* in Hebrew. Note the similarity between the two words in these two related, Semitic languages. As the Messiah of God, Jesus was then also reckoned by the Qur’an to be the Word of God. “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...” (Surah 4:171)

The Qur’an even hints at the divinity and intercession of Christ, though most Muslims probably would not be inclined to accept this. Surah 39:44 states, “Say: ‘To Allah belongs exclusively the right to grant intercession: to Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: In the End, it is to Him that ye shall be brought back.’” Hence, Allah alone has the right to intercede before himself for human beings. Interestingly then, over in Surah 3:45, we see, “And remember when the angels said: O Mary! Lo! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a word from him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, illustrious in the world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near unto Allah.” That phrase “brought near unto Allah” has been interpreted by many prominent Muslim scholars, including the authors of the early commentary on the Qur’an, *Al-Jalalan*, as indicating a position and office of intercession with Allah, which we saw previously is said to only reside with Allah himself<sup>1</sup>.

Lastly, and most controversially, the Qur’an appears to teach both the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Surah 3:55, the Qur’an says “And when Allah said: O Isa, I am going to terminate the period of your stay on earth and cause you to ascend unto Me and purify you of those who disbelieve and make those who follow you above those who disbelieve to the day of resurrection; then to Me shall be your return, so I will decide between you concerning that in which you differed.” (Shakir translation) Pickthal translates the phrase “I am going to terminate the period of your stay” as “I am gathering thee”. Muslim apologists claim that this does not

indicate the death of Jesus Christ, but that Allah merely brought Him up to him through ascension. However, Dr. Anis Shorrosh makes the statement,

“This phrase in the Arabic language, ‘Inni mutawaf-feeke,’ is translated as “I am gathering thee.” Some say the word does not indicate death, while others affirm that Christ did actually die. As an Arab, I have never known of any other meaning than death for this expression, within or without the Quran.”<sup>2</sup>

Likewise, Muslim interpreters clearly understand that the Qur’an teaches the death and resurrection of John the Baptist in Surah 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!”. However, almost the exact same wording in the Arabic is used when the Qur’an reports Jesus as 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!” (Surah 19:33) Yet, many Muslim scholars will contend that Jesus did not say he was going to die and be raised up again in this passage, preferring to say instead that it teaches the “gathering in” mentioned earlier. They would rather make completely unsupportable textual claims than admit that their scriptures report the death and resurrection of Christ.

## Reverencing the Lord?

So, does all this teaching about Jesus really honour Him, as Muslim apologists say? And further, do Muslims really even abide by the apparent teachings of their own scriptures with regards to the Lord Jesus? Not really. For all that the Qur’an says about Jesus, it still in the main denies His divinity. “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: far exalted is He above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs.” (Surah 4:171) Muslims use this passage as a source for their arguments against the divinity of Jesus. Pointing to this, they will say that Jesus was no more than a messenger of Allah, that He was not part of the Trinity, and that Allah is far exalted above having a son, so hence Jesus was not the Son of God.

Another Quranic verse which Muslims use to deny the Trinity is Surah 5:116, “And behold! Allah will say: “O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah.?” He will say: “Glory to Thee! never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, Thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my heart, Thou I know not what is in Thine. For Thou knowest in full all that is hidden.”

Muslims have long misunderstood the doctrine of the Trinity, as these verses demonstrates. The Trinity does not consist of three separate gods. The Trinity does not consist of God, Jesus, and Mary (as per Surah 5:116). Instead, the Trinity is one God who has revealed Himself to mankind in three manifestations, each playing a varying role in God’s plan of redemption for mankind. These are three in person, but one in essence, and all are one God. “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” (I John

5:7) This is THE clearest statement of the Trinity in all the Bible, though by no means the only one. Jesus Christ, the Word of God, is clearly shown to be God in the Bible. Christ Himself made the claim to deity. "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30) The men of Jesus' day knew that He claimed deity, which is why the Jews sought to lodge blasphemy charges against Him.

"When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his Spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion." (Mark 2:5-12)

What Jesus was illustrating in this passage was His deity. He asks the rhetorical question of which is more difficult: to forgive a man of his sins, or to heal a man of his physical infirmities. The answer, of course, is that it is more difficult to heal the man physically. Jesus showed that since He had the supernatural power to heal the man without the least bit of effort, then He also had the power to forgive sins, which is reserved for God alone. By forgiving sins, Jesus demonstrated His deity in a way that His audience easily recognised.

Further, it must be understood by all, Muslim and non-Muslim, that Jesus Himself laid claim to deity in a specific and direct way. When Christ was being tempted by Satan in the wilderness, there was a point at which Satan took Him up to the top of the temple and challenged Jesus to throw Himself down, in an attempt to get the Lord to step outside of the plan which God had for His ministry (this by engaging in a 'spectacular' exhibition instead of preaching and teaching and using His miraculous powers rightly for these ends). However, what is interesting for us here is the Lord's response to Satan's challenge:

"Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt THE LORD THY GOD."  
(Matthew 4:7)

Now, who was present in this dialogue besides Jesus and Satan? Nobody. Who was Satan tempting? Jesus. Therefore, who ONLY could Jesus have been saying was Lord and God who was being tempted? Himself.

Islam denies His deity, though, and reduces Jesus to the status of a prophet only. "He spake: Lo! I am the slave of Allah. He hath given me the Scripture and hath appointed me a Prophet." (Surah 19:30, Pickthall translation) Hence, Jesus is subordinate to Allah, and cannot be reckoned as having deity or being Allah. The two are clearly delineated and declared as separate beings. Similarly, Islam denies that Jesus is God's Son, using Surah 4:171 where it says that Allah is exalted above having a son. Most expositors on this that I have seen, though, consistently think that this idea refers to God physically having a son, in the same way which a mortal human being would, i.e. through sexual procreation. However, they fail to understand that the virgin birth of

Christ renders this argument moot. God miraculously caused Mary to conceive, through the overshadowing action of His Holy Spirit, and thus Jesus was born without a human father. This is important, also, in that it confirms His sinless perfection. As Christ was not born through the means of passing the seed of man down, Christ did not inherit in the human part of His nature the sinfulness which afflicts the mortal human race.

Hence, what we see in the way Islam deals with the deity and personage of Christ is that they will go right to the brink, and then fail to take that all-important step of faith to trust in His deity. Islam acknowledges His sinlessness, His virgin conception, and that He was indeed from God (as far as being a prophet is concerned). Muslims see and believe that He performed many miracles, and that He is the Messiah who intercedes before God on behalf of man. Yet, they turn back at understanding and believing what this all means. Christ's virgin birth and sinlessness point to His deity. His position as the Messiah, who was to die for the sins of the world, made Him the only one who could be the spotless sacrifice for man's sin. God Himself was the only acceptable sacrifice to God to take away man's sin guilt, as He is the only one who has never sinned, and thus is spotless and righteous in His own right.

Islam also tries to deny the death of Christ. Many fairy tales have been put forth over the years by Muslims wishing to deny the crucifixion of Christ. It will has been said that He really swooned on the cross, did not really die, and was taken down, after which He woke up again (similar to the tale told by liberal infidels in many of our "Christian" seminaries). Muslims will claim that it was really Judas who died on the cross, instead of Jesus. They will say that angels removed Him from the cross before He died. Any number of stories are told to get around the simple fact, as seen from all four Gospels and secular sources as well, that Jesus Christ died upon the cross at Calvary. Muslims will make the argument that saying Jesus died on the cross dishonours God as it presumes that one of God's servants would be killed by sinner. The fact notwithstanding that God's Word records MANY of God's faithful servants who were killed for serving Him faithfully, this argument demonstrates the ignorance of Muslims as to the PURPOSE of Christ's death on the cross. The argument that they think is honouring the Lord really dishonours Him as it denies the very reason He even came among mankind as the God-man. Jesus Christ incarnated to mankind for the specific purpose of dying on the cross! It was His whole reason for coming, to consummate God's plan of salvation for man by serving as the ultimate, final sacrifice for man's sin.

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver or gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (I Peter 1:18-19) - "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many..." (Hebrews 9:28) - "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled. In the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in his sight;" (Colossians 1:21-22)

Christ died to serve as the sacrifice for man which would atone for man's sins. Man cannot save himself through his good works or religious rituals. Christ, who was completely righteous, took the place of every man, woman, and child who ever lived and will ever live. He voluntarily gave Himself to suffer the death penalty, the wrath of God against sin, so that through Him we all

might receive forgiveness of our sins, if we trust in Him and His sacrifice and resurrection. The Muslim claims that Christ did not die is an attempt to negate this. While they think they are honouring Him, they are in fact denying Him, calling Him a liar, and leaving themselves with no hope of eternal salvation.

Likewise, the resurrection of Christ from the dead demonstrated His triumph over death and hell, and gives promise of eternal life to all who trust in Him. His resurrection was a firstfruits of the resurrection to eternal glory which all who believe on Him will also receive. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” (I Corinthians 15:23) Without the resurrection of Christ, which Muslims deny implicitly when they deny His death, there is no hope for any man to be saved. “And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” (I Corinthians 15:14)

What is amazing in all this is that Islam dimly recognises and honours the need for a sacrifice to be made in the place of sinful man. Every year, at the conclusion of the *hajj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca, Muslims celebrate a three-day festival called *Eid al-Adha*. This feast period celebrates an episode in which Abraham was called by Allah to sacrifice his son Ishmael on an altar, but at the last moment, an angel intervened and allowed Abraham to sacrifice a ram in the place of Ishmael. This is very similar to the Biblical account of the near-sacrifice and salvation of Isaac in Genesis 22:1-18. Isaac, representing sinful man, must die for his transgressions, but God sends a male ram to die in Isaac’s place, providing a type of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, who was described by John the Baptist as “the Lamb of God” (John 1:29). The Muslim Eid Al-Adha, while being transposed to Ishmael, provides a loose corollary of this event. Yet, the implications of the need for man to die for his sins, and the provision of God to take man’s place under wrath are not understood by the Muslim world.

## **The Gospel of Barnabas**

A brief mention ought to be made concerning the so-called “Gospel of Barnabas” (not to be confused with the “Epistle of Barnabas”, a recognised exhortatory epistle of a second century Christian author). This work is an extra-biblical book which claims to be an account of the life and work of Christ. Muslims love this book, and cite it often in support of the Islamic view of Christ. The reason for this is because the book conforms very much to Islamic theology concerning Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Barnabas denies that Jesus claimed deity, denies that He was the Son of God, and denies His death on the cross (this is partially where the claim that Judas was substituted comes from). Muslims say that this book was considered authoritative by the early church, but this claim is contradicted by the fact that no church fathers ever cited it in their writings, and that the earliest textual evidence for this book is a sixteenth century Italian manuscript<sup>3</sup>. Some apologists claim that the Gospel of Barnabas is mentioned in “The Gelasian Decree” of pope Gelasius (492-495 AD). Now, a “Gospel in the name of Barnabas” is discussed in that decree, but is rejected along with a host of other writings as spurious and apocryphal, which had been attributed to various Apostles and other first generation Christians<sup>4</sup>. However, this apocryphal gospel was dismissed at the end of the 5th century, while the Gospel of Barnabas preferred by Muslims shows much internal evidence of having originated at a much later date.



Muslims will sometimes also attempt to point to various other decrees of the early Catholic church as evidence of an early date for the Gospel of Barnabas, such as the Decree of Pope Sixtus I, but examination of these documents shows no mention of such a gospel.

Additionally, the Gospel of Barnabas contains many historical mistakes and anachronisms which date to medieval Europe and which would not have existed in the first century AD, and the many Islamic influences in the work seem to indicate the “Gospel” is the work of a medieval European forger, likely a convert to Islam. The style of quotations from the Old Testament found in this work are from the Latin Vulgate, which was not even translated until the very end of the 4th century, and which remained the standard Roman Bible for most of Roman Catholic history to the present. The tradition in the Catholic church that Mt. Moriah was the mount of Transfiguration began only in the 3rd century, yet this is the place presented in the Gospel of Barnabas. This “Gospel” also contains several references to medieval elements such as wooden wine casks and romanticised duals between lovers, which did not exist in 1st century Palestine. Most revealing are the numerous references to Mohammed (in chapters 44, 54, 97, 112, 163, etc.) which reveals a post-Islamic origin for the work.

In fact, the dating for the creation of the Gospel of Barnabas can positively be placed between 1300 and 1350. This is because of the use by its author of a centennial Year of Jubilee. In chapter 85, the Gospel of Barnabas states, “..Years of the Jubilee, which now cometh every 100 years”. In the Old Testament, the Year of Jubilee was set for every fifty years, and this remained the practice (at least in word even if the Jubilee was not kept) throughout the subsequent history of both the Jews and the early and medieval Christian church. Yet, the Gospel of Barnabas says that the Jubilee was changed to being every 100 years. Why? Gairdner supplies the answer by noting that after celebrating this year in 1300, Pope Boniface VII altered the Jubilee to a centennial event. However, his successor Pope Clement VI reversed this decision and celebrated the next Jubilee in 1350<sup>5</sup>. Only a person living in that period between 1300 and 1350 would have considered the year of Jubilee as being changed to come every 100 years. Further evidence for dating the “Gospel” to at least this date lies in that it actually, on several occasions, quotes the works of Dante Aligheri (1265-1321)! All of these evidences, plus many, many more which will not be listed here for the sake of space, point to the Gospel of Barnabas as being a complete and utter forgery, produced by an individual steeped in Muslim theology and tradition, yet who was also at least marginally knowledgeable of the “Christianity” of his day.

For much more detailed expositions on the reasons why the Gospel of Barnabas can be nothing but a forgery, read the section from their book *Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross* which deals with the Gospel of Barnabas, by [Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb](#), and also the essay on this subject by [Gerhard Nehls](#). Any serious seeker of truth will be forced to recognise the fakery behind this pseudographical forgery.

From all this we can see that while Islam says that they reverence and honour Jesus Christ as a prophet of God, they really call Him a liar and dishonour Him. Muhammed apparently heard the truth, or at least something closely approximating it, from Christians in his early life, but could not accept the claims of Christ. His contact with Monophysite Christians in Syria warped his theological understanding of Christianity, and resulted in his denial of the Trinity, and therefore, Christ’s deity. Muslim claims of honouring Christ sound much like those mentioned in Isaiah

29:13, “Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of man.”

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## End Notes

- (1) - *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, eds. H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramers, p. 173.
- (2) - Dr. A. Shorrosh, *Islam Revealed: A Christian Arab's View of Islam*, p. 97
- (3) - L.B. Jones, *Christianity Explained to Muslims*, p. 79
- (4) - C.G. de Boor, “The Gelasian Decree of Books Received and Not Received”, in *Texts and Investigations into the History of Ancient Christian Literature*, cap. xxxviii.4
- (5) - W.H.T. Gairdner and S. Abdul-Ahad, *The Gospel of Barnabas: An Essay and Inquiry*, p. 19

## Mohammed

### ***Myth #5 Mohammed was a Prophet from Allah***

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For a billion Muslims the world over, Mohammed is the epitomé of prophethood. He is viewed as the final prophet, bringing the final revelation of Allah to man. Most view Mohammed as a sinless saint, the perfection of how humanity ought to conduct itself. This man's life and way of living are held up as models for humanity, and their emulation is encouraged in every generation. But who was this Mohammed, what is the true testimony about him, and did he really fulfill the role of a prophet from God?

### **Who Was This Mohammed?**

Before exploring in detail what the Muslim traditions teach about Mohammed, the question of whether Mohammed actually existed as a historical personage, at least as he is depicted in the traditions, must be raised. Practically the only knowledge available about the life and history of Mohammed comes from the traditional Muslim sources, the *ahadith*, the *sunnat*, and the *sirat*, or biographies of Mohammed. The primary deficiency of traditional Western study of Islam has been its uncritical over reliance upon these traditions and historiography as the means of examining Islam in what Renan, the early Orientalist, called "the clear light of history". Scholars have long recognised that the various *ahadith* and other traditional material, such as the historical records of battles in the Arab conquest and the biographical materials concerning Mohammed, are often quite contradictory, and rarely can be put together into a logical, coherent order of events. Further, the materials making up the *ahadith* and the biographies are very late, often as much as two centuries after the fact and were often blatantly polemical in their outlook. This suggests that the reason for the conflicting details in so many of these sources is due to their being "spun" (or even invented) by factionalists among the Muslims, each trying to bolster their own particular view or party by laying claim to some saying or action of the prophet. Schacht has expressed an opinion which has become increasingly commonplace in the studies of Islam when he stated,

"I should like to present some ideas on what, I think, is a necessary reevaluation of Islamic traditions in the light of our present knowledge; but am at a loss whether to call my conclusions something new and unprecedented, or something old and well known. No one could have been more surprised than I was by the results which the evidence of the texts has forced upon me during the last ten years or so; but looking back I cannot see what other result could possibly be consistent with the very foundations of our historical and critical study of the first two or three centuries of Islam. One of these foundations, I may take it for granted, is Goldhizer's discovery that the traditions from the Prophet and from his Companions do not contain more or less authentic information on the earliest period of Islam to which they claim to belong, but reflect opinions held during the first two and a half centuries after the Hijra."<sup>1</sup>

Schacht thus affirms the unreliability of the Muslim traditions for use as primary source materials when studying the events surrounding the rise of Islam. Instead of reflecting historical fact, these traditional materials reflect later opinions and redacted accounts of Muslims who were applying their later standards and beliefs onto an earlier generation. Daniel Pipes has compared the use of these materials by Western scholars who attempt to determine the “authentic” history of Islam to a similar, though hypothetical, situation where we, in the 21st century, would try to determine the makeup of the Constitution, solely on the basis of the ideas and interpretations of various modern factions in America, which would obviously give conflicting accounts and emphases, etc.<sup>2</sup>

As noted earlier, nearly the only source for direct information concerning Mohammed (as well as a host of other topics concerning early Islam) are the ahadith. The material in works such as Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hisham, and other early biographers of Mohammed (*sirat*) largely draw from the ahadith as their sources. The ahadith are purported to have been transmitted orally from the time of Mohammed and the Companions via chains of authority, conveyed to later generations through series of trustworthy Muslims who passed down what they had heard about Mohammed and the early Muslims. This process is known as *isnad*, and the determination of an “authentic” hadith by Muslim scholars has traditionally been made by judging the *isnad*, the personages making up the chain of authority for the hadith, on a number of factors such as reliability and reputation (hence, making it a somewhat subjective exercise).

This method in which the ahadith were transmitted and recorded is less than inspiring in its capacity to accurately transmit information. Also, the independence of the witnesses in the *isnad* has likely been overestimated by past scholars of Islam. Noting that the process of *isnad* as a means of transmitting information about Mohammed and early Islam evolved many decades after the facts they purport to transmit, Juynboll expresses a studied trepidation about the authority and authenticity of these traditions.

“In my view, before the institution of the *isnad* came into existence roughly three quarters of a century after the prophet’s death, the *ahadith* and the *qisas* (mostly legendary stories) were transmitted in a haphazard fashion if at all, and mostly anonymously. Since the *isnad* came into being, names of older authorities were supplied where the new *isnad* precepts required such. Often the names of well-known historical personalities were chosen but more often the names of fictitious people were offered to fill the gaps in *isnads* which were as yet far from perfect...The overall majority of allegedly the most ancient traditions is likely to have originated at the earliest in the course of the last few decades of the first century [ed. note - Islamic century] (700s-720s), when for the first time the need for traditions became generally felt. The *isnad* as institution had just come into being and slowly but gradually the concept of *sunnat an-nabi* began to eclipse the *Sunna* of a region or of a (group of) person(s).”<sup>3</sup>

Thus, Juynboll argues from the evidence for a process of standardisation (*isnad*) that began in the dusk of the first Islamic century. This process arose out of a recognised need on the part of the community within the Arab religion to establish a solid basis upon which to ground their traditional beliefs and to bring order to the very haphazard system of commandments, stories, personal examples, and doctrines each claiming authority. Wansbrough goes even further, recognising the supplying of *isnads* for statements or examples attributed to Mohammed and his

Companions as a formal innovation datable only to the very beginning of the third Islamic century (200 AH/815 AD)<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, Cragg notes that the more formally organised and “scientifically” established a tradition in the ahadith is, the more likely it is to have been severely redacted and/or deliberately invented. He says,

“This science being so meticulous that it is fair (even if somewhat paradoxical) to suspect that the more complete and formally satisfactory the attestation claimed to be, the more likely it was that the tradition was of late and deliberate origin. The developed requirements of acceptability that the tradition boasted simply did not exist in the early, more haphazard and spontaneous days.”<sup>5</sup>

Goldhizer was the first modern western scholar of Islam to recognise the spurious nature of the hadithic records, when his thorough examination of them (practically the first undertaken by a Western scholar) uncovered the astounding regularity with which the traditions contradicted each other, and whose numbers seemed to balloon with each succeeding generation. Goldhizer succinctly summarised his findings,

“In the absence of authentic evidence it would indeed be rash to attempt the most tentative opinion as to which parts of the Hadith are the oldest original material, or even as to which of them date back to the generations immediately following the Prophet’s death. Closer acquaintance with the vast stock of Hadiths induces sceptical caution rather than optimistic trust regarding the material brought together in the carefully compiled collections. We are unlikely to have even as much confidence as Dozy regarding a large part of the Hadith, but will probably consider by far the greater part of it as the result of the religious, historical, and social development of Islam during the first two centuries. The Hadith will not serve as a document for the history of the infancy of Islam, but rather as a reflection of the tendencies which appeared in the community during the maturer stages of its development. It contains invaluable evidence for the evolution of Islam during the years when it was forming itself into an organized whole from powerful mutually opposed forces.”<sup>6</sup>

This point is recognised and repeated by more modern scholars on the subject of Islamic tradition. Among them, Crone states about the *Sira* of Ibn Ishaq (which was ultimately based upon the hadithic materials),

“The work is late: written not by a grandchild, but by a great grandchild of the Prophet’s generation, it gives us the view for which classical Islam had settled. And written by a member of the *ulama*, the scholars who had by then emerged as the classical bearers of the Islamic tradition, the picture which it offers is also one-sided: how the Umayyad caliphs remembered the Prophet we shall never know. That it is unhistorical is only what one would expect, but it has an extraordinary capacity to resist internal criticism...characteristic of the entire Islamic tradition, and most pronounced in the Koran: one can take the picture presented or one can leave it, but one cannot *work* with it.”<sup>7</sup>

She further concludes about the hadithic traditions,

“There is nothing, within the Islamic traditions, that one can do with Baladhuri’s statement that the kiblah (direction of prayer) in the first Kufan mosque was to the west (opposite direction to Mecca): either it is false or else it is odd, but why it should be there and what it means God only knows. It is similarly odd that Umar (second caliph) is known as the Faruq (Redeemer), that there are so many Fatimas, that Ali (Muhammad’s cousin) is sometimes Muhammad’s brother, and that there is so much pointless information...It is a tradition in which information means nothing and leads nowhere; it just happens to be there and lends itself to little but arrangement by majority and minority opinion.”<sup>8</sup>

The process of *isnad* is also highly suspect, and was shown on several counts by Goldhizer to yield seeming authenticity to mutually contradictory ahadith. Cook has shown a number of ways in which the *isnads* could spread in ways which would falsely appear to give greater authenticity to them<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, that the ahadith and other traditional materials are most likely forgeries developed over time in the Muslim community to “fill out” for itself and its prophet a sense of history has been shown as both plausible<sup>10</sup> and likely<sup>11</sup>. Noth and Conrad have noted formal elements in many accounts in the Muslim traditions which are so stereotyped that they can easily be transported from one account to the next, and which suggests that they are not so much accurate history as a literary artifice of symbolic value<sup>12</sup>.

Concerning the reliability of the *sirat* biographical material of Ibn Ishaq (from whom most of the later biographers obtained their material), Conrad writes,

“Ibn Ishaq’s numerous students and their successors took what they received from the master and redacted and transmitted it in different ways. Witness, for example, the differences between Ibn Hisham, the quotations of al-Tabari, the recension of Yunus ibn Bukayr, and that of Muhammed ibn Salama al-Harrani. As different lines of transmission represent potentially different redactions, efforts to reconstruct the original form of a text cannot simply combine quotations from different lines of transmission, as if Ibn Ishaq’s students and successors were making no changes of their own....Transmitters did not limit themselves to passing on what they had received from their teachers, but rather laid claim to the role of adapting and revising their materials as they saw fit, not just by the well-known means of the collective *isnad*, but also by rearranging, abbreviating, expanding, and recasting.”<sup>13</sup>

Finally, it must be understood that the sheer magnitude of hadithic traditions existed just for the reasons given above - the need to provide a common basis for belief and practice among the community in the Arab religion and the need for the scholarly and clerical class in this society to provide legitimisation for itself and the “orthodox” system which they were evolving and enforcing. Crone discusses the large numbers of hadith at length,

“Bukhari is said to have examined a total of 600,000 traditions attributed to the Prophet; he preserved some 7,000 (including repetitions), or in other words dismissed some 593,000 as inauthentic. If Ibn Hanbal examined a similar number of traditions, he must have rejected about 570,000, his collection containing some 30,000 (again including repetitions). Of Ibn Hanbal’s traditions, 1,710 (including repetitions) are transmitted by the Companion Ibn Abbas. Yet, less than fifty years earlier one scholar estimated that Ibn Abbas had only heard nine traditions from the Prophet, while another thought that the correct figure might be ten. If Ibn Abbas has heard



ten traditions from the Prophet in the years around 800, but over a thousand by 850, how many had he heard in 700, or 632? Even if we accept that ten of Ibn Abbas' traditions are authentic, how do we identify them in the pool of 1,710? we do not even know whether they are to be found in this pool, as opposed to that of the 530,000 traditions dismissed on the ground that their chain of authorities were faulty. Under such circumstances it is scarcely justified to presume Hadith to be authentic until the contrary has been proven."<sup>14</sup>

Essentially, she is making the point that the huge number of ahadith which were available to al-Bukhari and Ibn Hanbal to sift through, all presenting themselves as authentic (though most recognisably not), was the result of a process of hadithic inflation. Huge numbers of ahadith were being created and added to the compilations of these traditions, such that while Islamic scholars in 800 AD recognised a mere ten (or nine) ahadith as transmitted from the Companion Ibn Abbas, a mere fifty years later, this number has increased to **1,710**. This expansion in the number of ahadith was due to the redactions and inventions discussed above.

Due to the extreme unreliability of the biographical materials concerning Mohammed, and the ahadith upon which the large portion of this biography is based, the quest for Mohammed must be directed away from polemical and often self-serving traditional accounts and towards the evidences provided by archaeology and from the accounts of observers who were closer to the fact than the later Muslim biographers and tradition-makers. What must be understood is that there is actually very little real evidence for Mohammed, at least as a "prophet" and religious leader. Concurrently, practically everything in the traditional account of the rise of Islam which has been pieced together from the Muslim traditions is not substantiated by evidential facts.

Analytical scholarship recognises the contradictory and often pointless nature of the hadithic material. Further, it is observed that this material was collected within the milieu of intersectorian rivalries and scholastic quarrels. The evidences provided by contemporary sources in the first part of the 7th century, as well as the tangible, physical artifacts of both Arab and non-Arab from the period under scrutiny, paint a picture in which there was no prophet named Mohammed (or indeed, a religion called Islam) for many decades into the "Islamic" period.

From evidence unearthed in the sands of Palestine and other areas of *Al-Shams* (an Arabic term for the Syro-Palestine region), it appears that when the Arabs began to infiltrate Syria and the surrounding regions in force beginning in the first decade of the 7th century, they were still largely pagan, though many had adopted some form of Christianity, Judaism, or Abrahamism. The religion of the Arabs which eventually became Islam developed over the next two-three centuries after the Arab takeover of Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia. Further, this development initially began in these regions, and was later given a redacted origin in the Hijaz, where Mecca and Medina are located.

From the evidence at hand, it is highly doubtful that, initially at least, Mecca existed as a centre of any importance; certainly it was nothing like what is depicted in the Qur'an. The Roman geographer Ptolemy is often cited as an early witness to Mecca, through his description of a city called Macoraba<sup>15</sup>. However, as has been pointed out, "Macoraba" is of a different linguistic root than Mecca<sup>16</sup>. Crone, further, demonstrates that Ptolemy's Macoraba cannot be identified with Mecca, and that if Ptolemy did refer to anything like Mecca, it would have been to a town in



Arabia Petraea named Moka<sup>17</sup>. This identification with the Mecca of Islamic tradition is, obviously, extremely tenuous at best.

Mecca as the centre of caravan trade presented in the Islamic tradition, was practically unknown by contemporaries. Whereas Arabia (a term which can include the deserts east of Al-Shams) was of political and ecclesiastical importance in the 6th century, there is no mention of the Quraysh or the trading centre of Mecca in any way, in any literature from the time, even though Greek and Latin authors had written extensively about the trade which supplied them with the spices and other goods of southern Arabia, and which is assumed in Muslim tradition to have come through Mecca<sup>18</sup>. Crone points out that in sources contemporary with the maturation of the Arab religion (late 7th - 8th centuries), there seems to be some confusion as to where Mecca even was. She notes that the *Continuatio Byzantia Arabica* gives a location for Mecca between Ur and Harran, which is not in Arabia, but on the edge of Mesopotamia<sup>19</sup>. This may belie an apparent Abrahamic influence in the Arabic religion during this time. She also notes that Jacob of Edessa knew of the Kaabah to which the Arabs prayed, but placed it not in today's Mecca, but at a point close to what might have been the Moka mentioned by Ptolemy, which is far north of Mecca. As such, in the early years of the Arab conquest and the development of the Arab religion, Mecca as a great religious centre and home of the prophet of the final revelation seems to have been unknown.

Another evidence for the Syrian origin of the Arab religion lies in the disposition of the religious milieu in which the Arabs of Al-Shams existed versus the Hijaz. There is no archaeological evidence to support the contention in the Qur'an that Mecca and the Hijaz were huge centres of pre-Islamic *Jahiliyya* paganism. Indeed, there has not been found any evidence of Arab settlement in the region of the Hijaz in the 6th and early 7th centuries<sup>20</sup>. There is, however, evidence for exactly the type of pagan centres, practices, and sanctuaries which are described in the Qur'an and the Muslim traditions - in Syro-Palestine. Various pagan sites have been unearthed in this region which conform to what is recorded in the Qur'an. One of the most prominent is a site at Sede Boqer in the Negev desert (between Palestine and the Sinai peninsula). There were *Jahiliyya* type pagan sites at Sede Boqer all the way up to 160-170 AH (roughly 780-790s AD)<sup>21</sup>, even though the Traditional account claims this region would have been thoroughly under the control of Islam for over a century and a half. Evidence from over thirty sites in the Negev and surrounding areas give evidence to active and thriving pagan cult centres even into the reign of the Abbasid Caliph Hisham (724-750 AD)<sup>22</sup>. This suggests to us that the reaction to paganism which is so evident in Muslim polemic works, not the least of which would be the Qur'an, exists not because of interaction which the early Muslims had in the Hijaz and Mecca, but because of what they confronted in Al-Shams.

Further, there is evidence that what is called "Classical Arabic" (the language of the Qur'an) did not originate in the Arabian peninsula, but arose instead among the Arabs of Al-Shams<sup>23</sup>. Classical Arabic adapted an Aramaic (22 letter) script which is actually not very suitable for transcribing Arabic. This is despite the presence among peninsular Arabian tribes of South Arabian scripts with 28 or 29 letters which would be more suitable for Classical Arabic (which any hypothetical Meccans in a busy caravan town would have been very familiar with). The fact that a more unwieldy script was chosen suggests that the reason was due to the availability of the Aramaic-based scripts, in turn suggesting a more northerly origin for Classical Arabic than in the

Hijaz. In fact, there is no epigraphic or other evidence for Classical Arabic in the Hijaz region until the reign of Mu'awiyah in the 640s AD. This late appearance, coupled with the fact that when Classical Arabic appeared in the Hijaz it did so fully developed (with no long history of evolution), indicates that it was introduced from outside, perhaps by a colonisation effort into the region instituted by Mu'awiyah. The traces of development of Classical Arabic from precursors are instead found in Syria, where an early form of this language written in a proto-Kufic script has been found at a number of sites dating to the 6th century, including on the lentils of church doors<sup>24</sup>. It would seem that far from originating in the Hijaz, Islam (or at least a proto-Islamic Arabic monotheism) was introduced into the area by colonists or other occupants, as evidenced by the scripts and language they used. The later adoption of the Hijaz as the framework within which the Muslim traditional accounts took place may be the result of a desire among the later *ulamas* to redact a more "Arabian" feel and origin for their religion, moving its place of birth into the peninsula from whence the Arabs had originally come.

The picture which the epigraphic and numismatic evidences in Syro-Palestine and Iraq paint is one of gradual development of an Arab monotheism from an indeterminate stage, to a stage in which the prophet Mohammed was introduced (referred to as the "Mohammedan" stage), to the final crystallisation of the Arab monotheism into the Islam which is still with us today. The development of Arab religion from indeterminate monotheism to Mohammedanism to Islam, on the basis of the religious declarations and statements made on coins and in the epigraphy, can be generally traced. As noted above, paganism remained a factor (and seems not to have been suppressed until well into the 8th century) among the Arabs and their subject peoples for quite some time after the Arab conquests. However, for several centuries previous to the Arab Empire, monotheistic forces had been at work among the Arabs. The 5th century ecclesiastical historian Sozomenus (himself Arab), described the "Saracens" as Abrahamists, who circumcised their sons, abstained from pork, and otherwise engaged in many Jewish rites and customs<sup>25</sup>. Various sects of Christianity, as well as Judaism and the Judeo-Christian groups, had also converted a number of Arabs to their beliefs. Hence, when the Arabs obtained mastery over the region, monotheism was a known quantity for them. Among the Arabs higher on the social and political scale, an indeterminate monotheism seems to have developed which blended elements from these various belief systems, while asserting a distinct Arab character for itself.

This indeterminate monotheism, however, gradually developed into a belief system centred about a Chosen One/prophet who could serve as a figurehead and prophetic pedigree for the Arab monotheism. With Abd al-Malik (r. 685-705 AD) we have the rise of what is referred to by Nevo and Koren as "Mohammedanism", the stage in Arab religious development where this Chosen One/prophet was felt to be needed, and this need acted upon, and from which Mohammed as a religious figure arose. Mohammedanism was an intermediary stage in the development of the Arab religion. As the Arabs came in contact with established religions in the Empire which they had obtained, the theological ideas of these religions gradually were adopted into the Arab religion. One of these was the messianic idea, the need for a chosen one (akin to the "anointed one"), an Arabic parallel to the Jewish and Christian prophets, who would provide both religious uniformity and a "pedigree" of respectability to the Arabs, who almost certainly felt the lack of this in the presence of so many groups who could point back to their progenitors with pride. The Abrahamism which tinged the early monotheism of the Arabs before, during, and into the first few years after the acquisition of their Empire, was a starting point, but one which

still placed the Arabs into an inferior position to the Jews, owing to the fact that the Arabs were traced back to Abraham through the rejected son Ishmael, rather than the son of promise, Isaac. The national prophet built by Abd al-Malik and enhanced in later generations by the traditions of the ahadith and the sira, rectified this deficiency<sup>26</sup>. It was Abd al-Malik who moved the Arab religion from indeterminate monotheism to Mohammedanism, when he introduced the prophet role for Mohammed. The Arab religion needed a messianic style prophet of the model had for Jesus/Messiah to the Christians and Jews, hence the introduction of a tradition which filled this need.

How and where did Malik come up with the prophetic role for Mohammed? It is possible that Mohammed, as the person, existed. The evidence of contemporary chronicles and other literary sources suggest the existence of an Arab king named "Muhammed" at the time of the Arab conquests of Al-Shams. Nevo and Koren demonstrate a number of contemporary and near-contemporary Syriac literary sources (roughly the length of the 7th century) which discuss the Arab conquest of Palestine and Syria<sup>27</sup>. These sources mention Mohammed as a king of the Arabs, and provide generally correlating dates for his rulership, but do not mention him as any sort of Arab "prophet". Nor do they indicate any idea that an Arab religion "Islam" existed. Indeed, this evidence is silent concerning any particularly religious aspect to his person. Brock, likewise, has pointed out that in the 7th century, Syriac sources, if they even refer to Mohammed, do not do so as a prophet or apostle, but rather simply as a king of the Arabs, and that the Syriac writers viewed the takeover as an Arab, not a Muslim, invasion<sup>28</sup>. Brock further suggests that, initially at least, the Christians among whom the Arabs were settling were not even aware of a religion called "Islam". Indeed, the literary evidence from a number of 7th century sources such as the Syriac authors and the Armenian Sebeos suggest that these writers were not aware of any planned invasion by the Arabs, and that only after some time was the realisation had that there had been a takeover by the infiltrating Arabs, rather than just the typical raiding behaviour which had gone on for centuries. The accounts of the great battles in which the Muslim *mujaheddin* crushed their Byzantine opponents appear, as far as the evidence is concerned, to be fictitious. Further, these accounts provide no evidence for any of the early caliphs in the Muslim traditions until Mu'awiyah (640s AD)<sup>29</sup>. Indeed, in the contemporary sources, there seems to be no correlation with the accounts given in the traditional Muslim historiography. Far from Mohammed being a uniter of the Arabs under the banner of Islam, the accounts given by those who were eye-witnesses to the Arab conquests in the region suggest that the Arab invasions were haphazard and fitful until the 650s, when Mu'awiyah succeeded in uniting the Arabs into one state<sup>30</sup>.

As such, it appears likely that, rather than being a great leader and prophet, the Mohammed who was later expanded was merely one of many Arab chieftains moving his flocks and his tribe into the Syro-Palestine area, out of the Eastern deserts. The later details of the exploits of Mohammed and the very early caliphs such as Umar and Uthman, appear to be more of the same invention of traditions which has been noted above.

Abd al-Malik's contribution to the development of the Arab religion was to take an obscure, barely known chieftain and turn him into a prophet and harbinger of a new religion and a new social order - Mohammedanism. No longer were the Arabs merely worshipping their al-ilah, but He now had a messenger and apostle to bring His words to man. That this development in Arab

theology was a late one is shown by the evidence at hand. The first evidence for this Arab prophet Mohammed dates to 71 AH (690 AD), with the first known inscriptions bearing his name and his title of “rasullah” (messenger of god) on coins and then later in the important Dome of the Rock inscriptions. Before this, there is no evidence in any epigraphy, papyri, or other written (and thus tangible) sources to suggest that the Arabs accepted or understood there to have been an Arab messenger from Allah. It seems strange that the Arabs, if stirred up by a mighty prophet-warrior as the Traditional account suggests, would wait over seven decades to start declaring the position of this man. Yet, this is exactly the picture which the evidence paints, as has been noted by a growing body of scholars of Islam,

“It is a striking fact that such documentary evidence as survives from the Sufyanid period (661-684) makes no mention of the messenger of God at all. The papyri do not refer to him. The Arabic inscriptions of the Arab-Sassanian coins only invoke Allah, not his rasul.”<sup>31</sup>

Also, many of the Traditional details of Mohammed’s life were taken from the life of Mohammed bin al-Hanafiyyah, a prophet-like figure put forward by a losing faction in one of the early Arab civil wars<sup>32</sup>. Bashear hints that this Mohammed might have been THE Mohammed, but this is not likely. Rather, he provided, as the idealised “prophet of Allah”, a template upon which later Muslims built the biography of the prophet Mohammed. Further, Mohammed appears very little in the Qur’an, and in a way not particularly suggestive of being a specific person, but rather a generalised “chosen one” style of prophet, which really could refer to anyone. Indeed, the many appearances of terms referring to “God’s Prophet” or “the messenger” are assumed to be referring to Mohammed. Indeed, many English translations even insert his name in parentheses to strengthen the mental association, yet there is little to specifically suggest that these are about Mohammed, other than to rely upon the *a priori* assumption that these statements are speaking of him. Nevo and Koren have also noted that in Arabic literature, the root *hmd* (from which comes the name “Mohammed”) was first used as a title, only later did it become a name around the second half of the 8th century<sup>33</sup>. The root itself means not so much “one who is praised” (the traditional understanding, thus to be attached to Mohammed), but “chosen one”, thus clarifying the early messianic role for the Arab prophet.

It was not until al-Walid (705-715 AD), the son of Abd al-Malik, that “Islam” as a vigorously distinct entity stood out as the religion of the Arabs. Walid pursued a much more hostile stance towards the various Christian sects in the Arab Empire than previous Caliphs had done, starting with his confiscation of St. John’s church in Damascus and its conversion into a *masjid* (a house of prayer) at the start of his reign, an act designed to indicate his official policy of intolerance towards these sects. The earliest appearance of the term “Islam” is on the Dome of the Rock inscription, dated at 72 AH (691 AD), used by Abd al-Malik. However, it has been well-argued that the manner in which this term is used by Abd al-Malik and his immediate successors differs in spirit and intent from the way it was used in later Arab religion. The term “Muslim”, denoting one submitted to Islam, does not appear in any Arabic texts, official or otherwise, prior to the rise of the Abbasids (~750 AD).

## What did Mohammed as a Prophet Represent?

It would be the expectation of most people that a person who was a prophet of God would be a person of high moral integrity, one who served and lived for his God. Throughout the Bible, for instance, we see example after example of men who were God-called prophets who, despite their human failings, were men of great faithfulness to the Lord and who had placed their full faith and trust in Him. We see men like John the Baptist, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Daniel, and many others who fit the bill as far as living a holy life before God is concerned. Islam teaches and makes the same claims for the man whom it considers to be the final prophet of Allah, Mohammed.

“Such was our Holy Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him). He was a prodigy of extraordinary merits, a paragon of virtue and goodness, a symbol of truth and veracity, a great apostle of God, His messenger to the entire world. His life and thought, his truth and straightforwardness, his piety and goodness, his character and morals, his ideology and achievements - all stand as unimpeachable proofs of his prophethood. Any human being who studies his life and teachings without bias will testify that verily he was the True Prophet of God and the Qur’an - the Book he gave to mankind - the true book of God. No unbiased and serious seeker of truth can escape this conclusion.”<sup>34</sup>

We would therefore expect that an examination of the life and teachings which are traditionally ascribed to Mohammed would back up this very laudatory view of this man. So, what DO these traditional teachings which are attributed to Mohammed indicate about this man’s character. Does he really fit the qualifications for a man whom a holy God would use to serve as His prophet? God wants for servants people who will keep themselves clean and pure in His sight. “Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the LORD.” (Isaiah 52:11).

We must understand, from what has been seen above, that what we are looking at when we speak of the traits, characteristics, and actions of Mohammed are the idealised beliefs of the early Muslims who produced the biographical details in the ahadith which were incorporated in the biographies of Mohammed. Thus these details do little to enlighten us as to the actual nature of the real person Mohammed (the early Arab chieftain). Rather, they help to show what the ideals and values of these early Muslims were, mores based upon the 7th-8th century culture of the Arabs, what they viewed as traits of manliness or goodness or right order.

## Mohammed’s Sexual Excesses

In studying the life of Mohammed in an unbiased, factual way free of blind adoration for the man, we see that Mohammed did not fit the description of a man keeping himself pure before God. In fact, his whole life was that of a man living to fulfill his lusts and desires, living a self-centred life at the expense of those who got in his way. This is perhaps not more clearly shown than in his manifested weakness for women. The Qur’an in Surah 4:3 limits a man to four wives, but Mohammed went well beyond this limit. Mohammed took to himself 16 wives through formal marriage. In addition, he kept two women as slave-concubines, and had four devout

Muslim women who “gave” themselves to Mohammed as acts of devotion. The complete list of Mohammed’s women is below.

Mohammed’s Women

- 1 - Khadija Bibi
- 2 - Sawda
- 3 - Ayesha
- 4 - Omm Salama
- 5 - Hafsa
- 6 - Zaynab of Jahsh
- 7 - Jowayriya
- 8 - Omm Habiba
- 9 - Safiya
- 10 - Maymuna of Hareth
- 11 - Fatima
- 12 - Hend
- 13 - Asma of Saba
- 14 - Zaynab of Khozaymah
- 15 - Habla
- 16 - Asma of Noman
- 17 - Mary the Coptic Christian (concubine)
- 18 - Rayhana (concubine)
- 19 - Omm Sharik (devotee)
- 20 - Maymuna (devotee)
- 21 - Zaynab (origin unknown, devotee)



22 - Khawla (devotee)

Some notes ought to be made concerning some of these women. His first wife, Khadija Bibi, was his employer while he was still a caravan driver. She was his senior by 15 years, and many indications seem to show that she proposed to him, unusual for Arabian society at the time, but less so when the man was in an inferior social and economic situation to the woman<sup>35</sup>. His sixth wife, Zaynab of Jahsh was originally the wife of his adopted son, Zayd. However, Mohammed became smitten with Zaynab, and Zayd offered to divorce her so that she could marry Mohammed. This was carried out, and caused great scandal among the early Muslim followers until Mohammed had a timely revelation.

“Behold! Thou didst say to one who had received the grace of Allah and thy favor: “Retain thou thy wife, and fear Allah.” But thou didst hide in thy heart that which Allah was about to make manifest: thou didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that thou shouldst fear Allah. Then when Zaid had dissolved with her, We joined her in marriage to thee: in order that there may be no difficulty to the Believers in marriage with the wives of their adopted sons, when the latter have dissolved with them. And Allah’s command must be fulfilled.” (Surah 33:37)

Poof! Problem solved, and it suddenly became acceptable for men to marry the wives of their sons. Interestingly, it is in this same surah that Mohammed was given a special exemption from the four-wives limit imposed earlier (Surah 33:50).

Mohammed’s seventeenth woman, Mary, was a Coptic Christian who was given to Mohammed as a gift from the ruler of Egypt. Bravely refusing to renounce her Coptic Christianity and accept Islam, she refused to marry him, and instead remained his slave. Perhaps most disturbing of all of Mohammed’s relations with women is his taking of his third wife, Ayesha. She was six years of age when he “married” her, nine when he consummated the relationship, and she remained his favourite wife throughout the rest of his life. When he died at the age of 62, she was a mere 17 years old. This episode in Mohammed’s life points to very distressing paedophilic tendencies in the man.

Mohammed’s actions give every indication that he was a man driven by his lust for women. Witness his attitude towards a woman named Duba Bint Amr, who “was among the most beautiful of Arab women....her hair was long enough to cover all her body”. Mohammed asked her son if he could marry her, but then retracted the offer after finding out that though she was beautiful, she was also aging<sup>36</sup>. In contradiction to the Muslim claim that Mohammed married many of his women out of a charitable desire to protect widows, we see that he was merely interested in their physical beauty and ability to retain that beauty for his enjoyment.

Also, Mohammed advocated marrying women for their wealth, beauty, and for conversion efforts. “A woman can be married for religion, her fortune, or her beauty. So marry one for the religion.”<sup>37</sup> Apparently “love” or “God’s will” don not factor into the equation. This also tellingly reveals the reason why so many Muslim men marry non-Muslim women in the West. It’s easier to influence a woman towards Islam when a man is married to her, as she seeks to



please her husband, and in part explains the greatly unequal rates of conversion to Islam by Western women over Western men.

Of course, no exposition of Mohammed's perverse attitude towards sexuality would be complete without a look at his version of "Paradise" that would make Hugh Hefner blush with shame. Muslim men are promised 72 young virgins for perpetual enjoyment. For the sake of propriety, I won't include the quotes, but this all is right there in the Qur'an, in Surat 37:40-48, 44:51-55, 52:17-20, 55:56-58, 70-77, 56:7-40, and 78:31. Additionally, sodomy with young boys plays a role in the Muslim paradise (Surat 52:24, 56:17, and 76:19) with these boys being described using much the same language as was employed to describe the virgins. Of course, Islam's paradise has plenty of wine, wealth, and food for the enjoyment of those who have passed on. Mohammed was a man for whom the fulfillment of bodily pleasures was of paramount, and some would say, consuming importance.

### **Mohammed's Greed for Wealth**

In addition to a lust for women, Mohammed also had a lust for wealth. This first seems to have manifested itself early in life. After growing up in the fashion of many young Meccan boys, as a poor shepherd, when he was 25 years of age, Mohammed followed the advice of his uncle Abu Talib and hired on as a caravanserai in the employ of a rich widow named Khadija. He accompanied her caravan as far as Syria, and apparently did such a good job of making money for her that upon his return to Mecca, she extended a proposal of marriage to him. He accepted, despite the fact that she was at least fifteen years his senior, and had been married twice before. Her great personal wealth and position as owner of a prosperous caravan likely did much to overcome his natural aversion to what would have been severe drawbacks for marriage in Arabian culture at the time.

This claim, that Mohammed had a greed for wealth, is confirmed by his actions later in life, many of which were carried out with the assistance and acceptance of his Muslim followers. In 623 AD, Mohammed's career in caravan piracy began. Late in that year, several of his Muslim followers, acting upon his orders, ambushed and looted a small Meccan caravan. In this raid, one Meccan was killed, two others taken as slaves, and a sizeable amount of booty captured<sup>38</sup>. Emboldened by this success, Mohammed next personally led a raid on the main caravan of the Meccan Quraysh tribe, returning from Syria. In this raid, he led 305 men and was engaged in battle at Badr by a Meccan force of 800-900, with the outcome being a Muslim win. While this Muslim victory was a comparatively small fracas, it is heralded as one of the greatest victories in history by many Muslim historians. The Muslims considered it a miracle from Allah, and viewed it as giving sanction to their piracy. Practically speaking, the victory did provide them with much booty in the form of slaves, horses, camels, and military equipment, which was to prove useful in the years to come.

Because of this battle, and their piracy, Mohammed and the Muslims became a stench in the nostrils of the Meccans and others with commercial interests in the region. Thus, in 625, the Meccans sent an army numbering about 3,000 against Medina, the city where Mohammed and the Muslims had fled to when they escaped from Mecca several years before. Mohammed

elected to meet this army on the field of battle, and the Muslims were seriously defeated, with Mohammed himself being wounded and sent fleeing from the battlefield. Because of internal dissensions, the Meccans failed to follow up on their advantage and pursue the Muslims. Two years later, though, they returned and attempted to lay siege to Medina. Being forewarned of the Meccan return, Mohammed acted upon the advice of a Persian friend and ordered a ditch dug around the weaker defence quarters of Medina as protection. This artifice, previously unknown in Arabia, hindered the Meccans and their allies, who lifted the siege and departed<sup>39</sup>.

After this “victory” Mohammed and the Muslims became encouraged, and stepped up their raiding behaviour. Many Bedouin tribes were drawn to the Muslim circle by the military victories and prospects of treasure, adding their strength to Mohammed’s. It was at this time that Mohammed finished the expulsion of the several Jewish tribes from Medina, and expropriated their lands and properties for himself and his followers.

Victory over Mecca was finally obtained in 630 AD. Using an insignificant incident to provoke a clash of arms, Mohammed led his followers against Mecca, this just a year after Mohammed had signed a ten year peace treaty with that city. The Meccans, who were recognising the solidification of Mohammed’s power and the ascendancy of his arms, folded with barely a fight, and the Muslims entered victoriously into the city. As a result of these years of piracy, Muhammed had amassed great personal wealth and power, and Arab tribes from all over the peninsula flocked to him.

During the course of all this fighting and raiding, Mohammed and his Muslim followers developed a love for fighting and loot which came from the life of piracy.

“When he was at the head of a robber community (in Medina) it is probable that the demoralizing influence began to be felt; it was then that men who had never broken an oath learned that they might evade their obligations, and that men to whom the blood of the clansmen had been as their own began to shed it with impunity in the cause of God; and that lying and treachery, in the cause of Islam, received divine approval, hesitation to perjure oneself in that cause being represented as a weakness. It was then, too, that Moslems became distinguished by the obscenity of their language. It was then, too, that the coveting of goods and wives (possessed by unbelievers) was avowed without discouragement from the prophet.”<sup>40</sup>

What honour these men had from their previous upbringing in the culture of Arabic tradition, what morality they may have engendered from their traditional raising, slowly eroded as the sin in their lives increased and increased. As they became increasingly hardened in their hearts, and their consciences seared, crimes which would before have been unthinkable to them gradually became commonplace.

Islam as a vehicle to wealth and power is clearly demonstrated. Muhammed himself received, by “divine” decree, a fifth of all booty captured in war,

“To whichever village you go and settle therein, there is your share therein, and whichever village disobeys Allah and His Messenger, its one-fifth is for Allah and His Messenger and the remainder is for you.”<sup>41</sup>

The rest, of course, went to the Muslim followers who took part in battle. Hence, it was good money to be in the business of warfare as a Muslim. After conquest, Islam was further strengthened by the “three choices” option imposed upon conquered peoples. Subject nations were offered one of three choices: Accept Islam and become members of Dar es-Salaam; pay the *jizyah*, the unbelievers tax; or death<sup>42</sup>. Either way, Islam benefited materially. Unbelievers either became Muslims and contributed to the enhancement of Islamic warmaking, booty-gathering, and social strength; or they became direct sources of revenue for Islamic states; or else they ceased to be “in the way” of Islam’s expansion. Mohammed and his religion’s attraction to wealth truly bears witness to the Biblical record found in I Timothy 6:10, “For the love of money is the root of all evil...”.

### **Mohammed’s Penchant for Violence**

As was alluded to above, the lifestyle of looting and pillaging took men who were already accustomed to violence and hardship, and made them even more wicked and depraved in their violent deeds. The violence which we see in Islam and which has been previously expounded on, did not arise without a source, this being Mohammed and the early Muslim leadership. It was from their example that Muslims learned the ways of violence, murder, and subjugation.

Mohammed was a violent man. As with other pagan war leaders of his day, it was not merely enough to defeat and control an enemy. After defeating one Jewish town, Mohammed ordered the beheading of all the adult males in the place, numbering anywhere from 700-1000 individuals. The women and children were sold into slavery, and the town looted<sup>43</sup>. Muslim tradition also recounts that upon taking Mecca, Mohammed ordered the death of a poetess of the city, Asma daughter of Marwan, who had ridiculed him and who had pointed out that some of the material in the Qur’an had actually been stolen from her father, also a poet, and used by Mohammed. The traditions relate this story as follows,

“The Apostle of Allah said, ‘Who will rid me of the daughter of Marwan?’ “

Upon hearing this, the Companion Umair ibn Udaj went to her house and killed her, reporting back to Mohammed of the deed the next day. It is then recorded,

“Then in the morning he was with the Apostle of Allah and said to him, ‘O Apostle of Allah, verily I have killed her.’ Then (Mohammed) said, ‘Thou hast helped Allah and His Apostle, O Umair!’ “<sup>44</sup>

Thus, this “prophet” ordered the death of a woman because of personal vendetta and to protect himself from charges of plagiarism!

Mohammed one time ordered the death of an old man who mocked the Muslim pride in their dirty foreheads. Muslims in Mohammed’s day were proud of their method of prayer, placing their foreheads directly in the dirt. The elderly man, mockingly suggesting that there was more to prayer than mere outward form (having a dirty forehead), took some dirt, spread it on his own

forehead, and stated that this was good enough for him. Mohammed ordered his Muslim followers to murder the old man, which they did <sup>45</sup>. Certain of the ahadith are full of instances where Mohammed ordered opponents and those with whom he had personal grudges to be killed <sup>46</sup>. One example in particular shows Mohammed's penchant for wickedness as he pressed his revenge. The traditions record the fate of a certain Arabian Jew of the tribe of the Bene Nadir named Ka'b ibnu'l Ashraf who was believed to have been conspiring against Mohammed's life, as well as singing insulting songs about Muslim women. For these offences,

“The Messenger of Allah said: ‘Who will kill Ka'b ibnu'l Ashraf? He has maligned Allah, the Exalted, and His Messenger!’” (This was after the Muslims apparently were in control of the war situation.) “Muhammad ibn Maslama said: ‘Messenger of Allah, do you wish that I should kill him?’ He said: ‘Yes’ ... so Muhammad ibn Maslama came to Ka'b and pretended to be a dissident of Islam to gain his confidence. He asked for the loan of foodstuffs. It was agreed upon to pledge the weapons in exchange. Muhammad ibn Maslama promised that he would return with three (four) friends. That night they went. When his wife heard them, she exclaimed: ‘I hear a voice which sounds like the voice of murder’, but Ka'b quietened her and went down to them. Muhammad (ibn Maslama) said to his companions: ‘As he comes down, I will extend my hands towards his head and when I hold him fast, you should do your job.’” They conversed about the “very fine smell” of the scent of his hair. Being allowed to smell his hair, he held his head fast” and said to his companions: ‘Do your job.’ And they killed him.” <sup>47</sup>

Ibn Hisham, the early Muslim biographer, relates another aspect of this story in which young Ibn Maslama to carry out his great service to Allah with Mohammed's prodding,

“All that is incumbent upon you is that you should try. ‘He said: ‘O Apostle of God, we shall have to tell lies.’ He answered: ‘Say what you like, for you are free in the matter.’ So lies and deception were used. Mohammed accompanied them for a while and blessed them in parting: ‘Go in God's name; O God help them.’ After having seized the locks of Ka'b he said: “‘Smite the enemy of Allah’. Accordingly they smote him. Their swords came in collision with one another and effected nothing. Muhammad ibn Maslama said: ‘Then I recalled to mind my dagger ... I seized it. The enemy of Allah cried out with such a cry, that around us there remained not a stronghold on which a fire was not kindled. Then I stuck it into his abdomen, then I pressed upon it till it reached his genitals, and the enemy of Allah fell.’ In the grappling with the swords one of the companions was wounded. They carried him back to Mohammed who was - “standing praying. We saluted him, and he came out to us. We informed him of the killing of the enemy of Allah. He spat upon our comrade's wound, and went back.” The laconic end of the story goes like this: ‘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.’ <sup>48</sup>

Ibn Ishaq further elaborates this point, noting that Mohammed used this as an excuse to stir up his Muslim followers against the Jews,

“the Apostle of Allah said, ‘Kill any Jew that falls into your power.’ <sup>49</sup>

Thus, it may be seen from whence the foundation of anti-Semitism was laid in Islam. Mohammed's personal dislike for the Jews resulted in the condemnation of this group to death, a

point which to this day still bears its evil fruit in the attitudes and behaviour of orthodox Islam. This particular point of anti-Semitism, further, was just one symptom of the chronically violent and revengeful nature of Mohammed.

## **In Contrast - The Goodness and Purity of Christ**

Having examined the life of Mohammed, it can be pretty clearly seen that he could not be a man of God, at least not of a holy God who demands that His servants keep themselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27). In contrast, though, we can see the testimony of the goodness, upright character, and perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was more than a prophet, but was indeed the sinless Son of God. No record anywhere, either biblical or secular, has ever recorded a single misdeed committed by the Lord.

The scribes and Pharisees and other socio-political leaders of the Jews in Jesus' day could find no fault in Him. Despite the very public nature of His ministry, which lasted for three years, during which time He was under the watchful eye of all those leaders who hated Him and wanted to destroy Him, these enemies of Christ were still completely unable to lay anything to His charge. He asked them, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8:46). All they could do was mock and insult him, which has always been the last resort of those who know they have not a leg to stand on against an enemy. When the religious leaders of the Jews captured the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane and took Him before the chief priest, Jesus said, "...If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" (John 18:23) Jesus spoke no evil, nor could these enemies of the Lord find any truthful accusation to make against Him. Instead, they had to try to falsely accuse Him on trumped up charges.

"Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none...." (Matthew 26:59-60)

They could find no false witnesses who could produce (quite literally) any evidence against the Lord's character, righteousness, or truthfulness. As the Bible records in Mark 14:56, "For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together." Their "witnesses" against the Lord could not even get their own stories straight, and their lack of truth was exposed immediately!

The secular authorities found no fault in the Lord Jesus either, there was nothing which Herod or Pilate could lay to His account. After being questioned by Herod, who could make no judgment on Him, Jesus was sent to the Roman governor Pilate. After being questioned, Pilate pronounced his own judgment on the matter of Jesus. "Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man." (Luke 23:4)

Even the man who betrayed the Lord Jesus, this being Judas, acknowledged the purity of the Lord. "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood..." (Matthew 27:3-4) After realising that

Jesus was condemned to die, Judas realised the magnitude of his crime, that he had just handed over the most innocent man who had even walked the earth, one who had done nothing to deserve death or punishment.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was recognised as speaking with authority by those who heard Him and saw His miracles and His purity. “And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.” (Mark 7:36-37) Also, “And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.” (Mark 1:22) The Lord Jesus Christ was so gracious in word, so powerful in deed, and so righteous in life, that He was the standard which put the religious leaders and self-righteous Pharisees to shame. Jesus spoke as one with authority, which He indeed was, as He is God Incarnate. His sinless perfection demonstrates His character as Very God. “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” (James 1:13). Christ was, is, and always will be sinless, as He was, is, and always will be God, which cannot sin. Christ endured 40 days of temptation in the desert, under the duress of hunger and solitude, from Satan, the master tempter, himself, and passed this test with flying colours. Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 record in-depth the temptation of and successful resisting of that temptation by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Even the Qur’an bears witness to the sinless perfection of Christ. In Surah 19:19, the angel speaks to Mary concerning her son to be born, Jesus. “He said: ‘Nay, I am only a messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a pure son.’” Muslims, both from the record of their own book, and from the record of the holy Scriptures of the Bible, which they are bound by the Qur’an to accept, must acknowledge and admit the sinless, perfect purity of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Thus, we see between Islam’s Mohammed and the Lord Jesus Christ a sharp contrast. On the one hand, Mohammed, a man who killed, fornicated, coveted, and betrayed the trust of those with whom he had made a pact of peace. On the other hand, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom nobody, not even His bitterest enemies, could lay a charge to His account. While Mohammed went out to make war, Jesus Christ came from God to make peace, peace between sinful man and the holy God. “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ...” (II Corinthians 5:18). The record is clear, and the observer can clearly see which it was that was of God, this being Jesus Christ.

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## End Notes

(1) - J. Schacht, “A Revaluation of Islamic Traditions”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, (1949), p. 143

(2) - D. Pipes, “Who Was the Prophet Mohammed?”, *Jerusalem Post*, May 12, 2000

- (3) - G.H.A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, p.5
- (4) - J. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 179
- (5) - K. Cragg, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. XXII, p. 11
- (6) - I. Goldhizer, *Muslim Studies*, Vol. II, pp. 18-19
- (7) - P. Crone, *Slaves on Horses*, p. 4
- (8) - P. Crone, *Slaves on Horses*, p. 12
- (9) - see, for instance, M. Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma: A Source Critical Study*, pp. 115-116, whereby the attribution of primary witness to what is really a secondary one can give the false impression of two independent witnesses to a saying, when in fact only one would be a witness, and the other dependent upon the first as a source. This would give unwarranted credibility to the tradition.
- (10) - see E. Stetter, *Topot und Schemata im Hadit*; also A. Noth and L.I. Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source Critical Study*, p. 24
- (11) - see J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammedan Jurisprudence*, esp. his statements of pp. 4-5
- (12) - A. Noth and L.I. Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source Critical Study*, p. 19
- (13) - L.I. Conrad, "Recovering Lost Texts: Some Methodological Issues", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 113, no. 2 (2nd Q. 1993): p. 258-263
- (14) - P. Crone, *Roman, Provincial, and Islamic Law*, p.33
- (15) - Claudius Ptolemaeus, *Geography*, Lib. VI, cap. vii.32
- (16) - see *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. J. Hastings, Vol. 8, p.511
- (17) - P. Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*, p. 136
- (18) - P. Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*, p. 134
- (19) - P. Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*, p. 137
- (20) - Y. Nevo and J. Koren, "Methodological Approaches to Islamic Studies", *Der Islam*, Vol. 68 (1991), pp. 101-102; citing the general results of archaeological reports in the *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan*, *Al-Abhath: Journal of the Centre for Arab and Middle East Studies* (American University of Beirut), and *Al-Atlal: Journal of Saudian Arabian Studies*
- (21) - Y. Nevo and J. Koren, "Methodological Approaches to Islamic Studies", *Der Islam*, Vol. 68 (1991), p. 102
- (22) - see Y. Nevo and A. Rothenburg, *Sde Boqer 1983-84*, full report
- (23) - see Y. Nevo and J. Koren, "Methodological Approaches to Islamic Studies", *Der Islam*, Vol. 68 (1991), p. 103-106



- (24) - see A. Grohman, *Arabische Paläographie*, Folio 2, Part 2, pp. 16-17
- (25) - Sozomenus, *Ecclesiastical History*, Lib. VI, cap. xxxviii.3
- (26) - see Y. Nevo and J. Koren, *Crossroads to Islam*, pp. 255-256
- (27) - see Y. Nevo and J. Koren, *Crossroads to Islam*, pp. 129-135
- (28) - S.P. Brock, "Syriac Views of Early Islam", in *Studies in the First Century of Islamic Society*, ed. G.H.A. Joynboll, p. 14
- (29) - Y. Nevo and J. Koren, "Methodological Approaches to Islamic Studies", *Der Islam*, Vol. 68 (1991), pp. 99-100
- (30) - see John Bar Penkaye, lib. XV, p. 8, trans. R. Abramowski in *Dionysius von Tellmahre: zur Geschichte der Kirche unter dem Islam*; also Sebeos, *Histoire d'Héraclius par l'Évêque Sebeos*, cap. xxxviii, trans. F. Macler
- (31) - P. Crone, M. Cook, and M. Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, p. 24
- (32) - Y. Nevo and J. Koren, *Crossroads to Islam*, p. 281
- (33) - Y. Nevo and J. Koren, *Crossroads to Islam*, p. 265
- (34) - S. Abul Ala Maudadi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, p. 78
- (35) - S.N. Fisher, *The Middle East, a History*. p. 30
- (36) - Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat*, p. 153
- (37) - Abu Issa al-Tarmidi, *Sunan al-Tarmidi*, lib. IV, no. 1092, p.275
- (38) - S.N. Fisher, *The Middle East, a History*, p.38
- (39) - S.N. Fisher, *The Middle East, a History*, p.39
- (40) - D.S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*, p.109
- (41) - *Mishkat* Vol. 2, p. 412
- (42) - T.P. Hughes, *A Dictionary of Islam*, p. 243
- (43) - Ali Dashti, *23 Years: A Study of the Prophetic Career of Mohammed*, pp. 88-91.
- (44) - *Mishkat*, Vol. IV, p. 995
- (45) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 2, no. 173
- (46) - see *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 3, no. 72; vol. 3, no. 687; vol. 3, no. 829

Myth #5 Mohammed was a Prophet from Allah

(47) - *Sahih Muslim*, Vol. III, pp. 990-991

(48) - Ibn Hisham, *Siratul Rasul*, vss. 550-553

(49) - Ibn Ishaq, *Siratul Rasul*, v. 553

## ***Myth #6 Mohammed was the Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy***

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Many Muslims claim that Mohammed was foretold in earlier Scriptures, i.e. the Bible, and thus Christians and Jews ought to recognise that he was The Prophet of God. To substantiate this claim, they point to several passages in the Old and New Testaments which supposedly speak of Mohammed. In fact, this line of inquiry has a very long yet not well-evolved record in the history of Muslim polemics against Christianity. In many respects, the same claims which the Muslims were making against the Byzantines in the 11th century are those which are being used by Muslims in the 21st. Little innovation has been introduced into most of these claims of prophetic foretelling for Mohammed. This is not because of the great success which these Muslim arguments have had with those who are knowledgeable of the Bible (indeed, these arguments tend to serve better at bolstering Muslims in their own beliefs than in changing anyone else's), but rather because of the stagnancy introduced into Muslim polemics on this point. This stagnancy is induced by the Muslim truism that the Bible (the Torah and the Gospels) was altered by the Jews and Christians so as to deny the "truths" of Islam which would otherwise still be found in these texts. Thus, when the Muslims find verses in these Scriptures which their more creative theologians can recast as evidential prophecies of Mohammed, it becomes an article of faith that these "prophecies" are still found (despite Jewish/Christian tinkering) because of providential preservation on the part of Allah. Upon examination, however, it is quite clear that Mohammed is not discussed in these passages, and indeed, the Bible is silent about him. A look at the actual context of these passages, both in the text and in the historico-social settings, dispels the myth that these passages refer to Mohammed. While any Christian who has spent a reasonable amount of time studying the Bible is unlikely to be swayed by the arguments that Mohammed is found in these passages, it may still be helpful to new Christians to see the errors in the Muslim claims for these verses, and can also be of benefit to all Christians who deal with Muslims in helping us to systematically dispel and debunk these claims in the minds of the Muslim friends and neighbours with whom we interact. As such, I present the most common Old and New Testament verses which are abused by Muslim polemicists.

### **The Claims**

#### **Genesis 49:10**

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

Muslims claim that because "Judah" is a Hebrew name which has its root in the verb "to praise", and because "Mohammed" means "he is to be praised" in Arabic, that this is a prophecy pointing to Mohammed. This interpretation has several fundamental flaws. First, we should note again that the name "Mohammed" does not really mean "praised one" but "chosen one", and did not take on any apparent aspect as a personal name in Arabic writings until well into the 8th century

AD (Nevo and Koren, *Crossroads to Islam*, p. 265). Before this, the term was used as a titular description, a general term which was introduced into the developing Arab monotheism as the need for a messianic/prophetic figure arose.

Those Muslims who make the argument for this verse, however, miss the fact that it is not **Judah** who is the object of this prophecy, but the one called “Shiloh”. As such, the matter of what the names “Judah” and “Mohammed” mean in their respective idioms is irrelevant. Shiloh is not so much a name as it is a title or a term of description, one which means “tranquil”, it comes from the Hebrew root word “shalah” which means “tranquil or secure”. Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of this Messianic title, He who even in the midst of the raging storm could simply say, “Peace, be still” and cause the wind and waves to cease. He likewise bore His burden of scourging, mockery, and crucifixion with remarkable equanimity. This sort of tranquility and security cannot rightly be said to apply to Mohammed, for whom Islamic traditions record a life characterised by violence, bloodshed, revenge, and strife.

Further, the context of this passage clearly indicates that it was given specifically to Israel’s son, Judah, who was the literal antecedent of the tribe of Judah. As such, there is no contextual warrant for the allegory which Muslims try to spin into this verse. This prophecy saw the first part of its fulfillment some 600 years after it was given when David, of the tribe of Judah, became king of Israel, thus receiving the sceptre, a symbol of royal power and authority. Jesus was of the tribe of Judah, and it is indeed to Him that the gathering of the people both was (Matthew 4:25, Luke 5:17, John 6:2), and will be in the future (Revelation 21:24). Mohammed, of course, was Arab, and not Jewish, and could not have been of the tribe of Judah.

### **Deuteronomy 18:15,18**

“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken....I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.”

Muslims claim that this passage refers to Mohammed, and support this by pointing to certain copies of the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) which lack the phrase “from the midst of thee”. Because of this, they say, the “brethren” spoken of were Ishmaelites, who would have been distantly related to the Hebrews by virtue of their descent from Abraham through Ishmael. This explanation falls flat as there is earlier Hebrew manuscript evidence which shows that “in the midst of thee” DOES belong in the text, and thus the Prophet spoken of was to arise from “in the midst” of the Hebrews, to whom Moses was speaking.

Secondly, there is no conclusive evidence that Arabs, or at least most of them, are even descended from Ishmael. We must keep in mind that the word “Arab” is not so much a specific ethnic name, but rather a description. It comes from a common Semitic root <sup>c</sup>*rb* which has several meanings; most prominent among them are the ideas of sterility (probably relating to the desert wastes which these tribes inhabited), duskiness or covering (i.e. to make something dark by covering it), and intermingling (literally, intertwining or braiding). The Bible itself calls the

notion of Arabian descendent from Ishmael into question, and seems to suggest for the Arabs a mixed background related to the latter of the meanings for the root given above. In Jeremiah chapter 25, right in the middle of a list of various nations which were to be judged by God, comes verse 24, “And all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the desert.” Thus, we see that Arabia is intimately connected with these mingled peoples, groups which had intermarried to the point that their original origin could not be easily determined. In addition, archaeological evidence suggests that the descendents of Cush, a son of Ham, traveled across the Arabian peninsula during their migration from Mesopotamia to the region of Ethiopia, leaving genetic as well as artifactual remains across the whole region<sup>1</sup>. The presence of names relating to Cush in Mesopotamia (“Kish”, a Sumerian city) and also all across Arabia into Africa (the Egyptians referred to Ethiopia as “Kesh”, there is a region around the Red Sea in Arabia known as “Khuzistan”) also indicate this Cushite migration. Evidence also links many tribes all over the Arabian peninsula to the sons of Cush: Sebah, Havilah, Sabta, Raamah, Sheba, Dedan, and Sabtecha<sup>2</sup>. It is this author’s studied determination that after the Tower of Babel and the end of Nimrod’s (the son of Cush) rebellion, that the Cushites departed from their original dwelling place in Sumer where Nimrod had built his empire, crossing Arabia and entering into Eastern Africa, where they have dwelt to this day. Carleton Coon notes several times the Negroid appearance in many ethnic stocks in Southern and Western Arabia, evidence for the Cushite migration through Arabia<sup>3</sup>. As well, Moses’ wife was a Midianite described as an “Ethiopian” (Numbers 12:1), the Hebrew word here being “Kuwsh”, which further supports this contention as Midian was a region in northern Arabia. Hence, it is highly unlikely that the Arabs of Mecca, of whom Mohammed belonged, could have traced their lineage clearly back to Ishmael. Many, if not most of them, would trace their ancestry back in large part to the Hamitic line, while Ishmael was a Semite.

But, I digress. This prophecy clearly points to Jesus Christ. Faithful men in Israel recognised Jesus as the fulfillment of this prophecy. Note their testimony, “Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world....Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.” (John 6:14, 7:40) Further Jesus’ actions and words demonstrated His fulfillment of this prophecy and office of that Prophet. Just as the Prophet was to have the words of God put into his mouth, so Jesus had this. “As my Father hath taught me, I speak these things” (John 8:28) - “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.” (John 12:49) Christ Himself bore testimony to having the words of God from the Father, and following the Father’s commands to speak them. And indeed, the Lord also had God the Father’s testimony that the people should hearken unto Him. During His transfiguration, the Father spoke from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, hear him.” (Mark 9:7) Christ, from the tribe of Judah, was a Jew, raised up from the midst of His brethren. Hence, Jesus Christ was the complete fulfillment of Moses’ prophecy in Deuteronomy.

### **Deuteronomy 33:2**

“And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.”

The Muslim attempt to eisegete Mohammed into the Bible with this verse is one of the more, well, *interesting* examples we may give. Muslim apologists will often point to this verse, claiming that it is a prophecy about Mohammed. The basis of this belief is their claim that “Paran” is a reference to Mecca, and because there are certain Muslim traditions which depict Mohammed as capturing Mecca with 10,000 Muslim followers, this verse is a prediction of that event.

To begin dealing with this claim, the postulation that Paran can be equated with Mecca must first be examined. Pretty much the sole basis for the identification of Paran with Mecca stems from an incidental comment made by a medieval Muslim geographer named Yaqut al-Hamawi. In the geographical work which he finished around 1225 AD, he wrote,

“Faaraan: After the alif there is a raa’ and it ends in a nun. An Arabicized Hebrew word. It is one of the names for Mekkah mentioned in the Torah. It has been said that it is a name for the mountains of Mekkah. Ibn Makulan Abu Bakr Nasr Ibn al-Qaasim Ibn Qudaa`ah al-Qudaa`i al-Faaraani al-Iskandari said “I have heard it is a reference to the mountains of Faaraan, that is to say, the mountains of the Hijaz. In the Torah God came from Sinaa’ and dawned from Saa`iir and became known from Faaraan”; they are the mountains of Filastiin, and it is His sending down of the Injiil upon Isa, peace be upon him, and His revealing from Mount Faaraan the fact of His sending down the Qur’an upon Muhammad, peace be upon him. It is said Faaraan is the mountain of Mekkah; Faaraan is also a village in the region of Sughd, one of the provinces of Samarqand, to whom Abu Mansuur Muhammad Ibn Bakr Ibn Isma`iil al-Samarqandi al-Faaraani traces his origins. This was transmitted from Muhammad Ibn al-Fadl al-Larmaani and Nasr Ibn Ahmad al-Kindi the Qur’anic scholar, from whom Abu al-Hasan Muhammad Ibn Abd Allah Ibn Muhammad al-Kaaghidhi al-Samarqandi transmitted. Abu Abd Allah al-Qudaa`i said, “Faaraan and al-Tur are two districts in southern Egypt.”<sup>4</sup>

It is upon the basis of Yaqut’s testimony that Muslims trumpet this identification and the subsequent apologetic claim. Now, it should be apparent to the discerning reader that there are several problems with relying on the above to try to nail down something as important as a prophecy. Yaqut’s sole source is based upon the hearsay of one man, who says that “the mountains of Faran” (Paran)<sup>5</sup> was a name for the mountains around Mecca. No explanation is given as to where this identification came from, or why one would not logically place Paran in the Sinai peninsula, where both Mts. Sinai and Seir also exist. As such, his statement is hearsay, and little fit to be evidence for overturning the uniform consensus which geographers and scholars have held for centuries. Further, Yaqut notes that this name is “an Arabicised Hebrew word”. The obvious question is, “Why would **Arabs** located over 1000 km from Palestine refer to mountains in their heartland with Hebrew names?” One would logically presume that there would be no need to “Arabicise” names for landmarks existing right in the middle of the indigenous Arabian civilisation.

Other problems exist as well. Mecca is, of course, a city, not a mountain, and is actually located in a valley. Deuteronomy 33:2 explicitly states that the LORD is coming from mount Paran, indicating a single peak, not a chain or group of mountains. Yaqut himself identifies Paran as a group of mountains, which does not correlate with the Paran mentioned in the Bible. Further,

Yaqut's exposition is self-contradictory in that he identifies all three of these mountains (Sinai, Seir, and Paran) as "mountains of Filastiin" (Palestine), which again, seems to cast doubt upon his concurrent claim that Paran is Mecca. As such, the statement of Yaqut, which Muslim apologetics has rested upon for well-nigh eight centuries, is a very weak foundation upon which to try to construct a Biblical prophecy about Mohammed.

Yaqut's testimony is **further** weakened in that either he or his source seems to be the **originator** of the "Mecca=Paran" equation. Evidence from another much more well-known and well-traveled Muslim geographer contradicts Yaqut's testimony, indicating that **before** Yaqut, the identification of Paran with Mecca was not known. Abu Abdallah Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Abdallah Ibn Idris al-Qurtubi al-Hasani, hereafter known as Al-Idrisi, produced a much more systematic and in-depth geography of the Muslim world of his time, this one written around 1154 AD (or roughly 70 years before Yaqut). In it, he speaks also of Paran, which he refers to as "Faran Ahrun" (Paran of Aaron)

"This district lies 40 miles from Al Kulzum, and along the sea coast. The city of Faran stands at the bottom of a gulf. It is a small town where certain of the Arabs have their camping ground. Over against Faran is a place where the sea has formed a bay, and beside it is a mountain of very hard rock. The waters surge round this and encircle it, and when the winds rise, the passage thereof is difficult, and no one can accomplish it, except with great effort. Travelers are frequently lost there, unless Allah save and guard them. According to the common saying, this is the sea wherein Pharaoh - Allah curse him! - was drowned." <sup>6</sup>

Al-Idrisi's identification seems little plausible if one tries to apply it to Mecca. He states that Paran stands at the bottom of a gulf, and indicates that the sea forms a bay next to the city. Mecca is around 80 km inland from the Red Sea, and thus would have no bay next to it. He further states that it is a "small town" where "the Arabs have their camping ground". At the time of his writing, Mecca was certainly not a small town, and certainly would not have been referred to as a "camping ground" by a Muslim! Further, Al-Idrisi positively nails down the location of Paran in the Sinai peninsula. He comments that the common saying was that the sea on which Paran sat was the sea where Pharaoh was drowned during the attempt to recover his Israelite slaves during the Exodus. Tradition in all three groups, Muslim, Jewish, and Christian, has been that this event occurred in the Gulf of Suez, which is the western finger of the Red Sea that forms a "V" around the Sinai peninsula. Thus, in his mind as well as the minds of his readers at the time, his reference would definitely be to a town on the bank of the Gulf of Suez. Further, he states precisely that Paran was 40 miles (in modern distance units, of course) from Al-Kulzum. Kulzum was an ancient town on the Gulf of Suez that served sometime as a fortress for controlling the canals in the region. Kulzum finds mention in the "Thousand and One Arabian Nights" stories, where it serves as the castle and capital for the Blue King, a king of the Jinn. A more serious identification is made by Burton in his translation and commentary on that literary work, however,

"The old name of Suez-town from the Greek Clysma (the shutting), which named the Gulf of Suez "Sea of Kulzum." The ruins in the shape of a huge mound, upon which Sá'id Pasha built a Kiosk-palace, lie to the north of the modern town and have been noticed by me. (Pilgrimage, Midian, etc.) The Rev. Prof. Sayce examined the mound and from the Roman remains found in it



determined it to be a fort guarding the old mouth of the Old Egyptian Sweet-water Canal which then debouched near the town.”<sup>7</sup>

None of this is located even remotely near to Mecca or the Hijaz, but all are located in the Sinai peninsula. The identifying information seems to conclusively identify a site located at or near the headwaters of the Suez finger of the Gulf.

Further, internal evidence from the Bible itself firmly places Paran in the Sinai peninsula. Paran is mentioned on a handful of occasions in the Old Testament, most of which are inconclusive for giving a positive location, but a few of which prove very informative. In I Kings 11:15-18, we see a parenthetical aside detailing the escape of an Edomite royal heir named Hadad to Egypt during the time when David and Joab killed the males of Edom in a campaign. They fled to Egypt for protection with the Pharaoh, and their route is said in this passage to have been from Midian (a region south of Israel around the headwaters of the Gulf of Aqaba, the other finger of the Red Sea) to Paran, and then on to Egypt. Now, it would seem to make little sense for them to flee from Midian to a place 1000 km south, then return by the same route<sup>8</sup> so as to go to Egypt. However, the placement of Paran near the headwater of the Gulf of Suez would make perfect sense for this passage.

The other passage of interest is Genesis 21:21, which describes the circumstance of Ishmael after he and his mother Hagar were expelled from Abraham’s household. This verse states that he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran, and that his mother took for him a wife from the women of Egypt. This gives additional evidence for placing Paran in Sinai over towards Egypt. As Hagar herself was Egyptian, it would seem natural that after her expulsion, she would return to the people of her nativity, and thus would approach Egypt. That she took a wife for Ishmael from the Egyptians also suggests proximity **to** Egypt, as she (being an expelled slave woman) would not have had the resources to send for a woman in a land over 1200 km away, which the populated parts of Egypt would have been from Mecca. As such, the biblical testimony which touches on the location of Paran also contradicts the attempt to locate Paran at Mecca.

Lastly, even without the details of locations, it should be understood that the Muslim apologetic attempt to cast Deuteronomy 33:2 as a prophecy about Mohammed simply makes no sense, either logically or theologically. To begin, the passage is not even uttered in any sort of prophetic way. In fact, it is given in the **past** tense, it is detailed by Moses as an event which had already occurred. Further, the verse explicitly states that it is the LORD who came from mount Paran. In the Hebrew, this is referring to YHWH, making this a direct reference to God Himself coming down from mount Paran in a picture of anthropomorphy. Unless Muslims wish to equate Mohammed WITH God, then they cannot read this text naturally and still try to find Mohammed in it.

### **Psalm 45:3-5**

“Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand

shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee."

It is claimed that this applies to Mohammed because of his supposed status as a prophet, and because of his conquests. In fact, Mohammed is often known in Islam as "The Prophet of the Sword". However, as we see, this passage stipulates that the individual mentioned was to ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness. It has been shown above that Mohammed (at least as he is presented in the traditions) was certainly NOT a righteous man, and that he was not the bearer of truth, as the flawed Qur'an which is attributed to his intermediacy indicates. Mohammed was also not meek before God, meekness being the quality of being submitted to God and serving Him faithfully. Mohammed violated numerous of God's laws (repeatedly), lived in sin, and never put his faith and trust in Jesus Christ as his Saviour, which is God's command to us ("...repent ye, and believe the gospel." - Mark 1:15)

Further, when these passages are taken in context, we see these passages referring to God as Jesus Christ. Psalm 45:6 says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre." This reference to God in v. 6 follows immediately after the text above, and is contextually addressing the conquering hero of vv. 3-5. No Muslim would claim that Mohammed was God, as this would be blasphemy to them. Hence, when taken in context, this passage fails as an attempt to put Mohammed in the Bible.

It DOES, however, indicate the Lord Jesus Christ. This is clearly shown in Hebrews 1:8, "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." This passage quotes Psalm 45:6 and applies it to the Lord Jesus Christ. And indeed, Jesus will return to earth one day with His sword and shall destroy wickedness and will establish His reign and carry out His judgment, being called "THE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:11-16). All authority is given to Christ for judgment. "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." (John 5:27) All the nations will be gathered unto Him, and on the last day, even Mohammed will bow down before the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge that He is the Lord! (cf. Philippians 2:11)

## **Isaiah 21:7**

"And he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels; and he hearkened diligently with much heed."

Muslims will contend that this is a prophecy referring to the coming of both Jesus Christ and Mohammed, with Mohammed coming after and therefore bringing a fuller revelation from God. They say this, positing that the chariot of asses refers to Christ's entering Jerusalem on the back of a young colt, and the chariot of camels refers to Mohammed because he always rode a camel.

However, looking at the context of this verse, one sees that it is not a prophecy relating to the coming of anyone. It is part of a vision relating the destruction of Babylon by the Persian empire. The chariot of asses and camels (note, the surrounding context indicates that only **one** chariot is present, not two) is carrying messengers who spread the word about the fall of Babylon, as

indicated in verse 9 of the same chapter, “And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.” Note that verse 9 indicates that a chariot (singular) brought the news, not two separate chariots, one drawn by donkeys and one by camels. This verse is a classic example of the Muslim ploy of taking Biblical verses completely out of context to make claims that the Bible supports their theology, when in fact the Bible does not say anything even near what they are claiming.

### **Matthew 3:2**

“...Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Muslims will often claim that this call to repentance made by John the Baptist was indicative of the coming “kingdom of heaven”, by which they mean the establishment of the power of Islam, with the Qur’an as the Law of the kingdom. Note though that John said that the kingdom of heaven was “at hand”, a term which indicates immediacy, which would not seem to be rightly applied to an event reputed to have occurred over six centuries later. Further, the words of Christ Himself clearly indicate that the kingdom of heaven was already present long before Mohammed was ever born.

Jesus said, “But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.” (Matthew 12:28) Christ cast out many devils during the course of His earthly ministry, and did so in the power of the Holy Spirit, with whom He was anointed (John 1:32-34, Luke 3:21-22, Mark 1:10, Matthew 3:16). The Qur’an even acknowledges the presence of the Holy Spirit in Christ. “We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of messengers; We gave Jesus the son of Mary clear signs and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit.” (Surah 2:87) Hence, Christ’s clear testimony in Matthew 12:28 indicates that the kingdom of heaven WAS already come by the time He had spoken His words, long before the coming of Mohammed and Islam.

Likewise, in Mark 9:1, Christ told His disciples, “Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.” This prediction was then fulfilled by the witnessing of the vision of the transfiguration of Christ, who appeared to them with Moses and Elijah in the glorified state. They were translated in this vision to see the glory of the future coming permanent kingdom of God.

Hence, we see that neither the temporal nor the spiritual aspects of the kingdom of God can be in any way related to Mohammed or Islam. The temporal aspects, the power of Christ residing with and in believers on earth, had already come nearly 600 years before Mohammed. The future permanent kingdom in all its infinite glory with believers in their glorified, purified, heavenly bodies, of course, in no wise resembles anything on earth, Islamised or otherwise.

## Mark 1:7

“And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.”

Muslims will argue that these words are the words of Christ, referring to the coming of Mohammed. Of course, a simple reading of this verse quite clearly indicates that these words were spoken John the Baptist, as John is described in the verse immediately prior to this passage. Similarly, the parallel passages John 1:15, Matthew 3:1-12, and Luke 3:16 all clearly demonstrate this without a doubt. Additionally, John himself makes it clear that the Lord Jesus was to whom he was referring, as he testifies in John 1:29-30, “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which was preferred before me: for he was before me.”

Muslims also try to claim that this passage, then, could still not refer to Christ since Jesus was already in the world. However, John was speaking of Christ coming after him in ministry. As the Gospels bear record, the Lord did not begin His preaching ministry until after John the Baptist had been put in prison, and was not engaged in his own preaching ministry any more (Mark 1:14, Matthew 4:12-17). Thus, the words of John the Baptist quite clearly indicate the Lord Jesus Christ (of whom he also said “He must increase, but I must decrease” - John 3:30), not Mohammed.

## John 4:21

“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.”

In this verse, Muslims suppose that Christ was declaring that prayers would no longer be made toward Jerusalem, but instead toward Mecca, and that this foretold the coming of the Muslim religion. However, as Christ listed no place to which worship would be directed (and in fact, seems to eschew the whole idea of worship towards any geographic point), the claim that He is referring to Mecca is spurious, supposition based entirely on the Muslim desire for this to be so, rather than on any actual evidence from the text.

In fact, the whole point of this passage in the Bible is that Jesus was telling this woman that true worship would not ritualistically depend on a geographical focus of prayer and worship (as it partly had in the Old Testament, see Daniel 6:10). Instead, with the coming of Christ and the kingdom of God, worship would be true worship when it was done with a right heart and reverence for God, regardless of the location. In verse 23-24 of the same chapter, Christ continued speaking to the woman and said, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Christ said, “and now is”. He had already **abolished** what Muslims call *qiblah*, the focus of prayers. Hence, He certainly did **not** allude to Mecca becoming *qiblah*, but abolished the whole notion outright.

Indeed, we must understand that Mecca was not even the original point for *qiblah*, as has been shown from archaeology and early contemporary source documents. Mosques built in a variety of places from the first two centuries of the Muslim era show *qiblah* which do not face toward Mecca. Creswell investigated early mosques in Iraq at Wassit and Baghdad which were built during the Umayyad dynasty (661-750 AD). Both of these were oriented such that the direction for prayer was pointed too far north for the object of their *qiblah* to have been Mecca<sup>9</sup>. The mosque at Wassit faced 33° too far north, and the one at Baghdad 30°. Instead of facing towards Mecca, these mosques appear to face towards Jerusalem. Even early Muslim writers note that there was apparently some confusion as to the direction in which the mosque should point for prayers. Al-Baladhuri records the tradition that the first mosque built in Kufa, a city in Iraq, faced west (whereas a *qiblah* towards Mecca would face almost due south)<sup>10</sup>. Al-Maqrizi, likewise, reported in the traditions that Amir ibn al-Ass, the first Arab governour of Egypt, prayed in a mosque facing slightly south of east, which again would not be in the direction of Mecca<sup>11</sup>. Creswell notes that this mosque of al-Ass, which pointed to a location too far north, was later rebuilt during the governourship of Qurra b. Sharik<sup>12</sup>. Cook and Crone also show that the earliest evidences from tangible sources shows that the sanctuary to which the very early Muslims prayed was too far north to be located in the Hijaz<sup>13</sup>. Again, these evidences indicate a general direction of *qiblah* towards Jerusalem. The orientation of Egyptian mosques was recorded by the Syriac patristic writer Jacob of Edessa (d. 708 AD) as facing east towards the “Kaabah” of the “Mahgraye”<sup>14</sup>, even though Mecca would be southeast from Egypt. Thus, at least at the beginning of the 8th century, the Muslim sanctuary to which prayer was directed seems to have been Jerusalem, or some point in that locale, not Mecca. Only later, with the added pressure to specifically “Arabicise” the emergent religion and free it from some of its more overtly Jewish trappings, was the sanctuary of the Muslims shifted to Mecca, which was previously a pre-Islamic pagan centre of worship which was retrofitted to serve as the centre of Muslim devotion. Hawting notes that no mosques from the 7th century have been found which point towards Mecca, and he further concludes,

“It seems that the Muslim sanctuary at Mecca is the result of a sort of compromise between a preexisting pagan sanctuary and sanctuary ideas which had developed first in a Jewish milieu. I envisage that Muslim sanctuary ideas originated first in the Jewish matrix, as did Islam itself. At a certain stage in the development of the new religion the need arose to assert its independence, and one of the most obvious ways in which this could be done was by establishing a specifically Muslim sanctuary. The choice of sanctuary would have been governed by already existing sanctuary ideas and when a suitable sanctuary was fixed upon these sanctuary ideas would themselves have been modified to take account of the facts of the sanctuary which had been chosen. It seems likely that the Meccan sanctuary was chosen only after the elimination of other possibilities - that in the early Islamic period a number of possible sanctuary sites gained adherents until finally Mecca became established as the Muslim sanctuary. And it also seems likely that one reason for the adoption of the Meccan sanctuary was that it did approximate to the sanctuary ideas which had already been formed - although they had to be reformulated, the physical facts of the Meccan sanctuary did not mean that already existing notions and terminology had to be abandoned.”<sup>15</sup>

Thus, at some point after the first decade of the 8th century, the *qiblah* seems to have been changed to a specifically Arab sanctuary in Mecca, which originally had been a reputed important sanctuary to Hubal. This change in the direction of prayer is recorded in the Qur'an in Surah 2:144, which suggests that this particular *ayah* was incorporated into the *surah* at some point later than ~708 AD, after the death of Jacob of Edessa.

The essential point to be gathered from all this, however, is that Jesus Christ certainly was not telling this woman that the direction of prayer would be turned to a sanctuary in the Hijaz. Rather, He was emphasising to her to spiritual and personal nature of true religion, that it was not an act centred upon a geographic locale, but upon heartfelt desire to worship God regardless of location. Mecca is no more important of a city now than Jerusalem, or New York, or London, or even Nome, Alaska, for that matter. For one to be worshipping God in truth means to worship with a heart desiring to please Him, which is attentive to His commands, and which seeks to do what His Word, the Bible, says. Without reverence for God and the Bible, true worship is an impossibility.

### **John 14:16-17, 26**

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.....But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

Muslims contend that in this passage, the Greek *parakleton* translated as “Comforter”, refers to the coming of Mohammed, who fulfilled this when he received the Qur'an from the angel Gabriel, whom Muslims believe is the Holy Spirit.

Several problems arise with this interpretation, however. First, the Comforter is clearly said to be the Holy Ghost. Even with Islam's belief that Gabriel is the Holy Spirit, this wouldn't indicate Mohammed. Second, the Holy Ghost is sent in Christ's name, which Mohammed certainly did not fulfill. Instead, Mohammed came rejecting Christ and His teachings. Mohammed disbelieved that the Lord Jesus Christ is God Incarnate and that He died for our sins and rose again. Because of his disbelief, Mohammed cannot be said to have been sent in Christ's name, in other words, in Christ's express reputation and testimony as the Son of God. Third, the Comforter is said to dwell not only with us, but IN us. This certainly does not apply to Mohammed, who is not only dead (and therefore not WITH us anymore), but also was a physical being incapable of living IN us. The Holy Spirit, the third member of the triune Godhead, is God's very Spirit who dwells within saved, born-again Christian believers. The Holy Spirit seals all true believers at the moment they accept Christ as their Saviour (Ephesians 1:13) and serves, among other things, as their comfort and assurance of salvation until the final redemption at the Lord's return (Ephesians 1:14, 4:30). Fourth, Mohammed did not “bring all things to our remembrance” which Christ had taught, but instead rejected much of the teachings of Christ with which he did not agree. Thus, Mohammed fails to fit this qualification, too.

The work *parakleton* is a Greek word meaning “helper, comforter, sustainer, advocate”. Mohammed certainly did not fit this description. Mohammed sought to destroy those who opposed him, contradicting the notion that he was a helper or sustainer. The Holy Ghost, contrastingly, seeks to call unto Christ all men, working in their hearts, convicting them of sin, and turning them to faith in God (John 16:8-11). The Holy Ghost truly does help and seek to sustain and comfort men. Mohammed sought only to turn people with the sword, if they would not submit to the rule of his man-made religion. Also, the Qur’an denies that any but Allah can be an advocate, and therefore Mohammed could not fulfill that role, by Islam’s own teachings. Also, the Comforter had the role of glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and to do the work which Christ sent Him to do. “He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” (John 16:14-15) Mohammed certainly, as we noted, did not glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, but instead glorified himself and the false god Allah. Nor did Mohammed do the work of Christ, but instead opposed the work of Christ through his denial of the deity and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

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Thus, we see from the passages above that Islam grasps at straws in its attempts to demonstrate Mohammed in the Bible. By relying on passages taken out of context and by trying to squeeze meaning into texts where it does not fit, Muslims seek to falsely authenticate Mohammed as a prophet sent from God. While Islam must rely on textual gymnastics to authenticate Mohammed from the Bible, the same need not be said for the Biblical testimony concerning the Lord Jesus. Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of dozens of EXPLICIT prophecies for which no verbal wrangling is needed. Precise details of the life and death of the Messiah predicted hundreds or thousands of years in advance were fulfilled in the minutest detail by Jesus Christ.

## **Prophecies Fulfilled by the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ**

To begin, let us examine the many prophecies which were fulfilled by the events surrounding the death of Christ.

Genesis 3:15 - “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” - Spoken to the serpent who had tempted Eve (Satan), and fulfilled by the crucifixion of Christ (see John 19:18, e.g.) where Christ, the seed of the woman, was killed but rose again from the dead (bruising of his heel, not a mortal wound), and in doing so utterly destroyed the power of Satan, who is now merely awaiting his final destruction (the bruising of his head, representing mortal wounding).

Psalms 22:1 - “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?” - Fulfilled in Matthew 27:36, “And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”



## Myth #6 Mohammed was the Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy

Psalm 22:2 - "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent." - Fulfilled by the coming of darkness over the whole earth as Jesus cried out from the cross. "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour." (Matthew 27:45)

Psalm 22:6 - "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." - This was fulfilled when Christ was mocked and despised by the various groups of people while He hung on the cross. (See Matthew 39-44)

Psalm 22:7-8 - "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." - This was also fulfilled in Matthew 27:42-43 as the chief priests, scribes, and elders mocked Him.

Psalm 22:16 - "For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet." - This was fulfilled through the crucifixion of Christ, which involved the driving of nails through the wrists and ankles of the victim to hold them up on the cross. See also John 21:27, where Jesus commands the disciple Thomas to touch the nail prints in his hands as proof that He really was Jesus risen.

Psalm 22:18 - "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." - This prophecy was fulfilled when the soldiers who had crucified Christ did indeed part his garments among them, and cast lots for his cloak. (See Matthew 27:35)

Psalm 31:5 - "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed, O LORD God of truth." - As God, Christ was the only man to walk this earth who could voluntarily commit, or give up, His spirit. "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:18) And Christ indeed did give up His spirit at the time of His choosing on the cross in John 19:30. He did not die because of His wounds, He died because He chose to at that moment.

Psalm 34:20 - "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken." - This was fulfilled by Christ's expiration on the cross in John 19:30. Because of this, he was already dead when the soldiers came to break the legs of those on the crosses so that they would die faster. As He was already dead, they did not break his legs (John 19:33), and this is explained as the fulfillment of this prophecy (John 19:36). Interestingly, this also hearkens back to the Passover lamb of Exodus 12:46, which was a type of the coming Christ. No bone of the Passover lamb was to be broken, and this was fulfilled by Christ not having any of His bones broken as He was sacrificed for the sins of mankind.

Psalm 35:11 - "False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not." - This was fulfilled with the bringing of false witnesses to lie about Jesus Christ. (See Mark 14:56)

Psalm 38:11 - "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off." - This happened in Luke 23:49, where Christ's acquaintances and relatives stood afar off from Him beholding Him.

## Myth #6 Mohammed was the Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy

Psalm 41:9 - "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." - This prophecy was fulfilled by the betrayal of the Lord by Judas. Judas had traveled with Christ for three years, had been one of the twelve innermost companions of the Lord. He had eaten bread with Christ, as was explicitly stated in John 13:26. Yet, through all this, he betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ over to His enemies.

Psalm 69:3 - "I am weary of my crying; my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God." - This prophecy of thirst was fulfilled when the Lord, waiting for the time when He should give up the ghost and finish the work His Father sent for Him to do, said, "I thirst" in John 19:28.

Psalm 69:19 - "Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee." - This was fulfilled in Matthew 27:28-29 when the Lord was mocked and ridiculed and brought to shame before the council and the soldiers.

Psalm 69:21 - "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." - In John 19:29, the onlookers gave Jesus Christ vinegar to drink.

Psalm 109:25 - "I became also a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me, they shook their heads." - This came to pass in Matthew 27:39-40 when the mockers are describes as "wagging their heads" at Christ.

Isaiah 50:6 - "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." - In Matthew 27:26, the Bible records that Pilate had Jesus scourged, and in verse 30, Jesus was spat upon and beaten.

Isaiah 52:14 - "As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." -

Isaiah 53:3 - "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." - These words were fulfilled in Mark 15:29-32 when Christ was reviled, rejected, and despised by those who passed by where He was crucified, and indeed, by the two thieves who hung next to Him. In a sense, this prophecy is still being fulfilled today by those who despise, mock, and reject the Lord Jesus Christ and His free gift of salvation.

Isaiah 53:4-6 - "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes are we healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." - Peter expounds on this fulfillment in I Peter 2:24, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." This clearly illustrates perhaps the most central doctrine of the Christian faith: that of the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ. Christ died for us, and took the wrath of God against our sins upon Himself. Through His death, when we trust on Him in faith, we receive His own righteousness imputed to us, and are given

eternal life. Thus, through His death, we are healed of our spiritual deadness and are freed from the burden of our own iniquities.

Isaiah 53:7 - "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." - When Jesus was questioned before Pilate in Matthew 27:13-14, He "answered him to never a word." In Luke 23:9, Jesus was also questioned by Herod, where it is recorded "he answered him nothing." Jesus, by His silence before these officials who wielded actual political power, fulfilled this foretelling. Jesus was also heralded by John the Baptist in John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John recognised Christ's role as the final, ultimate sacrifice which was to be made for the sins of the whole world. Only God, incarnated as Jesus Christ, could be a perfect, sinless offering to propitiate His own wrath and cover and truly wash away sins from a lowly sinner. Christ, thus, was the fulfillment of the typological picture given by the Passover lamb which was slaughtered to avert God's wrath (see Exodus 12:1-30).

Isaiah 53:9 - "And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." - This came to pass when Jesus' body was given to the rich man Joseph of Arimathea, and was laid in the sepulcher owned by this man. Thus, He was laid in a rich man's tomb.

Isaiah 52:12 - "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of man, and made intercession for the transgressors." - Mark 15:27-28 records the fulfillment of this prophecy in that Christ was crucified between two thieves, hence, that He was numbered (or reckoned to be with) these transgressors. Also, Christ made intercession for the transgressors when, on the cross, He prayed to the Father, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

Daniel 9:26 - "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself..." - This prophecy of Daniel gave the exact date of Christ's death. The prophetic phraseology "week" refers to a period of seven years, and years by prophetic reckoning (such as used in Revelation) are 360 days, not the 365.25 days of our sidereal calendar. Thus, threescore and two weeks (which would be 62 periods of seven years each, or 434 years of 360 days each) beginning at the date of the rebuilding of Jerusalem (cf. Daniel 9:25) which was in 446 BC, would give a date for the death of Christ at 27 AD. From historical records, we can surmise that Christ was born in 4 BC (as this was the year Herod died, which is mentioned to have occurred near after Christ's birth). Christ began His ministry at the age of 30 years, which was the age at which a Jewish priest could begin his ministry, and he ministered for three to three and a half years, so He would have died at the age of 33, in 27 AD. Hence, Daniel's prophecy, given nearly 600 years before the death of Christ, gave the exact year in which the Lord was crucified and rose again from the dead!

Zechariah 11:12 - "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." - This foretold the betrayal of the

Lord by Judas for thirty pieces of silver, the price which the chief priests payed to him to commit his wicked deed (See Matthew 26:15).

Zechariah 11:13 - "And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD." - This was fulfilled in Matthew 27:3-7 when Judas, after realising the magnitude of his error and filled with remorse, cast the thirty pieces of silver he had received back to the chief priests in the Temple, which was the house of the Lord. They then used this money to purchase a potter's field."

Zechariah 12:10 - "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." - This prophecy was met in Luke 23:27 which records that "a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him."

Zechariah 13:7 - Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." - This prophecy was doubly fulfilled. Jesus, described as the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls in I Peter 2:25, was indeed smitten when He was crucified. Likewise, just as Jesus foretold to His disciples in Matthew 26:31 that they would be scattered (quoting Zechariah 13:7) the night of His crucifixion, so they were when in Mark 14:50, "they all forsook him, and fled."

## **Other Prophecies Fulfilled by Christ**

In addition to these, the life and person of Jesus Christ fulfilled other prophecies given in the Old Testament.

Christ's virgin birth - Isaiah 7:14 - "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel." - The birth of Christ fulfilled this when, by the Mary's own testimony to her virginity, He was born of her. Luke 1:27 describes Mary as a virgin, and Mary herself stated in Luke 1:34, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?". Yet, she conceived by the Holy Ghost and gave birth to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, just as Isaiah 7:14 said would happen, and this is a sign to all who read and hear of it that God's Word is true and testifies to the unique status of Christ as the God-man, God Incarnate without the sin nature passed down from generation to generation of man. As an aside, the Hebrew word translated as virgin in Isaiah 7:14 is "almah", which refers to something veiled, protected, and is always used to describe a virginal young woman. Likewise, in the New Testament, virgin is translated from the Greek word "parthenos", which also literally means "secluded, protected, veiled and set apart", and describes a woman who has been protected from the attentions of a man. The biological term parthenogenesis comes from the same word, and refers to the reproduction of certain single-celled species without sexual interaction, i.e. "virgin births".

The Messiah to be Born in Bethlehem - Micah 5:2 - "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting." - In this passage, it was foretold that the future king of Israel, the Messiah who would one day establish His reign and save His people, would come from Bethlehem. And indeed, Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem and was of the lineage of David which sprang from Bethlehem. Christ came to bring men into the kingdom of God, and He will one day return and establish His rulership over Israel and save His people. "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Romans 8:26) Before Christ could save His people, though, He had to die for them and become their sin-sacrifice, the Lamb who took the wrath of God upon Himself in their place. His blood was shed for all mankind, Israel included, and Israel will one day turn and accept Him as their Saviour.

Herod's Slaughter of the Children of Bethlehem - Jeremiah 31:15 - "Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not." - This passage from Jeremiah, in its context, describes the weeping of the women of the tribe of Benjamin when their children were taken from them and deported to Babylon after Judah was conquered by the Babylonians. The historical background behind this context is that Ramah was a town about 5 miles from Jerusalem, which was also near to Bethlehem of the tribe of Judah. When Judah was conquered by the Babylonians, Ramah served as a staging point for the caravans taking the Jewish captives away to Babylon. Thus, the women of Judah lamented their lost children at this place, and are personified by Rahel (Rachel), who was one of the wives of Jacob, and the mother of Benjamin, whose descendents were still associated with the town and region at the time of Jeremiah's writing. This weeping and lamenting for their lost children also served as a type which foresaw a prophetic event fulfilled in the circumstances surrounding the birth of Christ. As Matthew 2:16-18 records, King Herod saw that his royal authority had been flaunted by the wise men who came to worship the Christ. He was angry over this, and was also troubled at the news that another King was born (Matthew 2:3). Herod felt that the Christ child would be a threat to his petty dominion, and therefore determined to kill the child Jesus before He could grow up and become a threat. As a result of this, Herod ordered all male children under the age of two years to be slaughtered in all the area around Bethlehem, which would include Jerusalem and Ramah. As one could reasonably understand, this would cause great sorrow for the women whose children had just been murdered. Thus, this event fulfilled the prophecy uttered by Jeremiah some 600 years before, which had depicted an event which was to be associated with the Messiah.

The Flight of Jesus' Family to Egypt - Hosea 11:1 - "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." - This prophetic passage was accounted when, upon being warned in a dream of the danger impending from Herod's purge, Joseph took Mary and the Christ child and fled to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15). Matthew specifically mentions that this event was to set up the fulfillment of the prophecy in verse 15. And indeed, the prophecy that God's Son was to be called out of Egypt was fulfilled when, after Herod's death, God called Joseph to bring Mary and Jesus back to Judea from out of Egypt (Matthew 2:19-23).

Jesus' Galilean ministry - Isaiah 9:1-2 - "Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did not grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they than dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." - This passage foretold that the ministry of the then-coming Messiah would be in the region of Galilee, a district in northern Israel near the Sea of Galilee and beyond the Jordan, extending toward what was called Decapolis during Roman times. This was roughly the region encompassed in the lands given to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali when Joshua divided Canaan among the Israelites after their entry into the Promised Land. Indeed, Galilee was the area where most of Christ's ministry was carried out, other than in Jerusalem itself. The Lord only passed through Samaria, and had very little if anything to do in Judea in the south. Jesus said in John 9:5, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Indeed, the light of Christ shone in Galilee, enlightening the people who had walked in darkness in Zebulun and Naphtali.

Jesus Declared by God the Father to be Son of God - Psalm 2:7 - "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." - This prophecy was fulfilled when God the Father spoke as Jesus was transfigured on the mountain, as witnessed by Peter, James, and John. "...This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matthew 17:5). Christ was declared by the Father to be His Son, establishing Christ's full deity.

Jesus Spoke in Parables - Psalm 78:2-4 - "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done." - This was fulfilled in the way that Jesus preached to the multitudes. He taught in parables, which were not merely stories designed to elucidate points or demonstrate practical applications, but had the specific purpose of concealing truth from the unbelieving (Matthew 13:10-16). Those who opposed Christ and did not believe in Him could not understand the words that He spoke. "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not; from him shall be taken away even that he hath." (Matthew 13:12) To those who had faith, knowledge and understanding were added in abundance, but to those who did not have faith in Christ, the truth that they had heard from Him was lost completely on them. This parallels the passage in I Corinthians 2:12-14 which tells us that a spiritual (saved, believing) person can understand and learn from God's Word, while a natural (lost, saved, unbelieving) person cannot receive or understand what the Bible says. Jesus' teaching in parables fulfilled the prophecy in the Psalms, as is pointed out explicitly in Matthew 13:34-35).

The biblical testimony from the Hebrew scriptures is quite clear. Jesus Christ was the unique fulfillment of dozens of prophecies given by God. The odds of one single person fulfilling each and every one of these prophecies, as Jesus has done, is literally so astronomically remote as to be absolutely impossible. Yet, He did. While Muslims have to scabble for convoluted explanations to try to find Mohammed in the Biblical record, Jesus Christ is quite clearly shown to have been predicted as the Messiah who was to come for Israel and for the whole world.

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## End Notes

- (1) - J.F. Walvoord and R.B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p.43
- (2) - W. Cooper, *After the Flood*, Appendix 2
- (3) - C. Coon, *The Races of Man*, various places
- (4) - Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, Vol. III, p.834
- (5) - Faran in Arabic is rightly equated with Paran. In Hebrew, both the “p” and the “f” are represented by the letter “Pe”. The pronunciation of this letter depends upon the presence or lack of the Dagesh Lene within the letter. If it lacked the Dagesh, as it would in unpointed Hebrew scripts (pointing did not arise until the medieval period), then it would indicate the “f” phenome. Further, Arabic does not have the “p” phoneme except in certain loan words. Early Muslims, relatively unfamiliar with the contextual rules of Hebrew that would indicate how to pronounce an unpointed Hebrew text and not naturally using the “p” phoneme anyway, may have inadvertently altered the name Paran to Faran. We can see this phenomenon occurring also in Yaqut’s passage with the alteration of Palestine to Filistiin.
- (6) - Al-Idrisi, *Nuzhat al-Mushtaq fi Ikhtiraq al-Afaq*, p.2; from G. Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems*, p. 440
- (7) - *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, trans. R.F. Burton, Vol. VII, Tale #154, FN #419
- (8) - Which they would have to do. The Red Sea was historically known for its treacherous waters, and was little used for traffic until the time of the Romans, whose ponderous ships could better sustain the rough seas. Thus, their route to Egypt would have to have been by land, back exactly the way they came, to get to the Egyptian court in the northern part of that land.
- (9) - K.A. Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, p. 137ff
- (10) - Ahmad ibn Jabir al-Baladhuri, *Kitab Futuh al-Buldha*, ed. de Goeje, p. 276
- (11) - Taqi al-Din al-Maqrizi, *al-Mawa'iz wa al-i'tibar fi dhikr al-khitat wa al-athar*, 1326:6
- (12) - K.A. Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, p. 150
- (13) - M. Cook and P. Crone, *Hagarism: The Making of the Muslim World*, p. 23
- (14) - see W. Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature*, p. 604
- (15) - G. Hawting, “The Origins of the Muslim Sanctuary at Mecca”, *Studies in the First Century of Islamic Society*, ed. G.H.A. Juynboll, pp. 27-28



## Social Impact

### *Myth #7 Islam is a Peaceful Religion*

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From a sociological standpoint, this is perhaps THE most widely propagated myth about Islam. For many years now, Islam has been putting forward to Westerners a peaceful, loving front. This false view of Islam has been spread all the more aggressively since the September 11 terrorist attacks. Muslim leaders in the United States and other Western nations had to push their efforts at hiding Islam's true nature into high gear, trying to counterbalance the impact made by the sight of Palestinians and other Muslims (some in this very nation) cheering and celebrating the destruction of the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. Unfortunately, many liberal Christians in most of the mainline denominations have gone right along with these attempts at whitewashing Islam's image, either out of blind ignorance or ungodly sympathy for Mohammed's religion. False teachers even in many traditionally conservative Protestant churches have invited false teachers from Islam to present that religion to their congregants, and the image given is invariably that of a peaceful, loving, tender-hearted faith whose members are absolutely appalled at the violence committed by "a few fringe radicals".

I have even personally witnessed this sort of bald-faced lying being done in the name of Islam. On November 11, 2001, I attended a panel presentation on the campus of the University of North Carolina, in Chapel Hill, in which the several panel members each had the opportunity to take 15 minutes and give their thoughts on the events and responses to the September 11 attacks. One of the speakers was a Muslim imam from a local mosque in Durham. Naturally, he took twice as much time as was allotted for him, and did not even address the topic of discussion. Instead, he spent 30 minutes ranting and raving about how peaceful and loving Islam was, and how Islam respects people of other religions. This lying deceiver even went so far as to say that he would be morally obligated to stop a person whom he were to see defacing or vandalising a Christian church. In short, his entire diatribe was one giant lie, yet much of the (mostly liberal) crowd ate up every word of it like it was gospel truth. This response demonstrated the desperate need for education about Islam in this nation. Not education IN Islam, but education ABOUT Islam, so that the vast bulk of the population out there who knows little to nothing about the religion can learn the truth about it, instead of being fed sugar-coated lies from Islamic leaders and propagandists. People in this nation need to know that the image of Islam as a violent, intolerant, wicked religion is in fact true, and growing more so every day.

So, to ask the question bluntly: Is Islam peaceful or violent? To answer bluntly: It is violent. It is a religion born out of violence, propagated through violence, and still accustomed to violence even today. This can clearly be seen by examining the teachings and record of Islam. These are the two primary means by which to judge the character of a religion on some question. You look at the established, recognised, plainly understood teachings of that religion, and then you look at the manner and methodology by which those most faithful to that religion carry out their adherence to their belief system. So let us apply this test to the Muslim faith.

Though violence towards those of other faiths is certainly not unknown among other of the world's religions, Islam goes further than the other various false religious systems in the world is that its holy texts command and commend religiously-motivated violence against unbelievers. It's not just a matter of countenancing it, of turning a blind eye. Rather, the Qur'an and the ahadith support and encourage the faithful to press violent *jihad* against non-Muslims.

## Violence From the Qur'an

What does Islam teach as far as violence is concerned? Looking at the Qur'an, we see quite a lot taught about this subject. Muslim apologists will often point to Surah 2:190-193 as proof that Islam teaches only defensive warfare, but eschews offense.

“Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors. And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have Turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they first fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith. But if they cease, Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. And fight them on until there is no more Tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah; but if they cease, Let there be no hostility except to those who practise oppression.”

These verses, it is said, admonish Muslims only to fight against those who oppress or persecute Muslims, and only until the offenders have stopped oppressing Muslims. However, there is a catch to all this. The Qur'an also teaches for Muslims to enter into exile in lands where Islam is not the dominant force, and to stir up trouble, so that this persecution will come as the natives in those lands protect the integrity of their sovereignty.

“Those who believed, and adopted exile, and fought for the Faith, with their property and their persons, in the cause of Allah, as well as those who gave them asylum and aid,- these are all friends and protectors, one of another. As to those who believed but came not into exile, ye owe no duty of protection to them until they come into exile; but if they seek your aid in religion, it is your duty to help them, except against a people with whom ye have a treaty of mutual alliance. And remember Allah seeth all that ye do. The Unbelievers are protectors, one of another: Unless ye do this, protect each other, there would be tumult and oppression on earth, and great mischief.” (Surah 8:72-73)

In this passage, “adopted exile” is translated from the root form *hjr*, which has as its primary meaning the ideas of containment or confinement, and can carry the connotation of being quarantined or compartmentalised. The idea garnered from this verse seems to be as follows: adopt exile in a foreign land, voluntarily confining yourself in a non-Muslim society. Eschew assimilating into the culture and way of life of the host country, and instead agitate for Islam. When opposition arises, join together and give aid and fight for Allah against the unbelievers, since *voilà*, persecution has arisen! Hence, what is touted as a defensive doctrine is in reality carried out in an offensive manner.

There are numerous other, more straight-forward quotes from the Qur'an which exhort the followers of Mohammed to war:

“But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem of war; but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and pay Zakat, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Surah 9:5)

This passage is found in a portion of the Qur'an dealing with the making and breaking of treaties with pagans (unbelievers). In context, it is condoned for Muslims to break treaties with pagans if it is to their advantage to do so, UNLESS those pagans have been completely faithful in the discharge of their treaty obligations. But, after the terms of the treaty are met (the forbidden months are past), Muslims are commanded to make war. The historical context is that in ancient times, both in Arabia and elsewhere, treaties were most often made for specific periods of time. During that time period, both parties were expected to be completely faithful in the discharge of their obligations under the terms of the treaty. After the treaty term had ended, all bets were off. Groups which had been allies for a period of time might then turn on each other in the most vicious manner after the treaty time ended, without any loss of honour for either side. Hence, the Qur'an tells Muslims that pagan or unbelieving groups with whom they do not currently have a treaty are open to the prosecution of offensive war.

Likewise, in Surah 9:73, Mohammed is commanded to press hard war against unbelievers,

“O Prophet! strive hard against the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites, and be firm against them. Their abode is Hell,- an evil refuge indeed.”

Also,

“O ye who believe! fight the unbelievers who are near to you, and let them find harshness in you: and know that Allah is with those who fear Him.” (Surah 9:123)

“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, from among the People of the Book, until they pay the *Jizya* (religion tax) with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.” (Surah 9:29)

Each of these verses, in context, is dealing with waging offensive war against unbelievers for the purpose of spreading Islam. As with the previous verses which we saw, Muslims will often try to claim that these verses promote defensive warfare only, and that offensive war to propagate Islam is not Quranical. They say this in the hopes that their audience, most likely non-Muslims, will not be conversant in the Qur'an, and hence will be unaware of the contextual environment in which these verses reside. A straight-forward reading of the appropriate surat and surrounding passages using a little common sense will contextually demonstrate the offensive nature of these verses to the unbiased reader.

However, many Muslim apologists still attempt to argue that these verses in the Qur'an are being taken out of context. Because of this claim, we should then investigate what orthodox Muslim expositors and scholars have to say on this, as their words were often much less inhibited by concerns for presenting Islam in a positive light to Western audiences. One of the earliest great Muslim legal scholars, Al-Tabari (839-923 AD), explained Surah 9:5 as commanding the death of infidels if they would not embrace Islam, lest they should enter Mecca <sup>1</sup>. Al-Mahili (d. 1486 AD) also gives a clear indication of understanding Surah 9:5 offensively and aggressively,

“The chapter of Repentance was revealed to raise the level of security which the infidels enjoyed because Muhammad had earlier made a covenant with them not to kill them. After that, this verse was given (9:5) in order to free God and Muhammad from any covenant with the infidels. It gives them four months in which they will be protected, but by the end of the four months (the end of the grace period), the order comes: Kill the infidels wherever you find them. Capture them, besiege them in their castles and fortresses until they are forced to accept Islam or be killed.”<sup>2</sup>

Another of the most historically influential of Muslim jurists and Quranic exegetes, al-Baydawi (d. 1276 AD), gives a fairly typical understanding of the doctrine, commenting on Surah 9:29,

“Fight Jews and Christians because they violated the origin of their faith and they do not believe in the religion of the truth (Islam), which abrogated all other religions. Fight them until they pay the poll-tax (Ziziya tax) with submission and humiliation.”<sup>3</sup>

The Islamic philosopher and historian, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 AD), stated,

“In the Muslim community, the holy war is a religious duty, because of the universalism of the (Muslim) mission and (the obligation to) convert everybody to Islam either by persuasion or by force. Therefore, caliphate and royal authority are united in (Islam), so that the person in charge can devote the available strength to both of them at the same.”<sup>4</sup>

Other noteworthy Islamic jurists and philosophers promoted the same offensive strategy for jihad. Ibn Kathir (d. 1372) reiterated the famous quote attributed to Mohammed that “no two religions are to exist on the Arab peninsula”, and asserted that Surah 9:5, seen above, abrogated any covenant which might have been made between Muslims and infidels<sup>5</sup>. Ibn Hazm (994-1064) provides some interesting commentary concerning that verse, Surah 2:256 (“Let there be no compulsion in religion...”), where he demonstrates the true purpose of the ayah,

“The prophet Muhammad did not accept from the Arab heathens less than Islam or the sword. This is compulsion of faith. No compulsion in faith (or religion) applies only to Christians or Jews because they are not to be forced to embrace the religion. They have the option either to embrace Islam, the sword, or to pay the poll-tax. In this case they can keep their own faith. It was truly said on the authority of the apostle of God that there is no compulsion in the faith.”<sup>6</sup>

Thus, compulsion certainly was to be applied to any non-Muslims who were not Christians or Jews. These latter two groups were given the third, apparently non-compulsive, choice of submitting to pay the *jizyah* poll-tax and live out their lives as a permanent underclass.

Modern Muslim scholars, historians, and exegetes have taken similar stances on jihad. Al-Buti reveals for us the following,

“The verse (9:5) does not leave any room in the mind to conjecture about what is called defensive war. This verse asserts that Holy War which is demanded in Islamic law, **is not defensive war** (as the Western students of Islam would like to tell us) because it could legitimately be an offensive war. That is the apex and most honorable of all Holy wars”<sup>7</sup>

He likewise states,

“You may wonder now: Where is the wisdom of forcing infidels and their associates to embrace Islam? How could the mind set of the twentieth century understand such matters? The answer is: We wonder where the wisdom is when the state forces an individual to be subjugated to its system and philosophy despite the freedom he possesses? How can it be reasonable for the state to have the right to subjugate its citizens to the laws, principles, and ordinances it enacts, while the creator of all does not have the right to subjugate them to His authority and to convert them from every creed or faith to His religion?”<sup>8</sup>

And in further refutation of the “defensive war” theory,

“This is the concept which professional experts of thought attempt to conceal from the eyes of Muslims by claiming that anything that is related to a Holy War in Islamic law is only based on defensive warfare to repel an attack....It is no secret that the reason behind this deception is the great fear which dominates foreign countries (East and West alike) that the idea of Holy War for the cause of God would be revived in the hearts of Muslims, then certainly, the collapse of European culture will be accomplished. The mind set of the European man has matured to embrace Islam as soon as he hears an honest message presented. How much more will it be accepted if this message is followed by a Holy War?”<sup>9</sup>

In exegesis of Surah 9:29, which commands the laying of the *jizyah* onto the infidels, Khan states,

“Allah revealed in Sura Bara’at (Repentance, IX) the order to discard (all) obligations (covenants, etc), and commanded the Muslims to fight against all the Pagans as well as against the people of the Scriptures (Jews and Christians) if they do not embrace Islam, till they pay the Jizya (a tax levied on the Jews and Christians) with willing submission and feel themselves subdued (as it is revealed in 9:29). So the Muslims were not permitted to abandon the fighting against them (Pagans, Jews and Christians) and to reconcile with them and to suspend hostilities against them for an unlimited period while they are strong and have the ability to fight against them. So at first the fighting was forbidden, then it was permitted, and after that it was made obligatory.”<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the teaching is that Muslims are to fight when they have sufficient strength to win, and that this fight is obligatory. When Muslims are not strong enough to fight their enemies, they are likewise to lie low until such a time as they can fight, according to another prominent modern Muslim scholar. Quoting as-Suyuti, as-Saleh wrote,

“The command to fight the infidels was delayed until the Muslims become strong, but when they were weak they were commanded to endure and be patient.”<sup>11</sup>

Saleh goes on to cite Zarkashi in a footnote saying,

“Allah the most high and wise revealed to Mohammad in his weak condition what suited the situation, because of his mercy to him and his followers. For if He gave them the command to fight while they were weak it would have been embarrassing and most difficult, but when the most high made Islam victorious He commanded him with what suited the situation, that is asking the people of the Book to become Muslims or to pay the levied tax, and the infidels to become Muslims or face death. These two options, to fight or to have peace return according to the strength or the weakness of the Muslims.”<sup>12</sup>

Saudi scholar al-Amin likewise points to the Qur’an for the justification of offensive holy war,

“God had made it clear to us that (we should) call for acceptance of islam first, then wage war. It is not admissible to wage war before extending the invitation to embrace islam first, as the Qur’an says. ‘We verily sent our messenger with clear proofs and revealed to them the scripture and the balance, that mankind may observe right measure, and he revealed iron, wherein is mighty power and uses for mankind and that Allah (God) may know him who helps Him and his messengers—Allah is strong, Almighty’” (Surah Iron 57:25).”<sup>13</sup>

This is especially informative for those who may remember that in the aftermath of the 11 September terrorist attacks, Saudi religious and political leaders, in the process of extending their condolences to President Bush, also extended an invitation to him to convert to Islam. Qutb, in a chapter entitled “Jihaad in the Cause of God”, says this about those who believe that jihad is to be a defensive war only,

“They are ignorant of the nature of Islam and of its function, and that it has a right to take the initiative for human freedom. Thus wherever an Islamic community exists which is a concrete example of the Divinely-ordained system of life, it has a God-given right to step forward and take control of the political authority so that it may establish the Divine system on earth, while it leaves the matter of belief to individual conscience.”<sup>14</sup>

Thus, while touting “freedom of individual conscience”, Qutb seems to be espousing the right of the “Islamic community” to take control of political authority, which would seem to hearken back to what was seen earlier with Surah 8:72-73. Qutb, it should be noted, was executed by Egypt’s Nasser government for attempting to overthrow the secular regime. Fattah adds,

“Islam has approved war so that the Word of God becomes supreme. This is war for the cause of God (Holy War). Muhammad, therefore, sent his ambassadors to eight kings and princes in the neighborhood of the Arab Peninsula to call them to embrace islam. They rejected his call. Thus, it became incumbent on the muslims to fight them.”<sup>15</sup>

Pakistani Islamic authorities stand with their brethren on this issue. Fazlur Rahman notes the abundant discussion of jihad in the Qur'an, and rejects the modern interpretation of jihad as defensive war only<sup>16</sup>. Maududi, likewise, rejects attempts to make a distinction between offensive and defensive jihad and views jihad as the means by which to overthrow all non-Islamic systems and replace them with submission to Allah<sup>17</sup>.

The above are only a very small sampling of what could be presented with regard to both the historic and modern orthodox Muslim positions on holy war. As can be seen, the justification is often drawn directly from those verses which were quoted above, and which are often said to be "defensive only" or "taken out of context" by Muslim apologists. Thus, it should certainly be seen that offensive war for the specific purpose of spreading the Islamic religion is very much a Quranic practice.

## Violence From the Ahadith

The Qur'an is not the only source for this *jihad* doctrine, however. The ahadith also contain much regarding this sort of behaviour. Jihad is touted as the second best deed which could be performed in Islam, second only to believing in Allah and his prophet, Mohammed<sup>18</sup>. To those who participate in jihad comes either the spoils of war if he lives or paradise if he is killed.

"The Prophet said, "The person who participates in (Holy battles) in Allah's cause and nothing compels him to do so except belief in Allah and His Apostles, will be recompensed by Allah either with a reward, or booty (if he survives) or will be admitted to Paradise (if he is killed in the battle as a martyr)." <sup>19</sup>

Other portions of the ahadith also confirm the rights of jihadis to the spoils of those they kill in holy war<sup>20</sup> and their automatic entry into paradise if they die as martyrs in the cause of Allah<sup>21,22</sup>. Participation in holy war earns Muslims many benefits and blessings from Allah, or so the writings teach. For instance, Mohammed said,

"He who reared a horse for the sole intention of using it in a Jihad, then he will be rewarded one virtue for each grain he gave the horse as a feed." <sup>23</sup>

Right after this passage, it is then taught that a man who participates in jihad only for so long as it takes to milk a she-camel (I don't know much about camels, but this is probably not a very long time) still is entitled to paradise because of the blessedness of his endeavour<sup>24</sup>. Then, in the next passage after that comes one which teaches that a man who dies in holy war has the right to intercede before Allah in paradise for the entry of seventy other men of his choosing, which Allah then is required to allow into paradise<sup>25</sup>. It pays to have friends, apparently!

The importance of holy war in Islamic teaching takes precedence over other religious activities, as well. Mohammed taught that acting as a soldier of Allah for one night is better than 2,000 years of saying prayers back home<sup>26</sup>. While Islamic teachers in the West will play up the Muslim duty of *zakat*, the giving of alms to the poor, the ahadith teach that giving of your wealth to support jihad earns you even greater rewards. Mohammed stated,



“Whatever one spends to facilitate Jihad, Allah shall give him a reward which will exceed his contribution 700 times.”<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps the most decisive statement in all the ahadith which shows the driving force behind the expansion of Islam to be greed, and not any sort of “service” to a deity is this,

“He who murders another, property of the murdered becomes property of the murderer.”<sup>28</sup>

Want something that a non-believer has? Just get out your sword (or AK-47) and take it! Nevermind those laws of God like, “..thou shalt not kill....thou shalt no steal....thou shalt not covet...” (Exodus 20:13,15,17)

Hence, it ought to be seen and understood that the propensity of Islamic scriptural teaching is toward violence and the propagation of the Islamic religion by war and the enticement of booty and eternal, carnal paradise. Let us turn to the examination of Islam’s practice, both historically and in a contemporary setting.

## Islamic Attacks on Scholarism

Islamic behaviour towards those *kafirs* (unbelievers) who would not submit to Islam nor pay the religion tax has generally been very unpleasant. Islam has at various times sought to destroy any knowledge or learning that did not conform to Islam’s way of thinking. While the destruction of the Great Library of Alexandria cannot be properly laid at the feet of Islam (actually, it was dealt the decisive blow, accidentally, by Julius Caesar’s invading army six centuries earlier), this does not exonerate Islam from culpability with regards to the destruction of “infidel” knowledge. Muslim historiographer Ibn Khaldun (1332-1395 AD), mentions the destruction of the Persian state library that occurred with the capture of the capital, Ctesiphon, in 637 AD,

“Umar wrote [to the local Muslim commander who had requested permission to distribute these books to his troops as booty] : ‘Throw them into the water. If what they contain is right guidance, God has given us better guidance. If it is error, God has protected us against it.’”<sup>29</sup>

Similar atrocities against scholarism were committed by Muslim invaders who destroyed the Sanskrit college of Vishaldev, Gujarat, India in 1196 AD, and by those who leveled the Buddhist university at Nalanda in 1200 AD, destroying much repository of learning at both sites.

## Historical Muslim Violence Toward Unbelievers

As appalling as such activities may be, the toll in human life which Islam has wrought through history is infinitely greater. The aforementioned Caliph Umar I attained to the leadership of Islam in 634, two years after the death of Mohammed. In his short time as caliph, he led Islamic armies in the conquest of Syria (636 AD), Iraq (637 AD), Palestine and the Transjordan (638 AD), Egypt (642 AD), and Persia (642 AD). Umar was so brutal and despotic in his retaliation

against the Persians (modern day Iranians) for opposing Islam's spread, that to this day Iranians will celebrate with great festivities the anniversary of his death.

The Muslim conquest of India was similarly brutal in its destruction of the indigenous civilisation and subjugation of the native Indians.

“From the time Muslims started arriving, around 632 AD, the history of India becomes a long, monotonous series of murders, massacres, spoliations, and destructions. It is, as usual, in the name of ‘a holy war’ of their faith, of their sole God, that the barbarians have destroyed civilizations, wiped out entire races.....Mahmoud Ghazni was an early example of Muslim ruthlessness, burning in 1018 the temples of Mathura, razing Kanauj to the ground and destroying the famous temple of Somnath, sacred to all Hindus. His successors were as ruthless as Ghazni: 103 temples in the holy city of Benaras were razed to the ground, its marvelous temples destroyed, its magnificent palaces wrecked.”<sup>30</sup>

India was repeatedly subjected to wave after wave after wave of Muslim invaders who would make a practice of killing or raping anyone in sight, and burning down anything they couldn't make off with in their packs. The Muslims of India and Pakistan (which is traditionally an Indian cultural area) are descendants of those Indians who converted to avoid the massacres and the religion tax imposed by their Muslim overlords.

Deserving of special mention is one sect of Islam which lives on today, in name if not in fact, which has given to the English language its word for cold-blooded, amoral murderers: The Assassins. The Assassins were a group of Muslims derived from to the Ismailite sect of Islam. Founded in 1090, this group kept much of the Middle East in fear with their daring, cold-blooded assassinations of all kinds of personages, even up to the caliphs themselves. This group believed that killing was a religious duty, and would often assassinate leaders they felt to be too weak or too compromising to continue the spread of Islam. Much of their effort was also made against Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians in the Middle East, both Frankish and Byzantine. The name for this group derives from *hashish*, which they would often smoke so as to induce ecstatic states in preparation for their killings. This group was ultimately destroyed by the Mongol invader Hulagu Khan who razed their mountaintop fortress of Alamut in 1296<sup>31</sup>.

In the later middle ages, the expansion of Islam by jihad was carried forward by the Ottoman Turkish empire. The Turks, over the course of three centuries, pushed their way out of Asia Minor, conquering Constantinople in 1453, and moving further up into the Balkans and Central Europe until finally being turned back at the gates of Vienna in 1683. During their time of domination over the Balkan peoples, the Turks laid very heavy oppression upon these conquered subjects. One particularly distressing practice was that of taking “infidel” children from their parents as slaves. Once every five years, the Turks would take every Orthodox and Catholic child they could get their hands on from among the unconverted Balkan peoples, and bring them as slaves to the Sultan. The girls usually were destined to serve as concubines in the harems of Turkish leaders. The boys were forcibly converted to Islam, and then thoroughly indoctrinated in Muslim fanaticism and Turkish nationalism. After their “education” was finished, these were then highly trained in the arts of war and made into warrior-slaves, known as *janissaries*. The

Janissaries served as the Sultan's police force throughout the Empire, many of them enforcing his decrees back in the very homelands from which they had been stolen<sup>32</sup>.

Muslim nastiness towards the conquered peoples of the Balkans still plays a role in the politics of that region today. The Albanians and Bosnians are both Muslim groups whose ancestors originally converted to avoid the child-conscription and religion tax. The Serbs and Croats hate the Bosnians and Albanians with a passion because of historical remembrance of the atrocities which the Turkish overlords perpetrated against their Slavic underlings. The enmity today between the Greeks and Turks derives from the brutality of Muslim rule in Greece, and the barbarity of the Turkish attempts to put down the Greek war for independence (1821-1827).

## **The Violence of Islam in the Modern Era**

Muslim atrocities against non-Muslim conquered populations continue into the modern era. In 1894, Sultan Abdul Hamid II instituted a pogrom against Orthodox Armenians who refused to abide by a 100% increase in the rents which the Turkish government charged them. Between 1894-1896, over 150,000 Armenians were killed by either the sword or starvation, another 100,000 driven into exile, and 40,000 escaped by conversion to Islam<sup>33</sup>. Again, between 1915 and 1918, the Turks carried out genocide against the Armenians. Families were torn apart, the men being taken out and shot, and the women and children forced to march until they died of exhaustion or starvation<sup>34</sup>. In this time, a quarter of a million Armenians were able to escape to Russia, while another 200,000 saved themselves by converting to Islam. However, the best estimates say that more than one and a half million Armenians were killed by this Muslim atrocity. Turkish Armenia ceased to exist.

The Greeks also have suffered holocaust at the hands of Muslims in this century. In an effort to complete the Islamisation of Turkish dominions, efforts to destroy or drive out the mostly Orthodox Greek populations were begun in 1913. That year, 16,000 Greeks were murdered in Eastern Thrace (on the European side of the Dardanelles). In 1914, Greeks were ordered to vacate the city of Pergamum, and were massacred in Erythrea and Phocaia. That same year, 400,000 Greeks died from malnourishment and mistreatment in forced-labour battalions, and 120,000 Greeks were driven from their homes in Eastern Thrace, fleeing as refugees to the Kingdom of Greece. In 1917, 23,000 Greeks were deported from Cydoniae, and in 1918, another 8,000 Greek families were expelled from southwestern Asia Minor. In 1922, 300,000 more Greeks were forced out of Eastern Thrace, and at Smyrna, 150,000 Greeks and Armenians were massacred by Turkish forces<sup>35</sup>. It is important to keep in mind that all of these areas mentioned: Eastern Thrace, the Ionian isles, and southwestern Asia Minor, were all traditionally Greek cultural areas, dating back to the Mycenaean period over 1000 years before Christ. The Islamisation of these areas by the removal of the Greeks is therefore very clearly seen as an act of jihad, the conquest of territory for Islam. Muslim apologists even today try to claim that these actions were not Muslim, but secular, since it is often touted that Enver Pasha and other Turkish leaders who ordered these atrocities were secular. However, their "secularity" is demonstrated by the fact that the Young Turk regime "resumed the teaching of Islamic religion in the public schools, opened state schools for the training of religious functionaries and taken such measures for the promotion of religion as putting Qur'anic programs on the state radio"<sup>36</sup>.

Jihad is still alive and well today, and is not just the province of a few militant radicals. The forcible advancement of Islam, coupled with a contrived hatred for the Western world, appeals to the hearts and minds of millions of disaffected Muslims worldwide, many of them young and eager to give their lives in the cause of Allah. Many well-educated Muslims, in the Middle East and in the West, have taken hold of the intellectual cause of Islamism and support this jihad wholeheartedly. Witness the exultation of Muslims worldwide at the destruction of the World Trade Centre towers...not only in Palestinian, Pakistani, and Egyptian villages and slums, but also in more well-to-do North African neighbourhoods in France and on many college campuses in North America.

The fields of battle which radical Islam is pushing range all across the globe. In 1974, Turkey invaded Cyprus and waged war on the Greeks yet again, who were ostensibly Turkey's NATO ally. Pakistani *mujahedeen* and terror bombers seek to force the Indians out of Kashmir and unite that province with Pakistan. Muslims in East Timor murdered and displaced hundreds of thousands of Roman Catholics before the UN intervened with Australian troops. In Mindanao, Muslims are murdering Roman Catholics and Christians, and throughout the Middle East, Christians and others of all kinds of religions are persecuted and killed. In 1981, Muslim fanatics rioted in Cairo against the Coptic Christian population, murdering over 100 individuals. In 1947, after the splitting of the Indian subcontinent between Muslim Pakistan and Hindu India, Muslims instituted a reign of terror against Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist minorities in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). People were killed, property was confiscated, refugees left penniless, and Hindu women were taken and given to Muslim men for the purposes of polygamy. The wickedness of the Muslim actions earned for Islam the turning of its name into an acronym standing for "Intolerance, Slaughter, Loot, Arson and Molestation"<sup>37</sup>. In 1950, half a million more Hindus were butchered, and in 1971, during Bangladesh's war for independence from Pakistan, Pakistani soldiers murdered another 3 million Hindus and other religious minorities. In 1981, after gaining complete control of Iran, the Islamist revolutionaries under the Ayatollah Khomeini engaged in a systematic oppression of Iran's Bahai minority, murdering them and taking their property. Presently, Sudanese Muslims are waging a war of jihad against Christians and animists in the southern part of that country, killing many, and taking others as slaves. In Mauritania, thousands of black Africans have been murdered or expelled by Islamist radicals who have instituted sharia law in that nation. In that country, over 90,000 people are still reported to be living in slavery<sup>38</sup>. Muslims in northern Nigeria continue their effort to establish sharia Islamic law over non-Muslims.

Of course, there is also the continual *intifada* which the Palestinians under Yasser Arafat and other radical Islamist leaders carry out. Thousands of Israelis have been killed or maimed through cowardly Palestinian terror bombings. Many of these bombs have been specifically targeted at children, as have rifle and mortar attacks on schools and homes in Israel. Perhaps the most notorious Arab crime against Israel was the murder of eleven Israeli athletes which *Fatah* (Arafat's terror organisation) terrorists had taken hostage at the 1972 Olympics in Munich, Germany. Of course, Muslim jihad has also launched five wars against Israel, which have all failed to drive the Jews from the Holy Land.

This voluminous amount of information about Islamic practice, even in the present, only constitutes a small portion of what could be said about Islamic violence against non-Muslims. It seems evident that every place in which Muslims make up a significant portion of the population, efforts are made to subjugate or drive out non-Muslims. The conclusion pretty much has to be made that Islam is most certainly NOT the peaceful, tolerant, loving religion which it is claimed to be. More on the “tolerance” of Islam will be seen in the next chapter.

Please note that the above should not be construed to say that every Muslim is a violent individual. Many Muslims are indeed peaceful people who get along well in non-Muslim societies. I have known several Muslims with whom I have worked, who did not take the Islamic faith very seriously and were decent, kind individuals. Still, the record of Islam on violence and forcible conversion is practically unrivaled in sheer magnitude, even by Roman Catholicism with all of its inquisitions, conquistadors, and counter-reformations. One is forced to wonder when Islam will begin to practice that verse in the Qur’an which their apologists love to quote, “Let there be no compulsion in religion...” (Surah 2:256)

## **The Contrast of Bible Christianity**

Foes of true Christianity and apologists for Islam will often rebut attacks against Islam’s violent nature by trying to pin the violence label on Christians as well. They will point to various passages in the Old Testament which advocate violence, particularly those involved with the establishment of Israel in the land of Canaan. What these people do not understand is that these particular passages, while instructive to today’s Christians in the desire of God for His children to keep themselves holy and free from wrong influences, are not directly applicable to Christians today as we do not live in the same dispensation as that of ancient Israel. A dispensation is simply a particular time frame in which God deals with man in a particular way. In the Old Testament, several dispensations are seen, as God progressively reveals Himself to man. Eventually, God begins to deal with man through the nation of Israel, whom He called out from among all nations. It was to Israel that the violent passages in the Old Testament were directed. God dealt with man differently in the New Testament. Instead of just dealing with Israel as a nation, God deals with people from all nations, and is calling His church out from among every nation on earth.

“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us...” (Ephesians 2:11-14)

My purpose for this brief lesson in dispensationalism is to demonstrate that a right understanding of the Bible will include the understanding that many passages in the Old Testament dealing with the ceremonial laws, priestly rites, and political judgments in ancient Israel are instructive for teaching general principles of holiness to Christians today, but are not meant to be applied

**directly or literally** in the lives of Christians. This is the generally understood position of what are rightly termed “Fundamentalist Christians” such as myself. Now, there are other groups, such as Covenant theologians and Reconstructionists who believe otherwise. I would disagree with them, and point out that there is no scriptural warrant in the New Testament to apply the kingdom of Israel directly to the church in this dispensation, and thus that their beliefs on this point are in conflict with the Biblical testimony.

Seeing that Christians today are not called by the Bible to drive out the unbelievers and put them to the sword, what then IS the attitude which Christians ought to take?

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” (Ephesians 6:12)

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.)” (II Corinthians 10:3-4)

These passages both illustrate that a Christian’s struggle is with the spiritual forces of evil. Our warfare is fought on the spiritual plane, against the machinations of Satan and his demons. It is fought with prayer and supplication. It is fought by witnessing and preaching the truth to lost sinners in this dying world. It is fought by living rightly and presenting a pure testimony of graceful, God-honouring living to the world at large, serving as a reproof to those who live in sin. A Bible Christian may be involved in politics, may have to fight in a war if called upon by his nation, may have to even serve on a jury and choose to recommend the death penalty for a vicious criminal who has broken a law worthy of death. But, the Bible Christian will not use force or coercion to spread the Gospel and win souls.

What is the behaviour then of a Bible Christian living by the Bible? They will witness. They may hand out tracts. They may even make an unsaved person feel uncomfortable by talking about God or standing up and doing right or refusing to do wrong. They may vote against a candidate who supports abortion, and campaign for that person’s opponent. But they won’t use force to spread the Gospel. History bears this out as truth.

“Ah,” the scoffer might say, “What about the crusades, or the inquisitions, or the conquistadors and the subjugations of natives all over the world, or what about the abortion clinic violence?!” The simple answer is that not a single one of these has been perpetrated by Bible-believing Christians, often called Fundamentalist or Evangelical Christians. The crusades, the inquisitions, the conquistadors, these were all the products of the Roman Catholic church. Even the abortion clinic bombers and gunmen like John Salvi and Eric Rudolph were practicing or former Roman Catholics. Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma city bomber, went to Catholic school before drifting away from that faith. Adolph Hitler was raised a Roman Catholic, and never was excommunicated. The Portuguese Jesuits who forced their way into India in the 16th century, gaining converts by fire and sword, were Roman Catholics. The Roman church which perpetrated all these acts did so **in spite of** what the Bible says. That institution was acting **contrary** to the Word of God, thus by definition those who acted on Rome’s behalf were not

acting the part of “Bible believing Christians”. The point to this is not to condemn Roman Catholics as being worse than anyone else, or to lay blame for all the world’s ills at the feet of the Roman church. It is instead to show that Christians being true to the Bible had nothing to do with the many atrocities committed in the name of “Christianity” throughout the centuries. None of this can be laid at the feet of Fundamentalist and Evangelical Christians.

Another error in thinking which non-Christians often make and which needs to be addressed is this: There is not, nor has there ever been, such a thing as a “Christian nation”. No nation has ever been governed solely (or even principally) by the dictates of the Bible, nor has any nation ever been made up solely or even with a large majority of truly Bible-believing born-again Christians. Given the implications of what the Bible has to say as far as commanding Christians to be submissive to the laws of their respective earthly nations inasmuch as they can do so without violating Scripture and conscience (see Romans 13:1-7, I Peter 2:11-17), and that Christians are to be “in the world, but not of the world” (see John 17:15-16), it must be understood that Christians cannot partake of forcing their authority, either political or religious, upon the unbelieving world beyond those realms (such as voting, in democratic nations) in which they are lawfully allowed a voice along with everyone else.

As such, since there is no such thing as a “Christian nation”, it is not a valid argument to try to blame Christianity for the behaviour of Western nations such as the United States, Great Britain or other countries which many in the Third World usually refer to as “Christian”. Even a cursory glance at the laws and practices of Western nations, past and present, shows that these were not “Christian” in the sense of abiding by the strict dictates of the Bible, even if these nations did have large or influential Christian elements in their societies. Muslims err greatly in trying to apply their understanding of the *ummah* to the Western situation. In Muslim lands, Islam is supposed to form the complete sum total of all the community and society. Everything is to revolve around Islam, and Islam is to establish the sole *deen*, the way of living, in a nation ruled by the religion of Mohammed. Muslims apply this to the West, and therefore come to the erroneous conclusion that because the United States extirpated and quarantined the Native Americans, or because Britain sold smallpox-laden blankets to the Mohawks, or because the Dutch treated the natives in their Asian holding cruelly, that all of these crimes can be laid at the feet of CHRISTIANITY, rather than just individual nations or people. This is an invalid argument because Christianity, as taught in the Bible, is a private and personal relationship between man and his Maker. There is no, can be no, Christian *ummah* to which a nation’s actions can be attributed. While that concept may be attributable even to Roman Catholicism (which teaches its own version of *ummah* through its belief that all people in a region are submitted to the Pope and belong to the Catholic Church), it cannot be attributed to people who are being faithful to the Bible, which is the very definition of a “Bible-believing Christian”.

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## End Notes

(1) - Al-Tabari, *Commentary on the Holy Qur’an*, pp. 206-207

- (2) - Al-Mahili, *Al-Jalalan*, p.153
- (3) - Al-Baydawi, *The Lights of Revelation*, p. 252
- (4) - Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, Vol. I, p.473
- (5) - Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, p.336
- (6) - Ibn Hazm, *Al-Fisal*, Vol. VIII, part 11, p. 196
- (7) - M. Sa'id Ramadan Al-Buti, *The Jurisprudence of the Biography*, pp. 323-324
- (8) - M. Sa'id Ramadan Al-Buti, *Jurisprudence of the Biography*, pp. 266-267
- (9) - M. Sai'd Ramadan Al-Buti, *Jurisprudence of the Biography*, pp. 266
- (10) - Introduction to *Sahih Bukhari*, trans. M. Khan, p. xxiv
- (11) - S. as-Saleh, *Mabaheth Fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*, p. 269
- (12) - S. as-Saleh, *Mabaheth Fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*, note on p. 270
- (13) - M. al-Amin, *The Methodology of Islamic Law*, p. 17
- (14) - S. Qutb, *Milestones*, Ch. 4
- (15) - A. Abdul-Fattah, *The Spirit of Islamic Religion*, p. 382
- (16) - F. Rahman, *Islam*, p.37
- (17) - see S. Abul Ala Maududi, *Jihad in Islam*, pp. 9,19,24, etc.
- (18) - *Sahih al-Bukhari* vol. 1, no. 25
- (19) - *Sahih al-Bukhari* vol. 1, no. 35
- (20) - *Sahih al-Bukhari* vol. 4, no. 370
- (21) - *Sahih al-Bukhari* vol. 4, no. 386
- (22) - *Sahih al-Bukhari* vol. 9, no. 555
- (23) - *Ibn-e-Majah*, Vol. 2, p. 172
- (24) - *Ibn-e-Majah*, Vol. 2, p. 173
- (25) - *Ibn-e-Majah*, vol. 2, p. 174
- (26) - *Ibn-e-Majah*, vol. 2, p. 166
- (27) - *Sahih Tirmzi*, vol. 1, p. 697



- (28) - *Ibn-e-Majah*, Vol. 2, p. 183
- (29) - Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah*, Vol. I, p. 373
- (30) - A. Danielou, *History of India*, p. 222
- (31) - S.N. Fisher *The Middle East, A History*, p. 108
- (32) - R.E. Burns, *Wrath of Allah*, Chap. 4
- (33) - R.E. Burns, *Wrath of Allah*, Chap. 4
- (34) - C.J. Walker, *Armenia: Survival of a Nation*, p. 203
- (35) - R.E. Burns, *Wrath of Allah*, Chap. 4
- (36) - P.N. Siegel, *The Meek and the Militant*, p. 186
- (37) - S.K. Bhattacharyya, *Genocide in East Pakistan/Bangladesh*
- (38) - World Almanac and Book of Facts, 2001 edition, p. 821

## ***Myth #8 Islam is a Tolerant Religion***

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To evaluate the degree of tolerance in Islam, the term must be defined. For the purposes of this exposition, I shall eschew the “modern” definition of “tolerance” as espoused by the Political Correctness fascists on our college campuses, which gives the idea that all viewpoints, ideas, cultures, etc. etc. are equal and equally valid, and ought to be promoted equally. Instead, I shall go by the simple dictionary definition. “Tolerate”, as defined by the Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary is, “To suffer to be, or to be done, without prohibition or hindrance; to allow or permit by not preventing.” Thus, tolerance essentially means that you may not agree with something, but you do not hinder this “something” from being practiced, said, taught, etc. Tolerance does NOT mean agreeing with everything you hear, or **promoting** every viewpoint. From the standpoint of the discussion at hand, it merely means to not hinder another person from practicing a different religious faith or saying something with which you disagree.

### **Toleration - The American Example**

America has a long (though of course not perfect) history of religious toleration. This nation has been a haven for those who have sought to escape religious persecution, specifically because we practice toleration. America does not hinder a person from following their religious conscience. If a person wants to be a Quaker, Baptist, Mormon, Catholic, Jew, Hindu, Muslim, or anything else under the sun, they are free to do so. Further, America was built upon this foundation of religious toleration **because** of its Christian heritage. Separation of church and state, as rightly understood to be the barrier to intermingling of the exercise of ecclesiastical and secular authority (i.e. no state church), was **pioneered** by Baptists and their European forebearers such as the Waldensians and Anabaptists. Colonial Baptist John Leland was instrumental in securing American religious freedom through his persuasion of James Madison to include the language that became the 1st amendment in the Bill of Rights into the Constitution. The builders of this nation, both Christian and not, rightly understood, as the Bible teaches, that there cannot be force used in religious conversion and religious practice,

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.)” (II Corinthians 10:3-4)

Matters of eternity, of the salvation of souls, are to be dealt with through spiritual means (prayer, witnessing, a good testimony), not by carnal (earthly) means.

Likewise, though America has had a checkered history of tolerance toward racial differences, this nation is now more colourblind than it has been at anytime before. Race means less to fewer people than it ever has. In fact, racism is more of a problem caused by those claiming to fight it, such as the NAACP and the Southern Poverty Law Centre, than it is from the traditional (and dying) groups like the Klan or the Aryan Nations. Ethnic minorities today can get a job, buy a

house, go to school, and live in peace and safety almost anywhere they choose, with a very few (though highly publicised) exceptions to this new order. In short, America is demonstrating tolerance towards this sort of difference, that of race and culture, as well.

To clear up any misconceptions among those who have imbibed too much doctrinaire academic political correctness, tolerance does NOT mean never disagreeing with something, arguing against it, or challenging a view. My purpose for including this proviso is that many people who read this book will see my justified criticisms of Islam, and automatically make the pre-programmed accusation that I am being intolerant. However, I am not. I am not seeking to hinder Muslims from practicing their religion, or believing what they want, or acting as they see fit (provided they remain within the bounds of the law and human decency). I am merely engaging in that most American of activities: challenging and criticising that with which I disagree.

## Islamic Intolerance of Opposing Views

Continuing then, the question to be asked is this: Is Islam a tolerant religion? And, of course, the answer must be an emphatic NO! In fact, Islam is well characterised by a high degree of intolerance both to internal dissent and external challenge. As I said above, challenging and criticising what we disagree with is as American as apple pie and Little League ball games. It's what this country was built upon. Islam takes a diametrically opposite stance. In most countries with a Muslim majority, even "moderate" nations like Egypt or Saudi Arabia, freedom of thought and expression are severely curtailed.

Saudi Arabia, with its absolute ban on any religion besides Islam and its rigorous suppression of critics of the House of Sa'ud is a typical example of the sort of intolerance towards free thought and religious expression found in most Muslim nations. In Pakistan, protestors get bludgeoned over the head....when they're not doing the bludgeoning themselves. In Iran, dissenters from the Shi'ite Muslim theocracy are usually jailed, whipped, or executed. One need only to remember the death warrant placed on the head of Salman Rushdie for writing a book critical of Islam, *The Satanic Verses*. The very title of that book offended Muslim sensibilities by its reminder of Mohammed's penning what are called "the Satanic verses". These were verses which he supposedly wrote while under the influence of Satan, condoning that greatest of sins in Islam, *shirk*, which is when a person associates other gods with Allah. There seems to be an inherent tendency in Islam which influences its followers away from toleration of opposition. In fact, only ONE nation with a Muslim majority qualifies as having a truly democratically-elected government with freedoms protected by the rule of law, this being Turkey. And Turkey's democracy is none too stable, what with the constant tension in that nation between the government on one hand, and Islamist extremists (and the military strongmen ready to take over if the Islamists make a move) on the other. Further, Turkey's democratic system originated through the efforts of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and the Young Turks movement, who set Turkey on an overtly secular path which sought to consciously imitate the West. Despotism as seen in Libya, Syria, Sudan, and formerly in Iraq, and monarchy as seen in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Kuwait, are the norm for the Muslim world.

The simple explanations for Muslim intolerance can stem simply from the more medieval aspect of Middle Eastern culture. Islamic tradition and culture, as we will see a little later, is basically the grafting of 7th century Arabian culture onto the civilisation which falls into its grasp. Viewed in this light, it should be little surprise to us that many Islamic practices and *shari'a* laws would appear, in the very least, barbaric to Western eyes. After all, Europe did away with many of the same practices centuries ago. Likewise, any authoritarian system is not likely to endorse the acceptance or toleration of opposition. One could hardly expect dictatorships like those found in Syria to act differently than modern despots like Stalin or Hitler, or medieval despots of all nationalities.

But this does not just hold true for Middle Eastern nations. After all, even Muslims in the United States and the West who have lived here for years and have (supposedly) imbibed Western values and ideas, still often seem opposed to tolerating those they disagree with. Muslim apologists, for instance, will attempt to make the Qur'an "hands-off" as far as being a topic of discussion or debate is concerned, while at the same time attempting to subject the Bible to critical scrutiny. This sort of one-sidedness, this unwillingness to engage in a free and open discussion, is inimical to Western notions of criticism and debate, but fits right into the Muslim world's intolerance of opposition, a world in which criticising the Qur'an most often leads to death or disfigurement. The actions of Muslims are considered off-limits for criticism, even the most heinous of behaviour. This holds true even for "Westernised, moderate" Muslims. Columnist Don Feder reported that when the imam of the Hazrat-I-Abubakr Sadiq mosque in New York City denounced the World Trade Centre terror attack, half of the congregation got up and walked out<sup>1</sup>. Thus, it would seem that half of this Americanised congregation approved of the murder of over 3,000 civilian non-combatants, enough so to refuse to listen to the criticism of that murderous act from their own religious leader. It is not unusual for the authors of publications and websites critical of Islam to receive death threats and hateful *ad hominem* messages, even in the United States. Joseph Farah and others associated with online news source WorldNetDaily and its associated printed magazine Whistle Blower have received numerous death threats because of links and articles they have ran exposing the darker side of Islam. Worldnetdaily's advertisers have also been the target of a campaign of intimidation from self-identified Muslims. Likewise, Dr. Robert Morey, an evangelical Christian apologist who has written several books about Islam, has found himself to be the target of both verbal harassment and attempted physical attacks on his person, as a result of some of the ideas which he has put forth in his books which were critical of Islam. These attacks have been reported in both Canada and the United States.

## Islamic Intolerance Towards Other Religions

It should not be surprising then that a system of thought which discourages and suppresses dissent will also suppress and persecute other religions. As anyone who has been paying attention to the Middle East for the last fifty years can see, Islam is a prime persecutor of other religions, especially Christians. In many Muslim countries, even "moderate" nations like Saudi Arabia, renouncing Islam is a capital crime. Religions other than Islam are formally suppressed by the governments of most Muslim nations. For instance, in Sudan, Christians and animists in the South are enslaved and sold north by Muslim (mostly Arab) radicals, and this goes on with

the knowledge and promotion of the Sudanese government. It is little wonder that Muslim nations routinely top all the lists of human rights abusers.

Even without official government sanction, Islamic persecution of Christians is widespread all across the Middle East. Christians are routinely the target of terror campaigns in nations such as Pakistan, Indonesia, Algeria, and Iran. Often the violence results in outright murder, a recent example being the gunning down of 17 people in a Protestant congregation in Pakistan by three Islamic fanatics, on 28 October, 2001. Many other examples can be shown, such as the murder of the Gospel missionary Martin Burnham in Mindanao, the Philippines, by Abu Sayyaf, a Muslim terrorist organisation. The recent prosecution of several Pakistani Christians under anti-blasphemy laws (which carry the death sentence) also serve to illustrate Islamic intolerance and fear of religious competition. Likewise, the Copts of Egypt have undergone systematic abuse at the hands of not only radical Islamist groups in Egypt, but also the government. Islam has an endemic problem with violence, as has been demonstrated previously, which stems in large part from that religion's intolerance of competition. Islam, it would seem, fears any sort of dissent or challenge. Due to the unsaved condition of Muslims, who do not have the Spirit of God residing in their hearts and are thus lost sinners under Satan's influence, the only means they have of propagating and maintaining their religion is through the use of force and subjugation.

Islam's intolerance is spotlighted even more when one considers that nations with a Protestant Christian heritage demonstrate a diametrically opposite attitude towards religious freedom. In the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Holland, and other nations with Christian heritages, people are free to choose their religion (or lack thereof) without either government sanction or popular violence. Muslims in America, even in the wake of the September 11 attacks, have little to fear in the way of persecution or violence. Despite the intense provocation which Islam made against America with the terror attacks, there was little more than a handful of scattered reprisals against Muslims in America, mostly from individuals who were less than mentally balanced to begin with. The American government has even gone to great lengths to prevent and discourage attacks upon Arabs and Muslims. One can easily imagine how this would NOT be the case if the roles were reversed and Americans had hijacked and crashed airplanes into a few buildings in, say, Islamabad or Cairo, and killed thousands of civilians.

What must be understood, however, is that this Islamic intolerance for other religions is not a recent aberration, as even a cursory study of history would show. We must understand that the militant and violent intolerance demonstrated by orthodox Islam is not a product of Islam's exclusivist claims *per se*. Indeed, Bible-believing Christianity makes exactly the same sort of claims for itself as the way to salvation,

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” (John 14:6)

Yet, we do not see Bible-believing Christians gunning down members of other religions or bombing the houses of worship of other faiths. Instead of being merely a matter of exclusivism, Islam's often violent intolerance stems from its ingrained attitude of superiority over those who are not Muslim. Traditional Muslim teaching on the subject depicts those who refuse to accept

Islam as deficient, unintelligent, and morally bankrupt because of their refusal to acknowledge the “obvious” superiority of the Islamic *deen* (way of religion) and convert. This attitude of superiority, however, is confronted by the obvious inferiority of Muslim power and prestige in the world today. Huntington sums up the matter quite succinctly when he writes,

“The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power.”<sup>2</sup>

This position is inimical to the view which Islam idealises for itself. Islam, as the final revelation of Allah to mankind, should naturally be superior to all other systems, and should rightly exercise mastery over them all, until these can be extirpated and Islam rules as the sole *deen* on earth. Because Islam is a combined religio-political system, its claims for exclusivity will naturally cross over into the exercise of state power to enforce religious dictates, much as the popes used secular princes to enforce papal decrees during the Middle Ages. However, Muslims for the past few centuries have suffered the heartbreak of seeing their once dominant position removed by “Christian” Europeans who advanced far beyond the Islamic world in the sciences, the arts, and military power. This inferior position, coupled with the ingrained belief in their own natural and rightful superiority, has served to radicalise many Muslims towards a very violent form of Islamic traditionalism. It is intolerable to the orthodox Muslim mind that any non-Muslims should exercise any sort of superior position over them, and yet, this is exactly what has happened. It began when the various European powers started to push Islam back out of Europe and reclaim their former territories. It continued when the Europeans took advantage of the relative backwardness of Muslim lands to end the scourge of Muslim piracy in the Mediterranean and gain ascendancy over these former pirate powers. It reached its apex with the piecemeal subjugation and partition of the former Ottoman Empire amongst the various colonial powers. It still is felt today by the economically and militarily dominant position of the United States and other Western powers in the world today. In short, the Muslim ego, his sense of self-worth as it is had through his domination over the infidels, has been disappointed and confuted by the present position in which Muslim lands exist. In the space of a few centuries, the Islamic world went from being poised to literally conquer the known world, to being an *ummah* whose **combined** gross domestic production is only roughly 40% that of the United States alone.

This terrible sense of inferiority before the unbelievers is coupled with the innate fundamentalism of Islamic life and theology which has gripped the religion since the 12th century. In its early centuries, Islam was characterised, if not by religious toleration, than at least by an openness to innovative discovery and science which generally causes a civilisation to advance ahead of its rivals. Thus, the Islamic nations advanced far ahead of the petty Catholic European states, being justly renowned for their advances in fields such as optics, mathematics, chemistry, astronomy, and governmental philosophy<sup>3</sup>. However, around the 12th century, this attitude of inquiry was gradually replaced by the present attitude of anti-innovation and societal regression, in large part due to the influence of the Damascene theologian al-Taymiya (1263-1328 AD). The son of a theologian of the Hanbalite school (the strictest of the four major schools of Islamic law), al-Taymiya proved even more reactionary, and his hatred of all heretics (even Muslims who disagreed with strict orthodoxy, such as Ismailis and Shi'ites) caused him to advance an extreme position against innovation of any kind, coupled with an advocacy of a

return to the strict interpretation of the Qur'an. This sort of return to the 7th century has been, for all practical purposes, the position taught uniformly throughout Islam since al-Taymiya. Various revival movements, such as the Wahhabi movement and the Sudanese Mahdism, have served to retain this strict and unyielding interpretation of the Qur'an, with its concomitant intolerance and hatred for all non-Muslims<sup>4</sup>. For many, perhaps most, Muslims, the way of altering the inferior status in which they find themselves *vis-à-vis* the Judeo-Christian West is to return to an idealised past when the Qur'an was followed perfectly and Islam ruled. For some Muslims, this is attained by purging the Muslim world of all foreign influences interjected by the infidels, and by returning to the military advancement of Islam, the *jihad*, believed to be the will of Allah. For more Muslims, it simply means to try to advance Islam by *any* means, whether through the military, propaganda, subterfuge, or otherwise. Indeed, most Muslims are "fundamentalist" in the sense that they hold to a strict interpretation of the Qur'an. The difference between the militant and the peaceable Muslim is similar to that between the revolutionary and the democratic socialist: one is willing to use even violence to achieve the ultimate end, while the other contents him or herself with "working within the system" to realise the goal of Islamisation and bringing the world into Dar es-Salaam.

## Dhimmitude

Many apologists will defend Islam against the charge of intolerance by pointing to the "tolerance" exhibited by the Muslims during the Middle Ages. When Islamic civilisation was at its height, so the myth is spun, Islam was wonderfully tolerant and open-minded towards other religions. While it is true that during this period Islam more often than not refrained from massacring dissenters and rivals (which is often more than can be said for the European Catholicism of the day), to say that Muslims were either tolerant or open-minded is an untidy falsehood. During this era, Jews and Christians living in Muslim lands were reduced to the position of *dhimmis*. Dhimmitude entailed allowing non-Muslims to remain non-Muslim, so long as certain stringent rules were adhered to, rules which were designed to humiliate the dhimmis and to "demonstrate" the superiority of Islam over the religions of the conquered peoples. Dhimmis were not allowed to engage in any outward show of their religion, such as ringing church bells, praying or reading their Scriptures in public, or disputing about religious matters with a Muslim. They were also not allowed to build any religious buildings such as churches or synagogues, nor were they allowed to repair those already existing which wore down with age. They were most often reduced to a position of economic privation and near-slavery. Dhimmis had to wear distinctive clothing that marked them as clearly non-Muslim. Further, the distinctive clothing was often meant to humiliate the wearers. At various times, Jews and Christians would be compelled to wear badges in the shapes of apes and pigs, drawn from the Quranic description of unbelievers as these animals (Surat 2:65, 5:60, 7:166).

Coupled with this position of dhimmitude was the requirement for non-Muslims to pay the *jizyah*, the religion tax. This was a tax levied specifically upon non-Muslims, usually Christians and Jews, which was the only life-preserving alternative to outright conversion to Islam. The *jizyah* was designed to "encourage" subject populations to convert to Islam, since conversion meant being relieved of a heavy financial burden. Further, the *jizyah*, as well as other financial burdens upon dhimmi populations (such as the *kharaj*, or land tax) were traditionally supported

by Muslim theologians through appeal to various passages of the Qur'an, such as Surah 9:29, one of the most obvious passages in the Qur'an commanding Muslims to make war against non-Muslims and to force them into submission (and one which apologists for Islam today routinely say is "being taken out of context" by those who point to it as evidence of Muslim intolerance)<sup>5</sup>. Between the burdens of dhimmitude and *jizyah*, it is little wonder that Islam, which has remarkably little success making converts without coercion, came to hold the almost complete monopoly on Middle Eastern religion which we see it having today. To say that these actions, the religion tax and enforced second-class citizenry, are "tolerant" would be a gross misuse of that term for propagandistic purposes. Those who make the claim to Muslim tolerance would seem to either be ignorant of these, or else sweeping them under the rug.

In her excellent work on this subject, Bat Ye'or reproduces dozens of primary reference documents which detail the dhimmitude phenomenon firsthand. From these documents, it can easily be seen that the mythological toleration extended by the Muslims during the period of their ascendancy is complete fiction invented by modern apologists for Islam. Let us now look at a few of these firsthand accounts of Islamic "toleration".

Ibn Naqqash, a 14th century Egyptian religious teacher, recounted some of the opinions of early Muslim theologians,

"CHURCHES - It is related, according to the tradition, that the Prophet made this declaration: 'No churches are to be built in Muslim lands, and those that will have fallen into ruin shall not be repaired.' Another hadith is also quoted in his name: 'No churches under Islam.'

Umar b. al-Khattab (may Allah bless him!) commanded that every church that did not exist before the rise of Islam was to be demolished and he forbade the building of new ones. He also commanded that no cross was to be visible outside a church, otherwise it could be broken over the head of him who carried it.

Urwat b. Naj gave orders to destroy all the churches of San'a (Yemen). This is the law of the *ulama* of Islam.

Umar b. Abd al-Aziz went even further than this and gave orders to leave neither churches nor chapels standing anywhere, be they ancient or recent. It is customary, says Hasan al-Basri, to destroy the old and the new churches in any country.

Umar b. Abd al-Aziz also issued decrees prohibiting Christians to raise their voices while chanting in their churches, for these are the most distasteful hymns to the Most High. Moreover, he prohibited them from repairing those parts of their places of worship which fell into ruin. Concerning the latter point there are two opinions. If they resurface them on the outside, says al-Istakhari, then they must be prevented from doing so, but if they merely restore the inside, the portion that is on their side, then this can be tolerated. However, Allah is all-knowing."<sup>6</sup>

Al-Marrakushi, a Muslim historian of the Almohad reign in North Africa, recounts the following in his history,



“Toward the end of his reign, Abu Yusuf ordered the Jewish inhabitants of the Maghreb to make themselves conspicuous among the rest of the population by assuming a special attire consisting of dark blue garments, the sleeves of which were so wide as to reach to their feet and - instead of a turban - to hang over the ears a cap whose form was so ill-conceived as to be easily mistaken for a pack-saddle. This apparel became the costume of all the Jews of the Maghreb and remained obligatory until the end of the prince’s reign and the beginning of that of his son Abu Abd Allah [Abu Muhammed Abd Allah al-Adil, the Just, 1224-1227]. The latter made a concession only after appeals of all kinds had been made by the Jews, who had entreated all those whom they thought might be helpful to intercede on their behalf. Abu Abd Allah obliged them to wear yellow garments and turbans, the very costume they still wear in the present year 612 [1224]. Abu Yusuf’s misgivings as to the sincerity of their conversion to Islam prompted him to take this measure and impose upon them a specific dress. ‘If I were sure,’ said he, ‘that they had really become Muslims, I would let them assimilate through marriage and other means; on the other hand, had I evidence that they had remained infidels I would have them massacred, reduce their children to slavery and confiscate their belongings for the benefit of the believers.’”<sup>7</sup>

A particularly sad example of the treatment of the Jews in Morocco during the 17th century is found in Halevy’s archives, detailing in particular the Muslim contempt for Jewish womanhood,

“Needless to say it is primarily the working classes and the petty shopkeepers who are the most exposed to the arbitrary measures of the authorities. The Jewish craftsman who brings his work to the Moroccan official is paid with blows of a staff if he is not satisfied with half the price originally agreed upon. The heaviest tasks are continuously imposed upon the working population, women and children not excepted. While roaming through the bazaar in the Arab quarter, I saw long lines of young Jewish girls, bareheaded and barefooted, working in the manufacture of military uniforms, earning but 10 or 15 centimes per day. But the bodily sufferings are nothing compared to the moral vexations to which these sensitive and modest creatures are constantly exposed. In a country where no decent woman should be seen in the street without a veil, these Jewish women and girls are obliged to work unveiled in the middle of the bazaar and thereby exhibit themselves to the impudent stares of the Arab crowds.

“A Muslim himself admitted to me that this humiliating exposure has no other purpose than to force these Jewish women to convert as the only means of escaping from such intolerable treatment. Indeed, must not their spirit be exceptionally noble in order to withstand such a life of misery and untold suffering, when conversion can offer them the most precious advantages, freedom, wealth, and honors?

“The petty shopkeepers in the Mellah are not treated any better, for retail transactions are often the cause of arguments between Arabs and Jews, from which the former are certain in advance to triumph. A Muslim who buys some commodity from a Jewish shop comes back some hours later accusing the vendor of having cheated him on the weight or quantity. Since, on the one hand, the testimony of a Jew is worthless and, on the other hand, it is impossible to find Arab witnesses in the Mellah, the Muslim’s word is taken and the ghetto overseer (*muhtasib*) sees no harm in punishing the presumed offender with a round of thrashes from his staff, which leaves him unconscious on the ground or maimed for the rest of his life. With my own eyes I saw a great number of these victims, mostly butchers, woefully dragging themselves along the ground,

unable to walk upright, their backs horribly hacked to pieces and looking like one gaping wound. Black decayed flesh hung at their ankles and their feet, crooked and swollen by the violent blows, ended in a hideous blue blister which hid the atrocious remains of toenails that had been smashed by the staff. It was hideous and heartbreaking to see, and yet these wounds were already ten or fifteen days old. What had the state of these wretched people been on the day when this treatment had been inflicted upon them?

“Sometimes the cruelest punishments are meted out on these poor Jews without the slightest pretext, if only to remind them that they have masters who can do what they want with them. The main idea of the Moroccan authorities is that the Jew must not undertake nor initiate a commercial transaction without their mediation, the aim of which obviously is to receive a handsome commission. Consequently, their anger knows no bounds when such an opportunity escapes their greediness.”<sup>8</sup>

Many, many more examples, and worse, could be recounted. Indeed, from first-hand accounts of the treatment of Jews and Christians in Muslim lands throughout most of the history of Islam, a picture is painted far different from our understanding of toleration. The history of Muslim dealings with the dhimmis is one of oppression, random massacres, avaricious greed and plunder, extortion under the threat of persecution, rape, systematic degradation, and slavery.

Far from being aberrations from “true” Islam, this sort of treatment of subject populations has been theologically sustained since the very beginning of Islam. The reason for this is found in the peculiar Muslim triumphalism inherent in Islamic theology. Islam teaches that it is the final revelation of Allah to mankind, which in and of itself is not superficially atypical from other religions. However, Islam also teaches that, since Islam is the final revelation, that those who refuse to accept Islam are obviously morally and intellectually inferior, and are thus should be subject to the Islamic *ummah*. This subjection is achieved through the *dhimma* treaty, whereby conquered peoples who refuse to convert to Islam are coerced into agreeing to the dhimmi conditions detailed above. For a dhimmi to attempt to rise above these conditions, even centuries after they were originally imposed, is considered a violation of the “treaty”, and thus grounds for punishment. Further, this treaty of *dhimma* is considered to be conditional, subject to the disposition of Muslim rulers. Hence, the dhimmi populations could not and cannot feel secure even in the supposed toleration extended by Muslim rulers, as this toleration may be revoked at any time. Further, the *dhimma* treaty provided no practical protection against the Muslim masses in various countries who would periodically engage in popular massacres of Jews and Christians, if it were perceived by them that the dhimmis were in any way being less than absolutely submissive to the *ummah*.

Much is said today of the “humiliation” and the “anger” which are felt by the “Arab street”. What we must understand, however, is that this particular brand of humiliation felt by the Muslims today results from their inability to exert humiliation upon others. It was noted above that orthodox Islam demands the ascendancy of Islam over all other systems and religions. This includes retaining indefinitely the mastery over the dhimmis who live in lands which have, at some point or another, been conquered by Islam. Essentially, Islam demands the right to continue to exercise what it considers to be its natural mastery over these subject populations. Further, Islam must (it is felt) be above the non-Muslim religions of the world, whether

Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, or other. For non-Muslims to exercise dominion over Muslims, and for them to be able to successfully resist Islamisation, is intolerable to the more militant wings of Islam. Hence, the “humiliation” and “anger” which the Muslims feel when presented with a “Great Satan” who will not bend to the Muslim will, but instead acts in ways which are often inconsistent with the desires of Muslims.

The focal point of this perceived Muslim humiliation is the nation of Israel. As has been and will be shown elsewhere, anti-Semitism has been historically endemic in Islam, even an early hadith records that, in the day of judgement, even the trees will cry out to the Muslims to tattle on Jews who hide behind them from extermination by the Muslims<sup>9</sup>. Further, the Jews have been, since the conquests of the Arab Empire, a subject dhimmi people, thus by “treaty” destined for subordinate status in perpetuity. The nation of Israel, as a free Jewish state on soil once owned by the *ummah* is a grave affront to the sensibilities of nearly all Muslims. Israel represents a reversal for Islam which cannot be tolerated, hence the five wars which the Arab neighbours of Israel have fought to try and annihilate her, and the current intifada. The dhimma, which existed for the purpose of securing the dominance of the invading Muslims over a conquered region, has been broken, and thus the Jews of Israel, as rebels against the dhimma, are considered by orthodox Islamic law to be fair game for any and all retaliations. Hence, the Muslim obsession with the tiny nation of Israel, so often wondered at by Westerners, lies in the fact that Israel represents the worst incursion of dhimmi freedom to ever intrude itself into the *ummah*.

## Racism in Islam

Islam is also a religion which promotes racism. Muslim anti-Semitism is well known. Islam has essentially fought five wars seeking to annihilate the nation of Israel, and failed five times. Muslim leaders, both in the Middle East and in the West, routinely denounce Jews and “Zionists”, and are quite known for making fantastical claims against Jews. For instance, in an interview given to an Arab newspaper just days after the September 11 attacks, the Egyptian imam Sheik Muhammad Gemeaha made claims that Jewish doctors in New York were poisoning Muslim babies, and that the Jews and Israel were responsible for the World Trade Centre terrorism<sup>10</sup>. What is even more amazing than the claims made is that millions of Muslims all across the world BELIEVE these, without evidence and without thinking, simply because they are made against Jews and Israel. The view that the Jews blew up the World Trade Centre is even the official position of the Syrian government. The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a fraudulent document purporting to be a transcript of a secret meeting of Jewish world leaders in which they lay out their plans for world conquest through subterfuge, remains an ideological force in the Muslim world, giving many a pretended justification for Jew-hatred. Indeed, Egyptian state television ran a multi-part series promoting the *Protocols* in 2003. When the Israelis captured and tried Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in 1961, the Saudi Arabian press hailed Eichmann as a “martyr who bestowed a true blessing on humanity”, and who had “the honour of killing six million Jews”. Yet, while celebrating the extermination of Jews during World War II, Holocaust denial at the same time remains vigorously in vogue in Arab and Muslim circles. It is therefore not surprising that the only groups in America giving appreciable support to Osama bin Laden and Muslim terrorists in the wake of the September 11 attacks (aside from various reflexively anti-American leftists and Americanised Muslims themselves)

are the racist hate groups such as Aryan Nations and others like it. This makes sense as these groups share with much of Islam a rabid hatred for Jewish people.

Indeed, radical Islam has a sordid history of consorting with the Nazis, as well. In the two decades preceding the war, the Muslim Brotherhood, a *jihad* organisation founded in Egypt by Hassan al-Banna, forged the anti-Semitic ideological underpinnings which eventually led this organisation to alliance with the Nazis. Going beyond the traditional disdain for Jews (which was applied also to the local Christians as well), the Brotherhood made an active point of opposing the sometime Zionist-supportive policies of the British government, and violently opposed the immigration of Jews back to the Holy Land. This particular form of anti-Semitism was coupled with the idealisation by al-Banna of the death of martyrdom<sup>11</sup>.

Closely allied with the Brotherhood was the grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husseini, the highest Muslim religious authority in Palestine. The Mufti was almost single-handedly responsible for the radical turn which Palestinian Arabs took towards militant Islam and towards the vociferous anti-Semitism expounded by the Brotherhood. He instigated the “Arab Revolt” of 1936, in which his supporters ruthlessly put down rival (and more moderate) Arab factions as well as the minority Christian populations, instituting strict *shari’a* among the Palestinian Muslims on pain of death. This anti-Semitism, though, was not wholly native. As early as 1933, the Mufti had sought out the support of the Nazi regime in Germany. However, the only support he received was ideological, until 1937, when the Islamist movement began to receive generous gifts of funding and weapons from the Nazis, a factor which the Mufti himself acknowledged to be a determinative factor in his later “success”<sup>12</sup>. The Mufti openly collaborated with the Nazis throughout the war, met with high Nazi officials on several occasions during the war, and was known to be a close friend of Heinrich Himmler. After the destruction of the Nazi state, he fled to Egypt, where he was given shelter within the Brotherhood, and even made al-Banna’s personal representative and the supervisor over the Brotherhood’s activities in Palestine. This pro-Nazi attitude remains as vociferous in some parts of the Muslim world today as it did in those dark decades. As Bernard Lewis has noted, in many places, a pro-Nazi past was a mark of recognition, not shame<sup>13</sup>. Even today, *Mein Kampf* remains one of the best-selling works in many Muslim countries.

However, anti-Semitism is not the only aspect of Arab/Muslim racism. Islam carries in it, subconsciously or no, a grain of racism against blacks as well. Surah 3:106-107 indicates that on the day of judgment before Allah, those with white faces will receive Allah’s mercy, while those with black faces will receive damnation.

“On the Day when some faces will be white, and some faces will be black: To those whose faces will be black, will be said: “Did ye reject Faith after accepting it? Taste then the penalty for rejecting Faith.” But those whose faces will be white,- they will be in Allah’s mercy: therein to dwell.”

Muslim apologists will claim that these colour references are to those whose faces will be “lit up with” white and “in the gloom of” black, but the literal reading of the Arabic does not support this revision. Indeed, given the historic treatment which the Arab Muslims have meted out to darker-skinned peoples, especially black Africans, the racial interpretation of these ayat is quite

understandable. Further, al-Qayrawani (d. 966 AD), a noted early Muslim jurist of the Maliki school, stated that it is permissible (though not mandated) to kill a white non-Arab enemy who is taken prisoner<sup>14</sup>. This at least implies that this was mandated, or at least was not viewed to be as offensive, for non-white non-Arab prisoners. Further, in the work of Abu Yusuf (d. 798 AD), a comprehensive gradation is given of the treatment to be meted out to conquered peoples on the basis not only of the status of their religion, but also of their race<sup>15</sup>. He makes the point of saying that there were certain races with whom the Arabs would not mingle or marry, even where this separation is **not** enforced on religious grounds.

In many ways, Islam itself is viewed as a mark of Arab superiority over the other peoples of the world, even other Islamic groups. This prejudice has been prevalent even in the modern world, and found much currency in the Arab nationalist movement beginning in the last century. Nationalist scholar al-Bazzaz stated,

“Islam, although it is a universal religion suitable for all peoples and has in fact been disseminated among many nations and races, is undoubtedly a religion revealed first to the Arabs themselves, In this sense, it is their own special religion. The Prophet is from them, the Koran is in their language; Islam retained many of their previous customs, adopting and polishing the best of them....These gracious verses and many others, both Meccan and Medinese, confirm that Islam is the religion of the Arabs before being a universal religion. This does not contradict other verses, such as verse 107 of surat al-Anbiya (XXI): ‘We have sent thee only in mercy to mankind,’ because it is proved historically that the sending of the Prophet to the Arabs revived the Arab nation in its entirety and resurrected it. This resurrection was, at the time, beneficial to all the inhabited universe. The Arabs were the propagators of Islam and the saviors of the world from the reigning oppression and from the absolute ignorance which was then supreme; they were, as Gustave lebon said, the most merciful conquerors that the world has known.”<sup>16</sup>

Hence, the Arabs were the ones chosen to bring the “benefit” of Islam to the ignorant masses of the world, much the same as the 19th century European man may have felt it his imperative to bring civilisation to the “savages”. Islam yet remained, however, first and foremost an institution of Arab superiority even despite the brotherhood of non-Arab Muslims, the Arabs being a sort of “first among equals”. The primacy of the Arabs in Islamic matters has been reiterated by al-Kawakibi, who also injects a certain amount of racial overtone into his exaltation of the Arab people,

“The peninsula is the place where the light of Islam originated. It contains the exalted Kaaba. In it is found the Prophet’s Mosque and the holy ground of his house, pulpit, and grave.....Of all countries it is most free of racial, religious, or sectarian intermixture.....The habit of religion has become ingrained in them because religion is more compatible with their social customs than with those of others....Of all Muslims, the peninsula Arabs are the best able to bear hardships in order to attain their aims, and to undertake travel and residence abroad because they have not succumbed to the servile habits of luxury. The peninsula Arabs preserve better than all other peoples their race and customs; for though they mingle with others they do not mix with them...The language of the Arabs is the language common to all the Muslims, who number 300 million souls...The Arabs are of all nations the most suitable to be an authority in religion and an



example to the Muslims; the other nations have followed their guidance at the start and will not refuse to follow them now.”<sup>17</sup>

The Arabs, in the resurgent nationalism just as in the days when they first attained to empire, are the vanguard of the Islamic movement, the elite cadre about whom Islam rightly revolves, who have kept themselves most pure and are most fit to guide the other Muslim peoples in the right way. Unfortunately, as with any attitude like this, no matter how benevolent it purports to be, the principle can easily cross over into more malevolent arenas of racial and cultural superiority. These attitudes are often demonstrated in a practical way in Arab Muslim attitudes towards non-Arabic Muslims, especially those of South Asia. Muslims in India, whose skins are generally darker than those of Arabs from the Middle East, are considered to be “second-class” Muslims, as I have been told by several Indians with whom I have been acquainted over the years. Muslims of the Middle East often still regard black people as slaves <sup>18</sup>. Notice that phrase, “STILL regard”. Muslim Arabs were the reason the black African slave trade ever was started in the first place, because they provided a market for African tribes to sell captured prisoners of war as slaves. This began centuries before Europeans became involved in the trade. It is estimated that 9.3 million black Africans were taken across the Sahara desert to serve as slaves in the Muslim Empire<sup>19</sup>. Of these many died from exhaustion and thirst in the long trek to Mediterranean coast, those who could not make the trip on their two feet often were simply beheaded on the spot so that they would not hold up the caravan. This equals in volume, both living and dead, the Trans-Atlantic slave trade with which Muslims so often like to chastise the West. The slaves being taken today in Sudan by Arab Muslims are black Africans as well, mostly from the Christian and animist Nilotic tribes of the South, such as the Dinka peoples. Mohammed himself kept black people as slaves <sup>20</sup>, and on several occasions referred to Africans as “raisin-heads” <sup>21</sup> or “pug-nosed slaves”<sup>22</sup>. Even today, a common term used in Saudi Arabia for “black” is the term *abd*, the word for a servant or slave.

## Islamic Imperialism

One of the most common complaints made in the Muslim world is that of American or Western “imperialism”. The pervasiveness of American culture, attitudes, and ideas has allowed our way of life to penetrate even behind the Iron Crescent. Cell phones, McDonalds, and a host of other Western innovations are now commonplace in cities all across the Middle East, and it is even reported that the most popular American television show in many Muslim countries is *Baywatch*. But with this technology and culture have come other influences alien to traditional Muslim civilisation, influences such as women’s rights, religious and political freedom, and Western-style secularism. These influences often lead to charges of “imperialism” from traditionalist Muslim religious leaders, because they threaten to alter the way of life in many nations. This phenomenon, coupled with the disparity of wealth between the West and the Muslim world, makes it very easy and tempting for leaders in Muslim nations to incite and play upon envy, fear, and anger among their populations at large. As a result, “imperialism” has grown to become a dominant lens through which the Muslim world views its relationship with the West. Every woe is to be blamed on the infidel Westerners (especially the Americans) because they are richer, and they support Israel, and they are Christian (supposedly), etc. etc. *ad nauseum*.

But what about Muslim imperialism? While Western imperialism in the Middle East is now pretty much a figment of the imaginations of mullahs living a hundred years in the past, Muslim imperialism still thrives today, just as it has since Islam's inception. As was seen earlier, Islam was and is a religion spread primarily by the sword. The world according to Islam is divided into two regions: Dar es-Salaam and Dar al-Harb, the house of peace and submission to Islam, and the house of war, respectively. Islam is a religion and a culture built upon imperialism and expansionism.

Islamic culture is basically the imposition of 7th century Arabian culture onto a whole host of conquered peoples all across the Middle East and elsewhere. Looking across the Muslim world, one finds nations and ethnicities which did NOT adopt Islam of their own volition, but instead did so because of conquest and force. The Persians were not originally a Muslim people, but were conquered by Islam. Neither were the Berbers, Kurds, Azerbaijanis, Syrians, or Black Africans who were forcibly converted. In fact, the Arabs were not originally Muslims, of course, until the first Arab conquerors and their successors spread Islam to them by the sword. Hence, the religion of nearly a billion people in the world was brought to their ancestors by the force of arms. Further, as was noted earlier, the laws of the *shari'a* are little more than transplantation of various Arabian customs and traditions dating from the time of the Arab takeovers of Syro-Palestine and Persia, coupled with the indigenous (and still barbaric by modern standards) laws present in the Hellenistic East at the time of the Arab Empire's rise. The veil, the burkha, and other facial coverings for women stem from this Arabian society. So do the Islamic attitudes toward women which virtually require women to be accompanied by male relatives when in public (common in many Middle Eastern countries), prevent them from driving (Saudi Arabia and others), and keep them from receiving an equal share of inheritance (Quranic law, but comes from Arab culture in the 7th century). The execution of laws and punishment of criminals is also distinctly Arabian in methodology. The cutting off of hands for theft, execution for many seemingly minor crimes, etc. stem from the harsh life of desert nomads where force had to prevail to keep the rowdier elements in line and to preserve individual property.

The advancement of Islamic imperialism led to the invasions of Europe by the Moors, and later the Turks. India also suffered the brunt of Muslim invasions from the west, and was controlled by Muslim Moghuls for several centuries, a fact for which many Indians to this day are STILL bitter. Islam reached to the Russian steppes at the height of its expansion before being driven back by the Slavs. The Muslim enclaves in Bosnia and Albania are reminders to this day of Muslim Turkish imperialism in the Balkans, these being Slavic Europeans who converted to Islam because of persecution, force, and the persuasion of being free from paying the religion tax imposed on non-Muslims. In terms of brutality and outright violence, Islamic imperialism ranks right up there with the Spanish conquest of the Americas and the Japanese conquest of China and Korea in the 20th century.

This imperialism is still going on today. Islam is still trying to conquer new territory and bring it into Dar es-Salaam, whether by sword or by money. Muslim radicals regularly terror bomb targets in Indian Kashmir in an effort to force the Indians out and unite that region with Pakistan. Muslims in Nigeria are imposing *shari'a* law in many northern states in that country, in violation of Nigerian law, and impose this on the many non-Muslims in those states. Muslim fanatics are operating a guerilla war in the Philippines, with the stated aim of setting up a Muslim state in

Mindanao. Monetary bounties are offered to people in South Africa for conversions to Islam. Even in the West, Muslim leaders have at various times stated their aim of bringing Europe and America into the fold of Dar es-Salaam, and much Muslim literature emphasises the eventual conquest of the West (and the rest of the world) for Islam. An example is the prediction by Maududi,

“The powers that are today aligned with the anti-Islam camp will break away one by one and merge in the camp of Islam. And the time will come when communism will be under stress for its survival in Moscow itself; and capitalist democracy will be in a desperate plight to defend itself in Washington and New York even. Materialistic atheism will find its position untenable even in the universities of London and Paris. Racialism and Nationalism will find no devotees even among the Brahmins and the Germans. And the present epoch will be commemorated in history as an eye-wash that the adherents of such a universal and world-conquering power as Islam had been reduced to the folly of trembling in the face of sticks and ropes when they held the staff of Moses (the Divine Wand) under their arm.”<sup>23</sup>

Daniel Pipes, a noted expert in the areas of Middle Eastern politics, culture, and the Islamic religion, has written recently on this topic, giving numerous examples of how even “moderate” Islamic groups in America, such as the various Muslim Student Associations and the American Muslim Council, identify with the ultimate goal of “Islamising” the United States of America.<sup>24</sup> He discusses the various ways which Muslims in America are often expected to follow in reaching this goal, non-violently due to the extremely small percentage of the American population which Muslims currently make up. These include encouraging immigration to the United States from Muslim nations, encouraging acceptance of and the spreading of information about Islamic practices and religion, and silencing dissenters against Islam through legal action. All are becoming, disturbingly, more commonplace in America.

### **Islam Uber Alles by Any Means Necessary**

Part and parcel with this are the many inflated claims made concerning the number of Muslims residing in Western nations. For years, it has been an article of faith among American Muslim leaders that Islam had over 7 million followers in the United States. This large number is designed to give Muslims additional clout with American political and cultural leaders. However, this number is vastly over-inflated. An article in the New York Post reported that two prominent scientific polling groups, using data from recent polls, each report numbers around 1.8 million<sup>25</sup>. The same article also reveals that the American Muslim Council put pressure on researcher Fareed Nu'man to grossly inflate the figure for the Muslim population in a poll he was taking for them, and that Nu'man was fired when he refused to do so.

Related to these inflated population figures are the claims which Islam makes to ever-accelerating conversions of Westerners to the religion. However, these numbers are also exaggerated, and carry little real validity. The majority of white Western converts usually become disenchanted with Islam; because of the cool reception they receive from “born Muslims”, the lack of true piety they observe in Muslim immigrants to the West, and family pressure against Islam; and revert back to their birth religions<sup>26</sup>. Also, there appears to be a



systematic attempt at deception on the part of many Muslims through the manufacture of “conversion stories” designed to influence people towards Islam. This author formerly was a member of an Islamic e-mail message group based in Egypt which regularly sent out stories of this type. Invariably, the individual who had “converted” would have a stereotypically Anglo-Saxon name, claim to be an American (or, less commonly, a Canadian, Englishman, or Australian), yet would appear to have almost no skills in the English language. The letters gave all the appearance of having been written by someone with no command of English whatsoever; grammar, punctuation, verb conjugations, adverbs; all used wrongly. One can easily surmise that either all the illiterates of the Western world were converting to Islam, or else the letters were being faked by zealous (but careless) Middle Easterners.

These are examples of a practice known as *taqiyya*, which essentially means to lie for the sake of Islam. The intention is to deceive unbelievers about Islam, for the explicit purpose of assuaging doubts and concerns about Islam, and encouraging conversion. *Taqiyya* underlies the whole gamut of Muslim propaganda which is disseminated in the West, from the claim that Islam promotes equal rights for women, to the attempts at inflating the perceived number of Muslims. All are designed to draw people to Islam, by hook or by crook. The example given before of the Durham imam who went so far as to claim that he would be compelled by his religion to prevent a vandal from destroying the property of a church or synagogue is a typical example of *taqiyya*. It was said in a public forum for the express purpose of giving an appearance to the Islamic religion which does not reflect reality. Certainly, as has been seen, the historical attitudes of Muslims toward churches and synagogues has NOT been to protect them from vandalism, just the opposite is in fact the case. But, the lie must be told in the public forum so as to present Islam in a positive and tolerant light which will appeal to Westerners, which will cause them to believe that the image of Islam as an intolerant and violent religion are just myths created by Islam’s enemies to defame the True Faith.

This sort of sanctified dishonesty is also justified in the minds of many Muslims on the basis that everyone else who opposes Islam is lying. For many Muslims, it is absolutely inconceivable that anyone could ever reject Islam on logical or rational grounds, therefore to claim to do so indicates a failing in intelligence or morality on the part of the infidel. Schuon quite insightfully illuminates us to the attitude of the Muslim mind,

“The intellectual - and thereby the rational - foundation of Islam results in the average Muslim having a curious tendency to believe that non-Muslims either know that Islam is the truth and reject it out of pure obstinacy, or else are simply ignorant of it and can be converted by elementary explanations; that anyone should be able to oppose Islam with a good conscience quite exceeds the Muslim’s imagination, precisely because Islam coincides in his mind with the irresistible logic of things.”<sup>27</sup>

This insight elucidates many things which those who deal with Muslims on a regular basis can readily observe. It explains why Muslim apologetic defense of Islam is so often very elementary, even childish, in its presentation, and often quickly breaks down into name-calling against the infidel who has refuted Islamic arguments. It enlightens us as to why Muslims will loudly trumpet the “logic” and “rationality” of Islam while simultaneously defending their faith with circular reasoning and other errors of logic. This is why Muslims can, without any apparent

irony, claim that Islam is a “religion of peace”, even when the testimony of both history and current events bellows the opposite. For most Muslims, the idea that an infidel could reject Islam **because** of a sincere concern for knowing the truth is absolutely inconceivable. Hence, the infidel must be lying when he or she present facts and arguments against Islam, and the infidel must be an especially tricky liar when the facts and arguments cannot be answered by the Muslim. Hence, the resort to *taqiyya* to turn aside infidel lies so that the logic of truth, *a priori* defined as anything Islamic, will stand firm.

*Taqiyya* goes beyond mere lying for propaganda purposes. The word comes from a root meaning “to guard against, to keep (oneself)”. It thus also includes dissimulation by the Muslim to give the appearance of not being religious, so as not to arouse suspicion. In this vein, a Muslim, if necessary, may eat pork, drink alcohol, and even verbally deny the Islamic faith, as long as he does not “mean it in his heart”. If the end result of the lie is perceived by the Muslim to be good for Islam or useful to bringing someone to “submission” to Allah, then the lie can be sanctioned through *taqiyya*. As al-Tabbarah writes,

“Lying is not always bad, to be sure; there are times when telling a lie is more profitable and better for the general welfare, and for the settlement of conciliation among people, than telling the truth. To this effect, the Prophet says: ‘He is not a false person who (through lies) settles conciliation among people, supports good or says what is good.’<sup>28</sup>

The *taqiyya* concept is also found in the Qur’an,

“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. But Allah cautions you (To remember) Himself; for the final goal is to Allah.” (Surah 3:28)

Here, the Muslims are warned against taking unbelievers as friends, except if it will be beneficial to the Muslims as a way of defending Islam against its perceived enemies or preventing loss or danger from coming upon the Muslim because of his faith. In other words, the end justifies the means. If a Muslim must give the outward appearance of not being a Muslim, or must go against the general principle of not befriending infidels, then this is acceptable under the *taqiyya* doctrine. Keep in mind also that what is defined as “good” by the serious Muslim will be anything that aids the spread and eventual triumph of Islam over competing religions and ideologies. As such, this would tend to encourage infiltration of non-Muslim countries and institutions by Muslims who might pretend to support the organisations they join, but who are really working to undermine these for the greater goal of establishing Islam as supreme. Obvious recent examples of this sort of activity would be the misuse of their positions and access to information by Muslim members of America’s armed forces, several of whom have been caught and arrested while attempting to pass information along to al-Qaeda and other militant Islamic terrorist organisations.

Perhaps related to its false presentation of itself is the Islamic tendency towards discouraging open inquiry about itself, by which is meant inquiry that is not shepherded by some sort of Muslim religious authority or a Muslim already well-versed in Islamic dogma. This is most

plainly seen in the Islamic teaching that the Qur'an cannot be translated out of Arabic. Per strict Islamic traditional teaching, when the Qur'an is translated into some other language, it instantly ceases to be the true Qur'an, becoming instead a document which has had the admixture of man's thoughts and words interjected into it (presumably as a result of the translation process). Only the Qur'an in Arabic, according to Islam, is the true word of Allah. As a result, there are millions of Muslims all over the world who do not know Arabic, and who, when they respond to the muezzin call and hear the Qur'an chanted in Arabic, have not the slightest idea what is really being said. These people have to rely upon an imam or other religious leader to tell them what the Qur'an says, and what it means. Through this means, Islam maintains and enforces the submission of millions of non-Arab Muslims who have to rely upon the Arabic-speakers for knowledge of what their religion teaches and what their holy book says. Because of this teaching, Islam can be said to take on a role as a knowledge control cult much like the Jehovah's Witnesses (who are "encouraged" to read only what the Watchtower Society publishes) or other cults where independent examination of the religion's doctrines are discouraged or prohibited.

This sort of attitude is exactly what is presented in the Muslim traditions, too. In the Qur'an, we find that Muslims are encouraged not to ask hard questions about their own religion, and the reason is because they might lose their faith in Islam if they do,

"O ye who believe! 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."  
(Surah 5:102-103)

This discouragement to open questioning is also seen in the ahadith, one of which records that Mohammed was asked about some matters which he did not want to have to answer, and got so angry when the questioner persisted that he grew enraged, red in the face<sup>29</sup>. Other statements in the ahadith also record Mohammed's adverse reaction to being challenged on the things he taught<sup>30</sup>. Maududi, one of the most prominent theologians of Islam in the modern age, likewise encourages Muslims to leave off asking the difficult to answer questions about their faith<sup>31</sup>. The tendency against open questioning and willingness to examine the beliefs of Islam suggests to us that Islam is not really interested in people investigating Islam for the truth's sake (despite what many a Muslim making *dawah* might say). Rather, it tells us that Islam seeks to suppress its internal inconsistencies and embarrassing teachings, things which might cause the Muslim to doubt his faith and even apostasise if he were to dwell on them.

The conclusion which all the evidence gives to us is that Islam cannot be considered a religion or way of life which is in any wise tolerant of dissent or disagreement. Thus, Islam cannot rightly be called "tolerant". Instead, we see an aggressive, imperialistic power bent on supplanting all competitors, and which gives all appearance of being uninterested in peaceful coexistence.

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## End Notes

(1) - *Insight Magazine*, Vol. 17, No. 41, Nov. 5, 2001, p.43

- (2) - S.P. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, p.217
- (3) - Indeed, a number of common terms in English beginning with the prefix *al* belie their Islamic origin, such as algebra and alkaline, as well as the names of numerous stars such as Aldebaran, Algeiba, Alnasl, and Alnair, this not including the many other stars with Arabic names which do not contain this prefix.
- (4) - For a most incisive discussion on this turn of events in the 12th century, and what its ramifications are for Islam in the present day, see chapters 6 and 7 of F. Hoveyda, *The Broken Crescent: The Threat of Militant Islamic Fundamentalism*
- (5) - see, e.g. al-Mawardi, *Al-ahkam as sultaniyya*, trans. E. Fagnan, *Les Statuts Gouvernementaux*, pp. 299-300; in B. Ye'or, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians Under Islam*, p. 175.; also Ibn an-Naqqash, *Fatwa concerning the condition of the dhimmis and particularly of the Christians en Muslim lands, since the establishment of Islam, until the middle of the 8th century after the Hegira*, vol. 18, pp. 515, trans. Belin, *Journal Asiatique*, Vol. 18 (1851) and Vol. 19 (1852); in B. Ye'or, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians Under Islam*, p. 185.
- (6) - Ibn an-Naqqash, *Fatwa concerning the condition of the dhimmis and particularly of the Christians en Muslim lands, since the establishment of Islam, until the middle of the 8th century after the Hegira*, vol. 18, pp. 513-514, trans. Belin, *Journal Asiatique*, Vol. 18 (1851) and Vol. 19 (1852); in B. Ye'or, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians Under Islam*, pp. 184-185
- (7) - al-Marrakushi, *Al-mu'jib fi talkhis akhbar al-maghrib*, trans. E. Fagnan *Histoire des Almohades*, pp. 264-265; in B. Ye'or, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians Under Islam*, p. 189
- (8) - J. Halévy in Bulletin, Alliance Israelite Universelle: 52-54; in B. Ye'or, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians Under Islam*, pp. 314-315
- (9) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 4, Bk. 52, no. 177
- (10) - <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/23/nyregion/23IMAM.html?pagewanted=print>
- (11) - see A.A.M. el-Awaisi, *The Muslim Brothers and the Palestine Question, 1928-1947*, p. 125
- (12) - K. Gensicke, *The Mufti of Jerusalem Amin al-Husseini, and the National Socialists*, p. 234
- (13) - B. Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites*, p. 160
- (14) - Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani, *La Risala: Epitre sur les elements du dogme et de la loi de l'Islam selon le rite malakite*, trans. ed. L. Bercher, p. 163
- (15) - Ya'qub Abu Yusuf, *Kitab al-Kharadi*, trans. E. Fagnan, pp. 103-104
- (16) - Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz, "Islam and Arab Nationalism", *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*, ed. S.G. Haim, pp. 176-177
- (17) - Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, "The Excellences of the Arabs", *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*, ed. S.G. Haim, pp. 78-80
- (18) - V. and D. Khalil, "When Christians Meet Muslims", *Christian Herald*, July/August 1988, p.44

- (19) - K.P. Moseley, "Caravel and Caravan: West Africa and the World-Economies, ca. 900–1900 AD", *Review: A Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems and Civilizations*, Vol. XV (1992), p. 534
- (20) - *Sahih al-Bukhari* vol. 6, no. 435
- (21) - *Sahih al-Bukhari* vol. 1, no. 622; vol. 9, no. 256
- (22) - *Sahih Muslim*, Vol. 9, pp. 46-47
- (23) - S. Abul Ala Maududi, *The Evidence of Truth*, p. 23
- (24) - D. Pipes, [The Danger Within: Militant Islam in America](#)
- (25) - New York Post, Oct. 29, 2001
- (26) - D. Pipes, book review of "The Sun is Rising in the West", in *Middle East Quarterly*, December 2000.
- (27) - F. Schoun, *Stations of Wisdom*, p. 64, note #1
- (28) - A. al-Tabbarah, *The Spirit of Islam*, p.247
- (29) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. I, no. 92
- (30) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. II, no. 555, and Vol. III, no. 591
- (31) - see S. Abul 'Ala Maududi, *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, Vol. III, pp. 76-77

## ***Myth #9 Women are Respected and Equal in Islam***

When Americans and other Westerners think of Islam and the Middle East, perhaps one of the first images that comes to mind is that of Muslim women, swaddled in thick robes, their faces covered. Islam is generally associated with disrespect for the rights, and even the personhood, of women. While women in the Western world, and indeed in many non-Western areas such as India, Japan, Korea, and others, have seen their lot in life improved and their rights as human beings recognised, this sort of liberalisation is not usually associated with the Muslim world. Is this a fair association? Is there any basis for saying that Islam degrades women, that this disrespect is not just an aberration, but is ingrained within the Muslim religion? The answer to these questions, as ought to be seen by any clear-minded observer, is YES.

### **Muslim Women in the West - The Whitewash**

Muslim women in the United States and other Western nations often will allow themselves to be used to whitewash Islam's image as it is presented to the public at-large. Typically, these women, living in the United States and other Western nations, operate under the banner of "reaffirming" the rights which women have "traditionally" enjoyed in Islam. Much is made of the affirmation the right for women to own property and receive inheritance, primarily. Indeed, in the light of the way in which women were treated in pre-Islamic Arabia, the granting of the right to own property and to inherit from a dead relative **is** a step forward, considering women were denied even these in the pre-Islamic tribal system.

However, it should be noted that the Muslim women who seek to promote Islam as a tolerant and progressive force for women's rights often draw less than honest conclusions from the simple Quranic affirmation of property rights. Usually they attempt to draw their readers into jumping from this *technically* correct statement about women's rights in Islam to a false association of Islam with Western-style affirmations of the personhood and legal rights of women. On a number of occasions, I have seen or heard Muslim women who will say that they are Muslim, and that they have the same rights and respect as a man, that Islam respects them and allows them the same freedom as men have. Of course, what needs to be tacitly understood is that these women are saying this while they are **in the United States, or some other Western nation like Canada or Great Britain**. Of course their rights are respected and they are not oppressed! They are living in a society where the sort of behaviour which many Muslim men display towards women in Muslim countries is not generally tolerated. In the West, both law and popular opinion greatly discourage activities such as wife-beating and marriage to underage girls. Society would frown upon a man who made his wife wear a veil and stay inside the house unless he was with her. It would be neither understood nor accepted that women should have an inferior legal and moral status than men, as is held by a plain reading of the Qur'an and the ahadith. In this nation, Islam has no choice but to respect the rights and dignity of women, lest it raise the ire of the general populace. However, one wonders what these Muslim women would say or think if they tried to take the same attitude in, say, Pakistan or Iran or Egypt. Clearly, the apologetism which is made by Muslim women for Islam on the basis of some supposedly "enlightened" view of

women's rights is nothing more than a cloak woven to try and cover the ugly truth about Islam's attitudes toward women.

This has not, of course, impeded the proliferation of websites, pamphlets, and other venues purporting to show that women are equal with men in Islam, and that Islam elevates the fairer sex. Designed to appeal to the Western mind which operates under the paradigm of equal rights for all, these forums seek to redefine terms commonly used by Western thinkers, and often resort to blatant misrepresentation so as to present a grossly one-sided and decontextualised view of Islam's attitudes toward women. "Islam supports women's rights", it is said, but the "rights" which are supported are the basic ideas presented in the body of Islamic scripture and jurisprudence, such as freedom to divorce, freedom for a virgin or widow to choose her spouse, and the freedom to own property. There are, of course, other loopholes in the body of Islamic law which allow for the practical deprivation of these granted privileges, often amounting simply to a contradicting passage in the Qur'an or in a hadith. Further, many Muslim apologists will themselves use out-of-context statements in the Qur'an or the ahadith to justify their claims (something which they often accuse their opponents of doing, even when the detractors are doing nothing more than repeating longstanding Islamic legal tradition). An example is the hadith which says "The search for knowledge is a duty of every Muslim, male and female." This is quoted to "prove" that women have every right to get any sort of education, just like a man. Of course, the context of this passage is that the knowledge is religious, that every Muslim has the obligation to learn Allah's law, not some secular or technical education. This example, as well as the whole attempt by Muslim apologists to sugar-coat Islam's treatment of women, is another example of the *taqiyya*, the lying for the advancement of Islam which was mentioned above. It is a grave misunderstanding to believe that "women's rights" in an Islamic context would mean anything similar to how Westerners perceive the term, which would generally include the rights to a secular education, to hold any job, to hold and use property apart from her husband's direction, the right to custody of children, etc. On the contrary, these would be explicitly denied to a woman in any Islamic system which institutes the traditional Islamic *shari'a* rooted in the Qur'an and the ahadith.

Often, Christians will be confronted by Muslim polemicists who preach that Islam upholds the rights of women, and who will simultaneously charge that the Bible degrades women. Muslims often point to the position of women in the Bible, which does not allow for women pastors or allow women to exercise spiritual authority over men. Of course, the polemicists conveniently ignore passages such as Galatians 3:28 which affirm the spiritual equality of women with men before God. Muslims generally fail to comprehend the Biblical teaching of spiritual equality combined with positional subordination (which causes them likewise to misapprehend the doctrine of the deity of Christ, as well). Men and women are spiritually equal, both can receive the same salvation and the same eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ. However, in the earthly realm, God has also established men as the temporal spiritual authority in the family and the churches. This does not, however, mean that men are spiritually superior to women, anymore than a general in the Army is more of a citizen of the United States than a colonel. Both are equal citizens, yet one is placed in a higher rank of authority. Indeed, the Bible teaches this concept in I Corinthians 11, where the relationship between men and women is paralleled with the relationship between God and Christ. God and Christ are the same in essence, yet Christ, as the second person of the Trinity, was positionally subordinate to the Father. In the same manner,



men and women are of the same essence and spiritual value, but women are positionally subordinate to men (a subordination which will end in the eternal state when it is no longer needed). Of course, for the Muslim to engage in this attack is hypocritical, given the quite obvious inequality which is institutionalised in the Islamic religion. Yet, the attack is often made in an attempt to divert potential Western converts away from Islam's own misogyny and towards a manufactured quibble with the Bible.

Indeed, it is also common for Muslim apologists to play the gender card by presenting lists of women from the Bible who are depicted as unsavoury, licentious, and of generally bad character (women such as Jezebel, Herodias' daughter, etc.). The aim is to be able to point to these and say, "See? The Bible is anti-woman!" In addition to simply being a ridiculous argument, it is also easily refutable. One can simply provide a list of women (much longer, as it turns out) in the Bible who are presented in a positive light (Ruth, the widow of Zarephath, Abigail, Mary, etc.), and perhaps also a list of MEN who are depicted in a bad light (Nabal, Saul, Ahab, Judas, etc.). If the Bible is as chauvinistic a document as these apologists claim, then why would so many men be depicted in a poor light? Of course, the real point should be understood that the Bible merely depicts people as they are: sinners, some who are saved and live by faith, and some who remain lost and rebellious to their dying day.

## **A Woman's Legal Status in Islam**

In light of Islam's own revered writings, the Qur'an and the ahadith, we see a far different picture painted from that which is presented to the West. In orthodox Islamic nations, in which the *shari'a* law has been established, the treatment of women generally ranges from heartbreaking to downright abominable. Even in nations where *shari'a* has not been formally established, the theological fundamentalism of the Islam which is almost universally held, as discussed previously, results in social and de facto political forces which militate against the exercise of anything even approximating Western-style rights by women. Often these are codified into the legal structure of the nation, even though no formal *shari'a* has been established.

In Islam as found in the Qur'an, the woman is inferior to the man in matters of law and justice. For instance, it is stipulated that a woman is to receive only half the inheritance that her brothers receive when their parents pass away,

"Allah thus directs you as regards your children's inheritance: to the male, a portion equal to that of two females: if only daughters, two or more, their share is two-thirds of the inheritance; if only one, her share is a half." (Surah 4:11)

In this way, a woman is deprived of an equal share of inheritance solely because she is female, and if women are the only inheritors, they don't even receive the full inheritance! This sort of uneven distribution is elsewhere supported in the Qur'an,

"Allah directs thus about those who leave no descendants or ascendants as heirs. If it is a man that dies, leaving a sister but no child, she shall have half the inheritance: If such a deceased was

a woman, who left no child, her brother takes her inheritance: If there are two sisters, they shall have two-thirds of the inheritance between them: if there are brothers and sisters, they share, the male having twice the share of the female.” (Surah 4:176)

This apportionment system of giving women half the amount which a man receives is also supported by Mohammed in the ahadith <sup>1</sup>. Hence, though the Quranic right of a woman to her inheritance is affirmed, it still establishes a systematically unequal legal position for the woman.

Likewise, a woman is reckoned in Islamic jurisprudence to be worth half a man by means of testimony in a court of law. Specifically, a woman’s testimony only counts for half that of a man’s, thus two women are needed to counter the claims of a man.

“The Prophet said, ‘Isn’t the witness of a woman equal to half of that for a man?’ The women said, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘This is because of the deficiency of a woman’s mind.’ “<sup>2</sup>

Not only is a woman’s word not as good as that of a man’s, but neither is her mind! Because of this acceptance of the notion that women are not as intelligent as men, women are accorded an inferior standing in Islamic justice. Logically, this would bear out to the disadvantage of women in pressing their rights and defending themselves or seeking redress for wrongs done to them. If a woman were raped and the deed was done secretly, she would have absolutely no redress against her assailant, unless he confessed out of guilt or fear, because his word would count for twice as much as hers and overrule her.

Women and men are also treated differently for breaking the same laws. An example of this comes from the Quranic commands against homosexuality. The punishment for women is,

“If any of your women are guilty of lewdness, take the evidence of four reliable witnesses from amongst you against them; and if they testify, confine them to houses until death do claim them, or Allah ordain for them some other way.” (Surah 4:15)

For men, on the other hand,

“If two men among you are guilty of lewdness, punish them both. If they repent and amend, leave them alone; for Allah is Oft-returning, Most Merciful.” (Surah 4:16)

While women are confined in house arrest until death, with no evidence of forgiveness being available, men are set free with no punishment if they disavow their sin. The passage 4:15 provides a possible caveat in its statement “...or Allah ordain for them some other way.” If Allah rescinds the punishment, they may go free. Of course, the will of Allah is generally understood to be interpreted and dispensed to the Muslim community via its mullahs and imams, so the women are still essentially at the mercy of the interpretive temperament of these men. This sort of one-sided, unfair treatment of women is acknowledged by scholars who are intimately familiar with Islam,

“The statement that ‘men are the guardians of women’ in verse 38 of Sura 4 postulates inequality of men and women in civil rights. The words are followed by two brief explanations of men’s

superiority over women<sup>3</sup>.....In Islamic law, male heirs get more than female heirs, and men's evidence is more reliable than women's; to be exact, a man's inheritance share is twice a woman's share, and his evidence carries twice the weight of hers in court...The right to divorce belongs to the husband but not to wives.<sup>4</sup>

In most Middle Eastern Muslim countries that make a pretence at some sort of representative government, women are still denied the right to vote. Rights to property and asset ownership by women, technically existing as we have seen, are in practice non-existent as women in many Muslim countries are not free to even leave the house without their husbands' permission, much less transact business and manage property of their own accord. Because of the debilitating strictures placed upon a woman's freedom of movement and communication with others (especially men) outside of her kinship unit, she is usually not even able to exercise these Qur'an-given rights, and must consign her property and rights to her husband for him to exercise on her behalf. The few Muslim countries where women have been allowed to participate in the political process have almost invariably had problems with Islamic hard-liners who destabilise and overthrow governments. An example is Pakistan, which at one time had a female Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto. However, radical Islamist agitation brought the fragile democratic government down, and it was replaced with a military dictatorship, currently headed by Pervez Musharraf. Pakistan is now openly one of the main hotbeds of radical Islamic jihadi activity, with its thousands of *madrassas*, or Islamic schools, churning out tens of thousands of hard-line students. The extension of rights to women is not necessarily the direct or sole cause of Islamist dissatisfaction, but is instead viewed to be a symptom of the greater evil of Western liberal democracy, which the Islamists strenuously oppose.

When Islamic parties or revolutionary groups which seek to establish orthodox Islam as the *deen* of a nation manage to come to power, the rights of women are completely curtailed. There is perhaps no better example of this than Afghanistan. Before the Soviet invasion of this nation, Afghanistan was a relatively open and tolerant society, one in which women had a good deal of participation, could receive the same education as men, and could even become doctors or other types of professionals. All this changed with the Soviet invasion, and the subsequent American support for Afghan opposition groups such as the *Mujahadeen*. These opposition groups, more often than not, were militantly orthodox in their approach to Islam. While the United States supported many of these groups because of their shared enemy, the Soviet Union, once this threat had ended, it was left primarily to these many militantly Islamic groups to pick up the pieces (now with the money and arms previously supplied by the United States). This they did over the next decade, with the process of Islamisation eventually culminating in the Taliban regime, complete with its religious police who would savagely beat women in the streets for grave offences such as laughing in public. Even with the timely demise of the Taliban regime at the hands of American forces, the rights of women in Afghanistan, briefly restored, are fast on their way to becoming non-existent again, as the various other militantly Islamic (but less anti-American) factions prepare the new constitution for that land, one which is being explicitly billed as having an Islamic *shari'a* foundation.

## A Woman's Social Status in Islam

Part and parcel with the political inferiority of women in Islamic society is the subjugation of women in the social realm. Women are in many cases considered to be the property of men, and this dates back to the conditions found in pre-Islamic Arabia. As Dashti notes,

“In pre-Islamic Arabic society, the women did not have the status of independent persons, but were considered to be possessions of the men. All sorts of inhumane treatment of the women were permissible and customary.”<sup>5</sup>

This bears out explicitly in the Qur'an,

“Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property for the support of women. So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah hath guarded. As for those from whom ye fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Lo! Allah is ever High, Exalted, Great.” (Surah 4:34, Pickthal translation)

According to the Qur'an, men are to literally rule over women, both because of a supposed natural superiority and because men spend their resources supporting women. This passage really makes a woman into property which belongs to a man, and which exists for his use, since he has to pay upkeep. Likewise, the word “scourge” is translated from an Arabic root *drb* meaning “to hit, strike, or beat”. This word can also be used to describe a bullet striking its target, as in the phrase, “**draboo** b-r-rasaas w-gitloo”, which means, “they shot him with bullets and killed him.”

The Muslim practice of polygamy virtually turns women into a commodity to be bought and sold. Many Westerners have the impression that the “four-wives” rule follows basically the same rule and respect for marriage that the West understands, only quadrupled. This is not the case, however. In Islam, while the woman cannot divorce her husband without being considered an unbeliever and destined for hell, a man can divorce his wife on any pretext (or none at all),

“And if ye wish to exchange one wife for another and ye have given unto one of them a sum of money (however great), take nothing from it. Would ye take it by the way of calumny and open wrong?” (Surah 4:20, Pickthal translation)

What this is saying is that it's alright for a Muslim man to dismiss one of his wives and replace her with another as long as he takes nothing from the dowry which he originally gave to obtain her as his wife. Essentially, this turns his former wife into nothing more than a glorified prostitute, and quite obviously can lead to the abuse of the system. This is shown in the life of Hassan, a grandson of Mohammed. Hassan, over the course of his life, had over seventy wives, yet never exceeded the four-wife limit at any one time. He would marry a woman during the day, enjoy her company for one or a few nights, and then divorce her so that he could marry another, all within the bounds of Islamic law<sup>6</sup>.

Women were also considered by Mohammed to be deficient in religion. He is recorded as saying,

“I have not seen any one more deficient in intelligence and religion than you women.”<sup>7</sup>

According to the reputed founder of Islam, over half the population is deficient in intelligence and unable to be as religiously active or useful as the other! This is borne out in that the Islamic traditions taught that Mohammed also forbade women from giving themselves to extra prayer or fasting without the express permission of their husbands, as this might prevent them from being as sexually useful to their husbands as they could be<sup>8</sup>. Mohammed also taught both that a majority of women would go to hell<sup>9</sup>, and that the majority of people in hell were women, as he claimed to have seen in a vision<sup>10</sup>. The early Muslim attitudes expressed through the biographical details attributed to Mohammed clearly show a very disrespectful, chauvinistic attitude toward women which has, to varying degrees, filtered down into modern Islam as seen and is widely supported in many Muslim nations.

In proper Islam, women are completely in the power of their husbands. Men are free to beat their wives (as per Surah 4:34), provided they don't break any of her bones!<sup>11</sup> Far from being the vile activity it is viewed as in the West, wife-beating is a perfectly acceptable practice, according to the teachings of Islam's legal writings,

“On the Day of Judgement, a husband shall not be questioned for beating his wife.”<sup>12</sup>

This bore true also in the earthly realm, with Mohammed commanding, “No man shall be questioned for beating his wife.”<sup>13</sup> In many Muslim nations, women are subjected to the laws of *pardah*, or seclusion, which refers not only to the practice of facial veiling and body coverings, but also to the seclusion of women from all public life, as much as is possible in a given situation. A woman must be veiled even in the presence of her male in-laws<sup>14</sup>. A woman is not allowed, by Islamic law, to undertake a journey longer than three days unless accompanied by a male relative, and cannot even spend money without her husband's permission<sup>15</sup>. A woman's body is the possession of her husband, even to the extent that her breast milk is his literal possession<sup>16</sup>. It is even recorded that Mohammed stated that if it were proper for any person to be decreed to prostrate themselves in reverence to any other than Allah, that it would be a wife to her husband<sup>17</sup>. In many Muslim countries, women cannot leave the house without written permission from their husbands, and cannot drive automobiles.

## “Honour” Killing

Another disturbing aspect of traditional Muslim treatment of women is the phenomenon known as “honour killing.” This behaviour, which has absolutely nothing “honourable” about it, involves the murder of women by their male relatives for some perceived slight against the honour of the family unit. Primarily these slights are sexual in nature, ranging from something as serious as fornication to something as relatively innocuous as flirting with a man outside the family. A wife requesting a divorce is cited as another common motivation for honour killings, and they often occur simply because a girl refused to marry a partner chosen by pre-arrangement.

There have even been instances where Muslim women have been killed because they had been raped, a crime which Islamic law often considers to be the fault of the woman, not the rapist. This despicable practice has spread to the West, brought along by the Muslim immigrants who have been settling primarily in Western Europe. Great Britain has seen a rise in this crime. For instance, on 12 October 2002, a 48 year old Kurdish man, an exile from Iraq, savagely murdered his 16 year old daughter after receiving an anonymous letter telling him that she had been sleeping with her boyfriend<sup>18</sup>. She had brought shame upon the family, at least according to an anonymous note, and for this he repeatedly stabbed her back and chest, finally burying the blade of his knife so savagely into her throat that the metal tip snapped off after hitting bone. The BBC at the time also reported that the girl had left a note to her father detailing her intention of running away with her boyfriend, and the reason given was his previous propensity for punching and kicking her. Indeed, police reports noted that she had been beaten for months before her murder took place.

The same article also details other honour killings in Britain. In March 2002, a Muslim woman was kidnapped, strangled with parcel tape, and set on fire after filing for divorce from her husband. A Muslim man stabbed his daughter to death, over 20 strokes, because he caught her at home with a boyfriend in February 2002. In September 2002, a Muslim man went to the home of his estranged wife and hacked her and their two small children to death with a machete. Unfortunately, this sort of butchery is becoming more common in the West among the resident Muslim immigrant populations. Honour killings have also been reported in Italy, Sweden, Brazil, and Ecuador.

The impetus for this behaviour is not an aberration from the treatment of women in Muslim populations, but instead is firmly ground in the societal, and even legal, sanction of many Muslim nations. Honour killing is common across the Muslim world, more common than many would like to admit. Indeed, the United Nations Population Fund estimates that around 5,000 women are murdered each year through honour killings. The reason for this crime is the deep grounding in Arab culture of the communal sense of honour and shame. If one acts shamefully, then the shame is not just borne by the individual, but by the whole family group, often concomitant with social shunning by other members of the community. This then combines with the Islamic tendency to downgrade the personhood of women, and gives a heartbreaking cocktail of worldly religious fanaticism and the scapegoating of women. This bears out in the case, more typical than we would like to believe, of Rofayda Qaoud, a 17 year old Palestinian girl who was raped by her two brothers. She was taken into custody by the Palestinian police, and then returned to her family after she had given birth. Her mother demanded that she commit suicide. The girl refused, and her mother came into her room one night and wrapped a plastic bag around her head, slit her wrists with a razor, and then beat her on the head with a wooden stick, killing her<sup>19</sup>. The mother specifically stated that upholding the family honour was the reason she murdered her daughter.

Honour killing is abetted by the fact that the need to maintain honour is a mitigating circumstance under the legal systems of many Muslim countries. The Palestinian mother who murdered her daughter could have received a maximum sentence of five years in prison, specifically because the honour factor was introduced and accepted as mitigating, even though the penalty for premeditated murder under Palestinian law is capital punishment. Many countries



legally accept honour as a mitigating factor, including Jordan, Morocco, and Syria. In a speech on this subject, Azam Kamguian listed the articles in various Muslim countries which sanction honour killings by lowering or abolishing the punishment for murder if the murder was committed to maintain “honour”: Article 562 in Lebanon (abolished in February 1999), Article 340 in Jordan, Article 548 in Syria, Article 153 in Kuwait, Article 237 in Egypt, Article 309 in Iraq, Article 334 in the United Arab Emirate, Article 70 in Bahrain, Article 179 in Iran before 1979, Articles 418-424 in Morocco, and Article 252 in Oman<sup>20</sup>. He also notes that Saudi Arabia, Iran, Sudan, Pakistan and Qatar also apply a strict, traditional interpretation of *shari’a* in which honour killing is tacitly acknowledged. Indeed, a bill was recently introduced in the Jordanian parliament which would have increased penalties against those who commit honour killings. The bill was soundly defeated on the principle that it contradicted Islamic teaching and traditions, according to a Jordanian parliamentarian interviewed in the Associated Press story of 4 August, 2003. The placement of the burden of guilt for familial shame stemming from misbehaviour, even that of male members of the family, onto women is an injustice which stems from Islamic misogyny codified by centuries of tradition and orthodox interpretation of the Qur’an and the ahadith.

## Women as Objects of Carnality

A study of the sayings of Mohammed as found in the Qur’an and the ahadith shows that the founder of Islam did not view women as persons deserving respect, but rather as objects to be used to fulfill the sensual lust of men. This attitude is perhaps most clearly illustrated when Mohammed said, “A woman is like a private part. When she goes out the devil casts a glance at her<sup>21</sup>.” In his view, women were little more than the portions of anatomy required to gratify his desires. The “holy” writings of Islam are full of passages demanding that women submit to and fulfill the carnal desires of their husbands at any time, and a premium is placed upon women who “serve” this capacity especially well. The ahadith state that if a man desires sexual intercourse with his woman, that she must respond immediately, even if she is engaged in baking bread at the communal oven<sup>22</sup>. If a woman is riding a camel, and her husband demands intercourse, she must submit, and this is even said to be her duty before Allah, that fulfilling of her husband’s desire<sup>23</sup>. If a woman refuses to come to bed with her husband, Islam teaches that she is cursed by the very angels of Allah<sup>24</sup>. A woman is also shamed and coerced into sexual submission to her husband’s wishes by the threat of competition from the 72 houris (virgins) which Islam teaches a man receives for his enjoyment in Paradise,

“When a wife vexes her husband, then houris of paradise utter curses on her saying, ‘may Allah destroy you because he is with you only for a short time; he will shortly leave you to come to us.’”<sup>25</sup>.

Islam teaches a similarly low view of the blessed institution of marriage, reducing it from the God-ordained status of lifelong, total partnership to a mere vehicle by which a man’s carnal lusts can be “legally” fulfilled. In the Qur’an, a woman is likened to a field which a man must work and cultivate so that it bears him much fruit. “Your women are a tilth for you (to cultivate). So go to your tilth as ye will...” (Surah 2:223) This attitude is reiterated in the ahadith, “The most equitable of the conditions of marriage is that you should fulfill that dowry with which you have



made private parts lawful.”<sup>26</sup> Here we see that marriage is considered a way to make sexual intercourse legal, i.e. not fornication. Satisfaction of a man’s desires, sexual and otherwise, is even made a means of entry for a woman in heaven! “Any female who dies while her husband was pleased with her will enter Paradise.”<sup>27</sup>

To further humiliate, subjugate, and disgrace womanhood, the practice of female genital mutilation (sometimes called by the misnomer “female circumcision”) is carried out in many Muslim nations, particularly those in Africa. This process removes from a woman the ability to receive any physical enjoyment from the conjugal act, and makes intercourse a painful duty. As a result, it makes it difficult or impossible for a woman to cleave to her husband through desire for him, as was given in her nature to Eve and her daughters. This makes her less likely to form the psychologically intimate bond to him that would normally make her more difficult for him to send away when he divorces her. Hence it seems in reality to be just another means of removing obstacles to the fulfillment of the lusts of lecherous men.

Far from respecting the rights and personhood of women, Islam as it is properly understood from the Qur’an and other sacred Islamic texts degrades the fairer sex. As taught from these texts, women are little more than joy units for men’s pleasure, not accorded the rights or legal protections which men enjoy, and destined by *sharia* and *purdah* to lives of virtual imprisonment and subjugation.

Again, does all of this mean that every Muslim man beats his wife, “loves” her only for the pleasure she can bring him, and wants to force his wife to remain secluded from the world at large? No, of course not. Nor does it mean that Muslim women everywhere suffer from the horrid conditions which theocratic Islamic states impose upon them. Many Muslim women, particularly in the West but even in some of the more secular Muslim nations such as Turkey and Indonesia, do enjoy varying degrees of personal liberty and political freedom. The point is, however, that strict, orthodox Islam holds to the teachings illustrated above, and this makes the resurgence of militant, orthodox Islam in both the Middle East and Western nations a danger to the rights of and respect for women.

## End Notes

(1) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 4, no. 10

(2) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 3, no. 826

(3) - Ali Dashti, *23 Years: A Study of the Prophetic Career of Mohammed*, pp. 113.

(4) - Ali Dashti, *23 Years: A Study of the Prophetic Career of Mohammed*, pp. 114.

(5) - Ali Dashti, *23 Years: A Study of the Prophetic Career of Mohammed*, pp. 113.

(6) - A. Shaikh, *Islam: Sex and Violence*, Chapter 2

(7) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 2, p. 541

- (8) - *Sahih Tirmzi*, vol. 1, p. 300
- (9) - *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 1, p. 1431
- (10) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, p. 28 (see also 1:301, 2:161, and 7:124 of the same collection)
- (11) - *Sahih Tirmzi*, vol. 1, p. 439
- (12) - *Mishkat*, Vol. 2, p. 105
- (13) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, p. 215
- (14) - *Sahih Tirmzi*, vol. 1, p. 432
- (15) - *Sahih Tirmzi*, vol. 1, p. 265
- (16) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, p. 27
- (17) - *Sahih Tirmzi*, vol. 1, p. 428
- (18) - “For families that fear dishonour, there is only one remedy....murder”, *The Observer* (UK), filed by A. Asthana and U. Mistry, 5 Oct. 2003
- (19) - “Mother kills raped daughter to restore ‘honor’”, *Knight-Ridder Newspapers*, filed by S.S. Nelson, 17 Nov. 2003
- (20) - A. Kamguian, “The Lethal Combination of Tribalism, Islam, and Cultural Relativism”, from a speech made at a conference on honour killing and violence against women, 17-19 Jan., 2003 in Stockholm, Sweden
- (21) - *Al-Hadis*, trans. Al-Haj Maulana Fazlul Karim, vol. 2, p. 692, from *Mishkat al-Masabih*, by Waliuddin Abu Abdullah Mahmud Tabrizi
- (22) - *Sahih Tirmzi*, vol. 1, p. 428
- (23) - *Ibn-e-Majah*, Vol. 1, p. 520
- (24) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 7, p. 93
- (25) - *Ibn-e-Majah*, Vol. 1, p. 560
- (26) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 2, p. 657
- (27) - *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, p. 211

## Eternal Efficacy

### ***Myth #10 Islam is a Religion Which Can Give Eternal Salvation***

Perhaps the most important question of all, then, is this: Does Islam offer a true hope of heaven to its followers? Can following the teachings of Mohammed save a person's soul? Are the over one billion Muslims in the world following "another way" to God, or are they treading a false path leading only to hell?

### **Islam - A Way to Heaven?**

Islam cannot save a person. How could it? The reasonable question to ask is: Why would God be impressed with the works or rituals which man does? Why would we think that the pitiful offerings which we can give to God would be enough to earn us a spot in heaven? The short and simple answer to this is that our works cannot get us into heaven. However, this is what Islam essentially teaches. Like every other religion on earth aside from Bible Christianity, Islam teaches that certain actions and rituals are needed before a person can gain entry into heaven.

Essentially, Islamic soteriological doctrine (doctrine of salvation) says that to be accepted of Allah, a person needs to at least try to fulfill five certain pillars of the Islamic faith.

1. Declaring and believing the *Shahada* or Creed: A person must declare "*Ashhadu Alla Ilaha Illa Allah Wa Ashhadu Anna Muhammad Rasulu Allah*", which is to say, "There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is the messenger of Allah." This is perhaps THE bedrock belief in Islam. Without reciting this, a person is not considered to be a Muslim, and is still a *kafir* (an unbeliever). This creed will often be repeated by Muslims constantly.
2. Observing daily prayers (*Salat*) and attending the Friday public services. Prayer is a ritual very important to devout Muslims, who will face toward Mecca and prostrate themselves and recite prayers to Allah five times in a day: upon rising in the morning, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and before retiring for the night. The prayers, as founded on the ahadith, are very mechanical in their procedure, being prescribed to be performed a certain way. Devout Muslims will attend Friday worship services in a *mosque*.
3. Fasting during Ramadan. Ramadan is considered a holy month to Muslims, and for the entire month, the practice is to abstain from all pleasures during the period between sunrise and sunset. During the day, devout Muslims will not eat, drink, smoke, or engage in sexual activities. The concept behind the Ramadan fast is for Muslims to develop self-control, devote themselves to Allah, and learn to identify with the less fortunate.
4. The giving of alms (*Zakat*). Muslims are required to give one-fourtieth (2.5%) of their wealth to the needy and less-fortunate. This originally was voluntary, but has evolved over time into a religious obligation. Sometimes, the *zakat* as an obligation is distinguished from purely voluntary giving, known as *sadaqah*.

5. The pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*). At least once in their lifetime, devout Muslims are required to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, if it is within their financial and physical capabilities. This ritual is considered very necessary for the gaining of salvation in Islam, and ignoring it is considered a very serious sin, a form of rebellion against Allah. At Mecca, Muslims will engage in a prescribed set of rituals and ceremonies centered about the *Kaabah*, a large shrine in Mecca which was introduced into Islam as its sacred shrine sometime in the 8th century, and which was initially a site of lunar worship in the Mecca area in pre-Islamic times.

To this list of five pillars, many Muslims add jihad as a sixth pillar. It has been shown above that there is definite Quranic and hadithic support for the notion that Mohammed taught salvation through martyrdom in holy war. Further, the general trend in Muslim jurisprudence throughout the Islamic period has been that jihad is a necessary and **violent** act carried out against infidels to bring them under the domination of Islam. The place of jihad can be seen in the importance attached by many Muslims to *shaheed*, martyrdom which occurs while fighting for Islam or because of one's Islamic faith. The added benefit of multitudes of perpetually regenerating virgins in Paradise has, obviously, also served to increase the vigour with which young Muslim men have devoted themselves to this aspect of Islam<sup>1</sup>.

## How Everyone - Muslim or Otherwise - Can Receive Eternal Life

A devout Muslim certainly will be kept very busy in their religious life! Can this help to save them, though?

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” (Titus 3:5)

It is not the works which man does that can save him, but rather it is of the grace and mercy of God who sent His Son Jesus Christ to die and shed His blood for us, and who rose again. Only by faith in Him can we be saved, and this after He calls us and gives us the conviction to recognise that we are sinners in need of salvation. Repentance, that change of attitude and heart towards our sin, must be had before we are in a position to come to God for salvation. If we refuse to accept that we are sinners who cannot provide our own way to God, then we cannot be saved nor enter the kingdom of God. There is nothing; no ritual, no ceremony, no pilgrimage, which human beings can perform and earn a spot in heaven. “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (Isaiah 64:6) See, the Bible tells us that our efforts at producing our own righteousness are unworthy and flawed. Because of our sin, we are unclean things in the sight of God, and our works and rituals are worthless and filthy.

This applies to all of us, too. “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one....For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:10,23) Mohammed, as we saw, was a sinner. The Qur'an says as much. “Lo! We have given thee (O Muhammad) a signal victory, That Allah may forgive thee of thy sin that which is past and that which is to come, and may perfect His favour unto thee, and may guide thee on a right path.” (Surah 48:1-2, Pickthal

translation) Further, in Surah 40:55, “Then have patience (O Muhammad). Lo! the promise of Allah is true. And ask forgiveness of thy sin, and hymn the praise of thy Lord at fall of night and in the early hours.” (Pickthal translation) Mohammed himself recognised that he was a sinner in need of forgiveness.

So, if all mankind are sinners, and works, rituals, and the like cannot save them, what can? As stated above, the only way to salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour, repenting of your sins and trusting Him to wash your sins away through His own blood which was shed to forgive sin. “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6) Salvation is only through the Lord Jesus Christ. No works can replace this. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber....I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved...” (John 10:1,9) Jesus, the sinless man presented both in the Bible and the Qur’an who would not lie, said that He was the way to enter into heaven. If you are trying to get in by keeping the rules and regulations of Islam, you are trying to climb up some another way, and will not be able to successfully enter in. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) This is the love of God. We, who are sinners by nature and by practice, and who deserve the wrath of God by burning in hell for eternity, are freely given the opportunity to escape that fate, without work on our part, and without it costing us a thing. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: It is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9) Salvation is by grace, through faith, His gift to us. We don’t need to work, we only need to believe and trust in Him for our salvation. Doing good works and living a moral life cannot save. In fact, human beings are not even ABLE to live a truly moral life unless they have the Spirit of God residing in them, whom we receive upon trusting Christ to salvation. Think about it. No matter how moral you may appear to other people, you know that there is some sin which you have in your life which will condemn you to hell. Why try to strive to earn a salvation which cannot be earned? Jesus said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28) Lay the heavy burden of your sins and guilt at His feet, and take Him as your Saviour, and be saved!

## End Notes

(1) - Interestingly, a recent work by the pseudonymous Christoph Luxenberg, *Die Syro-Aramaische Lesart des Koran*, published to date only in Germany and unfortunately not yet available for wider consumption, casts doubt on this Quranic promise of perpetual young doe-eyed virgins. His reanalysis of many Quranic passages which have historically mystified even Arab Muslim commentators suggests that these passages are more coherent and better understood if they are approached from the vantage point of having originated in Syriac and then been transferred into Arabic, with the corresponding problems in misunderstanding that can arise from translation. One such possible alternative meaning has to do with this Quranic promise of virgins. Luxenberg suggests that the original Qur’an document may not have been promising “virgins” of “doe eyes”, but rather “raisins” of “crystal clarity”.

**Source:** [http://www.studytoanswer.net/islam\\_myths.html#intro#intro](http://www.studytoanswer.net/islam_myths.html#intro#intro)